NOVICE PRINCIPAL MENTORING: AN EXAMINATION OF HOW MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS INFLUENCE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The school principalship is a highly complex role (Augustine-Shaw, 2015; Crow, 2006.) The expectation for principals to be responsible for matters such as instructional leadership, student achievement, implementation of federal and state policy mandates, school culture, hiring, and professional development of staff (Crow, 2005; Leithwood, 2005; Metzger, 2003; Shoho & Barnett, 2010) speak to the need for effective mentoring and continuing developing of novice principals. Although the demands for principals continue to mount, support systems for novice principals have not changed or received significant momentum (Hale & Moorman, 2003). This qualitative phenomenological study examined the experiences of principal mentoring dyads in order to understand how relational structures influenced the experiences, professional supports and practices, and the overall outcomes for both participants. This project explored how principal mentoring relationships could serve as a catalyst for on-the-job professional development.

To understand these experiences, a conceptual framework was developed, *Principal Mentoring Framework*, which integrated professional mentoring literature and Social Capital Theory. This study addressed the following overarching research question: What elements of the mentor-mentee relationship support a novice principal’s ability to fulfill the expectations and professional responsibilities of their role? Four subquestions supplemented this question: (a) What approaches have novice principals and their mentors used to form and sustain trusting, supportive professional mentor relationships? (b) How has participant identity, investment, and intent affected the mentoring experience? (c) How has participants' professional practice been affected by the resources or forms of capital (career oriented and psychosocial) exchanged and reciprocated within a principal mentor-mentee relationship? and (d) How do mentoring participants negotiate challenges or disagreements that arise as a result of their relationship? Ten
mentoring dyads (20 participants) were selected for this study from Illinois public schools. In person semi-structured interviews were conducted as the primary data source.

Findings noted relational structures, including trust; formal and informal mentoring format; and participant identity, intent, and investment influenced participants’ overall experiences and the types of capital exchanged. Informal relationships exhibited more intense career-oriented and psychosocial supports relative to formal mentorships; differences between formal and informal relationships were evident throughout the data. Additionally, issues of identity, particularly a participant’s philosophical views, personality, values, and gender were foundational to the overall success of the mentoring experience. Finally, reciprocal benefits for mentors were found, specifically in dyads associated with a positive experience.

Implications from this project focused on how novice principals, principal mentors, school district leaders, and state education officials can better utilize and support mentoring as a form of professional development for novice principals in Illinois. Recommendations for policy, practice, and future research are addressed and highlight the need for a mentoring framework of best practices relative to supporting novice principals.
This project is dedicated to my family:

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Mom, Dad, Jamie, and Emily, I carry a piece of you everywhere I go. I am grateful for the support and love from each of you. Emily, you inspire me every day. Our hope will always be in something greater, no matter what Friedreich’s Ataxia will bring. Together we will cure FA!

Grandma Thelma, you always thought I should have a degree from the University of Illinois. Well, now I do.
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Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction ................................................................................................. 1
Chapter 2 Literature Review ....................................................................................... 15
Chapter 3 Research Methodology ............................................................................... 68
Chapter 4 Findings ....................................................................................................... 85
Chapter 5 Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations .................................... 155
References .................................................................................................................... 194
Appendix A Email Soliciting Candidates ................................................................. 208
Appendix B Mentor Screening Interview ................................................................. 209
Appendix C Email Notifying Candidates of Their Nomination .............................. 211
Appendix D Consent Form .......................................................................................... 213
Appendix E Interview Protocol and Questions for Selected Principal Mentor ....... 215
Appendix F Interview Protocol and Questions for Selected Principal Mentee ....... 218
Chapter 1

Introduction

The expectations placed on school principals are complex and increasingly demanding. At no time in the history of public school education in the United States have the challenges facing principals been greater (Levine, 2005). As they guide their schools, principals historically have juggled the competing duties of manager, supervisor, instructional leader, and politician (Kafka, 2009). However, given that “the job of a school leader has been transformed by extraordinary economic, demographic, technological, and global change” (Levine, 2005, p. 12), even traditional responsibilities are fluid and increasingly complex. Principals often feel they are overloaded, and their duties are constantly expanding; thus, they are challenged to fulfill their role, particularly their instructional leadership functions (Grubb & Flessa, 2006). Although many responsibilities fall under his/her purview, a modern principal’s effectiveness as a learning leader is uniformly seen as the most essential and critical responsibility. Often tied directly to the leadership for student learning role, accountability mandates have proliferated over the past two decades in the form of student learning measures (Crow, 2006; Leithwood, 2005), such as calls to reduce dropout rates, increase promotion and graduation rates, and improve student achievement (Levine, 2005). School leaders must implement state and federal policy reform levers (Leone, Warnimont, & Zimmerman, 2009), which often limit autonomy and flexibility in responding to the contextual needs of individual schools (Leithwood, 2005). The current policy environment rewards principals in schools that show student achievement gains, while punishing school leaders and their faculty members in underperforming schools (Archer, 2004).

Given the complexity and accountability pressures for school improvement, fewer educators are opting to undertake the principalship role (Metzger, 2003), and those already in the
position are increasingly choosing to leave the profession. In recent years, principal turnover in Illinois has been a growing phenomenon. From 2001 through 2008, yearly principal retention in Illinois fell from 86% to 79% (White & Agarwal, 2011). Only 28% of novice principals remained at the same school for at least 6 years as compared to 38% in the previous decade (DeAngelis & White, 2011). Most concerning, 40% of Illinois principals who left their schools during this 6-year period left the education field entirely (DeAngelis & White, 2011). Concerns linked to mobility trends of Illinois principals were prominent for multiple reasons, including leaving one’s current school for a more advantaged school; personal feelings of stress, inadequacy, and lack of preparation for the job; and concerns over salary, school culture, or relationships with district personnel (DeAngelis & White, 2011). White and Agarwal (2011) found a significant factor influencing principal turnover rates was projected retirements of the baby boomer generation, which resulted in a lower mean age of Illinois principals as retiring principals were replaced. From 2001 to 2008, the proportion of Illinois principals under 40 years of age doubled from 15% to 30%. Principal turnover matters, according to Bowers and White (2014), who studied 3,154 Illinois school principals from 2000-2001 through 2005-2006. Results indicated that student achievement was positively correlated in schools with principals who had several years of prior teaching and leadership experience, effective on-the-job professional development, were not first-year principals, and attended a high quality leadership preparation program.

Of the numerous factors contributing to principal turnover, stress is cited consistently (Daresh, 2004; Farley-Ripple, Raffel, & Welch, 2012; Metzger, 2003; Shoho & Barnett, 2010). School leaders often resign from their administrative posts due to their inability to cope with stress and form positive relationships (Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013) due to the isolation
they experience as administrators (Bush & Chew, 1999; Playko, 1995). Pressures mount in numerous areas. In particular, a new principal must develop the ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance between personal issues and professional responsibilities (Shoho & Barnett). Due to perceptions of their ability to handle the stress associated with the position, Daresh (2004) noted that educators who are contemplating the principalship often reconsider, due to their fear of isolation and lack of support.

As novice principals begin their jobs and acclimate to their responsibilities, it is important for them to be supported and to receive professional development; yet, deficiencies in on-the-job training for new principals is an area of concern. Relative to the resources, time, energy, and financial allocations dedicated to teacher professional development, principal and school leader development is largely ignored and rarely included in school district budgets (Lochmiller, 2014b). Citing a need for highly qualified and effective principals, the Illinois General Assembly enacted Public Act 96-0903 in 2010, which overhauled principal preparation program requirements (Brown & White, 2010). This legislation upgraded principal preparation program requirements and licensure regulations, including admissions processes, school leadership standards, assessment of candidates and graduates, and school and university partnerships. The state of Illinois also required first- and second-year principals to participate in a state-funded mentoring program (105 ILCS 5/2-3.53a). However, due to significant state budgetary shortfalls, Illinois no longer provides funding for its principal mentoring program. Currently, the only viable options for novice principals are to participate in a mentoring program offered by the Illinois Principals Association (IPA, 2016), sponsored within their local school districts, or other third-party professional organizations.
Statement of the Problem

The school principalship has become an increasingly complex profession, particularly for novice principals who seek to meet the demands of the role (Augustine-Shaw, 2015; Crow, 2006; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; White, Brown, Hunt, & Klostermann, 2011). Principals consistently have noted a diverse array of responsibilities, including an intense focus on instructional leadership, individual and school-wide accountability through student achievement measures, personnel relationships and management, implementation of federal and state mandates, fiscal planning, school culture, and managing personal stress and family time management (Crow, 2006; Kafka, 2009; Leithwood, 2005; Metzger, 2003; Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Although the principalship has changed over the years, the professional development available to principals has not, especially in terms of assisting novice principals with the demands of accountability measures (Hale & Moorman, 2003). The quality of principal preparation programs varies and, university faculty can only do so much in preparing a school leader to enter this role; principals need support upon graduating from their university programs as they begin their jobs (Daresh, 2004). Although concerns of the quality and content of university programs exist (Crow, 2006; Daresh, 2004; Metzger, 2003; Shoho & Barnett), even exemplary principal preparation programs are only able to provide entry-level skills, knowledge, and theory as a necessary foundation for the job. Expanding upon the initial training delivered by university preparation programs, localized on-the-job professional development provides novice principals with context related to the unique needs and culture of the school, district, and community.

Given the complexities and demands of the principalship, the need for novice principal on-the-job support and development is clear. The empirical research suggests that supporting on-the-job principals is critical, and mentoring has been advanced as an effective form of support
Mentoring is a standard practice and commonplace for success in the corporate and private sector (Daresh, 2004; Kram, 1985) and several notable mentoring studies exist in these fields (Allen & Eby, 2004; Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Fagenson-Eland, Marks, & Amendola, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Yet, few principal mentoring studies exist that focus on relational formation and mentoring structures, which contextualize factors that influence the mentoring experience and leadership practices for both the mentor and mentee. Additionally, few studies in educational leadership research examine the benefits and experiences for the mentor (Allen et al., 1997; Mertz, 2004). Thus, examining how principals utilize mentoring relationships as on-the-job professional development to support their entry into the profession is essential. The need exists to understand how principal mentoring dyads leverage this relationship as a means to support both the novice principal and mentor, and to understand the relational components that influence the outcomes of the relationship. To guide and support principals’ professional development and practice, central office administrators must understand how novice principals form and utilize professional mentor relationships to effectively meet the demands of their job, and to further understand the reciprocal nature of the relationship.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of this qualitative phenomenological study were (a) to examine the experiences of principal mentoring dyads; (b) to understand how relational structures influence the experiences, professional supports, and practices; and (c) to analyze and understand the overall outcomes for both participants. Ultimately, this study explored how supportive principal mentoring relationships served as a catalyst for on-the-job professional development. My
conceptual framework, noted later in this chapter, offers a promising lens with which to examine the nature of the relationships principals form with their professional mentors, but more essentially, to understand how the relational structures influence the reciprocity of capital exchanged between a novice principal and their mentor (Bourdieu, 1986). Using my conceptual framework, this study examined how the formation and outcomes of the mentoring relationship is influenced directly by structural components including construction of an informal versus formal dyad; establishment of trust; and participant identity, intent, investment. Finally, my research helped to understand how relational structures influenced the type of capital exchanged and the potential for reciprocal benefits for mentors.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following overarching research question: What elements of the mentor-mentee relationship support a novice principal’s ability to fulfill the expectations and professional responsibilities of their role? Four subquestions supplemented this question:

1. What approaches have novice principals and their mentors used to form and sustain trusting, supportive professional mentor relationships?

2. How has participant identity, investment, and intent affected the mentoring experience?

3. How has participants’ professional practice been affected by the resources or forms of capital (career oriented and psychosocial) exchanged and reciprocated within a principal mentor-mentee relationship?

4. How do mentoring participants negotiate challenges or disagreements that arise as a result of their relationship?

Significance of the Study

This study was noteworthy for multiple reasons. First, and most importantly, this study developed an understanding of the effectiveness of professional mentor relationships as a primary component of on-the-job development for novice school principals. Recent scholarship has noted principal turnover in Illinois as a growing phenomenon as well as the trend for younger
and less experienced principals entering the profession (DeAngelis & White, 2011; White & Agarwal, 2011); yet, their responsibilities continue to become more complex and demanding (Crow, 2006; Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Leithwood, 2005; Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Few scholars have engaged in empirically designed studies to specifically examine how principals are effectively mentored into their roles. Hall (2008) argued there is not a clear and consistent approach for the implementation of mentoring for educational leaders. This research study provides school principals, school district leadership teams, state policymakers, and stakeholders within university pre-service programs, new knowledge implicit to the benefits of a novice principal mentorship, including benefits to the mentor and mentee, something that is often missing in mentoring scholarship. Although potential benefits to principal mentors is noted in literature, these reports tend to be anecdotal (Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013; Playko, 1995). This study is significant because it highlights the potential for reciprocity of capital within the mentor-mentee relationship.

Additionally, this study applied my conceptual model as a means to examine novice principal relationships. This framework provides insight on how the formation and structure of a mentor relationship influences the reciprocity of resources exchanged and the quality of participants’ overall experience. The notion of a mentorship is not new to the field of education or even school leaders. Although formal principal mentoring studies do exist (Villani, 2006; Weingartner, 2009; Young, Sheets, & Knight, 2005), their core tenets are rarely grounded in a conceptual framework and do not incorporate findings from empirical research. Although relationships are often mentioned as the most important attribute of a formal or informal mentoring experience, principal mentoring research lacks an understanding of how relational formation and structural influences the participant experience and outcome. Finally, school
leader mentoring literature is unclear due to the varying definitions of the term mentoring (Daresh, 2004). Because formal principal mentoring programs are rarely funded (Lochmiller, 2014b) nor consistently implemented (Smith, 2009), understanding the supports necessary for a principal to persist in the profession is evolving. This study contributes to the scholarship necessary to inform stakeholders of the potential benefits associated with mentorship experiences for principals and serves as a primary component of their on-the-job professional development.

**Conceptual Framework**

To provide the greatest opportunity to understand this study’s central phenomenon, mentor relationships and experiences, conceptual components from the tenets of Social Capital Theory and professional mentoring literature were merged to create the *Principal Mentoring Framework*. My conceptual framework was constructed using consistent themes found throughout professional and educational mentoring in conjunction with social capital literature. Research suggests that mentoring relationships are influenced by building trust between participants, participants’ personal level of investment and intent within mentorship (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Daresh, 2004; Lin, 2001; Liou & Daly, 2014; Putnam, 2000), formal versus informal relationship (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006; Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Bush & Chew, 1999; Clayton, Sanzo, & Myran, 2013; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Henderson, 1985), and participant identity (Allen & Eby, 2004; Chandler, 1996; Ensher & Murphy; Henderson; Portillo, 2007; Ragins, 1997). Each of these factors influence the potential for the exchange of capital, reciprocity, and the quality of participant experiences. The conceptual framework establishes the lens through which my research will be collected, analyzed, and presented using the units of analysis and themes grounded in literature.
Overview of Research Methodology

This research study applied qualitative research methods through the use of interview techniques. I used a phenomenological strategy to examine the experiences of my participants: novice principals and their identified mentors. A phenomenological approach highlighted the voices, experiences, events, and perspectives of participants (Merriam, 2002; Saldaña, 2011); thus, this strategy was directly aligned with the purpose of this research. In order to understand my phenomenon to the greatest extent possible, participants were purposely selected (Merriam, 2002). Selection of participants was influenced by mentoring literature, which noted the importance of uniqueness of participant identity. Therefore, participant locality, gender, ethnicity, school level, and other factors comprising the mentorship dyad were considered to find
the most representative perspective of novice principals. The study’s participants were required
to have engaged in an active mentorship, functioning in their positions for a minimum of 6
months, and included novice principals (1 to 3 years) from any Illinois public elementary, middle
or high school. In this study, I explored the perceptions of participants’ (mentee and mentor)
experiences through in-depth, in-person, semi-structured interviews, which is the most utilized
qualitative data collection strategy (Saldaña, 2011). I relied on data elicited by mentorship dyads
through an investigation of participant perceptions of their relationship and how the relationship
influenced their professional practice. The data was gathered, analyzed, and presented by themes
through the lens of my conceptual framework.

Limitations

As with all research studies, limitations existed in the design and implementation of my
proposed study (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005). One potential limitation was the use of interviews as
my primary data collection method. Data collected from the participants were self-reported and
based on their personal perceptions, emotions, experiences, and memories. Although those
individual perceptions may be warranted, valued, and justified, the data presented consist of each
individual’s sole voice. Additionally, as with all personal interviews, participants must be willing
to share their experiences honestly and with integrity. I attempted to put all participants at ease;
however, there was potential for someone to be unwilling to share their entire perspective and to
be completely candid. This situation is possible as I interviewed principal mentoring dyads, of
which some dyads included a principal and their direct supervisor or other central office
administrator within his or her school district. Although the participants’ experiences and the
formal descriptions within this dissertation were confidential, two mentoring relationships were
found to be strained due to varying factors, therefore potentially causing an unwillingness for participants to share candidly and honestly.

In conjunction with the qualitative interviews, the source of the interviews and mentoring dyads was also a limitation of this proposed study. I attempted to locate mentoring pairs that represented the diverse nature of relationships and educational leaders in Illinois. Specifically, I intended to include principal dyads located in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Grounded in my conceptual framework, my hope was to find novice principal mentoring dyads that represented a range of ethnicities, gender compositions, and professional backgrounds. However, a diverse and representative participant sample was not found in terms of race and locality of school. Thus, a lack of participant diversity in mentoring dyads is a limitation of this study. Selection of participants was purposeful in nature; however, it was dependent on their awareness of the study and the willingness of both the protégé and the mentor to volunteer their time. Additionally, if a novice principal did not have a positive mentoring experience, there is a chance they opted not to volunteer for this study.

As with any qualitative study, there was potential for researcher bias in my data analysis due to my personal worldview and experiences (Creswell, 2009). I was committed to the highest ethical standards and practices to ensure my data collection, coding, analysis, and findings accurately represented the sources from which they were gathered. I address in greater detail the credibility, trustworthiness, reliability, and validity of my data analysis and findings in Chapter 3. Finally, this study cannot be generalized to other mentoring participants and sites, since the qualitative findings were unique to the perceptions and experiences of the mentoring dyads represented in my study. Although this study provided insights to the relationship structures that
influence the type of resources exchanged and overall participant experiences, they are unique to the sample in this study.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations assist the research in narrowing the study in size and scope (Creswell, 2009). The sample of targeted participants in this study included novice public school principals and their identified mentors, within the confines of Illinois. The novice principal, within the first 3 years of their tenure in her/his first principalship, was working in an Illinois public school and participating in formal or informal mentorship for at least 4 months. Finally, the primary avenue to solicit participants was utilizing the working groups and networking of superintendents and other district level administrators throughout Illinois.

**Definition of Terms**

**Capital.** Capital is considered an investment of resources with expected returns (Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998). In this study, capital will include psychosocial and career function supports that are provided and internalized as a result of the mentoring relationship (Kram, 1983). Capital and resources are used interchangeably through this study’s research design and findings.

**Formal mentorship.** “Formal mentoring relationships develop with organizational assistance or intervention usually in the form of voluntary assignment or matching of mentors and protégés” (Ragins & Cotton, 1999, p. 529) and “are managed and endorsed by the organization” (Bynum, 2015, p. 70). In this study, a formal mentorship is also called a formal dyad. A dyad a singularly composed relationship between a mentor and mentee.

**Informal mentorship.** “Informal mentoring relationships form by chance, without any rearranged schedule or agenda. They are less structured, spontaneous, self-directed and not recognized by the organization” (Bynum, 2015, p. 70). In this study, an informal mentorship is
also called an informal dyad. A dyad a singularly composed relationship between a mentor and mentee.

**Mentee.** A novice principal, in the first 3 years of his/her career, who is receiving mentoring support and guidance from an experienced professional. A mentee is the less experienced professional and will be used interchangeably with protégé throughout this study.

**Mentor.** A person dedicated to the developmental needs of another person by providing support, guidance, knowledge, and skills (Daresh, 2004). A mentor also may be identified as a coach, role model, counselor, or sponsor (Kram, 1985). A mentor in this study can be formally matched to a novice principal or informally identified by the protégé as their active and primary support.

**Mentoring.** A professional relationship in which a more experienced professional (Schechter, 2014) assists and supports a less experienced person to develop their skills and knowledge and enhance opportunities for professional and personal growth (Kram, 1985).

**Novice principal.** Any principal or school leader who is in the first 3 years of his or her initial principalship (Shoho & Barnett, 2010).

**Reciprocity.** Reciprocity is the notion of sharing capital and resources with an opportunity for exchange or return for each participant (Portes, 1998).

**Social capital.** Social capital is the ability to access resources from others within one’s relational network. Resources or capital can include information, influence, support, and competencies (Lin, 2001).

**Summary**

This chapter provided an introduction to my research study. A concise overview of the problem, purpose, and significance of this study were presented. Additionally, the chapter
included the research questions and conceptual framework used to guide the project, the research methodology, limitations, delimitations, and a definition of terms.

Following this chapter, Chapter 2 provides relevant research and literature imperative to the development and implementation of the study. There are multiple topics examined in Chapter 2: (a) an overview of principalship, (b) complexity and responsibilities of modern principal leadership, (c) professional mentoring literature, (d) literature in educational arenas, (e) principal mentoring, and (f) social capital and development of conceptual framework. The culmination of Chapter 2 is the development of my conceptual framework through conceptualizing mentoring scholarship with social capital theory.

In Chapter 3, this study’s processes and structure is presented through a discussion of my research design. This chapter includes the following components: research questions, description of the methodology, site and participant selection, data collection, data analysis procedures, and issues related reliability and validly.

Chapter 4 includes this study’s findings through my conceptual lens, Principal Mentoring Framework. The results from this study are presented by each research subquestion and then address the overarching research question. Chapter 4 highlights the results by organizing the data into multiple themes and subthemes.

In Chapter 5, an analysis and interpretation of this study’s findings by presenting the following sections: discussion, implications, and recommendations. The discussion is organized and presented through the units of my conceptual framework. Findings are connected to this study’s conceptual framework and prior research. Finally, the implications of this study’s results, and recommendations for policy, practice, and future research are addressed.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This review of literature focuses on the complexity of the principalship and the opportunity for the mentorship of novice principals as an approach to support their on-the-job development. First, a concise overview of the background, current complexities and responsibilities, and current expectations of principal school leadership are highlighted. Second, a review of professional mentoring scholarship is coupled with educational related mentoring in the following areas: (a) academia, (b) teaching, and (c) the principalship. Next, a conceptual framework that pulls from professional mentoring literature and social capital theory is presented as a lens to analyze supportive principal mentoring dyads. Finally, deficiencies within prior principal mentoring research are addressed in conjunction with this research project.

The Principalship

This section provides an overview of the principalship. A clear understanding of who becomes a school principal and the responsibilities associated with the role is warranted to justify the need for principal professional development. Specifically, I address the following issues: (a) why someone becomes principal, (b) the complexity of the role, (c) the pressures of principal and school accountability, (d) principal influence on student achievement, (e) an understanding of institutional changes, (f) modern school leadership frameworks, (g) balancing personal and professional life, and (h) principal attrition.

Why someone becomes a principal. Effective principals have a critical influence on the outcomes for both a school and its students; thus, understanding what type of person assumes the role of principal is essential to recruiting, developing, and sustaining effective principals. It is important to understand who becomes a principal and recognizing the trajectory of their career
path that ultimately resulted in their decision to lead a school (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; McGough, 2003). A study of 23 veteran public school principals’ personal narratives examined how principals reflected upon their roles as leaders and the connections they made throughout their lifetimes (McGough, 2003). Principals’ reflections of childhood and professional experiences noted multiple trends from their qualitative interview data. The study showed that the principals tended to follow four primary routes to the building leader role: (a) they directly came from a classroom or internship position; (b) they followed a traditional role of classroom teacher to assistant principal, and ultimately to principal; (c) they served in a teacher-leader position, most often as a department head, athletic director, or curriculum director; or (d) they left a leadership role in a non-educational setting or non-public school setting (McGough, 2003).

**Why someone becomes principal.** Principal career paths are also influenced by prior personal relationships. A qualitative study of 48 Delaware principals and assistant principals was conducted to examine administrators’ career decisions (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012). In several cases, administrators stated that they actively made a decision to apply for an open position; however, it was common for outside actors to either encourage the leader to apply or recommend them to the interview team. The Farley-Ripple et al. (2012) and McGough (2003) studies demonstrated that, in both cases, influential relationships were leading contributors to a person’s ultimate decision to become a principal. Evidence from these studies suggested that personal relationships that developed early in the principals’ lives influenced their decisions to enter the profession (McGough). Specifically, some principals noted that positive experiences in their formal childhood education led them to eventually help others and give back to a system that provided them opportunities, while other educators may strive to become principal in order to make a meaningful difference, to help a large number of people, to support other teachers,
ensure all students have an opportunity to learn, or to serve as the lead decision maker and ultimately find the best solution for kids (Villani, 2006). Regardless if their reason, it is important for principals to be self-aware of their prior experiences and understand that such experiences may have a direct link to their leadership practices (McGough). In order to fully conceptualize one’s motivations for the principalship, it is important to recognize that prior roles, recruitment, development, complexity of the role, unique organizational influences, professional relationships, and personal and family circumstances are all factors that may influence one’s career and why he or she chose to enter and exit the profession (Farley-Ripple et al.). Most importantly, Farley-Ripple et al. suggested researchers continue to assess the complexity of a principal’s role in order support their on-the-job development and effectiveness.

**Complexity of responsibilities.** The on-the-job development of principals, especially novice principals, is an opportunity to meet the challenges associated with the principalship. Research has highlighted the increasing complexity of a school leader’s role and noted that the challenges for new principals often began immediately. A qualitative case study of two novice principals noted the immediate need for newly hired principals to develop effective relationships with all stakeholders, understand their personal leadership strengths, routinize management related tasks, and know where to find support or resources (Armstrong, 2000). Immediately within the first few days on the job, a school leader may be confronted with unexpected staff resignations, incomplete construction projects, technology failures, inadequate student supplies, overcrowded classrooms, parent demands relative to student need, or any number of other scenarios (Villani, 2006). Although prior administrative experience is valuable, there are notable differences between the principalship and the other administrative roles. For example, a multi-year qualitative study of 62 novice principals found they noted key differences between the role
of a principal and the responsibilities of an assistant principal (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Assistant principals often have specialized focus areas such as curriculum and instruction, building operations, or student discipline, while a principal is general oversight of all matters pertaining to the school (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Several principals in the Shoho and Barnett (2010) study had no idea “how big the principal’s sphere is” (p. 575) prior to entering their positions. The principalship requires a multifaceted skillset, a strong knowledge base, and includes numerous responsibilities. The principalship has shifted away from a focus on management to pedagogical and content expertise, understanding student needs, interpreting and using data, and working directly with teachers to improve their classroom practices (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Of all the pressures placed on this principal, none are more influential than expectations for student achievement.

**Era of accountability.** A mounting challenge that school principals continuously face is an emphasis on meeting or exceeding accountability measures, particularly with regard to expectations or requirements driven by state and federal legislation (Villani, 2006). Specifically, scholarship has noted an increase in accountability measures related to student achievement and overall school performance, resulting in additional pressures on the principalship (Crow, 2006; Duncan, Range, & Scherz, 2011; Levine, 2005). Over the past 15 years, the demands of the No Child Left Behind Act, a federal law that was passed in 2001, were a central cause for the added pressure on schools to raise student achievement (Crow, 2006; Weingartner, 2009). In 2009, Race to the Top (RttT) offered federal grants to states that included student performance measures using test scores in their principal and teacher evaluations systems (Carbaugh, Marzano, & Toth, 2015, p. 1), and the state of Illinois was awarded RttT funding in 2011. The
expectations for the modern school leader are unprecedented, as noted by DuFour and Marzano (2011):

Contemporary American educators confront the most daunting challenge in the history of public schooling in the United States: they are called upon to raise academic standards to the highest level in the history with common core standards . . . [and] . . . are to bring every student to these dramatically higher standards of achievement. (p. 5)

Continued federal oversight and legislation, which provides “undiminished governmental pressure for standards and accountability will most likely drive school reform in the second decade of the twenty-first century” (Leone et al., 2009, p. 88). With this in mind, it is the responsibility of a school leader remain current on all federal and state legislation and the implications for school practices, but more importantly, the principal must ensure that all stakeholders understand relevant polices and mandates (Leone et al., 2009). It is a principal’s responsibility to ensure their school is compliant and proactive, keeping apprised and ahead of the evolving requirements relative to policy, assessment, and other accountability areas (Leone et al.).

Increased principal accountability and pressure as a result of legislation demands an increase in student achievement, as measured through standardized testing (Crow, 2006). A recent survey of Illinois public school principals found over 50% of school leaders reported that student achievement accountability pressures added stress to their role (White & Agarwal, 2011). Furthermore, the recent passage of Illinois’ Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA), which requires schools to utilize student growth data in their teacher and principal evaluation systems, further demonstrates a growing trend to link student learning to the individual success of a teacher, principal, and school (White & Agarwal, 2011). Principals often deal with mounting criticism from the media, families, and politicians over the “failing” public school system (Crow, 2006). Mandatory state tests and unsatisfactory student achievement results have led some
districts to have principals “reassigned or fired where school scores have not improved, regardless of the population challenges or needs of the students” (Villani, 2006, p. 8). The increased attention on student achievement scores, particularly for underrepresented students, is not going away given the current educational environment (Leone et al., 2009). However, the passage of Every Student Succeeds Act through the reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act does provide schools and states some flexibility with accountability measures (Klein, 2015). Although each state is still required to test students and analyze subgroups’ achievement by students’ race, socio-economic status, and disability, states and local districts have the autonomy to decide their accountability measures and determine how to support struggling schools with federal oversight (Klein, 2015).

**Effect on student achievement.** Although concerns over increasing accountability pressures relative to student achievement exist, principals influence student achievement within their schools, albeit indirectly. Effective principal leadership “is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 3). A meta-analysis of 69 research studies also concurred that effective school leadership is second only to teacher quality in terms of student learning (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Outstanding leadership and its positive influence on schools is also associated with schools with varying student and community needs. The Leithwood et al. (2004) report showed that effective principals who served in schools with difficult circumstances were able to have the greatest effect on student learning. There is no documented evidence of an ineffective leader turning around a struggling school or improving student learning (Leithwood et al.). The prior leadership experiences of principals can also influence student achievement: A comprehensive study of Illinois principals
found building leaders who previously served as assistant principals and earned advanced degrees at research-based institutions which offered doctoral degrees, also were more likely to lead schools associated with higher rates of student achievement (White & Agarwal, 2011).

**Institutional and organizational changes over time.** The role of a school principal has evolved, in part, due to changes in the students they serve and also the organizational structure of school systems (Levine, 2005). Crow (2006) argued the dramatic changes from a pre- to post-industrial society have radically changed the expectations for student learning and their preparation for college and careers. Specifically, principals are responsible for ensured that students are provided with the skillsets necessary to thrive in a post industrialized 21st century. According to Crow, post-industrial societies have shaped schools to value innovation, problem-solving, customization, and individuality, and are predicated on building strong relationships. Effective organizations have shifted away from individual leaders who lead from the top of an organizational chart to leaders who value collaborative and distributed decision-making processes (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

These postindustrial values also intersect with changing student needs and demographics. The U.S. student population has seen dramatic demographic changes between 1995 and 2013. In 1995, 35% of students enrolled in American public schools identified as an ethnic minority, which included Hispanic, African American, Asian American, Native American, or Pacific Islander students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). By 2013, students of color in American public schools comprised half of the overall student enrollments (U.S Department of Education, 2014). Building knowledge and capital within a diverse school setting requires a commitment from a school leader to employ effective strategies that address issues of a multi-cultural experience for all students (Leone et al., 2009). In order to address multiculturalism, school staff
will need training and development that offers culturally relative resources and language that teachers can use in classrooms (Leone et al., 2009). An emphasis on diversity, while likely imperfect, offers the hope of a rich and individualized student experience. A principal’s ability to foster a highly relational and individual student experiences has become more challenging as a result of the unique mobility, language, cultural, and socioeconomic needs of the student population (Crow, 2006). Given the growing variety of student needs, principals must provide the resources and training necessary for their staff to support all students, but particularly students of color and those living in poverty (Leone et al., 2009). Crow (2006) expands the meaning of student diversity to include socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, disabilities, immigrants, healthcare and other health related concerns, mobility, and the technology divide as factors that influence students’ success in schools.

The digital divide, in particular, is of growing concern in schools. For example, Crow (2006) and Leone et al. (2009) noted that as technology changes rapidly, not all student populations have equitable access to new technology; thus, their lack of digital literacy becomes another disadvantage when they enter the school system. In light of the mounting challenges and changing student needs, effective school principals must remain student-centered by prioritizing their needs, listening to their opinions, and believing in their potential to achieve anything (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006). This mentality will guide a principal’s ability to address changing and individualized student needs while navigating the intense and increasing complexities of the role.

Modern leadership attributes. The term leadership and its association with the principalship is critical to recognizing the importance of principal leadership. A comprehensive case study through the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP) studied 14
principals to identify leadership attributes necessary to be an effective leader and influence student learning (Gurr et al., 2006). Findings noted that the following attributes: (a) understanding the values, norms, and traditions of the local community, school, and staff; (b) actively exhibiting personality traits such as empathy, honesty, and caring about others; (c) ability to communicate with all stakeholders; (d) valuing decision making and a vision that empowered others; (e) developing a school climate with built upon trust and support; and (f) viewing leadership through the lens of social justice (Gurr et al., 2006). Ultimately, effective leadership is dependent upon the principal’s ability to utilize the most appropriate strategy given the context of the situation (Gurr et al., 2006).

Additional conceptual frameworks attribute specific practices of a principal to highly effective leadership. Commonly associated attributes or practices of effective principals include focusing on people and making positive relationships their number one priority, engaging in self-reflection and seeking to improve their weaknesses, consistently having a positive attitude, hiring the best people and improving or removing ineffective staff, keeping student learning the focus, shifting away from standardized tests, knowing when to focus on behaviors or beliefs, and anticipating teacher, student, and community reactions (Whitaker, 2012). It is also imperative to recognize principals must learn effective practices and then apply them to their unique local context (Leithwood et al., 2004). Leithwood and colleagues conceptualized principal leadership in three overarching themes: setting directions, development people, and redesigning the organization. They also argued there are no universal leadership styles. The principal as an individual, their prior life experiences, and the uniqueness of the context of their current role dictate their needs, which is why “we need to be developing leaders with large repertoires of practices and the capacity to choose from that repertoire as needed, not leaders trained in the
delivery of one ‘ideal’ set of practices” (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 8). The next section addresses instructional leadership and is one of the most commonly discussed aspects of the principalship.

**Leadership for learning.** The importance and expectation of a principal exhibiting effective instructional leadership oversight is cited throughout scholarship (Brown & White, 2010; Carbaugh et al., 2015; Duncan et al., 2011; Gettys et al., 2010; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; Weingartner, 2009). Augustine-Shaw (2015) argued a principal’s largest sphere of influence toward positively affecting student achievement is his or her ability to employ effective instructional learning practice. Leithwood et al. (2004) defined instructional leadership as “a focus on improvement of classroom practices of teachers as the direction for the school” (p. 4). In other words, instructional leadership is the principal’s ability to influence classroom teaching and learning practices (Augustine-Shaw; Gurr et al., 2006).

More recently, Knapp and colleagues (2003) developed a framework, Leadership for Learning, to describe how school leaders promote improved learning within their organizations. Leadership for learning expands beyond merely instructional leadership, which traditionally has focused on the act of teaching; in contrast, the leadership for learning framework addresses student learning, with an emphasis on effective teaching and learning practices that include, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Leading for learning incorporates the following areas of action: (a) establishing a focus on learning, (b) building professional communities that value learning, (c) engaging external environments that matter for learning, (d) acting strategically and sharing leadership, and (e) creating coherence. This framework does not provide a step-by-step process, instead it suggests each area influences the other simultaneously as “the five areas of action are likely to have a mutually reinforcing effect on each other” (Knapp et al., p. 18).
Further research examining leadership for learning in practice throughout Atlanta Public Schools and New York City schools yielded results specific to how a principal improves the learning environment (Knapp, Copland, Honig, Plecki, & Portin, 2010). Specific themes emerged as essential to the conditions necessary for school-wide instructional improvements: (a) school goals focus on quality and equity of instruction; (b) collaborative work at all levels of the organization dedicated to teaching and learning; (c) expand the meaning of instructional leader to include a focus on activities that include inquiry and evidence while establishing accountability systems for all staff; and (d) provide time for building leaders to meet, problem-solve, and form effective relationships (Knapp et al., 2010). Although leadership for learning is a prominent framework for principal leadership, challenges do exist.

A principal’s ability to serve as a catalyst with learning strategies in the classroom is one of the biggest challenges a principal faces (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Augustine-Shaw (2015) highlighted the difficulty of finding the time and dedication necessary to effectively provide classroom teaching and learning supports to teachers. Though important, the value of supervisory feedback, including through the formal evaluation process, is only one area within the scope of leadership for learning (Gurr et al., 2006). According to Gurr et al.’s (2006) findings, leadership aspects such as curriculum and assessment design, instructional pedagogy, professional development through internal and other external professional organizations all influence the instruction of classroom teachers. Within the realm of instructional leadership, Shoho and Barnett’s (2010) study found that secondary principals felt less prepared to lead given the variety of disciplinary offerings at the high school level. Shoho and Barnett’s research included a participant sample that was disproportionately female and at the elementary level. How this unique sample influenced the findings is unknown. Additionally, this study did not utilize a
theoretical framework in its research design nor implement follow-up interviews with participants to further investigate or valid themes. Both issues are recommendations critical to effective research design and implement in this research proposal.

Ultimately, a principal must be “competent and act as a bridge of knowledge to provide teachers with professional learning opportunities in educational trends and technology, changes in the law, and changes in policy” (Leone et al., 2009, p. 90). Leone et al. (2009) expanded the role of instructional leader to include all factors that affect instruction, including legislation and policy. Through the literature is evident that the role of instructional leader implies that a principal is the central teacher of the school building and ultimately has the immense responsibility of creating a learning environment dedicated to increasing the professional capital of the staff (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

Leadership and learning has also developed in conjunction with other leadership philosophies. Transformational leadership is model in which school leaders lead by example and utilize collaboration and inspiration to motivate people within the organization (Burns, 2003). A national mix-methods study of 24 elementary, middle, and high schools examined the role of instructional and transformational leadership practices as a catalyst for school improvement (Marks & Printy, 2003). The study coupled instructional leadership (instructional and supervision) with transformational leadership (use of ideas, influence, collaboration, consideration of individuals to still school-wide change) to develop integrated leadership. Findings from this study articulated the importance of a principal’s ability to distribute and share leadership practices with teachers. Overall, “teachers have both the desire and expertise to lead . . . and the research noted examples of teacher leadership have a direct influence on school performance” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 393).
Additionally, contemporary principals cannot lead instructionally or make improvements within their curriculum without addressing the role and use of technology (Leone et al., 2009). Given the role of technology in the classroom, school leaders have an enormous task of developing teachers’ technological literacy and preparing classrooms for the trend of ubiquitous learning opportunities. Finally, principals noted concerns in understanding special education policy and managing a special education program (Shoho & Barnett, 2010).

**Management.** Responsibilities as learning leader are often a visible aspect of the role of a school leader, but a complexity of the principalship that tends to be overlooked is the management of personnel and school operations. Shoho and Barnett (2010) found that principals were often unaware of the process or had difficulties developing a budget. Specifically, school leaders struggled to allocate resources and finances in line with local, state, and federal policy. Shoho and Barnett’s findings correlate with other research that noted challenges specific to school personnel. The research of Farley-Ripple and colleagues (2012) yielded a confirmation from principals that working with adults is challenging, and that challenge was often a reason a leader elected to remain in the position, find alternative employment, or leave the profession entirely. The findings suggested principals’ relationships with their teachers, central office staff, and board members had a larger influence on their career choices than stress or the overall workload.

**Balancing stress, emotion, and time demands.** In addition to the complexities presented by learning leadership and organizational management, the stress and workload of the principalship is well documented throughout the literature. A mixed-methods study of 40 superintendents and college deans found a direct connection between high levels of stress, inability to cope, and challenging relationships and administrator turnover (Metzger, 2003). This
study was limited in scope in that it only included urban and suburban schools, it did not include rural or small schools in its participant sample. Further research is necessary to understand if these findings apply to administrators in all school settings.

Novice principals, especially those with young children, reported struggling to maintain a work-life balance (Farley-Ripple et al., 2012; Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Shoho and Barnett (2010) noted, “it was readily apparent that being single and having no kids made it easier for new principals to fully engage in their job without any outside concerns for neglecting other commitments” (p. 578). Thus, it is naïve to argue or conclude that the role of principal is only challenging for someone who has children. Additional factors that contributed to significant stress for school leaders included long work commutes and spending time toward completing an advanced degree (Shoho & Barnett). Additionally, Farley and colleagues’ (2012) research found ill family members and/or spouses weighed heavily on a principal’s ability to fulfill the multitude of responsibilities for which they are accountable. In fact, Farley et al. noted it was a combination of the aforementioned factors that drove principals into other careers or into different education positions. Emotionally charged and invisible stresses are exhibited through a principal working in isolation, fears of incompetency, and personally dealing with moral and ethical issues (Villani, 2006). On-the-job development provides opportunities for principals to seek advice relative to the law and allow one to reflect upon their beliefs and the situation presented (Villani, 2006). Undoubtedly, the emotional and physical stress of the principalship is cause for concern, especially if schools are in need of highly effective principals who persist and continue to grow their professional capital.

**Turnover.** The multitude of challenges facing principals can lead to turnover (Gates et al., 2006). A longitudinal study focusing on principal mobility in Illinois and North Carolina
from 1987-1998 to 2000-2001 found that 20% of novice principals leave the position within their first 6 years on the job (Gates et al., 2006). Additionally, principals in schools where the majority of the student body is made up of students of color were more likely to leave the school. However, principals who identified as the same race as the majority of the student body were more often to stay in their position (Gates et al., 2006). A North Carolina study analyzed 12 years of public data to examine the effect of principal turnover on student achievement and consistently found a decrease in student achievement scores for at least 2 years following a principal’s departure (Miller, 2013). Principal turnover can be associated with varying factors, including the school leader’s compensation and benefits (Villani, 2006), school culture, central office support, and ability to enact organizational change (White et al., 2011).

**Leadership preparation program quality.** Principal turnover and/or principals feeling ill-prepared for their role has often caused scrutiny of university-based leadership preparation programs (Hale & Moorman, 2003). As the complexity of the principalship as morphed into a central focus on learning leadership and accountability pressures relative to student achievement scores, Hale and Moorman (2003) argued some preparation programs have not necessarily changed their training practices. The principals studied noted inconsistencies between the content taught by some university preparation programs and its overall relevance to the role of school leader (Duncan et al., 2011; Levine, 2005). A qualitative study of six Missouri principals participating in district and state mentoring programs found novice principals reported that their university coursework often focused on managerial related tasks, rather than instructional development strategies which provide greater opportunities for student achievement (Gettys, Martin, & Bigby, 2010).
In reality, even highly effective principal preparation programs can only provide aspiring leaders with entry-level knowledge and skills and are unable to prepare them for every challenge they may experience. A case study exploring the experiences of 18 educational practitioners as they progressed through a principal preparation program noted that “students who enroll without clearly defined personal reasons and later discover that the program fails to provide meaningful professional application for them, learner disengagement and frustration can occur” (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003, p. 497). Many graduate students who acquire their principal license often do not enter into an administrative position until several years later, if at all (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Educators in preparation programs often fail to recognize their need for support as they move through future phases of their career (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Principal development “should be an on-going process embedded throughout the careers of educational leaders” (Duncan et al., 2011, p. 16). In addition, a quantitative study of 106 Wyoming principals asserted professional support for principals at the local, district, or state levels, school districts should seek to leverage partnerships with universities to further the training of principals (Duncan et al., 2011). This study was unique in that most participants lead small, rural schools throughout Wyoming to examine how university preparation programs could further prepare school leaders for the challenges they face by partnering current school leaders. An opportunity to continue a principal’s on-the-job professional growth is the influence of a mentor.

**The need for mentors.** A description of the need and practicality for principal mentoring and induction is found throughout scholarship, as a mechanism to support novice principals as they learn to negotiate through the demands and responsibilities of this position. A mixed-methods mentoring study of eight Illinois principals found protégés perceived the importance of instilling confidence to deal with the challenge of their responsibilities as invaluable in their
professional experience (Swift, 2004). Although the growing pressures of principal and leader
turnover have stimulated a need for principal mentoring, relatively little research exits (Brown,
2005). School districts need additional research to establish what aspects of principal mentoring
practices are effective in supporting novice principals in the context of their local organization.

**Professional Mentoring**

Research pertaining to mentoring is often limited to corporate or business related fields
(Daresh, 2004). Yet, findings from these fields help to develop a trend in consistent patterns of
mentoring scholarship. This section presents relevant research pertaining to professional
mentoring and the dynamics that affect the relationship between mentor and protégé.
Specifically, the relevant literature pertaining to professional mentoring provides an overview of
(a) Kram’s (1985) conceptual model of mentoring, (b) the influence of participant identity on
outcomes, (c) the influence of formal and informal programs, and (d) the possibility for positive
and negative participant outcomes.

**Kram’s conceptual model.** Scholarship dedicated to mentoring as a form of professional
development, training, and career advancement outside of education, especially in the corporate
or private sector, is abundant. The most widely cited and relevant framework on professional
mentoring was developed by Kram (1985), through her in-depth study of 18 junior and senior
corporate relationship pairs. Although mentoring literature within the private sector is prevalent,
some inconsistencies existed, and no universal definition permeates mentoring scholarship
(Kram). In fact, Kram noted the use of the word *mentor* was detrimental to the study; instead, she
utilized *development relationship* in place of *mentor* throughout the study. Kram’s significant
contribution to the literature is the development of two distinct mentoring support functions:
career and psychosocial. According to Kram, “career functions are those aspects of the
relationship that enhance career advancement. Psychosocial functions are those aspects of the relationship that enhance sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role” (p. 23). Components of career functions include sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments while psychosocial functions include role modeling acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship. Allen et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of mentoring literature and found Kram’s behaviors of psychosocial mentoring, such as friendship, confirmation, acceptance, and counseling, were linked to protégés’ higher levels of mentor satisfaction as compared to career mentoring. However, the analysis also noted that career-oriented and psychosocial mentoring equally influenced job and career satisfaction, consistent with results reported by Ensher and Murphy (1997). The Ensher and Murphy study found both components of Kram’s conceptual model were integral to a successful mentorship. Empirical findings of career and psychosocial support are prevalent within professional mentoring literature and will be discussed throughout this paper.

Kram’s (1985) mentoring framework was expanded by replacing the traditional single dyadic relationship with the notion of a multiple dyadic relationship (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Known as the developmental network perspective and derived from social network and developmental network theories, Higgins and Kram (2001) suggested multiple relationships can influence a protégé’s professional development. The conceptual model is grounded in the strength of an informal diverse network of relationships developed through associations in the community, school, or organizational setting. The developmental network perspective encouraged protégés to identity multiple people who influenced their professional growth and development, including relationships with professionals outside of the organization. This
mentoring model also focused on reciprocal learning within the relationship, rather than the learning of only the novice.

Kram’s (1983) work also yielded developmental phases of a mentoring relationship. Unique phases within the relationship include the following: initiation (six months to a year as the relationship begins), cultivation (2-5 years and is the time most career and psychosocial functions are exchanged), separation (6 months to 2 years after a significant change in the relationship), and redefinition (relationship ends or becomes peer-like). The mentoring phases and functions established by Kram are essential findings within the literature and will influence the development of my conceptual framework and future research methods.

Relational components. The relational aspect between a protégé and mentor is fundamental to the mentorship. Literature in this section establishes how professional mentoring experiences are influenced by the identity of participants, formal or informal structures in place, and overall outcomes of their mentorships.

Participant identity influences the relationship. The uniqueness of the mentor-protégé relationship and how the identity of each actor influences the development of the relationship are prominent throughout mentoring literature. A quantitative study involving the perceptions of 249 mentors from accounting-related occupations examined how mentor and protégé characteristics and gender influence the relationship (Allen & Eby, 2004). This study is unique within the literature in that it focused specifically on mentor perspectives, rather than those of the protégés (Allen & Eby, 2004). Findings suggested male mentors offered more career-oriented mentoring to protégés compared to female mentors, who primarily focused on psychosocial mentoring functions (Allen & Eby, 2004). Mentors, both male and female, also tended to provide more psychosocial mentoring to female protégés as compared to male protégés. Ensher and Murphy’s
(1997) research is contradictory to Allen and Eby’s (2004) findings in that protégés identified no differences in the quantity of psychosocial mentoring relative to the gender of the mentor.

The dyadic composition of the relationship is also highlighted throughout the research. Same-gendered mentoring pairs did not foster higher levels of psychosocial mentoring as compared to cross-gendered pairs, contrary to Ragins’ (1997) synthesis of mentoring research and the dynamics of cross-gendered dyads (Allen & Eby, 2004; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). However, females in same-gendered relationships were more likely to engage in social behavior after work hours (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The Ragins and Cotton (1999) study, which examined the influence of gender on over 500 participants in formal and informal mentorships, also established male protégés perceived less acceptance and satisfaction with their mentoring relationship if they had a female mentor as compared to other dyadic pairs. Same-gendered relationships did equate to more challenging assignments (career functions) for the protégé as compared to cross-gendered relationships (Ragins & Cotton). Additional research found neither male nor female mentors anticipated staying in contact with their protégé, with the exception of male mentors with same race protégés (Ensher & Murphy, 1997). Ensher and Murphy (1997) noted same-race mentorship pairs contributed to higher levels of career-oriented mentoring, but not psychosocial support. In fact, they found that cross-racial mentorship pairs may have little influence on the outcomes of the mentorship if the participants perceive themselves as similar in terms of personality and beliefs.

Mentors’ gender did not greatly influence their decision to support their colleagues, although females anticipated disadvantages. A quantitative study of 510 participants examined whether males and females had similar desires to become mentors within research and development organizations (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). Findings indicated that females were
equally interested as males in becoming mentors; however, females perceived more drawbacks, including time constraints, heightened visibility within the organization (feeling monitored), risk of failure of mentee, and lack of confidence that they were qualified to mentor other colleagues.

Relational dynamics such as diversity and power also contribute to the development of the mentoring relationship. A comprehensive analysis of mentoring literature asserted that mentors’ personal perceptions of their identity influence their ability to become a mentor (Ragins, 1997). A diverse mentoring relationship, which included dyads with members of a different class, disability, race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, was found to dwell on societal stereotypes, underestimate their power and competence, and struggle to bring resources from outside the organization (Ragins, 1997). With minority group power more often scrutinized, minority group members may seek additional professional credentials, join group coalitions, and seek exceptional performance to validate their expertise (Ragins, 1997).

Differences in variables, such as having mentors who were either inside or outside of the organization, were established in literature. Internal mentors offer greater opportunities to provide organizational resources, and due to locality, provide more frequent encounters with mentees (Ragins, 1997). External mentors, on the other hand, might avoid internal politics, offer interorganizational resources, and have greater long-term career advice. Ultimately, Ragins (1997) argued that diverse mentoring relationships have both costs and benefits, and they are neither worse nor better than homogenous dyads.

**Formal and informal aspects of mentoring.** Professional mentoring scholarship has addressed mentorships developed through a formalized process or program versus non-traditional or organic models. Members of an organization are more likely to accept mentoring if the concept is promoted and supported through a ground-up informal initiative, rather than a top-
down formal program (Henderson, 1985). Research has cited numerous benefits of informal mentoring relationships as opposed to formally established mentorships (Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Specifically, informal relationships lead to greater satisfaction among participants and typically provide higher quantities of psychosocial support such as friendship, social support, and acceptance. Informal mentoring is positively associated with increases in career-oriented mentoring (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Formally assigned mentors and protégés have been found to communicate less frequently than participants in informal mentorships (Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997). However, research by Allen and Eby (2004) contradicted these findings and found no difference in mentors’ perception of their experiences in formal or informal relationships. The influence of ineffective mentor training in formal programs was found to have little effect on protégé’s perceived support; however, high quality mentor preparation was linked to greater levels of career and psychosocial functional support (Allen et al., 2006). A study that examined the mentoring experiences of 148 management students also found that when either the mentor or protégé intended to continue the relationship past the program, higher levels of support were reported (Murphy, 2011). The research of two formal mentoring programs found short-term benefits and focused primarily on professional advice, coaching, and career planning (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). As some formal mentoring research noted, protégés perceived their mentors to be more disinterested, self-centered, and distant relative to informal relationships with mentors (Eby, Butts, Lockwood, & Simon, 2004).

The intent and investment of participants also has been found to influence the development and intensity of the mentor-protégé relationship. Ragins and Cotton (1999) asserted mentors’ participation in a formal program might be required or an obligation due to
organizational initiatives or personal need. Other mentors participated as a means to give back to the profession and felt empathy for their new colleague (Allen et al., 1997). Research indicates that people are more willing to mentor if they previously had participated in a mentorship program as a protégé (Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). Future mentors may underestimate the benefits of a mentorship while overestimating the costs involved such as time, especially if they had previously not participated in a mentoring program (Ragins & Scandura, 1999). Yet, the Allen et al. (2006) study found the strength of the mentorship was not affected by whether the mentor volunteered to participate, was the protégé’s supervisor, or the geographical location of the mentor. Mentor-protégé mentorships within the same corporate department did, however, have stronger relationships than relationships in mixed corporate departments. Finally, supervisors tended to offer more career mentoring support as opposed to psychosocial support (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Opportunities for positive outcomes in formal mentorship dyads have been noted. Ensher and Murphy (1997) found that perceived similarities between the mentor and protégé, such as shared values and perspectives, lead to greater satisfaction and frequency in contact within formal mentorship pairs. Additionally, when given an opportunity to be involved in the mentor-protégé match process, higher levels of motivation and investment were noted (Allen et al., 2006; Eby et al., 2000). Mentors preferred mentees who they perceived had desirable characteristics and potential to succeed (Allen et al., 1997). When stark differences in values and beliefs between the mentor and protégé existed, negative experiences occurred, particularly for the protégé (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000).

**Benefits of mentoring experiences.** Professional mentoring and the benefits associated with developmental relationships are documented throughout the literature. A synthesis of
mentoring research noted protégés who were mentored were more likely to receive promotions, have higher compensation, were more committed to remain at their current organization, and gained access to integral organizational knowledge (Ragins, 1997). Although most of the research has highlighted the benefits to protégés, several studies have documented mutual benefits that accrue to mentors (Allen et al., 1997; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Kram, 1983; Ragins). Allen et al. (1997) found mentors reported learning as much as their protégés, particularly in the areas of technology and other organizational services. Mentors had an opportunity to further understand the obstacles their protégés faced within the organization and also developed a fulfilling and gratifying relationship (Eby & Lockwood, 2005).

**Pitfalls of mentoring experiences.** Negative participant experiences are not reported within the mentoring scholarship. A mismatch of the mentor-protégé pairing in a formal mentorship has been noted as potentially negatively influencing the relationship (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). Also, some mentors dealt with feelings of inadequacy and disappointment if their relationship was not strong (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). Allen and colleagues (1997) researched mentoring from the perspective of the mentor and found their most frequent concern was the time commitment, involved as it took vital time away from their professional responsibilities. Protégés were also identified this concern, expressing frustration with the lack of time their mentor spent with them (Eby et al., 2000). Protégés identified other negative behaviors such as sabotage, self-absorption, and deception on the part of their mentors, which influenced their relational experience (Eby et al., 2000).

**Mentoring in Academia**

It is important to review how mentoring is utilized in other educational fields to further conceptualize its broader application in professional development practices. This section will
discuss the use of mentoring in higher education institutions, with a focus on how critical features could apply to K-12 school leadership mentoring and how they assist in the development of emergent themes for this study’s conceptual framework. Specifically, this section will address the benefits of a mentorship for new university faculty and establish how the identity (gender and race) of a mentor or protégé influence the outcomes of their mentoring experience.

**Background of mentoring in academia.** Mentorship arrangements in higher education are expected to expand in the coming years for their potential to support non-tenured faculty and graduate students (Mullen, 2009). In terms of doctoral candidates, mentorships are an investment in students to curtail challenges and program attrition, which often is higher for female and minority candidates (Mullen, 2009). Additionally, mentor-like supports for students often already exist by faculty members; however, Mullen posited that the expectations are not explicit, are rarely incentivized, and often are taken for granted by university administration. Although structures within the university can vary, graduate student productivity and satisfaction are found to increase through practical and psychosocial support by the faculty advisor (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001).

Support for non-tenured faculty who are new to campus is fundamental to their integration and can be mediated by a mentorship with a senior faculty member (Fleming, Goldman, Correll, & Taylor, 2016). A qualitative case study of 34 pre-tenured professors concluded although relationships can naturally form between new and senior faculty members, formal programs should be considered. Administrators encouraged behaviors for tenured faculty that included frequent check-ins, meetings, and establishing an inclusive relationship with new faculty (Fleming et al., 2016). The Fleming et al. (2016) study found proximity between new and senior faculty matters in terms of facilitating frequency of interactions and support.
A quantitative study by Xu and Payne (2013) included 472 university faculty members who reported having a mentor. The study found that mentor satisfaction was a predictor of proteges’ attitudes toward their jobs, commitment, and intention to leave. Although frequency of interactions between the mentor and mentee influenced the mentees’ satisfaction with their mentor, the quality of mentoring was a greater predictor of job satisfaction. Within the professoriate frequency of support is linked to protégé helpfulness, productivity, long-term career success (Chandler, 1996).

**Differences in gender.** The higher education mentoring literature also has addressed issues related to gender. A synthesis of professoriate literature noted that understanding of mentoring practices is consistently examined through the lens of male faculty members and there is a “deficient or inferior” (Chandler, 1996, p. 79) narrative for women. Women within the professoriate may lack access to high quality mentors and also may encounter sexist stereotyping (Chandler, 1996). Thomas, Bystydzienski, and Desai (2015) studied how peer mentoring circles supported women identified as Science-Technology-Engineering-Math (STEM) faculty primarily through psychosocial functions, finding that participants identified and problem-solved with other women in a social community with which they would have otherwise not had access.

Other research has examined the mentorship experiences (as a mentor in their current role and protégé as a doctoral student) of 10 African American female administrators of graduate social work programs (Simon, Roff, & Perry, 2008). Unexpectedly, Simon and colleagues found male protégés under the mentorship of the female administrators received greater levels of career and psychosocial support compared to female protégés. However, administrative participants who developed female-female dyads received greater levels of psychosocial support while in their doctoral program, as compared to cross-gendered dyads who received higher levels of
career-oriented support. Research also has found higher levels of psychosocial support were reported when a woman was either the mentee or protégé (Chandler, 1996; Portillo, 2007; Tenenbaum et al., 2001). Psychosocial support was perceived to nurture, reassure, and encourage the protégé (Portillo, 2007). An additional finding was the lack of support the participants received during their doctoral studies in balancing the responsibilities of career and family (Simon et al., 2008).

**Differences in race.** Researchers also have examined the influence of one’s race on mentoring relationship quality. Simon et al. (2008) found cross-racial dyads were not found to significantly influence the relationship. This study asserted White mentors “had complementary styles for addressing racial issues” (Simon et al., p. 19). However, a longitudinal mixed-methods study analyzing minority and female doctoral candidates through Kram’s (1983) framework noted a minority-female (protégé) and White-male (mentor) dyad resulted in mostly career mentoring support and lacked strong personal connections (Portillo, 2007). Also, evidence existed that female mentors, especially of color, “are pressured to provide the counseling and advising support of their student counterparts, particularly on campuses that lack diversity” (Chandler, 1996, p. 87). Chandler (1996) noted that “minority faculty are torn between supporting and investing in minority students and the demands of a competitive academic community” (p. 88). This overreliance and burden on minority faculty is concerning considering the evidence that protégés of color perceived an increased need for psychosocial support such as acceptance, confidence, and counseling (Portillo, 2007). Portillo (2007) concluded that confidence building and support are crucial for protégés of color. A qualitative study of newly hired African American faculty at two urban Black colleges asserted senior faculty greatly helped in their socialization to campus in a formal and informal capacity; however, aspects such
as advising and registration, university and departmental policy and culture, along with learning about key stakeholders were absent in their experience (Johnson, 2001). Protégés appreciated support in skill development (writing and publishing) and valued a mentor who focused on university socialization, increased their confidence, and supported their ability to accept and interpret criticism (Portillo).

**Mentoring in K-12 Systems**

In addition to academic mentoring, a review of mentoring experiences in school systems is also warranted. This section discusses the use of mentoring in the field of teaching, with a focus on how critical attributes could apply to K-12 school leadership mentoring. Throughout this section the benefits to mentoring and the emergent themes relative to this study’s conceptual framework will also be establish.

**Background of K-12 teacher mentoring.** The use of K-12 teacher mentoring as a catalyst for professional development and support is frequently discussed in literature. Support utilized to develop novice teachers, which often included a mentoring experience, is called the induction process and signifies when new teachers “have their first teaching experience and adjustment to all the roles and responsibilities associated with teaching” (Gourneau, 2014, p. 300). Induction support and mentoring experiences are presented throughout teacher literature as a viable step to prevent teacher attrition; however, there is little conclusive evidence on the effect of teacher mentoring on teacher retention (Long, 2009). Although program attributes and processes vary, teacher support and mentor programs are frequently more formal in nature (Israel, McCray, & Sindelar, 2014; Parker, 2010; Roehrig, Bohn, Turner, & Pressley, 2008) relative to the non-education sector. Professional and supportive practices include providing
teachers the time and opportunity for inquiry and collaboration, as well as access to the knowledge of experts (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

**Formal teacher mentoring and induction programs.** A contradiction to Long’s (2009) claim, a quantitative mentoring study of 8,838 North Carolina teachers in their first 2 years of practice, found mentor practices were predictive of a novice teacher’s decisions to continue teaching at their current school (Parker, 2010). Using the national Schools and Staffing Survey, a study also found a direct link between the retention of first-year teachers and participation in an induction and mentoring program (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Research also asserted a mentor-mentee dyad, which included teachers who were from the same content department and grade level, was associated with mentee retention (Parker, 2010; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). The frequency of interactions between the mentor and protégé positively influenced novice teacher effectiveness (Roehrig et al., 2008). Within the confines of the formal mentor program, informal experiences between the mentor and mentee as compared to formal meetings were linked to mentee retention (Parker, 2010). The applications of valuable informal experiences embedded within the formal program is an important distinction and also noted with principal mentoring research.

Literature also has highlighted specific qualifications for a mentor-teacher, someone who is frequently identified as an “exemplar” teacher and has several years of successful teaching experience (Roehrig et al., 2008). In fact, a mixed-methods case study of six novice elementary teachers found mentees with effective veteran mentors were more likely to develop into effective teachers (Roehrig et al., 2008). Everston and Smithey (2000) studied the mentoring experiences of 46 novice teachers who had either a formal mentor or informal mentor and found “preparing mentors for their task does enable them to be more successful if success is defined as supporting
protégés success” (p. 302). In other words, expert teacher-mentors provide an opportunity for a richer experience for the mentee.

**Opportunities to support teacher practice.** Professional support in teacher mentoring programs provided assistance in critical areas necessary for novice teacher development. Teachers noted a critical attribute of the mentorship is support with instructional practices (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Parker, 2010; Roehrig et al., 2008) and classroom management (Roehrig et al., 2008). Professional capital pertaining to student learning, culturally relevant pedagogy, school climate and systems (Leon, 2014), and understanding school culture (Hudson, 2012) were perceived as important supports to novice teachers. Wilkins and Okrasinski (2015) studied the mentoring and induction experience of student teachers, finding that teachers received support in understanding the cultural needs of students. Evertson and Smithey’s (2000) research was also one of the few studies to cite evidence of direct benefits to students, including evidence of fewer student disruptions and consistently followed routines.

Along with professional supports, mentees noted emotional support was essential to their ability to be successful (Israel et al., 2014; Parker, 2010). Conversations central to managing work-life balance are useful as the teacher adjusts to her/his new environment and workload (Hudson, 2012). Israel and colleagues’ research explored the mentor-mentee relationship of special education teachers through the lens of Kram’s (1983) framework, specifically career/profession and psychosocial functions. While Kram noted career/professional supports as a distinct relative to psychosocial support, Israel et al. (2014) found psychosocial and emotional supports were rooted within the professional support offered from mentors. Therefore, there was no clear distinction.
Educational Leadership and Principalship Mentoring

In addition to academic and teacher mentoring literature, a thorough understanding of mentoring scholarship within educational leadership is warranted. This section examines the applications of mentoring in educational leadership and the principalship with a focus on how critical attributes could apply to this research. In the case of principal mentoring research, the context of scholarship is traditionally viewed through formal, rather than informal experiences.

After years of professional experience and training, stakeholders may wonder why a school leader, specifically a novice principal, may need a mentor. Similar to teacher mentor programs, structured mentor programs hope to alleviate principal attrition and shortages (Weingartner, 2009). According to Weingartner (2009), “districts must make a concerted effort to address principal attrition by developing a process that encourages and supports experienced educators in pursuit of principal positions” (p. xiii). Yet, principal mentors serve a greater purpose than simply promoting principal retention. Mentors are there to support new principals to enhance new learning following advanced degree programs. For a novice principal, “the real learning for the principal begins when he or she is handed the keys to the school” (Young et al., 2005, p. 1). A qualitative case study that studied the first-year experiences of 11 K-12 novice principals found importance in recognizing the individualized contextual environments facing principals (Armstrong, 2000). Additionally, the study noted the novice principals must understand and recognize where to access their support and resources from the first day of their employment. Armstrong’s (2000) study fell short, however, of addressing the experiences of novice principals in years 2 and 3 of their principalship. While still inexperienced, second and third year principals can also reflect and compare their current challenges to their first year on the job. Finally, a critical critique of this study was the absence of a theoretical framework to
guide the research, data analysis, and findings. My proposed research seeks to address both of these shortcomings.

As was noted previously, researchers have struggled to establish a uniform definition for mentoring (Mertz, 2004); therefore, a uniform approach within principal mentoring research also is unlikely. Studies centered on mentoring programs or their participants are often unable to be generalized to other studies or situations due to the underlying assumptions from the researcher or participants (Mertz, 2004). Although multiple definitions and participant voice are unique to educational leadership literature, research can continue to explore how schools leverage mentoring experiences to professionally develop principals. There is a dearth of research that has examined principal mentoring and noted their effectiveness in promoting novice principals’ development. A look into strategies used for principal mentoring is addressed in the next section.

**Formal Mentoring Programs**

The **structural components of formal mentor programs**. Initiatives to develop educational leaders, including the school principal, are most often provided in the form of a structured, formal mentoring program. Mentoring is often viewed as a central component to principal induction, which is defined as “a multiyear process for individuals at the beginning of their careers or new to a role or setting and is designed to enhance professional effectiveness and foster continued growth during a time of intense learning” (Villani, 2006, p. 18). Several components of a principal induction program may exist within a school district or state: (a) advanced degree courses and research, (b) assigned mentors, (c) informal mentors, (d) guidance by district level personnel, (e) networks of veteran or beginning principals, (f) state principals’ association, (g) conferences/workshops, (h) shadowing and visits to other schools, or (i) principal internships or experience as associate principals (Villani, 2006). These mechanisms are
consistently used as a catalyst for formal principal mentor or induction programs. This section addresses the attributes of formal program frameworks and highlight existing mentor programs.

Young and colleagues (2005) developed a principal mentoring framework that organized the program into four phases: preparing, negotiating, enabling, and closure. Each program component addressed specific attributes of a mentoring program: (a) a preparatory phase guided the participants which included program goals and selection of participants; (b) the negotiation phase alluded to the development of a relationship between the mentor and protégé and was grounded in trust and confidentiality; (c) enabling focused on the implementation of formal activities such as observations and feedback, brainstorming, reflecting, and goal setting; and (d) the closure phase represents the end of the mentorship and the variety of emotions associated with the end of a relationship (Young et al.). Formal program components often required mentors to provide feedback to their protégés, create professional development goals, meet face-to-face, and conduct observations of the protégés’ professional practices (Gettys et al., 2010; Young et al.). Additional formal principal mentoring activities might include a mentor and protégé problem-solving issues, communicating regularly, understanding the novice principal’s leaning style, instructional practices, school management, and goal setting. It is important for school districts to apply a framework that fits the needs of the mentee, as well as the local context (Weingartner, 2009).

The unique and local needs are relevant as it pertains to formal principal mentor programs. Several of the prominent formal programs exist in urban areas; thus, application to a rural setting is more challenging (Weingartner, 2009). Weingartner (2009), who developed a principal mentoring program for Albuquerque Public Schools, argued simplicity is key when
applying formal program mentor frameworks and ideas to unique settings or rural areas.

Specifically, Weingartner asserted,

> The initial planning and development could be time consuming, but, once the program is established, an organized program should be profitable to both new and experienced administrators. It is imperative to commit resources, to communicate, and to cooperate if the endeavor is to succeed. (p. 41)

Gettys et al. (2010) also noted program characteristics such school size, location of mentor-mentee schools, and frequency of interactions were influential in promoting effective experiences of program participants. The unique locale a novice principal may enter cannot be ignored during the creation and implementation of a formal mentoring program.

Aspects of communication and collaboration within formal programs are also prevalent in the literature. Hall (2008) argued in order to ensure the success of a program the organizers needed to effectively communicate each person’s role, establish common language, and clarify the purpose of the program. One of the key levers used to effectively communicate formal program expectations was prioritizing collaboration (Hean, 2009; Mertz, 2004; Saban & Wolfe, 2009; Villani, 2006). Methods to collaborate were varied within the research. A study of the Iowa Administrator Mentoring and Induction Program (IAMIP), a 2-year pilot program which focused on the mentoring of novice principals and superintendents, found mentors and protégés willingly collaborated informally on a regular basis; however, protégés typically expected the mentors to contact them (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). Although formal programs are more common, Samier (2000) reported that informal mentoring is more supportive to the protégé due to the relational focus as opposed to the rigidity and structure associated with formal programs. However, overall, literature suggested structured mentoring programs offer opportunities for principals’ professional growth through effective networking, socialization, and communication.
The importance and opportunity to support novice principals through a mentoring experience has not evaded policymakers. In fact, since 2000, over 50% of states have required some form of mentoring for new principals (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). The literature has highlighted several notable formal district programs that have been implemented in urban, suburban, and rural areas along with state funded or required programs, or through professional association models (Villani, 2006). The examples below, while not an inclusive list, provide specific examples for current or recent formal principal mentoring designs from multiple settings.

- The Kansas Educational Leadership Institute (KELI), which provided new principals an experienced mentor, assistance with obtaining their licensure, and established professional development requirements grounded in national leadership standards. (Augustine-Shaw, 2015)

- The Kentucky Principal Internship Program (KPIP) was one of the first states to require mentoring for novice principals. KPIP focused on state leadership standards, professional practice, and continued licensure as a result of demonstrated successful practice. The novice principal is supported by a three-person team: sitting expert principal, district level administrator, and either a university faculty member or retired principal. Sitting principals who mentor are preferred to be active principals with at least 5 years of successful experience. (Mitgang, 2007)

- The Chicago Public Schools Independent Schools Principal (ISP) Program provides opportunities for principals to come together to focus on effective strategies that provide innovation and foster student achievement along with promoting principal autonomy (Chicago Public Schools, 2016). This program is in conjunction with its principal’s fellowship program which is offered through Northwestern’s Center for Nonprofit Management at Kellogg and its School for Education and Social Policy. Fellows receive coaching and feedback for 3 years in this selective, rigorous program.

- Extra Support for Principals (ESP) is a principal mentor program in the Albuquerque public schools which intended to provide a positive initial experience to novice principals by providing effective school leadership development through expert mentors. Participation in the program is voluntary and lasts the duration of one year. Mentors are expert, full-time principals who are paid $1,000 for their services. Mentor criteria is not utilized, but mentors are matched with their protégés. (Villani, 2006, p. 34)

- New Administrator Induction Program is a principal mentoring program in the Bridgeport, Connecticut public schools which focused on establishing a network for
support for new administrators, provide professional development, mentoring, and coaching, and retaining principals. Participation in the program is voluntary and lasts the duration of 2 years. Mentors are trained and received ongoing support, but are not paid unless they are retired or employed outside of the district. A mentor-protégé match process is utilized, but no mentor criteria exists, (Villani, 2006)

- The New Principal Mentoring Program through the Illinois Principals’ Association provides 1st or 2nd year principals an opportunity for professional development from highly trained mentors (Illinois Principals Association, 2016). Mentors are required to provide a minimum of 40 hours of mentoring and will help their protégé develop a professional development plan in areas related to teacher development, vision, management, goal setting, and strategic planning. This mentoring experience is confidential and matches a protégé and mentor based on their geography, grade level, and prior experiences.

It is important to acknowledge that several examples within the literature highlight principal preparation academies, alternative certification programs, and university leadership programs. However, for the purpose of this research, the scholarship highlighted addressed programs unique to on-the-job principal mentoring support for leaders currently in the role of principal.

**Dynamics of participant relationship formation.** In order to render the necessary support to sustain an effective mentoring partnership, the core driver is the development of a positive relationship. Mentors cannot perceive the partnership as a chore; instead, they should seek a sense of pride and accomplishment in assisting in the professional growth of another school leader (Young et al., 2005). Mertz (2004) asserted there are two distinguishing characteristics of a formal mentoring program: the intent and involvement of participants. In other words, the predictors of success include the following: What does each participant want out of the program, and how much time are participants willing to put into the program? Each factor will be a fundamental aspect that influences success. Mertz further warned that one should not necessarily assume the mentor or mentee is fully committed to the relationship or program. Differences may occur if participation is mandatory versus voluntary. Mentees looked to a
mentor to develop their relationship by establishing trust and respect through a reflective process, rather than a more authoritative approach (Daresh, 2004). Daresh (2004) argued above all, a supportive and positive relationship between the two participants must come first.

As reported in other mentoring literature, differences in program outcomes were specific to gender and race in at least three studies. Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) found that male protégés preferred more structured time and reflection, while female protégés noted less structured time with their mentor was beneficial. Bynum (2015) asserted informal collaborative mentoring practices such as peer mentoring or family members can further support the leadership development and advancement of female leaders. Additionally, Saban and Wolfe (2009) and Wolfe (2005) noted mentoring experiences for novice principals of color were more beneficial as compared to their white peers. The Saban and Wolfe quantitative study of 106 public school principals from unit districts across Illinois, however, did not have a large sample size of non-White principals. Additionally, this quantitative study fell short of in-depth data analysis of participant experiences and perceptions which might have been possible to further explore with additional qualitative methods. Consistent with several other mentoring studies, a lack of theory to ground the research is apparent. Nevertheless, potential differences in participant experiences associated with gender and race are important to consider.

**Mentor selection and match.** Arguably the most crucial aspect of an effective mentorship is the person who is selected to become a mentor (Gettys et al., 2010). A vital piece to a mentoring relationship included the assurance of a successful match between the mentor and protégé (Bush & Chew, 1999). The mentor-protégé partnership is built upon a shared sense of responsibility, priorities, and learning where the mentor is ultimately responsible for the mentee’s learning (Young et al., 2005). Cultivating the relationship over time requires
unwavering commitment and time from both parties (Bush & Chew, 1999; Mertz, 2004). To develop a sustainable and committed relationship, Daresh (2004) argued program coordinators should match candidates based on specific commonalities such as their professional goals, personality or leadership styles, and their areas of improvement. Dziczkowski (2013) suggested effective principal mentors need certain characteristics as well: experience in the principalship, the ability to develop trusting and supportive relationships, flexibility, and an understanding of school leader pedagogy. Overall, a mentor’s skillset, locality to the protégé, and role within the organization were also found to influence the protégés experiences (Gettys et al., 2010). The findings from the Gettys et al. (2010) study, however, involved more than 45 Missouri principals who fit the criteria for the study. However, only six were selected to be interviewed as a representative sample of the whole. Thus, these findings were limited to only six participants out of the potential 45 principals who could have been surveyed or also interviewed based on the participant criteria. Additionally, only one participant in this study held a doctoral degree. The distinction of advanced coursework in my proposed research although not the focus, will at least be acknowledged in the screening and initial interview.

The selection and training of mentors is also an important aspect (Bush & Chew, 1999; Villani, 2006; Young et al., 2005). The IAMIP provided an example of a targeted strategy to select meaningful mentors (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). Following the application process, prospective mentors were screened in person if they met the program criteria (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). In the IAMIP, mentors were required to meet the following criteria: evidence of their administrative capacity over 4 years, link their leadership and decision-making to student achievement, provide evidence of data in their decision-making processes, and show how their leadership style was student-centered (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). One limitation from the
findings of the Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) study was the homogenous nature of the participant sample, which was mostly White. As noted throughout literature, race, gender, and other participant identities can influence participant outcomes. Regardless of whether a formal mentoring program exists within a school district or state, the need for thoughtful and strategic selection of a mentor is crucial for positive formal program outcomes.

**Mentoring Experiences**

**Career-oriented support.** Aside from the emphasis on relationships, empirical research has addressed skills and concepts fundamental to the success of a school-leader mentoring program. Metzger (2003) identified school leaders’ area of improvements and in turn sought to support their leaders in the following areas: navigating school politics, enforcing mandated district or state policy, stress related to difficult colleagues, hiring and firing, and finding personal time. Daresh (2004) suggested mentors often taken on attributes similar to a role model, which helps the school leader learn such contextual aspects as school-wide structures, scheduling norms, school or district traditions, or teacher evaluation processes. A mentor, who often is called a coach throughout the principal literature (Lochmiller, 2014a), is portrayed as someone who provides the following capacities to their protégés: offers advice, influences decision making, focuses on district goals and student achievement (Clayton et al., 2013), benefits career advancement (Mertz, 2004), and helps with problem solving and organizational activities (Daresh). Lochmiller’s (2014a) 3-year descriptive case study of 12 principals and 13 university mentors noted that a coach’s support typically adjusts and diminishes over the course of the 2-year relationship as the protégé’s self-confidence, knowledge, and understanding increased. The Lochmiller et al. study was one of the only principal mentoring studies found in the research which developed a conceptual framework to guide their research design. Consistent with other
principal mentoring studies, the sample of principal participants primarily identified as female, White, and led in an elementary school. This study was one of the only which examined mentors who were tenured university faculty and knew the school leaders from their university preparation program.

In addition, Goff, Guthrie, Goldring, and Bickman (2014) noted in their quantitative research of 52 urban principals that mentors provided protégés feedback from their teachers, helped them interpret the feedback, and facilitated skill development relative to the feedback. Protégés also often attain skills around executing district policy and procedures, communicating, understanding cultural norms, and discussing educational theory (Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013). The research design of Goff et al. study was unique relative to other principal research in that principals’ voice was not an aspect of the research. Goff and colleagues collected feedback from teachers, students, parents, and other school staff to understanding the effectiveness of principal coaching. This study’s sample was overwhelmingly female and White, as is commonly the makeup of elementary school leaders. Consistent with other principal mentoring research, a theoretical framework was not utilized in the study’s methods.

**Psychosocial supports.** Along with career-oriented and professional supports, psychosocial supports also are beneficial. Listening, in a safe, supportive, and confidential manner is a central attribute of a supportive mentor (Augustine-Shaw, 2015; Hall, 2008). The simple process of listening and asking questions alone can reduce a principal’s anxiety and stress (Dziczkowski, 2013). Hall asserted the importance of developing a practitioner’s use of self-reflection. Mentors developed self-reflection by encouraging and modeling the process through listening, questioning, providing honest feedback, offering alternative viewpoints, and discussing prior or impending decisions (Hall, 2008). Effective mentoring in the context of school
leadership is someone who listens, asks “why” questions, and helps their partner develop a philosophy and reflect upon their practice (Daresh, 2004). Saban and Wolfe (2009) noted, “what principals value most of all from mentors is the opportunity for reflective conversations, emotional and moral support, and the affirmation that they are doing a good job” (p. 5). Research by Metzger (2003) was grounded in a conceptual framework developed using inner and personal development literature. This study also found the need for a school leader’s inner and self-development centered on nurturing their personal values, confidence, improvement, interactions, and health (Metzger). Achievement was established through deliberate conversation and inward reflection that helps both the protégé question their practice, but also provide confidence and self-actualization. Mentoring experiences led protégés to decreased levels of stress and anxiety along with increased levels of trust (Mertz, 2004), encouragement (Saban & Wolfe), confidence, value, and self-reflection were trends in the literature (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013). Smith (2009) found that any level of mentoring influences a participant’s confidence.

**Socialization.** The importance for protégés to have new social relationships or experiences also is essential. Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) and Hean (2009) emphasized that the formation of social networks over is perceived to be of greater importance than one’s leadership skill attainment. Hean argued that social networks can be challenging to join without the help of experienced leaders’ connections. Saban and Wolfe (2009) found socialization was a fundamental component to an effective mentoring approach, especially for new principals. Bush and Chew (1999) and Weingartner (2009) did not necessarily specify the value of social networks but did address the notion of support and avoiding isolationism.
**Coaching.** DeFilippo and Hogan (2014) asserted distinctions between the concepts of coaching and mentoring. Specifically, the authors argued a “mentoring relationship is about the more experienced practitioner sharing his or her knowledge with the less-experienced learner . . . the mentors who have already walked the path of the mentee can share their experience as a guide” (DeFilippo & Hogan, p. 18). Mentoring most often occurs at the earlier stages of a professional’s career. On the other hand, coaching tends to be used with leaders at higher levels within an organization for specific development- or transition-goals . . . [and occur over] periods at a time . . . [coaching] includes the individual’s goals and their alignment to the organization’s priorities. (p. 18).

Also, coaching tends to occur throughout a professional’s career. Huff, Preston, and Goldring (2013) synthesized coaching is a modern phenomenon in educational leadership and it serves two primary goals: to improve the performance of a school leader by focusing on targeted practices and setting benchmark criteria, and to focus on a leader’s “deeper cognitive or psychoanalytical issues” (p. 507). A recent case study by Farver and Holt (2015) focused on three urban principals who participated in a coaching experience as part of their professional development. The study found coaching did support the principals’ growth and noted themes such as solution oriented planning, goal planning, and action planning. Additionally, themes related to the importance of trust and confidentiality emerged in the study. As Kram (1985) noted, the term *mentoring* is broadly used and often incorporates the use of coaching strategies. Kram suggested to avoid using a narrow definition of the word mentoring, furthermore this study will follow that recommendation.

**Reciprocal benefits.** Learning within the mentoring relationship is not limited to protégés (Bush & Chew, 1999; Clayton et al., 2013; Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013). Mentors also were found to have experiences that increased enthusiasm toward their leadership, practice,
and self-reflection (Dziczkowski, 2013). Clayton and colleagues (2013) reported in their qualitative study of 11 participants in a school leader mentoring program that mentors felt the relationship challenged their beliefs and leadership philosophy. Daresh (2004) asserted mentors not only reflected on their own practice but also experienced a sense of pride and enthusiasm as they witnessed successes of their mentees. The mentoring outcomes for both participants have potential to positively influence the leaders’ practice, self-awareness, and philosophical framework. The Clayton et al. study was unique in that it included qualitative feedback from both the mentor and mentee participants. The study’s sample was nearly entire comprised of females. How this effected the outcomes of participants is not known. Additionally, this study’s methods were limited due to an absence of a theatrical framework and implementation of effective data validation strategies.

**Pitfalls of principal mentoring experiences.** The possibility for positive change and influence in a structured leadership mentoring program are well documented; however, obstacles can impede the process and pose challenges for both mentor and mentee. By far, the most cited concern is the difficulty for participants to find time to engage in mentoring activities (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013; Hall, 2008; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). IAMIP noted the challenge for novice principals to find quality time in their hectic schedules to meet with mentors, which limited the effectiveness of their mentoring experiences (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). Gettys and colleagues (2010) argued mentors did not spend sufficient time discussing ways to support instruction and instead focused too heavily on the principal’s managerial tasks. The Gettys et al. study also found novice school leaders did not receive practical development or advice to use in classroom walkthroughs and improve overall student achievement. Finally, Clayton and colleagues (2013) noted the external accountability pressures
inflicted on the principalship were difficult for participants to navigate, especially in terms of time.

In addition to time constraints, the other pitfall was unprepared or ineffective mentors (Bush & Chew, 1999; Daresh, 2004; Hall, 2008; Mertz, 2004). Daresh (2004) and Mertz (2004) both noted that an ineffective mentor can be harmful to the protégé. Daresh argued more experienced mentors have not necessarily adapted to current cultural realities, notably issues concerning gender, race, and sexuality. Mentors sometimes gave their mentee poor advice and in some instances made decisions for their mentee’s school (Bush & Chew, 1999; Daresh). In other words, the mentor had too much influence on the mentee or the mentee simply was unable to make decisions for themselves. Concerns over ineffective advice or influence potentially stem from poor mentor selection. Daresh, Dziczkowski (2013), and Hall (2008) each noted apprehension with a program where mentors did not volunteer, were not consistently trained, or did not have a record of personal success and student achievement in their own experiences. Relationships aside, a trend within the research suggested that ineffective mentors can hinder a principal’s development process.

Literature which addresses mentoring as a platform for on-the-job professional development noted its importance for the success of a novice principal. Yet, there is a deficiency in the quality and quantity of research that explores how relational components of a principal mentorship influence the experiences of the mentor and mentee.

**Conceptual Framework**

This proposed study seeks to utilize my conceptual theory, *Principal Mentoring Framework*, by establishing emergent themes in social capital theory and their connection to professional mentoring literature presented throughout Chapter 2. First, this section provides
background on social capital theory and its relevance to mentoring literature. Furthermore, this section will integrate themes from social capital and mentoring literature to develop the tenets of my conceptual framework. Finally, I will address the gaps in prior research and indicate how this proposed study seeks to contribute to existing literature.

**Social capital theory.** Social capital theory is centrally grounded in the existence of a relationship between two or more people (Coleman, 1988). Lin (2001) argued the primary attribute of social capital is an investment of resources through a network of relationships. Lin defined social capital as an “investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace” (p. 19). Coleman’s contribution to the theory is consistently cited in social capital literature. Coleman looked at the nature of the relationship between parents and their children; specifically, the transfer of human capital from a parent to a child as a predictor of the child’s ability to persist through high school graduation. This process is unique in two underlying ways.

Social capital has two primary components: first, a social structure or organization must exist or be established; second, an actor(s) must make a decision or actively facilitate a transition or exchange of capital (Coleman).

Although theorists espouse slightly different approaches in understanding social capital, there are consistent trends of conceptual qualities within the social capital framework literature. Undoubtedly, one of most discussed concepts within the literature is the notion of trusting relationships (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Schullar, 2007). Trust is a fundamental attribute to the establishment of a relationship, the central component of the theory. Coleman noted the position of participants within an organization can influence their willingness to share information. Additionally, social capital is intertwined with all forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1998; Lin, 2001; Schullar, 2007) and Schullar (2007) asserted it
increased the effectiveness of other forms of capital. Regardless of the type of capital exchanged (cultural, economic, or human), social capital provides a lens to understand a relationship and its influence on the exchange of capital.

Lastly, it is important to remember a relationship or network of relationships do not necessarily yield quality or positive exchanges of capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998). Ultimately, the potential for a positive exchange of high quality capital is dependent upon the actors and their relationship, the capital itself, network norms, and other characteristics (Portes, 1998). Lin (2001) also noted the motivation of an actor will play a role in their investment, including the final product relative to the investment. Bourdieu’s (1986) social capital framework also established the importance of how the relationship formed (access) and the usefulness (quality) of the transmitted capital.

**Professional mentoring literature and research.** My conceptual framework, *Principal Mentoring Framework*, integrates mentoring literature and social capital theory as a means to understand the mentor-protégé experience within the principalship (Figure 2). The underlying premise of this conceptual framework asserts that the structures of a mentor-protégé relationship will directly influence the opportunity for a reciprocal exchange of capital and resources, through career-oriented or psychosocial supports. The existence of, and access to, a relationship between a novice principal and mentor is central to social capital theory and my proposed research (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988).
**Figure 2.** Principal mentoring framework.

**Relational structures.** Central components of theory and literature influence the development, structure, and nature of the mentor-protégé relationship. Mentor-protégé trust is central to a productive relationship (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1998; Mertz, 2004; Putnam, 2000; Schullar, 2007) and established through listening, collaboration, reflection, empathy, and building confidence from participants (Augustine-Shaw, 2015; Daresh, 2004; Metzger, 2003; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Young et al., 2005). Scholarship noted trust and confidentiality are foundation aspect to the development of relationship (Young et al., 2005).

Next, the investment and intent of both the mentor and protégé influence the relationship and outcomes of the experience (Lin, 2001). Also, how and why someone elects to become a mentor ultimately influences participant experiences (Allen et al., 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1993,
1999; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). Overall, the willingness to invest time and a deep commitment to each other will contribute to the effectiveness of a mentoring partnership (Bush & Chew, 1999; Mertz, 2004).

The intent and investment of participants is also associated with the formal or informal nature of the relationship, which may directly associate with the level of intensity of career and psychosocial support (Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Principal induction programs often involve a more formal and structured process, including the training of a mentor and matching a mentor with a protégé (Bush & Chew, 1999; Daresh, 2004). The structures of formal programs include aspects such as goal setting, problem solving, reflecting, communicating regularly, and meeting face-to-face (Gettys et al., 2010, Young et al., 2005). Yet, informal experiences may vary and exist within a formal and highly structure program (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Parker, 2010). The matching process, within a formal program, is an opportunity to select a mentor-protégé pair with similar characteristics such as personality, goals, or leadership style, leads to higher levels of participant satisfaction (Allen et al., 2006; Daresh; Eby et al., 2000).

Finally, mentor and protégé identity have a direct association with the perceived participant experiences and outcomes (Allen & Eby, 2004). Prior research noted distinctions of certain aspects of identity such as gender and race. For example, literature noted females perceived higher levels providing and receiving psychosocial supports (Chandler, 1996; Portillo, 2007; Tenenbaum et al., 2001). Additionally, aspects of participant identity differences in cross-gendered and cross-racial relationships could influence mentoring outcomes (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Overall, the dyadic composition of the partnership is associated with participant
experience (Chandler; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Portillo, 2007; Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton; Tenenbaum et al.).

**Capital and resources.** The relational components of a mentorship have a direct influence on the capital exchanged and received through a mentorship, including whether it is reciprocated and beneficial for both partners. Capital, or an investment in resources (Lin, 2001), within mentoring experiences is expressed through two functions of support: career and psychosocial (Kram, 1985). Career-oriented supports include: sponsorship, exposure-and-visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments (Kram, 1985). Psychosocial supports include: role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship (Kram, 1985). Support (capital) exchanged as part of principal mentoring experiences might include, but is not limited to the following attributes career-oriented functions: coaching (Lochmiller, 2014a), advice with school policy and structures (Daresh, 2004), and hiring of personnel (Metzger, 2003). Additionally, psychosocial supports in principal mentoring relationships could include trust (Daresh, 2004; Mertz, 2004), friendship, counseling (Allen et al., 2004), and encouragement (Saban, 2009).

**Reciprocity.** Opportunities for reciprocal benefits and exchanges are developed within this conceptual framework. Reciprocity, a mutual exchange of capital and support, is a critical component of this framework and is consistently addressed in literature, notably with positive relationships (Allen et al., 1997; Bush & Chew, 1999; Clayton et al., 2013; Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Kram, 1983; Ragins, 1997). Daresh (2004) and Dziczkowski (2013) asserted mentors experience enthusiasm and pride as they support the growth of their protégés. Additionally, it is essential to note, the experiences associated with a mentorship or the capital exchanged is not necessarily positive, especially due
to mentor ineffectiveness and personal differences (Bush & Chew, 1999; Daresh; Hall, 2008; Mertz, 2004).

**Gaps in the Literature**

After a thorough examination of principal mentoring literature, gaps are noted that pertain to my research. A notable gap in high quality, mentoring research is common in all areas with the field of education. Multiple mentoring sources in the education sector, although peer-reviewed and associated with reputable journals, are based on practitioner expertise and experience, rather than authentic research (Daresh, 2004; Mertz, 2004). In other words, their conceptual and practitioner based frameworks are not grounded in theory or empirical research. Nearly all of the empirically-based mentoring studies in education are devoid of theory (Daresh; Everston & Smithey, 2000; Gourneau, 2014; Mertz; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). There is a critical need for a thorough understanding of how the relational structures of principal mentor dyads influence participant outcomes. This study helps to address this void.

A significant limitation is the theory and empirical research related to professional mentoring has not been applied extensively within education, particularly within the field of educational leadership. Kram’s (1985) theory and the findings of empirical-based professional mentoring studies are no less justified to engage in a more thorough understanding of principal mentoring relationships and the factors that influence participants’ experiences. Thus, an in-depth qualitative understanding of how the formation of relationships influence career, psychosocial, and reciprocal support is missing within educational research.

Additionally, research findings pertinent to mentoring are difficult to generalize due to the participants’ perceptions and their unique local context. Fagenson-Eland and colleagues (1997) noted a primary limitation regarding a mentor program’s effectiveness were based on
participant perceptions. Similarly, Simon and colleagues (2008) acknowledged the same limitation as its findings were grounded in the perceptions of participants and how they perceived receiving and offering mentoring supports. It is difficult to generalize beyond individual mentoring studies due to the uniqueness and dynamics of each mentor-mentee relationship not to mention the inconsistencies in the varying definitions for a mentor (Kram, 1985; Mertz, 2004). Kram (1983) called for mentoring research to address the phenomenon of mentoring due to the uniqueness of participants, settings, and characteristics that influence their relationship. My proposed research study is necessary due to the unique dyadic relationship that exists within each principal mentoring relationship.

Disparities exist within mentoring literature as to the effects of gender, race, mentor identity, and program structure. Empirical literature addressing organizational position and participant identity is largely absent in principal mentoring literature and provides conflicting findings. In fact, Tenenbaum et al. (2001) found there were relatively no differences in mentoring outcomes associated with the mentor’s gender, contrary to findings in non-education based research (Allen & Eby, 2004; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Ragins, 1997). Organizational position or role, and more importantly participant identity and its influence on the mentor relationship, are critical areas to study in terms understanding effective principal development. Additional research that examines the context of a mentorship through the lens of participants’ identity will establish whether their identity is an influential factor in a principal’s ability to feel supported and sustain their responsibilities.

A notable difference between education and non-education-based mentoring is the formal-informal program structure. Multiple studies outside of education focused on the dynamics of formal and informal mentoring. However, within education, the use of formal
mentoring and induction programs is prevalent, and some research indicates informal experiences within those formal structures are meaningful (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). My study focuses on the degree to which both participants were invested in the relationship and to what extent the quality of capital was exchanged as a result of their relationships. Experiences of participants, as prior literature noted, may be influenced by factors such as the formal-informal nature of the relationship, identity if the participants, and the mentor’s role within the organization. Furthermore, and in relation to my conceptual framework, it is essential to understand how the relationship formed and the usefulness of the transmitted capital for both participants.

Finally, my review of mentoring literature found most experiences are reported from the perceptions of the protégé (Allen et al., 1997; Higgins & Kram, 2001). My research was grounded in a conceptual framework and addressed these gaps through an in-depth examination of the experiences and perceptions of both mentor and mentee. Currently, little empirical research exists as to the possible benefits of a mentorship and access to capital through the lens of a principal mentor. This study sought to understand how capital influences both participants.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed an overview of modern responsibilities and complexities of the principalship, the relevant scholarship pertaining to mentoring in professional, academia, and K-12 settings. Specifically, the literature presented trends in mentoring practices, benefits, and participant experiences that directly lead to the development of this proposed study’s conceptual framework. Finally, I presented gaps in existing principal mentoring literature which include: (a) a lack of empirically based studies on principal mentoring, (b) how features professional mentoring research intersect with principal mentoring research, (c) the influence of unique
relational structures (participant identity, formal versus informal mentorship, and investment of participant) affect participant outcomes, (d) an examination of the mentorship experience for the mentor.

The tenets to this study’s conceptual theory, *Principal Mentoring Framework*, were also developed and presented. *Principal Mentoring Framework* connects emergent trends in professional mentoring literature and social capital theory. Emergent themes central to this framework include the following: (a) trust building behaviors, (b) investment and intent of participants, (c) participant identity, (d) formal versus informal structures, (e) career-oriented and psychosocial supports, and (f) positive and negative experiences from reciprocal behaviors. The components of this framework serve as the foundational underpinnings of the methodology for this proposed research.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology

Noting how novice principals establish and sustain professional mentoring relationships to promote their professional growth is critical to understanding the development of effective principals. With the growing complexity of the principalship, a void exists related to professional on-the-job training for principals. This void drives the need for my study, in which I explored how the relational structures of mentoring relationships influence supports provided to novice principals as they learn how to effectively perform their highly complex and stressful roles. As such, a phenomenological method of inquiry was conducted to further investigate principal mentorships and their influence on participants’ professional practice. Krathwohl and Smith (2005) suggested research methods focus on the overall structure of the study, including who will participate, how participants will be studied and grouped, instrumentation, and how the data will be collected, analyzed, and protected. According to Merriam (2002), “an understanding of this process is important for assessing the rigor and value of individual reports of research” (p. 11). This chapter includes the research questions used to guide this study, a description of the methodology, site and participant selection, data collection, data analysis procedures, issues related to reliability and validly, and the dissertation timeline.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following overarching research question: What elements of the mentor-mentee relationship support a novice principal’s ability to fulfill the expectations and professional responsibilities of their role? Four subquestions supplemented this question:

1. What approaches have novice principals and their mentors used to form and sustain trusting, supportive professional mentor relationships?

2. How has participant identity, investment, and intent affected the mentoring experience?
3. How has participants' professional practice been affected by the resources or forms of capital (career oriented and psychosocial) exchanged and reciprocated within a principal mentor-mentee relationship?

4. How do mentoring participants negotiate challenges or disagreements that arise as a result of their relationship?

Methodology

This study emphasizes my philosophical worldview and how it influenced the construction and approach of my research. Creswell (2009) suggested the researcher explicitly identify and articulate how their philosophical worldview is represented in the study. Four different worldviews guide research: postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism (Creswell). Because I examined the experiences of other people through a central phenomenon, this research best aligned to a social constructivist approach. Philosophically, social constructivism is grounded in interpreting the experiences of others through the complexity of their experiences and meanings. As the researcher, my fundamental priority was to understand, interpret, and make sense of participants’ meanings. By nature, a social constructivist worldview aligns with an interpretive qualitative research approach whereby the researcher not only seeks to understand the meanings of participants’ data but also acts as a fundamental instrument for data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 2002). Therefore, a qualitative method of inquiry is best aligned to the purpose of this study.

The qualitative strategy of inquiry that I used to guide my study was phenomenology. At its core, a phenomenological study “focuses on the essence or structure of an experience” (Merriam, 2002, p. 7). Saldaña (2011) also noted phenomenological inquiries focus “on concepts, events, or the lived experiences of humans” (p. 8). In this study an experience was generated by participants’ relationships formed through the structure of a mentorship. The phenomenon in this study was the lived experiences of principal mentoring pairs and the capital
they exchanged as a result of their relationships. As the researcher in this study, my central role was to reflect upon the data collected and develop themes from participants’ experiences (Saldaña).

Vagle (2014) suggested phenomenology is an art form that continually changes over time. Phenomenological studies hinge upon the researcher’s craft and where the study takes him or her, not by a methodological roadmap that is linear and contrived. Vagle asserted phenomenologists should start “looking at what we usually look through . . . by leaving no rock unturned” (p. 12). This study provided analytical depth to the existing literature of principal mentoring by sharing the lived experiences of others. In order to thoroughly study and analyze the experiences of principal mentorships, a central theory is necessary to inform the research design (Maxwell, 2009). Merriam (2002) suggested a central reason to utilize qualitative methods is that the researcher believes “there is a lack of theory or an existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon” (p. 5). In anticipation of understanding and examining principal mentoring, an alternative conceptual model was necessary to properly research the phenomenon. Therefore, I applied the conceptual framework that integrates mentoring and social capital theory outlined in Chapter 2.

**Participant and Site Selection**

**Selection process.** Within qualitative research, purposeful sampling is most often utilized as a means to understand the phenomenon and experiences of participants who will offer “the most to learn” (Merriam, 2002, p. 12). It was vital to select participants who “help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2009, p. 178). Participants in a phenomenological study should have experiences rich in the phenomenon under investigation (Vagle, 2014). Thus, participants in this study were selected purposely, through assistance from
the Illinois Regional Offices of Education (ROEs) and school district superintendents. Illinois ROE offices deliver educational services to local school districts, including professional development opportunities, assistance with licensure, and dissemination of information. The contact information of Illinois superintendents was accessed through publicly accessible information available through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and ROEs. I contacted Illinois public school district superintendents and other district-level administrators to inform them of the study and to request their distribution of the research invitation (Appendix A) to their novice principals. Using their professional networks, superintendents also helped solicit participants by communicating the research invitation associated with this research project.

Potential participants opted into the study by contacting me following their acknowledgment of the research solicitation email. Each participant (novice principal and mentor) who contacted me was screened (Appendix B) for the following research criteria:

1. Principal mentoring participants self-identify as having taken part in an active mentoring relationship as either the mentor or mentee. Relationships were formal or informal in nature.

2. The principal mentee was in her/his first 3 years of the principalship and the mentoring relationship must have been in place for a minimum of four months.

3. Both the mentor and mentee were willing to share their experiences through in-person interviews. Mentor and mentee confirmed with each other their interest in participating in study.

4. The principal mentee must serve in an Illinois public elementary, middle, or high school.

During the screening process I provided an outline of the study, purpose of the research, and informed these individuals of next steps if they were selected as participants for the study.

Saldaña (2011) suggested that researchers “consider whose perspectives will best represent the diverse landscape of the social and cultural setting” (p. 33). The conceptual framework I applied highlights the importance of participant identity. I was hopeful to include a
diverse and representative group of principal mentoring pairs, but it was not a requirement for this study. I vetted potential participants and narrowed the nominations pool by strategically selecting participants, considering factors such as gender, race, experiences, and school setting to find as representative group of novice principals as possible from the initial 21 recommendations of novice principals. Overall, 105 superintendents, principals, and other school personnel were contacted to request nominations.

Creswell (2009) noted the importance of the researcher gaining access to participants through a gatekeeper in their natural setting. In this study, potential participants were asked to confirm with their mentoring partner their willingness and commitment to be vetted. Once confirmation of a respondent’s willingness to participate was established, I scheduled a phone screening with each nominee. This process did “involve gaining the agreement of individuals in authority to provide access to study participants at research sites” (Creswell, p. 90). Once a mentoring dyad was screened and selected, I provided each participant with an acceptance invitation (Appendix C) and requested they read and sign the research consent form (Appendix D).

The foremost issue with my research was the need to respect and protect the confidentiality of my participants. Central to this process included the approval to conduct this study through the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board (IRB); this study was submitted to the IRB and approval was granted. Issues around ethics and consideration of participants are addressed in separate section. This study pursued as authentic and truthful data as possible; thus, confidentiality provided a greater likelihood of that potential. Confidentiality was a primary component to this research study and assured participants were willing to share information about their districts or mentorship experiences in an honest and truthful manner. As
part of this qualitative process, pseudonyms for all participants were used to protect the privacy of all participants and ensure the utmost ethical considerations were facilitated throughout the study (Creswell, 2009). With the central phenomenon in this study centered on aspects of a professional relationship, it was critical to protect participants’ identity to ensure their responses were candid and free of potential repercussion.

**Selected participants.** I selected 10 mentoring pairs from Illinois public school districts to participate in this study. Participants were representative of public schools in mostly suburban settings and at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels. Table 1 presents the pseudonyms utilized in this study and information relative to the dyadic composition of each mentorship. Table 1 indicates the breakdown of the basic participant demographic factors identified for this study including: gender, race, current employment position, duration of mentorship, and dyadic structure. Additionally, findings in this study identified participants who transitioned into the principalship from an internal assistant principalship.

The concise summaries below provide additional context and background information for each mentoring dyad.

- **Principal Joseph and Mentor Ashley:** Ashley and Joseph met several years before either person became a principal. Their relationship continued throughout the years and became an informal mentorship when Joseph asked Ashley to meet with him regularly as he began his principalship. Joseph has worked in the same suburban high school his entire career.

- **Principal Garrett and Mentor Robert:** Garrett’s district required all new principals to participate in a formal principal mentoring program organized by their local ROE. Garrett transitioned to the principalship after serving as an associate principal for 7 years at the same suburban high school. Robert, who was hired by the ROE, has mentored other principals and is a retired former principal and superintendent.

- **Principal Michael and Mentor Tammie:** Michael was required to participate in this formal mentorship as established by his suburban school district. The district utilized the local ROE to coordinate a mentorship. Tammie, now retired, had formally mentored other areas principals, including principals from Michael’s district.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dyad</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Current position</th>
<th>Duration of mentorship</th>
<th>Dyadic structure</th>
<th>% of low income&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>% of students of color&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>aChris (P) Roger (M)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>H.S. Principal</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>aGarrett (P) Robert (M)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>H.S. Principal</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>aJoseph (P) Ashley (M)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>H.S. Principal</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Michael (P) Tammie (M)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>H.S. Principal</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>aMadeline (P) Jessica (M)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Elem Principal</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>aRebecca (P) Jennifer (M)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>H.S. Principal</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sandra (P) Nadean (M)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Elem Principal</td>
<td>3 Years</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sherri (P) Douglas (M)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>M.S. Principal</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>aTrevor (P) Rita (M)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>H.S. Principal</td>
<td>1 Year</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>aTyler (P) Carl (M)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>H.S. Principal</td>
<td>2 Years</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Internally transitioned from Assistant Principal to Principal.

<sup>b</sup>Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.

*Note.* (M) = Mentor, (P) Protégé.
Principal Trevor and Mentor Rita: Trevor and Rita worked together in a previous district a few years prior to Trevor’s transition to the principalship. Rita, now a superintendent at a different school district, continued to stay in contact with Trevor. Once Trevor attained a high school principalship in a metropolitan area of northern Illinois, Rita contacted Trevor to informally support him and be a part of her principal coaching program.

Principal Rebecca and Mentor Jennifer: Rebecca has served as an assistant principal at her suburban high school prior to transitioning to the principalship. Because Rebecca’s high school is the only school in the district, her superintendent suggested she participate in the IPA mentoring program. Jennifer, a retired principal, was hired by IPA to formally mentor area principals.

Principal Madeline and Mentor Jessica: Madeline transitioned to the principalship after serving 2 years as an assistant principal at the same elementary school. Madeline is the only principal of color in this study. Additionally, Madeline’s elementary school is the only setting considered an urban school setting. Madeline was formally mentored by Jessica, a retired principal, through the IPA mentoring program.

Principal Tyler and Mentor Carl: Carl was the high school principal who hired Tyler years before as one of his assistant principals. Once Carl took a district level position, Tyler was hired to serve as a suburban high school principal. Carl and Tyler have worked closely together since they have met and Tyler identified Carl as his informal mentor.

Principal Sandra and Mentor Nadean: Sandra and Nadean and met several years ago when Nadean was hired in the middle of the year to be the principal of an elementary school where Sandra taught. Sandra’s classroom was across the hall from Nadean’s office. Nadean encouraged Sandra to pursue leadership. Eventually Sandra became a principal at another elementary school in the same district of a metropolitan area within central Illinois. Sandra identified Nadean as her informal mentor.

Principal Sherri and Mentor Douglas: Douglas is a superintendent of a suburban district and Sherri was his first administrative hire in the district. Sherri was hired as a middle school principal, and Douglas served as both her informal mentor and supervisor.

Principal Chris and Mentor Roger: Chris served as principal in the same high school he has worked his entire career. Chris also transitioned from an assistant principal to the principalship at the same suburban high school. Chris was required to participate in a formal mentorship by the district through their local ROE. Roger, who is retired principal and superintendent, formally mentored Chris as a part of the ROE program.

Data Collection

In this research study, data were collected from January 2017 through September 2017, through participant interviews and follow-up interviews as suggested by Creswell (2009). It is
important for the researcher to collect more data than might be needed during analysis (Vagle, 2014). Additionally, I remained open to the changing needs of data collection as the process unfolded (Vagle, 2014). As such, follow-up interviews were necessary for additional information, context, and clarification.

As noted, pseudonyms were used as part of the data collection process; in addition, all subjects were assigned a unique code for transcription. While transcribing, all personally identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Codes and participant names were maintained in separate files, and pseudonyms were used for presentations and publications. These codes were used for subsequent interviews when necessary or to match their responses to document reviews. Findings identified from data collection were reported in aggregate form only, through the identification of themes emanating from the data. For interview quotations presented in the findings, a pseudonym is used. I ensured that interview quotations were only linked to individual respondents through their pseudonyms.

**Interviews.** Interviews are the most utilized methods of qualitative data collection (Saldaña, 2011). Saldaña (2011) noted that interviews are “an effective way of soliciting and documenting, in their own words, an individual’s or group’s perspectives, feelings, opinions, values, attitudes, and beliefs about their personal experiences and social world, in addition to factual information about their lives” (p. 32). Qualitative interviews allow a researcher a glimpse into peoples’ “inner experiences” by understanding their perception of knowledge that may otherwise go unnoticed (Weiss, 1994). Interviews within this study were central to understanding the unique participant perceptions and experiences.

Initial interviews took place in-person at a location and time convenient for each participant. Mentee and mentor pairs were interviewed separately during the primary and follow-
up interviews. The initial interviews lasted 35-62 minutes, depending on the depth of the responses by each participant. The mean interview time for protégés was 47 minutes, and the mean interview time for mentors was 48 minutes. The initial interviews followed a semi-structured interview protocol (Creswell, 2009) and I utilized a unique protocol for the mentor and mentee (Appendixes E and F). The protocol ensured the interview questions and format were consistent among each participant, and I deliberately encouraged interviewees to elaborate on their answers. Interview questions were derived from my research questions and grounded in my conceptual framework. The initial interview questions began with general background questions highlighting each participant’s educational and professional experiences. From there, my open-ended questions focused on the development of the mentorship, what factors influenced the relationship, and their overall perception of the relationship. Interview questions also offered participants the opportunity to share what types of support, or lack thereof, they have received or provided their partner.

Notes were recorded for each interview and the conversation was audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis (Creswell, 2009). Participants were given the option to opt out of the audio recording, with detailed notetaking in its place, but none opted out. Audio recordings were transcribed and sent to participants for member checks (Creswell, 2009). During this time in the process, participants had the opportunity to edit, clarify, or add to their original transcriptions. Additionally, follow-up interviews were requested from selected participants; however, these interviews were less structured to permit me to explore and validate initial themes. Follow-up interviews served multiple purposes, including the following: (a) initial participants were asked specific questions regarding themes which had not emerged early on in the interview process, (b) allowed me to ask clarifying questions relative to specific comments made in the initial
interview, (c) provided an opportunity for further elaboration of examples or content relative to specific themes or experiences, and (d) allowed me to verify or validate emergent themes or unintended findings. Eighteen participants were included in follow-up interviews; these were conducted on the phone, lasting approximately 10-20 minutes, or using email depending on participants’ preferences. At any time, a participant had the option to end the interview or choose not to answer a question.

**Documents.** Two formal mentors submitted documentation from their respective programs through the Illinois Principals Association and their local Regional Office of Education. Documentation included a program overview and expectations, disclaimer form, and log of hours form. The documents were used to verify the requirements (contact hours and forms of contact) of formal program participants as noted in their interviews. Documentation did not include materials pertaining to mentor training or selection.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was simultaneous and ongoing with data collection. During the collection process, I utilized this opportunity to understand and connect emergent themes, validate data trends, and make necessary adjustments in data collection (Merriam, 2002). Data analysis was grounded in my conceptual framework. Based upon the data collected from interviews, I rendered themes with my conceptual framework’s units of analysis from significant statements and common descriptions of the participants (Creswell, 2009). A qualitative researcher may navigate between inductive and deductive approaches throughout the data analysis process (Saldaña, 2011). I gathered data through the lens of my conceptual framework (deductive), but I was open to emergent themes outside of the framework if they surfaced in the data (inductive).
Table 2 displays the codeable characteristics from the data analysis, which were grounded in the conceptual framework.

Table 2

*Deductive Coding Matrix*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of analysis</th>
<th>Unit themes</th>
<th>Evidence from the field/codeable characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Investment and Intent</em></td>
<td>Time participants spend together or communicating. How mentoring relationship initiated and persists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Formal vs. Informal</em></td>
<td>Mentor/Mentee match is establish by an organization vs. mentor/mentee relationship is self-initiated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Trust</em></td>
<td>Communication, Psychosocial support, Relationship initiation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Participant Identity</em></td>
<td>Participants’ background, demographics, locality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Career Support</em></td>
<td>Knowledge, practical and skills based concepts and advice, coaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Psycho-Social Support</em></td>
<td>Confidence building language, emotional support, listening.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Positive and Negative Experiences</em></td>
<td>Participants identify a positive or negative exchange of capital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mentor and Protégé Benefits</em></td>
<td>Benefits of serving as a mentor or mentee are noted by participants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive coding initially was utilized to analyze data within the conceptual framework/units of analysis. This approach was useful when analyzing data among multiple sources (Saldaña, 2011). Coding allowed me to capture the emergent themes from the conceptual framework, challenge those themes, or add to the existing literature as analysis progressed. My coding process was initially by hand, in order to have a greater feel for the data; however, I also
will used Microsoft Excel software as a means organize, quantify, and validate my codes and themes.

For this study, the analytic process I utilized was grounded in Creswell’s (2009) framework. My use of procedures included the following steps:

1. Organize data (interviews and documents) throughout collection process;
2. transcribe participant interviews;
3. read the transcribed interview, cross check transcription with notes, and gather and describe initial themes/descriptions;
4. reread the transcribed interview multiple times and cross check initial themes/descriptions;
5. analyze overall meaning of the data by open, descriptive coding by hand;
6. organize and quantify data in Excel to examine and validate existing themes;
7. interpret the data analysis considering my personal background and understandings; and
8. compile data for a detailed narrative discussion. (p. 185)

As the process unfolded and data were analyzed, I made adjustments to the analytic process as necessary. Phenomenological research is a craft and not a consistent recipe (Vagle, 2014). Therefore, my analytic process required constant reflection as the data were analyzed. As part of the analytic procedures, the utmost importance was to conduct a trustworthy study. The following section addresses the issue of trustworthiness and data quality.

**Trustworthiness and Data Quality**

Credibility and trustworthiness are issues of honesty and integrity within the writing process (Saldaña, 2011). Specifically, the researcher has a responsibility to be transparent, clear about potential dilemmas, and ethical. Merriam (2002) noted issues of ethics are most likely to occur during the data collection process. As the researcher, I was committed to consistently upholding the highest ethical standards and qualitative procedures. Considering the deductive
coding approach grounded in my conceptual framework, I presented new or unintended themes that emerged from the data. During this process I was committed to exploring all potential themes. Additionally, I upheld the confidentiality and security of participant statements as it pertains to their mentorship experiences. Not all participant experiences are positive; furthermore, sincerity and trust are fundamental in this study between participants and myself.

**Reliability**

Reliability is defined as consistency in the study’s findings if it were repeatedly performed with the same or different researchers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Merriam (2002) posited that qualitative data are interpretative; thus, researchers might come to different interpretations of the same data set. However, the real question is “whether the results are consistent with the data collected” (Merriam, p. 27). In order to ensure reliability in this study, Gibbs (2007) highlighted the following as appropriate reliability procedures: check for mistakes in interview transcripts, establish consistent definitions of codes through use of analytic memos, and assess the quality of coding analysis through cross-checking themes with another researcher. As the primary researcher in this study, I ensured reliability by fulling the recommendations set forth by Creswell (2009). Additionally, I established analytic memos in order to track my data collection, the establishment of codes through units of analysis and emergent themes, and important decisions I made relative to the analytic process (Merriam). Finally, I utilized an experienced qualitative researcher to review, confirm, or challenge my emergent themes to further ensure the reliability of this study.

**Triangulation and Validity**

Validity procedures ensure the accuracy of the data collected (Creswell, 2009). Huberman and Miles (2002) proposed “validity is relative in the sense because understanding is
relative . . . it is not possible for an account to be independent of any particular perspective” (p. 43). Merriam (2002) noted internal validity essentially asks the question, “are we observing or measuring what we think constitutes reality?” (p. 25). Three strategies that strengthen the accuracy of data include member checking, triangulation, and addressing bias (Creswell, 2009). As noted, data from the interviews were triangulated to crosscheck themes, statements, and descriptions that emerged throughout the analysis. In addition, I utilized Microsoft Excel to further review, organize, quantify and validate the overall data analysis initially established by hand (Creswell, 2009). Member checking occurred at multiple stages of the analytic process and included follow-up interviews and emails with participants, and confirmation and review of transcribed data. Finally, I acknowledge my personal biases as it pertains to the results of this study and note this bias in my reflectivity statement.

Reflectivity Statement

To the greatest extent possible, I relied on the views of my participants (Creswell, 2009) while conducting this study. Although data were admittedly shaped through the lens of my own personal experiences (Crotty, 1998), it is essential for researchers to set aside their personal attitudes and perspectives to fully understand the phenomena under study (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2002). This notion is particularly important for a phenomenological study. I prioritized and explored the experiences of the participants, rather than filtering those experiences through my worldview. As a high school administrator, my expectations and predictions of the data and responses of the participants are recognized. My experiences in schools, both as a student and as an educator, also have affected my experiences and why I chose to explore this research topic. My priority was the same as so many of these participants: to further understand the potential benefits of a mentoring relationship between novice principals and their mentors. Additionally, I
recognize that confidential issues did emerge during the participant interviews. I did not disclose topics discussed in a participant interview with other participants in this study. Finally, I recognize not all mentoring participants had positive experiences with their counterpart. It is in the best interest of all stakeholders (researcher, school, and participants) for study not only to be fair and transparent but also confidential.

**Generalizability**

Generalizability establishes whether this study’s findings are relevant to a larger audience, different setting, or outside of the participants involved (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Merriam (2002) noted generalizability within qualitative research in most cases offers this opportunity by allowing practitioners to consider “local conditions” (p. 28) and apply the knowledge and findings of a study to their situation. In other words, the audience of this study should utilize the findings to conceptualize how they apply to their unique situation. With regard to this study, the findings highlight how relational structures influenced participant mentoring experiences, but within the confines of these unique participant population. Readers should take the implications and recommendations from this study and apply them to their local context.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the research methodology implemented during this study. Chapter 3 included a description of the participant and site selection process, including criteria established for the 10 dyads to participant in this study. Additionally, this chapter concisely highlighted participants’ background and characteristics. Next, this chapter presented the process utilized to collect and analyze qualitative data. The primary method of data collection for this study was in-person interviews. Emergent themes were coded using this study’s conceptual
framework, but unintended findings and themes were also explored. Finally, data analytic procedures addressed the overall process to ensure this study was reliable and valid.
Chapter 4

Findings

This phenomenological study explored relationships within 10 mentoring dyads of novice principals and their mentors. This study investigated how relational structures of mentorships influenced the experiences of the mentee and mentor, capital exchanged, and reciprocal benefits. The following overarching research question guided this study: What elements of the mentor-mentee relationship support a novice principal’s ability to fulfill the expectations and professional responsibilities of their role? Four subquestions supplemented this question:

1. What approaches have novice principals and their mentors used to form and sustain trusting, supportive professional mentor relationships?

2. How has participant identity, investment, and intent affected the mentoring experience?

3. How has participants’ professional practice been affected by the resources or forms of capital (career oriented and psychosocial) exchanged and reciprocated within a principal mentor-mentee relationship?

4. How do mentoring participants negotiate challenges or disagreements that arise as a result of their relationship?

Presentation of Reported Findings of the Study

Chapter 4 presents the results and analysis from this study. Emergent themes and findings from participant interviews and follow-up interviews are organized by the subquestions. Data analysis was driven by the conceptual model, Principal Mentoring Framework, discussed in Chapter 2. Established through professional mentoring literature and social capital theory, Principal Mentoring Framework explores the influence of relational structures including informal vs. formal dyads, participant identity, intent and investment, trust building, and the capital and resources exchanged from participants in a mentorship. Emergent themes outside of this conceptual framework are also explored in this chapter.
Overall, 12 themes emerged across the four subquestions and included supplementary findings. Finally, the overarching research question is addressed following the subquestions. Findings from the overarching research question address three emergent themes across multiple subquestions and present the major findings in their entirety. Refer to Table 1 in Chapter 3 to review relevant participant demographics, characteristics, and a summary of each mentorship background.

Research Subquestion 1: What Approaches Have Novice Principals and Their Mentors Used to Form and Sustain Trusting, Supportive Professional Mentor Relationships?

This subquestion focused on the behaviors participants utilized to establish trusting and supporting relationships. Three themes were revealed within the data: supportive approaches taken by formal mentorship participants to form relationships, supportive approaches taken by informal mentorship participants to form relationships, and participants’ efforts to establish and maintain trust as a foundational component to their relationship.

**Relationship development in formal mentorships.** This data included five mentoring pairs who identified as active participants in a formal mentoring experience. A formal mentorship is defined as a relationship that originates and is endorsed by an entity other than the mentee, in this study by the novice principal’s school district. Formal mentorships were associated with the Illinois Principals Association (IPA) or a program through the mentee’s Regional Office of Education (ROE). Subthemes included the following: supervisors initiating formal mentorships, the process for mentor-mentee match, participants beginning a formal relationship, and program requirements and structures used to support novice principals.

**Supervisors initiate formal mentorships.** Participants involved in formal mentorships noted their relationships originated through two potential paths. Two novice protégés were asked
by their supervisors if they would like to participate in an organized mentoring program and three were told by their supervisor that mentoring was required by the state of Illinois. Principal Garrett, who participated in the local ROE program, explained,

> Our Superintendent just let me know that there would be a one-year program that all new principals in the state have to go through, and I think he asked me if I had any ideas about who the mentor could be. I discussed the possibility [of a mentorship] with the Assistant Superintendent as well as other possible mentors, but I do not think that is typically the norm. I think they like to go outside the district.

Superintendents who suggested that novices participate in the ROE program were more directly involved in the mentor-matching process. Principal Chris said, “I think the superintendent may have said something because I know two other principals in my district who are fairly new also had Roger as a mentor, I think they probably had a good experience with him as well.”

As noted, some participants did have a choice about whether they wanted to participate in a mentorship. Principal Madeline shared,

> I got an email from my boss, who is the executive director of elementary schools. She said there is a program for new principals; it involves a mentor and it might be something you are interested in. If so, call this number. Already being overwhelmed I am like, really? I do not really need another thing on my plate, but okay because it is my boss and she is suggesting that I do it, so let me look into it.

The initial formal mentorship process started in different ways, but all mentees noted they would not have taken the initiative to seek out mentors because they did not have the time. Principal Chris admitted, “I did not even frankly look into it at the time because I was so busy trying to get everything established and figure everything out. I was like sure, mentor, fine like, whatever.”

**Process for formal mentor-mentee match.** Mentoring participants indicated varying match processes and criteria utilized by IPA, the ROE, or their direct supervisors in recruiting the mentor. Each of the five formal protégés, however, had difficulty explicitly noting how their mentor had been identified, although they had some assumptions regarding how the matches
occurred. Data suggested the criteria IPA utilized to match participants were based on factors such as the mentor’s expertise, mentee’s needs or goals, and geographic proximity of participants. Principal Rebecca, who voluntarily entered into a mentorship because she is the only principal in a one-high school district, shared,

We reached out to IPA who has that kind of mentor program built in . . . from what it sounds like, when they get an application they like look for somebody based on what my goals were for the year. They asked some demographic information and then just, what are your goals? What is it that you really want to work on this year and hit that really hard? . . . So they just assigned me somebody.

Rebecca’s mentor, Jennifer who lived close to Rebecca’s school, explained,

I was very apprehensive about it [mentoring Rebecca], frankly because our experiences did not match up. They needed somebody who would go on to the South side and I do not think they had a lot of people in the program that were available there.

Mentor Jessica acknowledged she was able to inform IPA of areas within mentoring and leadership with which she was most comfortable. As with other mentorships, proximity played a role in the match process:

I know location kind of mattered because I am only about 50 minutes away from her [Madeline], so I know that played a factor as well. But, mainly I think it was the instructional piece and probably the fact that we were female. The IPA field coordinator alluded to that at one point. Overall, I think they did a good job in matching us; we both have very similar beliefs.

There was an exception within the IPA match process: Principal Michael thought he participated in the IPA program but his mentor actually coordinated through the ROE program. As a result, his goals and needs were not considered with his mentor assignment. Michael shared,

We have always had new principals be mentored by an IPA principal mentor, and they kind of fulfill that role. Our district pays for it and it is an automatic when you become principal in this district. So, my mentor was chosen for me and given to me and she is a former district principal herself. So, it made a lot of sense in that way. I knew going in that philosophically we were about as different as could be.
The match process for the remaining two ROE participants was less transparent, compared to the IPA program. In ROE-led partnerships, district officials requested the specific mentor for their new principal. Principal Chris noted, “I did not fill anything out. . . . Somebody said Roger is going to be your mentor and then he just showed up. . . . Then, I am like ‘Let’s do this.’” Although Principal Garrett initially was assigned to Robert by his supervisor, he had the option to decline the relationship after his initial meeting with Robert. However, Garrett found it was “just very comfortable earlier on . . . obviously it was a good fit. So I found value in every one of those conversations.” Garrett further explained,

I think it just takes time to try to figure out what is the dynamic of that relationship going to be like. It was very early on where I just felt very comfortable, supported, and listened to . . . I was getting good feedback and it was not all about business.

Although formal match criteria were not utilized in the ROE programs, participants did not suggest it affected relationship quality, with the exception of Principal Michael’s scenario.

**Participants beginning a formal mentoring relationship.** Each of the five formal mentoring dyads spent the first few meetings working to establish a relationship. In each case, mentors strove to help mentees understand the nature of the program, including its requirements and expectations, their prior experiences, and maintaining open lines of communication. Mentor Robert noted,

I think the first thing we do is: I walk in, introduce myself, and just told him who I was, what my experiences were, and then say do you want to continue? And so I just think we introduced ourselves to each other and that was it, and it was nothing more than laying the groundwork and then seeing if you want to pursue. Because if he said “No, I do not think so,” then I would say fine . . . I wanted to make sure that he knew who I was and who I was not. . . . This was what our expectations were in the contract that we signed.

Mentors initially worked to ensure protégés that the purpose of the relationship was to support them through listening and providing advice when necessary. From the beginning, mentors established that the purpose was not authoritative or directive in nature. Mentor Jessica recalled,
I am kind of trying to look at it from a parent’s perspective. When we first met and we had that first in-person meeting, because we had talked a couple times on the phone, I said, “I want you to give me what you are looking for, what can I do to help you?”

Similarly, Principal Chris said, “he [mentor Roger] was kind of just here to listen and help and he would provide advice if I asked him, but he was not going to directly tell me how to do things.” Principal Madeline noted, she [Mentor Jessica] is just an ear that will listen to me and provide suggestions . . . she has given me a lot of guidance.”

Although Principal Rebecca articulated she quickly felt a connection with Jennifer, she noted Jennifer is “more of an advice giver; she just does like, ‘Okay, how is this going?’ She is never posing questions like, ‘How would you deal with that?’ She is not that kind of person.”

**Formal program requirements and structures used to support novice principals.** Each of the five formal dyads explained their program requirements included between 40-50 hours of support in the first year, with relationships extending into a second year involving an additional 25 contact hours. Formal mentors, who were paid for their services, were required to log their contact hours by documenting the nature of the conversation and locality. The data noted means of communication, frequency of conversations, and locality of the meetings were important during the formation of the relationship. Mentors encouraged mentees to contact them at any time with questions or concerns, including by email or cell phone, and setting up a location to meet in-person. Mentors frequently visited mentees’ schools on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

Mentor Jessica expressed,

> Initially we met twice a month face-to-face. The IPA said you only had to have three in-person meetings, but Madeline made it pretty clear that she wanted face-to-face . . . that would be a better fit for her. Because I was retired, I could do that.

Madeline shared, “she [Jessica] would check on me, too. She would not always wait for me to call.” Mentors met mentees in their offices to converse, observe administrative meetings, walk
the halls, attend extra-curricular activities, include them in outside social events, attend administrator academies, and meet at other local entities to collaborate with other principals and stakeholders. Mentor Roger shared,

In Chris’ situation I might come in and watch him run a parent meeting, or I might come in and watch him run an administrative meeting, or I might watch him do something else . . . I would sit with him at a football game . . . I watched the musical with him. Because it gives me a sense of what the school is and it also allows me to talk with him at various times of the day and night . . . you know, when he is doing things pertaining to the school. So that’s the way we essentially try to set it up . . . And there was one evening that I invited him out with other principals that I had mentored for dinner so that they could just kind of talk with one another and collaborate.

Mentor Tammie recalled,

We had mentor and mentee meetings with all of our mentors and mentees. So the mentees got to get together and talk about what they are experiencing and what is happening. And then we always did a second-year panel for the first-year principals. So, second-year principals would come in and they would meet with the first-year principals and let them just ask questions and a Q&A type of thing.

Two mentees involved in formal mentoring programs noted specific examples of programmatic structures that were non-existent or ineffective. Principal Michael noted he and his mentor met every two weeks at his school, but she declined to attend events outside of school hours: “I invited [my mentor] to come to special events, plays, but she was not interested that . . . Everything we did was during the day.” Michael also shared, “We had to get 50 hours in. She was meticulous, even down to the 10-minute increments. She recorded if we left early or stayed late. So, we had the 50 hours.” Principal Garrett also observed that opportunities for groups of novice principals to interact were not always effective:

I felt there was so much value in having that one-to-one conversation rather than kind of this artificial bringing people together to talk about certain themes and some of the presenters that they had at the service center . . . I am not sure to what degree the individual principals value hearing about experiences which they never have to deal with in their own particular position.
Each of the five mentors reported far more working knowledge of the formal program expectations than did their mentees. Protégés were not always fully aware of state of Illinois or program requirements.

**Relationship development in informal mentorships.** This theme involved five mentoring dyads who reported being active participants in informal mentorships. An informal mentorship is a relationship that is self-directed and formed by individual participants without expectation from an organizational entity. Participants articulated the following themes associated with the formation of their relationship: mentoring dyads held similar values and educational philosophies, and mentors continued to invest in their mentees by supporting their career and leadership advancement. The informal relationships emerged in two forms: mentee and mentor encountered one another in some professional capacity and developed a collegial relationship leading up to the mentoring experience, or the mentor had supervised the mentee in a professional capacity and continued to support the mentee’s development as a novice principal.

**Mentor and mentee meet as professionals at earlier career stage.** Two informal mentoring pairs formed their relationship over time in previous professional capacities. Both novice principals met their informal mentor prior to their principalship, made an interpersonal connection, and from that time each participant actively continued in the relationship. There was a sense of mutual admiration, respect, and philosophical alignment between mentor and mentee that sustained over time. Principal Joseph shared,

> We met when Ashley was exploring different job offers and opportunities and we had a principal job here that she came to look at. . . . I was an assistant principal. And I met her and gave her a tour of our high school, and in that time we started talking about what she believes and what she is trying to do as principal. . . . What I believe in and what I am trying to do as AP. I know from my perspective that we just kind of clicked and I believe she would say the same thing, that we really sort of had an energy with each other . . . and that it would be exciting and great to work with each other. Just in the short time we could just tell we would be good partners. It did not turn out that she came here, but then
after that initial meeting we have a mutual friend. So, through that mutual friend we would sort of be in touch periodically with one another, we would see each other at periodic events and always sort of reconnect.

Joseph’s mentor, Ashley, affirmed that in order for a mentorship to work the pair has to “click.”

Also recalling the tour experience, Ashley shared how that experience led the dyad to intentionally stay in touch over time:

So we really got connected kind of tight through that [tour experience]. . . . But then he contacted me a couple of years ago, and he said would you be willing to continue to meet with me or meet informally? And I said I would love to. So Joseph and I finding each other, I think that is the best way to put it together. Like find your own mentor that you think you have somehow kept in contact with and know a little bit about. Someone with similar values.

Joseph and Ashley’s relationship formed and persisted as these informal encounters occurred, due to their shared values. Joseph situation was distinct because his superintendent also assigned him a formal mentor during this same time period—one who did not share his values or vision for the school, but he was required to meet with his formal mentor. In fact, the formal mentor was essentially someone selected to explain to Joseph everything he needed to do to improve from the superintendent’s viewpoint. Joseph expressed,

I had a mentor assigned to me, but I have not clicked with that person. So that is a good example of how just assigning people mentors does not necessarily work . . . there is no match and it has not been a natural connection. It has not been a relationship that I have viewed as beneficial to me and so I have not invested in it.

Reflecting on his formal mentorship arrangement and informal experience, Joseph stated his engagement and investment with Ashley, his informal mentor, was significantly higher. Principal Trevor also had a distinct moment when he met his eventual mentor, Rita. Trevor met Rita while serving as an assistant principal; Rita at the time was the district’s assistant superintendent.

Trevor recalled,

I remember the first admin meeting and I had not known her very well. . . . I was sitting right next to her and she just said we are so happy to have you on board and I thought that
was really nice. I did not even know her that well, but it was a nice welcoming kind of statement. So that was my first real interaction with her. I remember that.

Trevor and Rita eventually worked closely together once Rita become superintendent and initiated strategic planning meetings Trevor attended. As the relationship grew, Trevor recalled interrupting Rita on multiple occasions to discuss important issues surrounding student discipline or staffing. Trevor shared, “she was always willing to give me her full attention.” Rita noted these encounters over time by acknowledging Trevor’s visits had a direct influence on how she viewed him as a leader:

What I liked about Trevor is even with my position and title, which kind of scares people sometimes . . . it never bothered him at all and he would come in and say, “I got to talk to you about this because I do not think I am on track with this or whatever.” And I appreciated that.

Ultimately, Trevor became a principal in a different district; however, this dyad is the only mentorship in my participant group in which the mentor reached out to support the novice principal. Rita had pursued formal training to coach novice administrators and this experience prompted her to contact Trevor. Trevor shared, “We have stayed in touch while I have been at North High School. She became a certified coach herself, so she needed someone who she did not work with . . . who she could practice her coaching on.” Trevor agreed to support her coaching and build his leadership capacity as a new principal.

*Internal administrators form relationship with protégé and helps advance their career.*

District level personnel who informally mentored their colleagues occurred in two informal dyads. Unique from the informal mentorships addressed prior, mentees discussed in this section identified a district level administrator as their mentor. These mentees did not express apprehension or intimidation in their relationship with the mentor, despite power dynamics associated with a district administrator’s role. The principals whose mentor also served as their
supervisor immediately recognized them as a supportive figure over time, including when they attained the principalship.

Mentor Douglas, a new superintendent, hired mentee Sherri as a middle school principal. Sherri mentioned that although Douglas was her direct supervisor and evaluator, she engaged and invested in the relationship from the onset. They immediately bonded over their prior professional experiences, particularly their passion for coaching. Initially, Sherri was drawn to the relationship due to Douglas’ verbal support and care. Sherri recalled what Douglas privately said to her following the interview for the principalship:

He said . . . “you are going to make mistakes, everybody does, but it is my job to help you so that you do not fall and break your leg. You may fall and skin your knee, but you are not going to fall and break your leg.” Once he said that to me in the interview I am like, this is the guy I want to work with because it is a really messy job and I know I am going to mess up . . . if this guy is brand new and he trusts me as his first hire then I really want to hitch my wagon to him and make sure that I am following his vision.

Douglas and Sherri noted their relationship continued to evolve over time, especially in year two when they interacted frequently to work on strategic planning for a new middle school structure. Douglas invested time in Sherri’s development by providing her feedback, spending time at her school, and modeling effective leadership. Sherri articulated as time when on, she felt more comfortable calling Douglas to discuss concerns or seek advice; however, she was worried about bothering him with questions at times due to his demanding schedule.

Similarly, Mentor Carl, a principal himself at the time, hired Tyler as a high school assistant principal of student services. Carl eventually became the assistant superintendent and Tyler the principal. Carl and Tyler quickly became close, even though Carl was Tyler’s direct supervisor at time. Tyler shared, “just having that day-to-day interaction with him as an assistant principal we really developed a close friendship and working relationship.” Carl expressed he quickly saw, including during the initial interview, that Tyler’s personality and vision aligned
with the direction of the school and his personal philosophy. Carl and Tyler were unique in that Tyler continued to follow Carl’s footsteps as Carl advanced within the organization. Carl observed the dynamic was both positive and negative as their relationship developed:

Having been in the assistant principal of student services position before Tyler I think that was good and bad for Tyler, because there were certain things that I was like, “I think you should do it this way” and really wanted him to do it a certain way. There are other things where you know giving him some opportunities to go on his own, but having had experiences in that office I think there were times I could really help him and kind of mentor him, and then there were times I am sure that he was like, “man, I wish Carl had not been an APSS.”

This dynamic continued as Carl and Tyler continued to work closely together and Carl promoted Tyler’s advancement in the organization.

An internal mentor, who served as both a mentor and former principal, was also represented in one informal dyad. Mentor Nadean and novice principal Sandra developed a relationship grounded in philosophical alignment as educators, but in a different context compared to other participants. Nadean met Sandra when she was hired as a principal in the school where Sandra was teaching. Sandra’s classroom was next to Nadean’s office. Nadean recalled,

She made me laugh. She still makes me laugh. . . . I knew she was relational. I knew she was in there building relationships, she was in there teaching kids that we do hard things. I remember she used to say that and she had this poster on her wall or a little sign just hung in her classroom, you know we do thank you’s, we do real, we do dreams . . . we do all of that and that is what she believed in and that is what I believe in too, especially the last word family. She cultivated that in her classroom and I think I gravitated to her because of it. And she is no drama. She was on the bus and she was ready to drive the bus if I had asked her to. She took a lot of initiative with things. She did not sit back and wait to be asked.

Nadean saw promise in Sandra due to her leadership roles outside of the classroom on various committees, instructional pedagogy, and willingness to go the extra mile. Nadean expressed, “You figure out the teachers that share your vision for everything and understand what good
instruction is. I think I have been able to identify the people who give a 110%.” Nadean in fact did ask Sandra to “drive the bus,” encouraging her to consider pursing leadership. Sandra confirmed this experience and Nadean’s influence on her entering leadership a few years later:

> We just had that relationship . . . she would include me in different things that she did not have to include me in as far as building meetings or leadership things and then encouraged me to continue education and that route. And I did my internship with her when I was completing my Type 75 [principalship] program.

A common practice in this elementary school, Sandra would frequently cover as principal for the day, including when Nadean was out of the building for a long medical leave. Once Sandra became principal at another elementary school in the district, Sandra continued to seek out Nadean for support. She noted, “I think too there is a level of comfort with her just because I have known her for so long and so going into this position [principalship] it was a natural mentorship and that probably helps a lot.”

*Invisible power structure between district administrator mentors and protégés existed.*

Although both mentees who were mentored by a district-level mentor stated that relational aspect did not affect their mentorship, their mentors suggested a formal hierarchical authority structure was present but not explicitly addressed by protégés in two informal dyads. Principal Tyler and Mentor Carl have a long-standing relationship as they both have advanced vertically in the organization. That relationship has changed somewhat as Tyler and Carl have different priorities through their building and district roles. Although neither participant explicitly addressed the notion of power, examples where provided. Carl explained,

> There are times when this happens to be the position I have. So, there are some of those situations where we will disagree and will be like, “Yes, but you are going to do this because this is what we are.”
Carl’s statement suggests that although he is Tyler’s mentor, he is also in a position of authority, which involves issuing directives to Tyler. Similarly, Mentor Douglas shared an example of his power as superintendent while also informally serving as Sherri’s mentor can have limits:

Sometimes I think she is not comfortable telling me things... I think she wants to handle things herself. There are times where she says “Well, I do not want to be bothering you all the time.” So like three or so months later after she had some frustration built up she will come to me and she will tell me, “Well, I do not know if you know this or not but this is kind of going on,” and I would say, “why did you not just tell me?” She would say, “I do not want to bother you.” But it is like you know better than that...

Douglas, who admits he is not “a big power guy,” observed that Sherri was concerned with interrupting or bothering her boss with leadership-related issues until the issues became too immense to handle on her own.

Informal and formal structures in place to facilitate mentoring. Participants from each of the five informal dyads shared their mentoring experiences occurred in two different forms: formal settings such as district meetings, evaluation processes, educational conferences, and coaching sessions; and personal, informal settings such as coffee shops, phone calls, and other social events. Although five mentees self-identified as participating in an informal mentorship, their development and mentoring experiences did occur at times in a formalized setting. Mentor Douglas highlighted, “all of our principal meetings are basically leadership development workshops and the principals take a lead in facilitating it... [and] have a two-day administrator retreat.” Formalized meetings, which were highly organized and consistent over a period of a couple weeks, provided mentees access to observe their mentor lead others, reflect, and improve their leadership capacity. Principal Sherri commented that Douglas formally supported her,

We read the principal book and a PLC book. I had been exposed to PLCs. That was not anything new to me, but I think changing my mindset from being a member of a PLC as a teacher, to leading PLCs throughout our building was very different for me. And so those were definitely things that when we were reading as a whole group in our leadership team
Douglas and I would talk about later on. I mean a lot of those things I was like oh, again I did not know that I needed it until I read it, and . . . I should be doing that.

Sherri further explained, "I was probably more in the trenches with him and . . . had more opportunities to watch him in the trenches and kind of model what he was doing if that make sense." Formal coaching also occurred within an informal mentorship. Principal Trevor and his mentor, Rita, recalled their experiences. Trevor shared, "we met 6 or 7 times over the winter mostly here [his office], and she was following her model and we were talking about issues and that helped me work through some things and again build my leadership capacity." Rita highlighted her coaching sessions,

I would ask him these questions: What would you like to get out of today’s session? . . . How are you today? What has been going on? . . . I would always end it with so what is your action plan from today’s discussion?

In addition to formalized experiences, informal mentoring experiences occurred during their personal time, in social settings, and over the phone. Conversations varied in frequency from consistent to more organic in nature whenever an issue or opportunity presented itself to share. Mentor Ashley shared, "It is meeting for coffee at Starbucks. There is not a set day. He [Joseph] actually initiates it most of the time." Joseph recalled,

This last year I started dealing with so much more intensive things and that is where I sort of formally ask her like, “Ashley can we meet for coffee? . . . I really need help and I need your advice and I could really use some extended time together with you.” And we have always sort of left it where every time we talk there is sort of an understanding that we are going to talk again . . . it is like you know where to find me when you need to call me you pick up the phone and I will find you.

On the other hand, Tyler, who over time developed a close friendship his mentor, Carl, spoke with his mentor frequently: "I talk to him almost every day and about both work related or non-work-related. Sometimes I will talk to him in the evening . . . when we are not working, sometimes we will talk on the way into work." Barriers can exist to the informal settings relative
to regularly scheduled encounters that assert some level of accountability for participants to meet. Mentors and mentees each noted times when they cancelled or were too busy to reach out for help, including maintaining work-life balance. Nadean expressed,

We do not see each other as much as we should. We used to go out socially more often. We both enjoy good wine and good food, but she has young kids. So when she has a break in her schedule she spends it with her family and I understand that.

Dyadic trust foundational to forming and sustaining mentoring relationship. Participants shared the importance of establishing and maintaining trust as an essential aspect of their relationship. Mentoring pairs who participated in formal relationships deliberately and immediately addressed issues of confidentiality as a foundational means to establish trust in a new relationship. Informal mentoring pairs noted a primary reason the relationship existed and sustained was due to their longstanding trust, confidence, and friendship with each other.

Establishing trust in a formal mentorship. All five mentors associated with formal relationships intentionally addressed issues of confidentiality in their first interaction with their mentee. Mentor Jennifer shared,

Well, one of the first meetings . . . I mean that is what you tell them [everything is confidential], that it is part of the protocol . . . I think that was just, it is a thing that you do with the IPA, but just to say that outright that this is confidential. She had to trust me because I was just there to serve her.

Jennifer’s mentee, Principal Rebecca, confirmed this conversation regarding confidentiality: “I vividly remember her saying like, ‘Do not worry, everything you say is confidential. I will not talk to anybody about it.’” Rebecca shared weeks later her superintendent checked on her, asking if the mentorship was going okay. Rebecca recalled he had no idea about their conversations: “Knowing that she is not sharing it with anybody” was foundational to their relationship. Mentor Tammie also asserted the importance of grounding the relationship in confidentiality, specifically as it pertained to information potentially shared with her mentee’s superintendent:
Well, one of the strong parts of this mentor training is the idea of complete confidentiality. You cannot be seen as someone who is going to report up to the superintendent, you can never betray the confidentiality and that is a key tenant of all of mentoring because otherwise your principal is never going to feel that trust enough to admit things that makes them look vulnerable. So one of the first things that we talk about when I come in is everything you say to me is completely confidential. I will not report anything to your superintendent or your assistant superintendent. . . . So that confidentiality is really key and I think that we had a very strong trust relationship.

Each formal mentee in this study confirmed their mentor addressed the issue from the onset. Tammie’s mentee, Principal Michael, recalled this conversation at the beginning of their time together and noted how their trusting relationship developed:

The trust definitely grew. I would say by the end I trusted the confidentiality very highly and felt comfortable talking about most things . . . she never broke confidentiality and that was helpful. I did not feel anything was off topic because it might get back to my building.

Principal Chris affirmed other participants’ conversations regarding confidentiality but also noted the only reason why his mentor Roger would breach that privacy:

He basically said, “You know, within this program unless it deals with student safety or unless you are violating ethics of an educator, everything is confidential.” He said, “If you want to tell me things about your superintendent, I am not going to go back to him and tell him.” He seemed like an honest, straightforward guy. I pretty much trusted him from the start.

Articulating the centrality of confidentiality was important to mentors, but mentor Robert also articulated the need not to push too hard for information, especially at the onset of the relationship: “I really think it [trust] is contingent upon the relationship and the needs of the principal. I am saying that because if he or she, if they do not feel comfortable with the conversation, I do not want to push it.”

*Trust was the basis of informal relationships.* Informal mentoring partners shared the feeling of trust was a fundamental reason their personal relationship initially developed and continued into a mentorship. This theme was articulated by all 10 participants from informal mentorships. Carl shared, “from the very beginning, when Tyler started as an assistant principal,
he is somebody who intuitively understands how you build trust with people.” The data highlighted multiple traits that each person in the relationship found invaluable to build trust with each other, particularly, honesty and vulnerability. Mentor Ashley shared, “They have to believe you are going to work in their best interest and make it about them and not about you. That you will be as honest as possible. That you will give them honest feedback when they need to hear it.” In regard to his relationship with his mentor, Trevor explained,

Rita makes it easy to be open and to be vulnerable, because . . . she will not be afraid to say, “I have no idea what to do here. Let us work through this.” So she will demonstrate that humility, which makes it easier for you to demonstrate humility. She makes it easy to be open and vulnerable.

Mentor Ashley noted trust was built with her mentee before the mentorship started; however, the intensity increased due to the seriousness and gravity of their conversations. Ashley explained,

Joseph told me some things right away that I knew I could not tell a soul. One of the first things I said to him is, “Thank you for trusting me with this. I know you needed to tell somebody.” . . . That was an intense building of trust really quickly.

Joseph affirmed the seriousness of this situation:

Over the summer a new superintendent came into my district and immediately some stuff started to happen that was terribly difficult for me and had a direct impact on me as principal. And I was shocked and confused and totally in the dark about where to go and what to do.

Due to the intensity of Joseph’s situation, their trust immediately was established.

**Respecting mentor’s experience, knowledge, and background helped to establish trust.**

Along with directly addressing the issue of confidentiality, trust deepened over time due to the mentor’s experience, knowledge, and mentees’ respect for their mentors’ overall expertise.

While this concept was a given for an informal mentorship to continue, this theme was presented in four of the five formal dyads as well. Principal Madeline recalled,

She has been in some schools that have propelled forward because of her leadership; she is a walking base of knowledge. I also find just her realness invaluable. Sometimes
depending on who you are around you are kind of guarded like, “I do not know if I can say that around you.” If I was withholding information, if I only wanted Jessica to see me on my good days, our relationship would not be as valuable because she would not be mentoring all of me, it would just be the piece that I showed her, but I show her all.

Rebecca affirmed that the quality of information her mentor shared allowed her to engage in the relationship to a greater extent and trust her mentor, Jennifer:

It is interesting because all of her experiences have been in elementary and all of mine have been in high school, but like the issues we end up talking about cross-cut all of that, like a lot of personnel issues. . . . She has got so much experience that I think that helps with the buy-in as well. . . . I can tell she was good at what she did.

This sense of commitment Rebecca articulated was perceived and confirmed by Jennifer: “I think I gave her a couple of useful things and suddenly I was more useful.” Principal Garrett highlighted similar feelings of trust and respect because of his mentor’s vast experience and success in similar leadership capacities:

I think there is just that level of respect because of the experience level that that person has. So when you know that that person has already been in your shoes as a principal and certainly as a superintendent and understands the complexities. . . . He has been there and was very successful and highly thought of in his own professional career.

In contrast to other participants, Michael’s trust did not grow as a result of his mentor’s expertise. Although he established confidentiality with his mentor, Tammie, Michael shared, “I would hesitate to talk about it [issue] if I knew where her perspective would be and was interested in others’ perspectives to a higher degree than hers.” Issues related to mentee’s reliance on others is addressed in a later section.

In addition to expertise and knowledge, similarities in participant backgrounds and interests also helped establish initial trust. Participants who identified commonalities were able to immediately establish their relationship. Referencing his relationship with Tyler, Mentor Carl stated, “I think we have a lot of similarities in our background. I think that, that was an opportunity for us to start develop that trust.” Sherri developed trust by sharing a similar interest
with her mentor Douglas, “what we share is really that collective team sports philosophy. Like I really believe in importance of working as a team and being a member of a team and what that means, and Douglas and I both share that.”

**Research Subquestion 2: How Has Participant Identity, Investment, and Intent Affected the Mentoring Experience?**

The second subquestion sought to understand how identity, investment, and intent influenced participants’ relationship and mentoring experience. Findings include the following themes: personal identity influenced mentoring relationships, the motivation behind joining a mentorship varied for participants relative to mentor preparation and the type of mentorship, and participant investment during the mentoring experience was positive and highly regarded for most mentors and mentees.

**Participant identity influenced mentoring relationships and experiences.** The notion of identity was consistently noted in participant responses, including all 10 protégés. In this study, participants’ highlighted identity is a combination of multiple human aspects: values, beliefs, philosophy, personality, ethnicity, gender, race, and prior experiences. Specifically, mentors and mentees articulated the following subthemes: participants’ values, philosophies, personalities mattered most; women placed more importance on gender identity than men; protégés placed more emphasis on identity as compared to mentors; and overall identity factors such as race and ethnicity did not influence one cross-racial mentorship.

**Identity defined through participants’ values, personalities, leadership style, and philosophy.** Nine of 10 mentees and 8 of 10 mentors expressed the most significant identity factor influencing their relationship quality was their partner’s values, beliefs, philosophy, and personality. Mentees noted the mentor’s leadership style was integral to their ability to engage...
and learn. Joseph expressed he was drawn to reach out to his informal mentor, Ashley, because of their common focus on servant leadership:

> When we talk leadership we are talking about being the last one to eat and the last one to leave an event. We are not talking about you show up, you make a speech, you look good and then you have everybody else do all the work.

Similar leadership styles and philosophies reinforced relational bonds through promoting discussions where mentees engaged in situational or advice-seeking conversations. Principal Rebecca expressed,

> There is totally different philosophies about why did you become a leader. What do you think the goal of school is? Or, how do you handle situations? . . . If our leadership styles were not similar that would not help me at all to deal with [situations].

Sherri’s relationship with her mentor and superintendent, Douglas, included experiences and situations allowing her to understand their goals and values were similar:

> I mean, I think at our core we are very aligned . . . I think very early-on we both talked about things that frustrated us here in my building and in the district. You know he is very inclusive. We [our district] say all means all . . . and I do not think that those were things that were happening here, and that irritated us both in the beginning . . . I felt he is very forward-thinking and I try to be as much as I can, too.

Principal Tyler also noted the importance of common leadership values and philosophical beliefs, while noting his decisions may differ from those of his mentor, Carl:

> We do have a lot of the same beliefs and philosophies when it comes to education and leadership. . . . Our philosophies are the same. We are very people centered, collaborative, and good communicators, but how we deal with certain situations sometimes may not always be aligned perfectly.

Mentors recognized the importance of leadership philosophy in their overall experience. Mentor Jennifer explained she and Rebecca shared a similar commitment, which allowed them to put kids first in their conversations:

> The one thing that I found out or felt pretty quickly is that Rebecca and I had sort of the same kind of worldview. So, how we kind of met the world and how the concern was for kids and to make sure the kids have the best experience.
An experience illustrating Jennifer’s assertion was a discussion focused on Jennifer’s concern with two underperforming staff members. Jennifer, who also had to make difficult supervisory decisions as a former principal, stated, “Those kind of conversations with Rebecca is where we kind of understood each other.” Mentor Nadeen also articulated that her ability to identify with Sandra was nurtured early in their relationship because their leadership beliefs:

I once had a couple of interns and one of them said to me, “I could never do what you do because I do not like it when people do not like me.” I could care less if you do not like me. If you are not doing what is best for our school we are probably going to have some tough conversations, and Sandra was that way.

Mentors and mentees connected with each other’s personalities and personal backgrounds that ultimately shaped their identity. In reference to his mentor, Trevor shared,

I think we have similar leadership styles. We are both the same Myers-Briggs personality type and we are very similar as far as a big picture, big dreamer, strategic thinkers. . . . We do not like to get slowed down when people want to be in the mud with details, yet we are detail oriented.

Although backgrounds of participants within a dyad might not be identical, the values and characteristics from those experiences influenced relationship quality. Mentor Jessica shared, “I see Madeline has been a very strong person . . . I think I am strong because I had to be for one reason and she is strong because she had to be for a different reason . . . we just kind of connected well.” Some participants noted not only their shared attributes but also reflected on why the connection existed. Principal Sherri noted,

I get the impression that his dad was super hard working . . . and that really shaped him and who he is. And I think my background . . . my dad is a construction guy. He his blue collar, works all the time, and does not take holidays. . . . So, I see some familiar traits.

Shared experiences, values, and characteristics offered a connection between a mentor and mentee, with one exception. Principal Michael articulated that his experiences and beliefs were different from his mentor Tammie. Michael stated, “I could tell we were just very different from
the foundation. So, we stayed surfacey on some pretty benign topics.” While Michael and Tammie finished the hourly requirements of their program, Michael admitted he never fully invested into the relationship. As will be presented throughout the findings, Michael and Tammie’s relationship was the only dyad whose overall experience was not positive, at least from Michael’s perspective.

**Differences in race overcome by common personal attributes.** All participants in this study were White, with the exception of an African American principal. Madeline, who participated in a formal mentorship with Jessica through the IPA, acknowledged that Jessica’s ethnicity initially concerned her. In addition, Jessica and Madeline had served in two very different communities in terms of socio-economic status and community demographics. Madeline shared, “she [Jessica] could not get that minority piece; in fact, I was a little concerned at the schools that she had been at were not like the schools that I have been at because I have been all Westside.” Madeline’s initial hesitancy regarding Jessica’s background, identity, and values quickly changed once they began to spend time together and Madeline understood something important they shared in common:

I am a Black woman and I am proud to be one . . . she was a White female. Yes, I wear two hats and I know what my history is. I know what struggles come along with being a minority, but Black woman is not my sole identity. It is a huge part of who I am, but it is not all of who I am. Part of just my genetic makeup is a strong work ethic. I get it from my father who was successful as an engineer. I was always raised that I would go to college and do something and I never expected to do anything less. I say all of this to say Jessica and I connected even though she is not a Black woman because she worked her butt off and she had a good head on her shoulders.

Discussed in the next section, along with work ethic and other values, Madeline and Jessica connected as women.

**Female mentees acknowledge their gender as influential to their identity and relationship.** Gender was consistently discussed as a factor in terms of individual identities and
their influence on the overall mentorship experience. Specifically, three of the four protégés participating both in formal and informal relationships said gender is important to their lens as principals and overall identity as persons. Mentees observed how few female principals exist, particularly at the high school level. Sherri, who had a male mentor, Douglas, recalled the first time she was exposed to a female principal and its impact upon her. Sherri’s principal at the time was conducting her dissertation research examining the lack of female administrators in education. She recalled, “I was teaching and I remember being like wow . . . she was someone who made me think about something before I was ready to think about it.” Although her relationship with Douglas was positive, Sherri expressed how she could see having a female mentor could be valuable. Principal Rebecca asserted her desire to be formally matched with a female mentor:

    In my experience of being a high school principal there are very few female high school principals. Like in our conference, there is only two out of the 15 schools . . . so there is a different dynamic to it. I would say it has been a benefit because she knows some of the struggles we face sometimes.

Rebecca continued, “there are aspects of female leadership that are just different. Like sometimes we tend to be more emotional and she gets that piece without being judgey.” Principal Sandra noted most of her informal contacts including her informal mentor are females, who “stick together quite a bit.” Sandra hypothesized, “maybe women are just chattier.” Principal Madeline suggested gender helped her immediately connect with her female mentor,

    Being a woman . . . I think made our mentor relationship strong because as women we kind of just have certain things in common. So, you know she would have a cute purse or a cute nail color and that would just be something we were talking about; her nails or where she got the purse from, you know that is what we women do. . . . Being women, being mothers, being leaders that are still trying to be motherly you know, I mean motherhood is a full-time job. The principalship is a full-time job, merging those two I felt like we connected there because she was still a principal and a mother and her child was young.
Mentors attempt to exclude gender as a factor in their relationship. Of the 10 mentoring dyads, eight of the mentors asserted they did not view their mentee’s gender as influential in their relationship with their mentee, including all female mentors with the exception of Jessica. In reference to a principal’s gender shaping the relationship, Mentor Robert expressed,

No, you know I cannot say that it has, but . . . I try to be pretty careful not to encroach upon certain lines. So, for example if you are a woman or if you are a man and I say, “How is your kid doing?” I would ask the same question of him or her. I am not going to ask you, “Are you dating anybody?” That is off the wall, but I would ask, “How is your son doing? I heard that he is playing on the travelling soccer team.” This does not matter whether you are a woman or a man, I am going to ask the same questions.

Rita, who mentored Trevor, noted during her extensive career she attempted not to see gender in her decisions as a leader or identify with that aspect in the workplace. Rita shared,

I tend to not see gender a lot in general, like people would talk to me and say, “How does it feel to be the two percent of all superintendents who are female? How does it feel to be one of them?” It never occurred to me . . . and I sit with almost all male superintendents, so I do not really see any of that.

However, Rita also acknowledged that her prior and close informal relationship with Trevor provided a comfortable level that might not exist with other mentees. Rita stated, “I think had . . . it had not been Trevor . . . I do not know if another mentee would be that way.” Additionally, mentor Nadeen asserted gender did not influence mentoring experiences with Sandra:

I think it is really our convictions because another principal who did his internship with me was a male, if he had Sandra’s convictions and was able to make decisions and able to work in crisis situations, I would be as close to him as I was with her.

The intent and motivation of participants. This theme highlights the motivations and purpose of why participants were involved in mentoring experiences. Subthemes included the following: mentors sought to give back to the next generation of principals while mentees anticipated acquiring expertise through their mentor’s knowledge and experiences, mentor
preparation influenced the format of the mentoring experience for mentees, and intentionality of informal dyads was an extension of their pre-existing relationship.

**Mentors saw this experience as an opportunity to give back to the profession.** Each of the 10 mentors acknowledged the challenges facing the principalship, ranging from time management and stress, to staffing and evaluation issues, to accountability from multiple stakeholders and policy mandates, but a common notion was the necessity for principals to make numerous decisions and living in a new world of organized chaos. Mentor Robert commented, “I think this is true of anyone; the first year you just kind of become like a ping pong ball. You just get batted back and forth and you try to figure out where you are supposed to be.” As such, mentors felt developing or maintaining a relationship with a novice principal was essential to their initial career survival. For instance, Nadeen reported supporting a novice principal was important because she never had access to a mentor herself as young principal:

They gave me the address to the school and the keys to the building and my husband and I . . . we pulled in the parking lot and I looked at that building and I thought, “Holy crap, what have I gotten myself into? I cannot do this.” How does a principal know what to do on day one? How do you know? I had no idea what I was doing. No one helped me. I had no mentor and I did not want to call and ask anybody because I was the new kid on the block.

Ashley saw becoming a mentor as an opportunity to continue doing what she loves, teaching: “I love to learn, and then with the principalship . . . I like the idea of growing people. And that is what I think I got into teaching for . . . It is just working with a different age person.” Jennifer expressed a desire to be around educators: “I really miss being in schools. I really do like being back in action . . . it is the idea of just contributing to the profession.”

Nine out of the 10 mentors explicitly noted building a relationship with a novice principal occurred primarily through listening while providing advice and experience when asked. Additionally, mentors avoided telling mentees what decisions to make or how to manage their
schools. Attempting to influence novice principals’ decisions was not the intent or strategy of any mentor participant. Mentor Tammie reflected on her intention with Principal Michael:

What I learned moving from school to school is that there are great things happening in almost any place you go; you just have to open your mind up to appreciate what that is. What that district does well and what it is that you can bring from your past to help them do even better. People that I have seen fail are people that come in and say “none of this works. I am going to change everything and I am here to teach you.” You will get nothing but push-back and resistance from that type of thinking. What you have to come in and do is see what they are doing well and value that . . . appreciate that.

Mentors entered the mentorship with the understanding that their role was not to tell the mentor what to do in specific situations. Formal mentors, each of whom were recently retired school leaders, were particularly cognizant that their limited understanding of the context may impede their ability to give valid advice. Robert stated,

What I offer, you can take it or leave it. You can say to me, “Robert, you are out of your mind, I could not do that here” and that is okay with me. What all I am trying to be is like a sounding board or reflection piece or conversation starter or you know here is . . . an option.

Robert’s mentee, Garrett, confirmed this assertion by Robert:

Sometimes meeting to throw ideas off of someone who has been through all this both at the principal level and as someone who has supervised principals and to listen to a unique perspective . . . just kind of giving you the feeling of comfort in some of the decisions you made and maybe some thoughts about how you might do some things a little bit differently.

This finding was not limited to formal mentorships. All five informal mentees also noted the conversational and reflective intent of their mentors. Joseph reflected,

I definitely think Ashley is naturally a questioner and wanting you to reflect. This year I have gone to her and said I needed advice and so she can play that role as well, but I do not sense it is natural. I never feel like she tries to get me to do what she would do as much as apply the thought process she would apply to a situation to see where it leads me.

Mentor Rita shared she avoided telling Trevor what to do in specific situations: “I do not know everything. So, I try to avoid this BLM Syndrome, Be Like Me Syndrome.”
Although no other mentor mentioned the longevity of someone who mentors, Robert, a formal mentor, asserted the importance of having a mentor who is still in the profession or recently retired. Robert expressed concerns relative to the changing landscape in education, predominantly in terms of laws and policy, it is important for the mentor to have had those experiences in the field:

If you have been practicing in the last five years, then you should be involved in mentoring. So, if I can go back five years . . . and that is where I am right now; this is my fifth year out. I think things . . . change so quickly. If you go back four years in education . . . the whole evaluation process, that whole thing has completely changed . . . I cannot answer from a first-hand experience with something that did not exist when I was in that role.

**Intentionality within informal dyads is a continuation of relationship.** The intention of informal mentorship pairs was an opportunity to extend collegiality or continue a preexisting friendship. Mentor Ashley shared, “I have known Joseph for a long time. . . . We saw each other at kids’ parties and stuff like that. We have kind of a unique beginning.” Informal relationships similarly existed as a form of general concern and genuine care for the other person. Douglas, who served as Sherri’s direct supervisor and informal mentor, shared, “when you hire somebody you are not going to let them dangle and fail, so I certainly try to make sure that she is doing okay and see if she needs anything.” As opposed to a formal, regular commitment, participants within informal mentorships noted their connections were relative to the mentee’s needs and when those situations that required a conversation occurred. Joseph shared,

Whenever I need it I come to her, but she is not calling and saying, “Alright, you are going into staffing season, do you want to get together and talk? or “I see you got three hires that you got to make, do you want to talk?” I do not need to take my time or her time to affirm what I already know.

**Mentors prepared for the mentorship differently, leading to varying experiences.** Mentors shared background information pertaining to how they prepared for their mentoring experiences. The preparation activities for mentors was diverse in nature and influenced their
pedagogical stance relative to mentoring in specific instances. Several mentors participated in formal training through IPA, a local ROE, or outside agencies. Tammie reported,

I took the state training as well as this collaborative and coaching training . . . the state training was very subpar, it was like one or two days and it was not nearly as good as this workshop put on by UC-Santa Cruz. I would suggest that mentors need to be trained in this collaborative coaching model. I think it is much more effective.

This example is not the only time mentors shared their preparation and differentiating between the use of coaching and mentoring strategies. Three mentors highlighted their desire to implement various forms of coaching frameworks learned through workshops or programs at some point in their careers. As noted earlier, this act was very intentional by mentor Rita who asked her mentee, Trevor, to participate in a mentorship as part of her training:

We [coach trainees] coached each other in class and then we were coached and then they didn’t say anything until the end. . . . We did a variety of those things during our training and it was nerve wrecking. There is two extra people watching you plus everybody in your class. . . . There is vulnerability to all of this. . . . On Trevor’s part he had to be comfortable being vulnerable with me and I had to be comfortable with him . . . the coaches leads everything. So, Trevor led all the discussions.

Trevor corroborated this assentation, providing an example of Rita coaching him through how to assess school-wide data at the conclusion of the first semester. Trevor noted Rita’s questions helped him to reflect and guided his planning. Trevor shared a sample question: “How do I shape that discussion amongst the team which eventually would get pushed out everywhere else? . . . We were talking mostly about how I was going to approach things as a leader.” Rita explained her coaching strategy relied almost entirely on strategic questions and listening: “It is reflective, that is why as a coach I am listening, which is not always very easy. I am getting better at it . . . You have to not jump in and give answers because they need to find the answers.” Mentor Jessica also clarified a difference between coaching and mentoring strategies, but noted she transitioned between those approaches throughout the experience: “Coaching is just a lot of
questions and offering support in a way, where mentoring is kind of having to spell things out because they do not know. They have not gone through it.” These experiences occurred in both formal and informal relationships.

**Mentees gain access to the experience and knowledge of their mentor.** As noted in a prior section, formal and informal mentorships formed for varying reasons. In some instances, mentees were required to attain a mentor as part of their newly acquired role as principal. Novice principals shared similar motivations for their mentoring experiences: an intention to acquire their mentor’s knowledge. Garrett was clear about his desire to learn from Robert: “I take every opportunity to listen to a person with his experience level and now hopefully I can grow from just those conversations that we have.” Principal Chris expressed,

I felt like our situations (former leadership positions) were similar and then I was able to connect to his experiences in this exact place that I am. . . . He was very willing to be open and allow me to ask questions and ask him for advice. . . . Knowing that he had sat in this chair and he had sat in superintendent's chair was important. We likely would not have had as great of a connection.

The social capital and knowledge acquired as a result of these experiences will be discussed in subquestion three.

**Participant investment directly influenced the experiences of mentors and mentees.** Although the intentionality of participants directly related to participant experiences, the investment of mentors and mentees had a profound influence on overall perceptions of mentoring quality. Subthemes included a willingness of principals and their mentors to invest in this experience, participants of formal dyads provided examples of investment, but also shared examples of disengaged partners.

**Mentors and mentees expressed high levels of commitment and investment in mentorship.** This finding held true for nine of the 10 mentors (from the perspective of the
protégé) and for nine of the 10 protégés (from the perspective of the mentors). As noted, the perceptions of commitment and investment of a participant were expressed from their partner. A common behavior mentors demonstrated was a high level of engagement with the mentee’s school. Mentors’ willingness to participate in school activities or monitor them online was noticed and appreciated by principals. Principal Chris noted,

Roger was always interested in school and I am guessing he set up some kind of Google or RSS feed to send his email with the information to our school, because we would win a football game and he would email me the next day. After graduation he emailed me the next day and he said the pictures of graduation looked great. So, he definitely had something going on where he would know what was in the news about our school and then always send a quick email.

Another tangible example of mentors’ commitment was their willingness to meet at a convenient time for the principal and follow through on that meeting. Mentors who consistently showed for their appointments, events, or scheduled calls demonstrated a sense of investment to their mentee. Joseph reflected,

I think Ashley’s investment is relatively strong in terms of a commitment to being there for me when I need her and because anytime I have ever asked she has been willing and able. It has not been, “Yes, I can get together with you in two weeks.” It is like, “You need to get together? Let us get together tomorrow. When can you meet?”

Roger was explicit to his mentee, Chris, about contacting him anytime for any reason. “I have always told him . . . if you ever need to call me, or if you ever need to text me, or if you ever want to talk with me, I am available.” Mentors consistently communicated to their mentees that they were accessible and to contact them if they needed anything.

Protégé investment was also highlighted in the findings. Mentee investment is not a given, particularly when mentees were required to participate as part of a formal experience or were asked by their informal mentor, as in the case of Rita and Trevor. Mentor Rita shared,
The investment of time was fairly significant from both of us. We both have busy lives and all that stuff, but we felt it was worth it. On his part, the investment of time was that he had to have an action plan every time we met.

Four of the five formal mentors reported their commitment to the mentorship deepened based on the initial interactions with their mentee, development of trust, and their perception of their willingness to accept the mentor’s support. Jennifer expressed she was invested once her mentee, Rebecca, affirmed she was committed to the relationship. Jennifer explained, “She said to me at one point every time we meet I get something out of it. That was all I needed to hear, then I committed, and it did not happen right away, but it happened over some time.”

The most common feature associated with commitment and investment was the willingness of either person to spend time with each other. Mentors and mentees interactions occurred in formal settings, informal check-ins, events and social experiences, over the phone or through email. The time demonstrated through intentional interaction was the most noted expression of investment. Mentor Jessica reported she and Madeline were highly invested in their relationship: “The fact that we got to meet twice every month face-to-face and then had phone calls, texts, and emails, we both have put a lot of time and energy into this.”

One formal dyad shared explicit expressions of investment and was the most similar to an informal relationship. Similar to intent, the deeply shared investment and commitment of informal mentors were factors that continued their relationship. Unlike the other four formal mentorships, Madeline’s expression of her relationship with Jessica shared common attributes of other informal relationships, including its intensity. Principal Madeline opened up about her overwhelming gratitude and almost surprise to Jessica’s commitment and care for her:

Jessica was always consistent. When she said she was going to come, Jessica showed up. Jessica showed up early and Jessica stayed late . . . I do not even want to get emotional on this, but I am like, God, when I think about this at the end of my year, I mean there were times when she came and our plan was to sit and talk, and then life happened here at school and Jessica would be out in the hallways with me dealing with students and
talking them off the ledge. . . . It was like, “you really are here for me.” We would sometimes meet away from here and we would go to coffee shops. She would sometimes have a gift for me, not that any of that matters . . . that is not what I need to be able to appreciate her, but she showed me that she genuinely cares.

Examples of Jessica going above and beyond the expectations of her program requirements and what she was contractually paid to do were found. Madeline expressed overwhelming appreciation and gratitude to the extraordinary actions taken by Jessica. An example of mentor Jessica exceeding program expectations included, “I hit 50 hours a while ago. I am not done. I just do not think that is fair to Madeline, so I guess in other words I am cutting my hourly rate, but I do not care.”

Although other examples were not as emotional, interviews of formal partnerships confirmed examples of mentor investment existed. Mentor Robert shared opportunities he extended to Garrett that exceeded program requirements: “I invited him to play in a golf outing, so we played in golf outings a couple of times. . . . I am going to have dinner that I have set up for him and a couple of people that I had mentored.” Roger noted his protégé, Chris, enjoyed discussing literature which influenced his leadership. In fact, Roger stated Chris, “was sharing books with me to read. I would read them and we could talk about that.”

**Lack of participant investment.** There were two exceptions regarding participant investment. Principal Michael expressed Tammie was neither invested in his success nor in being a mentor. At times Michael perceived Tammie was only participating to earn the monetary stipend; as a result, Michael also disengaged: “I did not feel she was invested. I felt she was putting in the hours. And so, I probably wrongfully began to adopt a similar attitude over time.” This dyadic misalignment was unique in that only Michael perceived this lack of investment or acknowledgment of a deficiency in their relationship.
On the other hand, mentoring experiences of Chris and Roger suggest both participants recognized a lack of investment, at least initially, by Principal Chris. Roger explained:

I tried to meet with Chris over a period of time and we were unable to do that. I feel it was more on his part than my part because I was available, so the total numbers of hours of 50 was not reached because at various times when I tried to set things up there was no response back, so again I did not want to force it. He is busy. I still did not want to intrude on that situation. So I think I would have wanted to meet a little bit more with him just because I have an obligation, but the flip side is I cannot bend his arm behind his back and say you have to do this.

Principal Chris confirmed Roger’s assertion of low investment and a feeling of busyness:

I more or less fell off the face of the Earth in November and the December just because of being overwhelmed and feeling like I had to get things done here. So there is a point at the end where I felt like he was probably frustrated with me in the fact that he had continued to reach out and I had cancelled some stuff or did not reciprocate that. And so there came a time in January where I asked him to come in and basically said hey, “I know that I have not been a great mentee or person for the last six weeks. I have been hoping that you will give me another chance . . . I apologize for not making the connections and I do value what you have done in your time and what I have learned from you. Can we not let the last six weeks influence the rest?”

As noted earlier, Chris expressed he did not understand the expectations of a formal mentorship. Over time, Chris learned how to more fully invest in the relationship.

**Research Subquestion 3: How Has Participants’ Professional Practice Been Affected by the Resources or Forms of Capital (Career Oriented and Psychosocial) Exchanged and Reciprocated Within a Principal Mentor-Mentee Relationship?**

This subquestion focused on the type of capital and resources utilized to support participants and how those supports influenced the participants’ practice, highlighting new understandings from not only the protégé but also the mentor’s perspective. Additionally, this subquestion sought to understand and classify the types of issues participants were discussing into the two different forms of capital: career oriented and psychosocial. Subthemes in this section included mentees consistently accessed career-oriented capital because of their
mentorship; psychosocial supports were an imperative aspect of the mentorship, particularly for informal dyads; and reciprocal benefits existed for mentors.

Career-oriented mentoring experiences were evident in each of the 10 dyads. A common theme throughout discussions among mentoring dyads focused on career-oriented mentoring. As noted in Chapter 2, Kram’s (1983) mentoring framework suggested there are five general categories relative to career-oriented mentoring experiences, which include sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. To organize subthemes relative to career-oriented mentoring experiences, subthemes are combined and categorized in a way that best represents emergent data from this study.

Mentoring experience yielded transformational support by mentoring through questioning. Mentees relied on their mentors to provide significant support relative to transformative practices through the use of strategic questioning. In this context, mentoring or coaching is categorized as providing mentees knowledge and strategizes they otherwise would not have without their mentor, in order to meet their job responsibilities. Most important, this subtheme highlights the how mentees utilized their mentors to make strategic decisions and at times set direction for their organization.

One of the most utilized mentor strategies was asking protégés questions to help them reflect, organize, or direct their thoughts and ultimately make a decision or further develop their personal leadership. Principal Sherri shared a conversation with her mentor, Douglas:

We were processing and reflecting on my practice and what was going on here. And that was really pivotal in my experience, that reflection piece when he would ask me why I chose to do what I did or why I did not think about it this way, and I think chewing on things with him was really helpful.
Principal Joseph provided an example of how Ashley’s questioning helped him consider alternative points of view before reaching a conclusion. Explaining a frustrating scenario involving a teacher and Ashley’s strategic response, Joseph recalled Ashley’s words:

“I understand you are really upset, but you do not know a lot of what was motivating him [teacher], so let me just tell you before you jump to conclusions I think you need to ask these questions because otherwise it is going to seem like you have made up your mind and this person has not even had a chance to talk to you.” . . . That is where it [mentoring] has helped.

Ashley confirmed that she and Joseph frequently discussed real-time scenarios and problems he faced as a novice principal. Ashley explained it was important for her to ask questions to offer clarity for her mentee, Joseph. Ashley believed Joseph always had the answer inside of him but needed help forming and articulating that process. From the mentor perspective, the use of questioning to help mentees reflect and engage was a targeted and purposeful plan. Specifically, mentor Rita shared a scenario with Trevor where her question to him was simple: “Is there another way you need to approach that?” Rita recalled Trevor ultimately ended the conversation by stating, “Maybe I should ask my team what they are thinking?” This was a transformative moment for Trevor’s leadership. Rita reminded Trevor, “a lot of times administrators are supposed to have all of the answers, but we do not.”

**Transformative experiences occurred through supporting the mentee’s personal development, leadership, and school programming initiatives.** Career-oriented conversations between mentors and mentees covered topics such as leadership styles, school culture, principal professional development, school-wide staff professional development, strategic planning, and data analysis. Mentor Douglas shared, “it is more a matter of having regular ongoing dialogue about what is important and prompting her to think about what she is doing than it is me having to you know micromanage her school improvement data or whatever.” Noted in multiple
mentoring dyads, mentee needs dictated the direction of the mentoring discussion. Douglas explained, “I think a lot of our conversations tend to focus on her professional development practices and what she is doing to help teachers move and create culture in her building, those are the professional types of conversations we have.” Principal Sherri confirmed Douglas’ perception of the experience and its impact on her leadership practices: “Quite honestly, those are things I guess I really had not thought about or had not been exposed to prior to coming here.” Sherri attended conferences with Douglas, participated in book studies he led, and continued having individual mentoring discussions with him. Sherri explained,

He has expanded and challenged my thinking, and again there were things that I did not even know were there or I should be thinking about . . . I think that culture is really important to him and that value of teamwork. Those are strong moral foundations to me that I knew the importance of, but to hitch my wagon with someone who also believes it . . . reaffirmed my thinking.

Leadership development unfolded differently within dyads. Mentor Rita spent time with Trevor addressing his personality type and strengths and deficits associated with it. Trevor’s personality tended to be more about systems and operationally focused; therefore, Rita helped Trevor understand his most important focus is to keep people in mind. Rita shared educational leadership is about “working with people . . . you have got to move people to get anywhere.”

Along with leadership development, mentor-mentee discussions focused on the school improvement plan or school programming. As an example, Roger supported Chris’s vision to strengthen an ongoing diversity initiative once Chris identified this area as an essential topic:

Sometimes our conversations were about what his visions were or what his goals were . . . he explains, “Here is what I am trying to do with my staff. . . . We brought in an outside company to come in and work with us so that we can begin to attend to the low expectancy students and the low expectations of parents, and even to the point of low expectations of staff to try to accelerate that or to try to improve that. Here is what we are doing.”
After Chris described this school-wide initiative, Roger asked questions, identified potential speedbumps, and provided advice relative to how Chris could support this relevant issue.

Mentors provided advice and knowledge to support principals’ leadership practice through problem-solving and discussions. An additional career-oriented subtheme suggested mentors had opportunities to share their experience, advice, and expertise in specific areas in order to problem solve with the novice principal. Overall, commonalities in the complex issues novice principals identified as needing support with centered a few important issues. Evidence in this study noted the most frequently addressed areas requiring a mentor’s advice and knowledge included: dealing with inappropriate behavior of staff members, hiring and firing practices of school personnel, how to leverage change amongst a group of stakeholders, how to consider viewpoints from school stakeholders, and how to implement policy changes. This theme was common in 9 of the 10 dyads, Michael and Tammie being the exception. One example, which both mentor Jennifer and Principal Rebecca vividly shared in their separate interviews, was how Rebecca should end a meeting when the purpose was to fire a staff member. The advice, which Rebecca recalled being simple but powerful, was “basically that I should just stand up and say I will let you go get back to your whatever.” Rebecca shared this advice that really helped given the awkwardness of that conversation. Principal Joseph also shared how Ashley’s advice directly influenced his practice:

It [mentoring] has helped me limit mistakes and it helped me be better in terms of a process for decision making. So, I will give Ashley a real scenario that I am dealing with and she will give me advice on conversations to have, questions to ask, and actions to potentially take. Therefore, I can come back to the building and I can execute those or conduct those things in a way that had I not talked to her I would not have thought about right.

Protégés frequently mentioned directly asking for advice from the mentor. Principal Trevor asked Rita how to handle a situation with his administrative team pertaining to graffiti in
bathrooms. Although Trevor knew how to solve this problem, he sought advice on how to empower his team to address the issue with urgency and collaboration in mind, without being condescending:

The team was not doing a great job with it. What Rita and I were talking about was how to follow up with that in a way that is not prescribing the solution and that is allowing them . . . to come up with a solution and the help drive the discussion, but she guided me in the direction that I needed to have this conversation.

In another scenario, Principal Chris recalled a conversation about contemplating a new teacher hiring strategy. Chris needed Roger’s advice on how this strategy would play out with this staff:

The way the hiring process worked here before, the department chair would interview however many candidates they wanted to and then bring one candidate to the principal, and the principal then interviewed them. . . . There were really only two people involved in the process, which I did not necessarily feel comfortable with. . . . I would like to see there be a panel the first round and a panel in the second round and get more people involved and get more opinions on what you think. And so, Roger gave me feedback, you know, we would talk pros and cons of that.

The mentors’ expertise helped to instill a sense of empathy for the teachers’ perspective as well. Personnel and teachers were a common area of concern for novice principals in this study. Principal Madeline shared Jessica’s advice on a teacher nonrenewal was instrumental:

When people find out that they do not have a job they tend to think that you are personally attacking them. So, they do these things personally because that is the mindset they are in. Jessica coached me through a lot. . . . “Why don’t you try this with this teacher? . . . Here is what they feel like inside” . . . sometimes she would just tell me to do nothing because the situation is done. She would also give me tips on how to coach them.

At times, the expertise and advice mentees requested from mentors was essential in order to make an immediate decision. Principal Chris recalled,

There were times where I would call Roger in the morning and say, “I have got this happening at 8 o’clock this morning and I am out of ideas. I have no idea how to handle this.” . . . There were certain times in those situations where he would be like, “Alright, here is what you do . . . this, this, and this and make sure you do not forget about this. Make sure you tell this person ahead of time.” That was huge to have. There are situations and scenarios in this job that I have never handled before and I have no idea
how to handle it the right way. I only get one chance to handle it the right way. Like it is either going to go okay or it is going to go really poorly and I am not okay if it goes poorly, so I need to reach out.

Mentor Robert articulated Garrett needed to make an important policy decisions around two critical areas, noting that Garrett “already had certain things in place, but we are looking at the homework policy for the school.” That decision was something Garrett needed to address and Robert was able to support with feedback. Additionally, Garrett was bombarded with occurrences of alleged substance abuse by students within the school. Robert had handled those issues as a former principal and superintendent, allowing him to provide critical feedback to Garrett and to help guide his policy decisions.

**Mentors also provided transactional advice and expertise to guide protégés.**

Transactional evidence of career-oriented mentoring occurred in the form of anticipating upcoming cyclical events or to support routine functions of the school. This theme was evident in three of the five formal dyads and one of the five informal dyads. These discussions were not grounded in forms of questioning that strategically fostered leadership growth or transformative practices. For example, mentors created lists of items involving operational tasks or the school calendar and shared advice about issues to consider. Roger recalled,

> There is something called graduation, it happens every year, right? In high school it happens and it is a big thing, and you never want some kid or some parent saying “I did not know that my son or my daughter was not going to pass this class.” One of the things I always caution the principals on like in November and December, is make sure that you get out in front of that because you do not want to be sitting there in May, in the superintendent’s office with attorneys where they are saying, “you did not give my son or my daughter an opportunity to remedy a deficient grade because your teacher never told us.”

> It is also important to consider that transactional encounters occurred in formal mentoring dyads. Principal Michael spent several of his formal hours at “any” legal conference he could find. The experiences led to discussions, something Michael and Tammie’s relationship lacked at
times; however, their conversations rarely led to deeper, transformational conversations, something Michael yearned for throughout the experience. Although some transactional conversations did not necessarily promote leadership growth, they did influence aspects of the principal’s practice. Michael shared,

She gave me idea about passing out flowers to teachers at teacher institute days for teachers that did something well and teachers could nominate a fellow teacher and give them a flower and tell them why. So, I incorporated some of those ideas into our staff celebrations that happen a couple times a year. It was just a good reminder to continue to celebrate.

Tammie affirmed these conversations: “We would talk about things that are coming up.” Tammie recalled covering a host of topics with Michael, including how to handle dog searches, Freedom of Information Act requests, expulsions, conferences, and legal updates.

Informal relationships yielded mentee exposure to new opportunities and challenging assignments. Four of the five informal mentoring dyads offered multiple experiences from mentors that provided protégés new challenges and exposure to other responsibilities, the exception being Principal Joseph and mentor Ashley. These experiences also provided mentees the opportunity to advance their careers, particularly within the district. Principal Tyler, who was hired by his mentor Carl, shared an example of exposure to new responsibilities,

I think even when Carl was the principal I feel like I was being groomed for this role. So, there were certain things he would have me go to, like board meetings, and speak on behalf of the building. Or he would give me some roles, evening events to speak at and some of those engagements because it was almost like he was grooming me in the role. So, I felt like I was doing it [principal] before.

Tyler further explained how his relationship with Carl was a part of a bigger plan to support his career advancement:

He brought me in after my first year here and said, “What do you think about being a principal? I am not going to be here forever.” So, that is when I started thinking about being a principal and after I had been a student services assistant principal for four years our new superintendent came in and he believes you have to have a curriculum
background if you want to be a principal. So, I would have never thought to apply for the assistant principal job for curriculum and instruction (APCI) that was really out of my comfort zone because I have never really dealt with that before, I was not a department chair. So, one of the things Carl and I talked about, he said, “Well if you want to be a principal here you are going to have to take that job.” He gave me an opportunity to interview for the position and I ended up getting the position.

Mentor Nadea recalled naming Sandra as her lead teacher, a formal role that assumed building leadership responsibilities. It was through this particular experience that Nadea knew Sandra was destined to be a future principal:

I took the lead and Sandra would watch and she would listen until she got comfortable and then she would not even wait for me to respond. She would just go do it on her own if there was a crisis.

Sandra affirmed Nadea’s assertion and stated, “I do think like she would just give more responsibility to people that she was trying to instill some leadership qualities. It was just her way.” It was this formalized experience while Nadea was a teacher that ultimately led her into the principalship. Their mentorship continued when Nadea became a principal in another district elementary school. Looking back, Nadea recalled,

I think she was the one who got me going. She was the one who like, “This is what you need to do. You were born to do this.” I am like, “You are crazy!” But, she got the ball rolling . . . I really see the value and in instilling that belief in others, so that they can make a bigger difference because this was something that I did not see myself doing.

A third example, Principal Sherri expressed that her discussions with Douglas provided her exposure to issues he faced as superintendent, and allowed her to examine school-wide issues from the lens of the district office or school board. “I have poked him a lot about the board relationship because again I have never paid attention to school boards until I have gotten here. How do you navigate that? What do you do?” Their relationship has led Sherri to engage in discussions with Douglas regarding her doctoral graduate work, which often provides a district lens.
Finally, an example of networking and exposure to others who held influential positions occurred in one formal mentorship. Principal Madeline recalled how Jessica introduced her to the area IPA director:

> It was nice to meet him and I am thinking, okay maybe I will see him again one day. Well, there was a student leadership breakfast last month. He was there and walked up to me and was like, “Madeline, hi, how are you?” And he hugged me. He remembered me and he remembered my face, so that caused me to think, wow Jessica has also helped me establish other relationships. I do not think I will be a principal forever... I do not know what the next 10 years holds. Maybe I will touch base with him.

This notion of networking was expressed by other participants and will be addressed in the overarching research question.

Along with career exposure and challenging assignments, informal mentors developed a protective relationship with their mentee. Mentees in each of the five informal relationships expressed a feeling of protection, noting how their mentor frequently looked out for them.

Principal Tyler felt Carl would “give me a heads up on something that he is aware of, just to be cognizant of things before I go into a meeting.” Carl affirmed Tyler’s perception:

> There are definitely times when I would call him and sort of give a heads up that maybe not everybody gets... you know? We are going to walk into this meeting tomorrow and this is going to be something that is going to get said you need to understand how important it is, so be ready... I think that is helpful to him because it sort of prevents him from being blindsided a lot of times.

Additionally, mentor Carl noted a time when he learned Tyler considered applying for a principalship elsewhere. Carl’s regional connections allowed him to gain background knowledge about the position and the district as a whole:

> They had a lot of leadership change, so we had conversations about how that position was an opportunity and how there was definitely challenges, too. What is the risk-reward in terms of do you continue to hope for the job here or you go full bore for this? I think those kinds of conversations and really trying to kind of parse it out from a very frank perspective as to what that meant for him, his career, and what that meant for his family.
That conversation ultimately led Tyler to remain at the school and he eventually become the principal. Similarly, Principal Joseph shared confidential information with his mentor, Ashley, regarding some issues at his district that “had a direct impact on him as principal.” Describing the situation as “terribly difficult,” Joseph recalled Ashley’s response:

I said to her, you know me, you know what I am all about, do I need to think about leaving? And she is like, “yes, you do, given everything you are telling me, given everything that has happened to you.” And I was saying, well, what about this or what about this? . . . I love this school. It was very clear that her concern for me was, “you are in a very precarious situation that no principal deserves to be in. You should not have to deal with this. You are too talented, too hard working, too committed, too professional. This is wrong. What is happening to you is wrong, what is happening in your district is wrong and I do not believe you can be part of that anymore without really compromising your core values and who you are, and Joseph, quite frankly from what I know about you, you are going to be miserable.” So, there was this moment where I was experiencing something for the first time and thought maybe I am going crazy or maybe I misreading this and Ashley was able to see it clearly for me and help give me sort of some of the career advice.

Not all protective instincts were intertwined in such dramatic and job-altering circumstances. Principal Nadeen simply said, “I will always have her back and I always will go to bat for her. If she makes a poor decision, I will support her and talk about it later.” The longstanding relationships existing within informal dyads consistently yielded feelings of protection.

**Psychosocial supports occurred to a greater extent in informal dyads.** Along with career-oriented mentoring experiences, participants also experienced psychosocial supports. As noted in Chapter 2, Kram’s mentoring framework suggested there are four general categories relative to psychosocial mentoring experiences: role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship. Psychosocial supports are described in subthemes in this section.

**Counseling experiences occurred to address protégés’ personal concerns and anxieties.** Mentors and protégés articulated psychosocial experiences that occurred through counseling participants in difficult situations, addressing emotionally charged feelings such as stress and anxiety. This was true for each of the five informal dyads, but only in one formal relationship
(Principal Madeline and mentor Jessica). Principal Joseph recalled transitioning from assistant principal to principal in the school he had served for 19 years. As a veteran of the school, Joseph still needed Ashley’s supports:

I did not know how to sit in the principal chair and be comfortable and survive. There was nothing Ashley could teach me about building the master schedule or about hiring at my school. I had that stuff, but I needed a lot of support in how to wear the principal robe and be a principal with confidence, with efficiency, and success. That is really why I sought her out.

Mentor Carl also described how he counselled Tyler as he transitioned to the principalship. Like Joseph, Tyler was also an internal assistant principal who became principal. Carl explained,

When you are in the principalship role you are the only one with that job in the building, so a lot of times nobody else will really understand it. So, it can be hard to find people that you can let your guard down and be honest like . . . “Is it normal that I have to be at 27 events in the next 8 days? So to have those kinds of conversations about how you do that and, yes, it is normal. And, yes, it sucks.

In Principal Sandra’s case, it was helpful to have Nadean who could listen and be a sounding board once she took over her new school as principal. Nadean recalls Sandra initially being emotional because she could not believe the things occurring at her new school that apparently had been happening for several years without her superintendent’s knowledge. Nadean shared Sandra said, “It was like a rude awakening, so that was listening and going through the shock value with her.”

Supporting mentees relative to work-life balance and their family life was a common theme. Mentors asked their protégés if they were spending time with their families and making them a priority. Mentor Tammie recalled asking Michael direct questions on this subject: “How are you doing? What are doing with the family this week? What are you doing with your wife this week? Is it a stressful week?” Tammie attempted to gauge Michael’s levels of contentment and stress each meeting. Principal Chris asserted his mentor, Roger, was intentional in ensuring Chris’ family remained a priority: “Each time he would ask me about my family and how they
were doing. . . He even met my family I think twice. . . It forced me to reflect on the question and reminded me that it is an important issue.” Nadean’s story regarding a conversation with Principal Sandra provides even further context of the work-life balance battle novice principals face:

I remembered one day she called me on the phone and I could hear it in her voice. We were supposed to be doing something that night, but her little daughter had crawled into bed with her and said, “Mom I had the worst dream, I dreamt that you went to work and you never came home.” And she cracked. She said, “I know we were supposed to go out or we had something planned, but I can’t. . . I have got to go and be with my daughter.” She was spending too much time at the office.

Mentees expressed supportive conversations, specifically with their physical, mental, and emotional health in mind, were helpful. Madeline said Jessica’s influence made a difference:

Jessica would say “build in time for yourself.” I started bringing my gym bag every day after that conversation because I can work 15 hours a day and it is easy for me to say, “Oh, I can do one more thing. I know I said I was going to leave at 5:00, but you know what if I stay until 5:30, I can get done . . .” and in the back of my mind I hear Jessica say take care of you, because when your blood pressure gets high and when your anxiety is high you are not going to be any good to anybody else.

Three of the four female protégés expressed the importance of venting within this supportive relationship because it allowed them to express their feelings in a nonjudgmental space. Principal Madeline shared how venting helped her to process through situations and reduce stress:

I would definitely vent to her about the school stuff that happens as a principal. . . . I actually did have a parent punch me in the face this year. . . . I am not kidding you. I would never have expected that to happen and I did not really have a lot of forewarning, she just hauled off and just really punched me. So, that day I called Jessica. I mean on my really, really rough days, I would call her and say you would never believe . . . What do I do? Like in tears almost and she was there for me . . . I do not have to be fearful that I am being judged. She is just an ear that will listen to me.

Although participants described this exchange as venting, the evidence within responses suggests it was actually about the mentor listening and compassion, with mentors typically saying
nothing. Principal Sandra shared, “she really listens to what I am saying... Even when I say I just want you to listen to this because I just need to vent and get it off my chest.” Nadean agreed:

There are just some times that it is a bitch session, you know where you are like “this is unbelievable to me” and again it is just listening. It is not like we are not going to solve this, because it is not solvable right now, but you just need to listen to me.

Mentor Tammie, who supported Michael, said mentoring “gives them an outlet other than their wife at home to just talk to and let their hair down and I think that, that is so important.” Although few male participants used the word “venting,” Tammie alluded to its importance for Michael to share his frustrations. In contrast, Principal Rebecca specifically addressed the fact that she did not feel the need to vent to Jennifer. Rebecca said, “I do not know how to say this without coming across awful but, I feel pretty confident in my job and so I do not need that sort of emotional piece... to just like just listen to me.”

**Affirmations and encouraging interactions.** An additional psychosocial subtheme focused on behaviors of affirmation. While these behaviors were more intense in informal dyads, all ten dyads provided examples of mentors’ affirming and encouraging behaviors. Affirmative behaviors instilled a sense of confidence and often reinforced mentees’ decisions; in addition, affirmation ensured mentees stayed true to themselves. Principal Joseph provided an example of affirmation from Ashley with regard to a decision he needed to make about his professional career. Joseph realized he needed to make a difficult choice, but it was Ashley who encouraged that decision. Joseph shared,

Ashley has helped me unpack who I am as a principal. She has helped either affirm like, “Joseph this is who you are, this is why this is matters to you.” Or she has help me say, “No, Joseph that is not who you are. You cannot do that because that is not the person you are... you could not live with yourself if you were to do that.”... If I were to go down this road because I think it is what I have to do as a principal Ashley is able to hold the mirror up and say, “Come on, that is not you.”
Ashley affirmed her intentional behavior to “help the other person be reflective and find the answers they already have. People come to you with the answers, but they want to share first and affirm, ‘Yeah, that is what I was thinking.’” Joseph’s description of affirmation and encouragement is one of the only representations of a male receiving this kind of support. It is important to note, every female mentee articulated their mentor—whether male or female—provided affirming and encouraging behaviors.

Mentor Jessica recalled affirming Madeline’s instructional leadership and decisions, and encouraging her to delegate tasks to others on her team. Jessica stated Madeline needed to learn not to “always second guess. I think that is hard, you know I will just do it myself and then I know it is done right.” Madeline’s appreciation for Jessica’s encouragement was heartfelt:

I am very in tune with who I am, but anytime you are brand new in a job you learn as you go and I am like, is this the right decision? I never encountered this, what is the best action plan because that is how my mind works. I need a strategic plan in place to execute whatever my task is. I will think one direction and Jessica will be like, “yes, you have got this skill. You are great at this.” Jessica has been really encouraging. She makes me feel like this is kind of like who I was born to be, not that I do not feel that on my own, but when other people see it sometimes it takes somebody else to point out your strengths and weaknesses.

Although Jessica and Madeline’s example noted affirming behaviors about issues in the present or future, findings also presented situations when mentors affirmed past decisions or situations. Principal Jessica also shared a past conversation with a teacher and parent that did not go well:

I get really hard on myself like, “Oh, I did not handle it the way I’m supposed to” and I think just talking things out with her has been . . . like she will say, “Oh, do not worry I had this happen too.” . . . I respect her for saying those things happened to me too or I made a misstep or I made this big mistake.

*Psychosocial interactions were evident through the qualities of friendship.* The notion of friendship, while it might be the ultimate intent of all mentoring dyads, was not explicitly evident in each relationship, particularly formal mentorships (the exception was Principal Madeline and mentor Jessica). In contrast, each informal dyad considered each other friends or
exhibited characteristics of friendship. Aspects of a genuine friendship included care and checking in, social encounters outside of work, joking around with each other, and expecting the relationship to continue over time.

A consistent expression of friendship in this subtheme included the notion of caring for the mentee. Mentor Nadean provided an example of her genuine care about Sandra,

She just turned 40 and I am 58, so it is kind of like friends but it is also kind of like I am a mom where if somebody went after her the mom bear in me would come out. I feel like I am protective of her. I worry about her and her lack of balance. I worry about her and her schedule consuming her with coursework. I worry about her in the building that she’s in. Work-life balance conversations were a frequent topic between Nadean and Sandra because of Sandra’s situation as a working mother. Their friendship also included social interactions after work. Nadean invited Sandra to her vacation home on a frequent basis. Additionally, Sandra shared, “We would just go after work or wherever and have a drink. Just you know, what do you want to talk about? It does not have to be work.” Mentor Douglas also asserted his commitment to socializing with Principal Sherri outside of work hours, noting it was important to build his relationship with Sherri and with other members of their larger administrative team.

A third aspect of friendship included examples of participants teasing or joking around with each other. Referring to his relationship with Principal Sherri, Douglas said, “Well, we give each other a hard time; it is probably not very traditional.” Again, it is important to note Douglas is Sherri’s direct supervisor and informal mentor. Their ability to maintain a friendship in the midst of those layers of formal authority is important to this study. Joking around was explicitly evident in Principal Tyler and Mentor Carl experiences. Tyler shared, “if we disagree on something he will say to me like, ‘I will punch you in the face if you make a call like that,’ but I know it is in good spirit you know?” More than any other mentoring dyad, Tyler and Carl gave
examples of spending time together and enjoying each other’s company. Tyler noted that he and Carl speak almost every single day, and Carl agreed:

It is funny because my staff here, when it is Tyler on the phone, they are like, “it is Tyler again!” . . . Whether it is Tyler calling me or I am calling Tyler, we like each other’s company obviously, but it is one of those things where I think both of us see value in the relationship.

There was one example of a deep friendship occurring within a formal mentoring dyad that appears will continue after the mentoring experience concludes. Principal Madeline shared that in her time with Jessica,

I can talk professional. I can talk academic. We can talk as friends. I can be vulnerable because she sees me and appreciates me as a human for who I am. If I cry on the phone with Jessica she will not judge me. I even sent her pictures from my Mexico vacation. She accepts me all the way around . . . I think you have to know all sides of a person in order to accurately mentor them.

The notion of the intent of mentors and mentees to continue their relationship, particularly in the form of a friendship, will be addressed within the overarching research question.

Although both informal and formal participants provided examples of psychosocial supports, it is important to note that four of the five informal participant examples appeared more emotional and personal in nature with the addition of the formal relationship between Madeline and Jessica. Additionally, in quantitative terms, informal participants provided 50% more examples of psychosocial support. The formal dyad exhibiting the most psychosocial examples was Madeline and Jessica, both female participants.

**Reciprocal benefits existed for mentors.** Mentors also experienced benefits from the mentoring experience. Tangible benefits found in the data were also expressed at a greater extent by each of the five informal mentors. Mentor Ashley, who is also an active principal, described how her relationship with Joseph yielded new ideas for her personal leadership growth:

Just hearing when he talks about his passions. Some of the ideas of what he has brought forward. I have been picking his brain about their ELL program because we were
supposed to have a committee looking at it and it has really gone nowhere . . . When I heard him speak about a couple of things I was really interested to the point of asking more questions, including related to curriculum development . . . and access in AP courses for students of color.

Ashley’s time with Joseph also helped her appreciate her superintendent and to be grateful for the autonomy he gives her to lead. “He has given me appreciation for the people I work with. Sometimes I can be critical of the people I work with. . . . So, Joseph helped me realize some of the things I should be appreciative of here.” This was especially true after learning about the challenging issues Joseph begun to deal with his superintendent.

Other tangible aspects were described by informal mentors. Mentor Carl’s example regarding his experiences with Tyler speak to the closeness of their relationship and how it also benefited Carl and his current job responsibilities:

I think there are definitely times when the principals are like, “Tyler you need to call Carl and talk to him about X and try to get.” . . . In the end, that helps because now we have avoided a minefield or whatever it would have been from the district’s perspective. We could have been fighting a fight that we really did not need to fight, so I think that is good. So, from a purely transactional kind of perspective I mean the reality is I do better in my job, the district does better when our principals do a better job.

Mentor Nadean shared her extensive time with Sandra provided two valuable benefits: “She reminded me about the importance of keeping balance in my life . . . and she reminded me not to be afraid to try new things.” Nadean saw firsthand the toll the principalship took on Sandra as she battled work-life balance issues. She also recalled ideas Sandra gave her such as a first-week bootcamp for new teachers.

Along with specific supports that developed mentors’ leadership, three of the informal mentors also experienced relationships that provided emotional and psychosocial support. Douglas valued not only these characteristics but also honesty and feedback during his time with Principal Sherri:
We had a really, really tough year last year and she helped take care of me at times when things were tough. So she is a very caring person. I like to hire the best because I like people to push me . . . like I don’t like to get complacent. So I learned from people and when they have ideas of things that are working or not working or when they share their opinions with me I always value and appreciate that.

Although formal mentors expressed to a lesser extent examples of reciprocal benefits within the mentoring experiences, some examples were found in two of the five formal relationships. Mentor Jessica and Principal Madeline shared an intense bond throughout and by the end of their formal mentorship their experiences resembled stories shared in informal dyads. Mentor Jessica highlighted,

One thing that I know has made a difference, you know Madeline is in a pretty rough school, and I have been sitting there when the phone calls come in or the behavior specialist or the deans are bringing students in her office and we are constantly being interrupted. And that girl can just always stay so calm; even when she is kind of chilling out one of the kiddos, she is just calm. And there are times this year down in my interim position where I have caught myself because at times I get easily ramped, but I caught myself and I said “Okay just breathe; just be Madeline.” So, yes, her calmness has stuck with me.

Finally, Mentor Roger provided specific aspects of his time with Chris that yielded new learnings on leadership. Roger noted, “We spent a fairly significant amount of time talking, even to the point where he was sharing books with me to read. I would read them and we could talk about that.” This is the only time when a mentor expressed they assumed additional tasks and responsibilities outside of their time together, which not only supported the mentee but also their own professional development.

**Research Subquestion 4: How Do Mentoring Participants Negotiate Challenges or Disagreements That Arise as a Result of Their Relationship?**

The final subquestion in this study sought to understand if participants experience disagreements during their relationship; and if so, how they negotiated or dealt with those challenges. Overall, due to the positive experiences expressed by this study’s participants, few
disagreements or significant challenges were cited. However, a few themes emerged: all participants negotiated meeting times and forms of communication, informal mentoring dyads expressed more frequent disagreements from the protégé viewpoint, and challenges in formal mentoring experiences were rare.

Participants negotiated meeting times and communication due to challenging schedules. Mentors and protégés expressed one of the hurdles to navigate within their mentorship was finding time to meet. Participants acknowledged new principals’ busy schedules as a direct cause of the challenge, and mentors did their best to meet mentee needs. Multiple dyads shared stories when their meetings needed to be rescheduled due to a last-minute conflict or crisis the novice principal needed to address. Mentor Jessica had a long distance to drive to support Principal Madeline. Jessica shared her perception of their compromises around meeting times:

Madeline has been amazing about if I have to shift the day for whatever reason, she will shift the time so that we can still make it face-to-face rather than saying you do not need to come up this time. And we both have done that.

Mentor Roger was very intentional to ensure he prioritized Chris’ schedule: “What I try to do is make it convenient for the person I am meeting with. So that is critical. If the person cannot meet then I do not want to say too bad.” Formal meetings, which occurred during school hours and at the principal’s school, were often interrupted due to situations within the building. Both mentors and mentees noted this experience and expressed gratitude for their partner’s flexibility. While finding time to meet was challenging at times, there was no evidence that scheduling conflicts negatively influenced a participant’s experience.

Next, negotiating forms of communication was highlighted in participant responses. Specifically, participants had preferences about meeting face-to-face, over the phone, or via email. Each means of communication was utilized for varied purposes, including asking
questions, setting up future meetings and events, or to discuss a time-sensitive and important issue. Mentor Jennifer shared,

We meet at her office and email. Early on, I said I do not really like email that much. I like just to pick up the phone and talk, but Rebecca made it clear that she liked email so that is what we are doing.

Principal Joseph used the phone or email to schedule a meeting with Mentor Ashley. However, Joseph preferred to always meet with Ashley face-to-face particularly due to the sensitivity of the issues he needed to discuss.

Finally, Principal Michael’s feelings about his relationship with Tammie affected their communication and ability to have conversations about important topics. After Michael reached a conclusion about the quality of mentoring he was receiving from this experience, Michael shared he stopped communicating about the issues he was passionate about once he knew the kind of answers provided. Michael stated, “When it came to my real needs as a principal, what would keep me up at night kind of thoughts . . . she was not the right one for that.” As a result of that feeling, he communicated and discussed issues that were not supporting his leadership development, but rather fulfilled the requirements of the program.

Conflicts existed within informal dyads, particularly from the protégé’s perspective. Participants noted small conflicts and areas of disagreement during their mentoring experiences. Mentees in four of the five informal dyads provided more examples of disagreements that did those in formal pairings. Possibly due to the deeper quality of their relationships, informal participants were more likely to describe how they identified conflicts and negotiated through disagreements. Each of the formal mentoring participants had difficulty recalling challenges or disagreements they needed to address. Findings suggest participants experienced disagreements relative to decisions made by the novice principal.
The most vivid examples of conflict occurred between mentor Carl and Principal Tyler, although neither Carl or Tyler mentioned the same situation. Tyler recalled a time when he and Carl disagreed on how to handle a teacher discipline situation. Tyler felt “there are just different ways of looking at it,” and it lead to greater discussion about the context of the situation and their competing philosophies on how to move forward. Tyler acknowledged, “I see both sides of it, but in the end I have to look out for our building . . . and he has to look at the big picture with the district . . . so I understand that.” Carl shared his perspective:

There have been other things where we have disagreed where I have said, “Look if you are going to do that, that is fine, but I am telling you what I think you should do or given you this advice . . . if you want to go down that road, you have to own it.”

Carl and Tyler described times when they passionately disagreed, while noted they respected the other person’s position.

While mentor Nadean did not share or recall disagreements with Principal Sandra, Sandra did recall a few instances of conflict, one being philosophically how to handle discipline:

I want my teachers to handle it in their classroom unless it is something that is office managed, truly office managed. And there were times that Nadean did not step in to different things, to different situations and I would say “Why are not you stepping in?” and I did not know if it was a personality conflict between the teacher and the principal. Or if was I am trying to give this person wings. . . . So there were situations that I observed that I was like, “Man, that is not how I would have done that,” and right or wrong I just did not agree with how that was handled. It was very philosophical. It was very here is what the research is saying and you just did this. And we would talk about those things, but we had a good enough relationship where we can do that.

Principal Sherri sensed a disagreement with Douglas was brewing but was not ready to press the issue. Sherri expressed her passion to support transgender students at the school by creating a “safe space” or “allies club” was not initially supported. Sherri stated Douglas “has not felt like the time is right to do that:”

We are very conservative here. We are very traditional, so I understand that, and I recognize I just finished my second year and I am still laying some groundwork, but I have started to plant the seeds with him. . . . I can tell he is like, “Oh, I do not know if we
are ready for that yet.” . . . Usually we are so aligned, but he is like put your foot on the brake.

Sherri decided that she will continue to push forward with the idea at least conceptually with Douglas. Sherri’s passion to support this group of students collided with the politics within the school district and Douglas’ global perspective of the situation.

**Challenges noted in formal mentoring dyads.** Formal mentoring dyads overall recalled few examples of challenges. Only three of the five formal dyads provided examples of challenges. Principal Chris shared that he initially was not as committed in his relationship with Roger as he should have been, and he cancelled several meetings. Chris felt the need to apologize to Roger. Roger recalled a conversation with Chris who told him, “you know I think there probably could have been sometimes I relied on you or called on you more. I wish I would have done that . . . I could have done that more.” Sensing Chris was busy and not prioritizing the mentorship, Roger understood this challenge and noted the issue was resolved over time.

As noted in previous sections, Principal Michael’s perception of Tammie and mentoring changed as he listened to her advice. At times, Michael simply outright disagreed with her advice:

> My deepest need or sense, at least at the time, for what I really wanted to do at the school, to get my team on the same page, have a common vision, how we lead people. . . . As I would dabble with that with her, I kept getting what I expected to get. . . . It was very quick that if someone does not give you want you want, then you get rid of them. It was that kind of mentality.

These types of conversations created a challenge for Michael, who never fully expressed his frustrations with Tammie and it minimized the opportunity for the mentorship to succeed or provide him with professional growth. Similarly, Mentor Jennifer did not share with Rebecca that she disagreed with a decision Rebecca made to non-renew a person on her team. Jennifer noted, “the person that I thought she was going to let go was not the person that she let go.” Yet,
Jennifer recognized she only had the context to the situation Rebecca was willing to share with her and acknowledged it was her decision to make. These examples suggest persons in formal mentorships may be less willing to be completely candid, for fear of overstepping boundaries. As noted prior, formal mentors were careful to avoid influencing their protégés decisions.

Each protégé had her/his own perception regarding what a formal mentorship should or would look like, which directly influenced their overall mentoring experience and relationship with their mentor. Three of the five mentees who participated in a formal mentorship expected structure, an agenda, and a plan of action, which could cause feelings of frustration and resentment. Ironically, each of the five formal mentors highlighted their intentionality to not create an agenda or lead conversations. This issue noted across two formal mentorships suggest a need for clarity of program expectations. Principal Chris shared,

I think again I underutilized him and maybe you know that was just me and who I am or the fact that I have not necessarily had a mentor or relied on one before. Maybe if there was more structure to this where part of my thing was I should have reached out to him every week, if I had told that at the beginning you need to reach out once a week I may have done a better job. Roger did an awesome job... I did not do as well. I was in a situation where I had been not necessarily had a mentor before in anything. And so as I reflected on our year I did not utilize his knowledge and the relationship as much in the beginning as I should have, only because I had not had a mentor did not really know how it worked.

Mentees’ experiences in formal mentorships highlight their lack of understanding of their mentors’ goals or style of mentoring. The approach taken by mentor Roger and Tammie, particularly with leading through questions and not having a rigid structure or agenda, was intentional and consistent with other mentors. Mentors also provided examples of expectations that needed further clarity or to be communicated. Mentor Jennifer, who did not have professional experiences at the high school level, shared,

I always felt a little unaware at the pace of the building and the pace of the high school and the things that are coming up. I felt I did not get a good handle on the flow of her
school, I would have loved to kind of walk through the school with her and she did not offer that.

The evidence articulated by formal mentoring participants highlights program expectations and what mentoring experiences should look like were not explicitly addressed. Only evidence from formal mentorships suggests protégés had an expectation of a structured time or agenda while together. Findings from this subtheme were not found within informal dyads.

**Overarching Research Question: What Elements of the Mentor-Mentee Relationship Support a Novice Principal’s Ability to Fulfill the Expectations and Professional Responsibilities of Their Role?**

The primary research question focused on overall aspects of the mentor-mentee relationship that influenced the novice principal’s practice and professional responsibilities. In addition to the themes presented in the subquestions, this section identifies participants’ experiences in their totality by addressing remaining aspects associated with the mentor-mentee relationship and presents findings across multiple themes. Overall, three themes are addressed: the individualized needs of protégés were addressed throughout the mentoring experience, informal dyads presented more frequent examples of supports compared to formal dyads, and all 10 mentees suggested they engage in a larger support network outside of their mentor.

**Mentee needs drive conversations and mentoring experience.** Mentors prioritized the needs of the mentees through various strategies, including leading with questions, accommodating their busy schedules, and in the case of formal mentoring dyads, breaking away from some of the program content.

**Leading with questions.** Participants from this study articulated the use of questioning as the primary conduit for development and mentoring. Questioning allowed each of the 10 mentors to identify the needs of their protégés. For instance, mentor Jennifer noted, “I am a great listener.
I think I can get people talking by just asking open-ended things. Get people to say things that surprise me.” Similarly, when asked whether she focused more on advice or listening, mentor Tammie shared,

I really did not [give advice] because I let Michael lead in what he needed to talk about and what he suggested that we do. So, if I had seen an area that we were lacking then I would bring it up.

Mentors posed reflective questions as a strategic approach to allow mentees to reflect on scenarios or problems they encountered. Trevor noted his mentor Rita would intentionally start sessions by asking questions. Trevor shared, “[questions] allow me to talk through situations which I know is a really effective practice in terms of coaching . . . just asking the question and allowing people to work through it in their own minds was helpful.” In a similar vein, mentor Douglas articulated his approach with Sherri to consider different perspectives: “I will say things like, ‘Have you thought of this? Why do not you ask them this and see what they say?’ And so we get into some specifics that are situational about things going on in her building.” To best support Chris, mentor Roger said nearly all meetings began with questions:

More in the earlier part of the year I would definitely have questions. I would definitely come in and say have you thought about this or what about this and how are you handing this? . . . And as time went on and he began to get his legs under him that approach kind of gave way to follow-up questions. “So what happened in this situation when we last talked last week? How does this resolve itself? What did you have to do?”

Principal Chris, Roger’s mentee, shared following his first meeting with mentor Roger:

He asked a bunch of great questions, very knowledgeable man, and I did not know what to ask or what to say because I was still getting used to everything and trying to figure it out. So in the beginning, I did not really know what to ask him or whatever. He would ask me what things are going on and he had a great questions . . . but he did not give a lot of advice just asked a lot of questions . . . had me talk a lot.

Regardless of whether the mentors saw themselves as a coach or mentor, questions were utilized to encourage novice principals to reflect on their practice and decision making. Principal
Chris recalled the types of questions Roger might ask: “He was great about asking questions. Well, have you thought about this? Why have you done this?” Once Chris explained additional context about the situation and reflected, he recalled Roger then would provide advice, “You know it would be really good if you took this to your peers and talk to them about it.” Principal Sherri expressed how mentor Douglas supported her leadership by helping her reflect on how to improve the leadership of her department supervisors: “He kind of leads me down this trail of things to kind of chew on and reflect on, and then he always does a nice job of asking questions like well how often does your team meet?”

Mentor Rita recalled being direct in terms of reflective questions. An example she shared with Trevor included how she would guide the conversation:

“Look, I am going to stop you there and can I make an observation?” And you get Trevor’s permission to make the observation. And then sometimes I would say to him, “It feels that you are running around the situation or you do not want to talk about it and I would like to know why that is.” So then you step in. But is still all about him and his thoughts, not what I think he should do. It does not mean you cannot help them if they say, “I would like your opinion on this” . . . but you want them to go a little further.

Rita concluded by saying you must “step back and just really listen.” Similar to Rita, mentor Nadea provided evidence of directly asking the mentee what they needed:

I do not want to overstep my boundaries in telling her how I would want to do something. So sometimes I will propose the question if she calls on the phone I will say, “I am not really sure what hat I am wearing right now. Do you want me to just listen? What role do you want me to play? Am I just listening or am I telling you what I would do?” . . . And she will go into a rant, a well-deserved rant, and then sometimes she will solve the problem on her own just by talking. . . . Usually she said, “I just needed somebody to talk to.”

The use of questioning was so persistent that it was at times frustrating to the mentee when no formalized agenda or focus for the day existed. The start of a mentoring meeting often would begin with the mentor asking a question to allow the mentee to share whatever was on their mind. Mentor Tammie noted, “I would let Michael bring up what was on his mind what
was going on in the school what things he wanted to talk about . . . we just talked about everything.” Similarly, mentor Rita explained how she often started meetings with “opening questions and then I would ask him, what do you want? What do you want to get out of today and what is your action plan?” Finally, Mentor Jennifer shared the purpose of questions was for further context while providing the support: “a lot of this just gives me more of an understanding of where she is and that has been the hallmark of our conversations. What is going on? What are you thinking about? What do you got coming up?” Overall, mentee needs dictated the conversations and activities across formal and informal dyads. Conversations tended to start more broadly in formal mentorships, but ended with discussions about specific topics.

The use of questioning was intentional from the mentors’ perspective, as they were careful not to project their personal opinion into a situation that required the principal to make a decision. Mentors often did not provide immediate advice or try to influence the principal’s decision because they recognized they may not have sufficient context to understand the entire situation. Mentor Jennifer said,

I only had a little piece of the information and what she cared to share in our conversations. I would be naive to think that I had the whole picture . . . my job was there to give some feedback, to be a sounding board, to maybe give another view, or just slow her down, but once her decision was made that was her decision . . . my role was not to second-guess it.

Even when directly asked, mentors felt their role was not to directly influence their mentee’s decision. Mentor Jessica shared how she utilized questions with Madeline,

I would listen. I would try to pose a lot of questions and get her to see things . . . I was just there to be a listener and ask a lot of questions because if you tell someone how to do something you are telling from your perspective and it may not work for them. Whereas if they come around and draw conclusions on their own or help to develop that path they are going to be more successful, so I tried to pose a lot of questions.

The use of questioning by mentors influenced the novice principal’s practice more than any other strategy.
Accommodating mentees’ schedules. Mentors strove to accommodate mentees’ schedules and were flexible throughout their relationship. Principal Rebecca shared, “Jennifer is retired, so it is very easy to set schedules because she is just like well you tell me when it works for you.” The situation was similar for Principal Chris: “so we met pretty much every other week throughout the first semester and he [mentor] would always come here which was great for me . . . just being as busy as it was in the first semester, so he was great about that.” Mentor Ashley noted her intentionality to support Joseph whenever he needed it: “I always make it work. If he says, I am ready. I always make it work in the next three or four days. He usually has an agenda of things he wants to ask me about.” Mentees expressed gratefulness for their mentors’ flexibility or their willingness to meet at the most convenient time given their demanding schedule.

Formal mentors identify unique needs of their protégés. As part of the programming implemented by the ROE and IPA, formal mentors received guidance for the mentoring experience. However, mentors altered programmatic aspects in order to support and meet the needs of the mentee, and also to provide mentoring that felt natural to them. Mentor Jessica shared,

I have a notebook full of things from the training of IPA that we could go by, but because Madeline and I never had a problem of things to talk about or things that she wants to bounce off of me to help her with, I have never had to resort to that. So Madeline is driving this. I am going to watch her do PLCs. I'm going to go watch her do some interviewing to help her with that, so whatever Madeline wants is what I tried to do . . . so it is pretty free-form for us.

Mentor Jennifer affirmed the notion of a flexible program to address emerging mentee needs:

I think I went in and I was too intense . . . I think I just kind of relaxed after meeting Rebecca . . . I decided okay, you know the IPA program has all these layers and all this, I should have gone back and looked at all the terms that, you know . . . reflective listening. But basically I did not think I was a good match for that, so I decided to do it the way I would do it and how I did it when I was in a previous district. I would just talk to them a little bit and it was more of a conversation. . . . As time rolled on the mentee set the agenda. The mentee set the pace. So I felt more comfortable about that. I think IPA was
using somebody’s theoretical model, which they never identified, but it was not a good fit for me.

Rebecca acknowledged the approach Jennifer took, including noticing the change:

Jennifer always comes in with kind of like a bullet-point list of topics to talk about. In the beginning she was given some things from IPA to talk about. Topics to talk about to make sure you covered goal setting . . . that kind of stuff, and then we kind of just kind of free-formed off of that now that we're further into it.

Mentor Robert also noted that his administrative experiences were foundational to how he mentored and what he shared with his mentee, Garrett:

You would hope that the [mentor] training would mirror what your life experiences were, but I would say 90% of my training was from my being a high school principal for 14 years being and a superintendent for 8, right? . . . They come down with the training and say you know you need to make sure you talk about this . . .

Prior leadership experiences and individualization within the program requirements allowed mentors to connect with their mentees, rather than worry about formal program requirements.

Two mentees within formal mentoring relationships identified a sense of ambiguity or frustration with their mentors’ laissez-faire approach. Specifically, the mentees did not exactly understand their role or the purpose of them setting the agenda. Principal Michael shared,

I was surprised . . . that there was never an agenda on her end. So I had to think about an agenda, lead the conversation, and keep it moving. It was an exhausting couple of hours. If there was a pause in the conversation there was never any, “Hey let us talk about this.” I had to think about the next thing to talk about.

Principal Chris’ experience was similar in that he did not understand what was expected of him and the mentoring experience, and his mentor did not fully explain the process:

I was in a situation where I had not necessarily had a mentor before . . . And so as I reflected on our year I did not utilize his knowledge and the relationship as much in the beginning as I should have, [I] . . . did not really know how it worked.

Chris did utilize Roger during the second half of his mentorship as time progressed and he conceptualized his expectations for the mentorship.
Internal transition from assistant principalship to principalship influenced mentoring experience and needs of protégés. In this study, four of the seven protégés who had served as an assistant principal in the same district where they became principal yielded different mentoring experiences than others. Protégés who were former in-district assistant principals voiced less need for certain psychosocial supports, specifically relative to issues of stress, work-live balance, and counseling. Principal Rebecca expressed, “I do not know how to say this without coming across awful but, I feel pretty confident in my job and so I do not need that sort of emotional piece of like just listen to me.” Principal Trevor, who also was an internal hire and knew he was going to take on the principalship well in advance, also suggested he is rarely stressed. Relative to his relationship with Rita, Trevor noted,

I do not want to vent too much to be honest with you, like for the sake of venting. So if there are concerns you will hear them, but it is usually going down the path of here is what is going on, what are we going to do here. So no, I did not use her that much for that [venting and stress] because I do not do that a ton.

Similarly, Principal Tyler shared, “I feel very comfortable . . . this job is not stressful to me at all . . . I feel like I have been groomed into it. I think if I would have come in from the outside it might be a different story.”

As mentors of principals who transitioned internally navigated the mentorship experience, they ultimately recognized the different needs and associated with their relationship. Mentor Jennifer expressed Principal Rebecca had a strong sense of confidence in the role and understood the ins and outs of the school: “She was an assistant there for a number of years before that” and at one point she wondered if the superintendent “thought that there was still a requirement” for mentoring and did not know it has been “softened.” While Jennifer and Rebecca each noted a positive experience and takeaways from the relationship, Jennifer
understood Rebecca’s needs were less than what she had anticipated. Mentor Roger also suggested someone from the inside might not actually be suited for a mentorship experience,

The idea of a mentorship was established for someone who was new to the school or new to the position and if they are new to the school. I think Chris had been at the school for 14 or 15 years prior to becoming the principal, so he was familiar with the school; he did not need much assistance in that respect. So, Chris did not fit really in a sense that he had been at the school over five years and in theory didn’t necessarily need a mentor per se according to what the state guidelines were set up originally.

Another element included participants who worked in the same district for the majority of their careers. While district longevity provided significant positive aspects to the mentees’ transition into the principalship, it also kept them sheltered to differing leadership, school organizational structures, and policies. In reference to her mentorship with Principal Joseph, Ashley shared,

Another area that he needed to grow and I think probably why he reached out to me to mentor . . . is that he only has the context of one place. . . . People only know what they know from here. He only has his high school’s context. Sometimes I think he needed me to say there are other ways to do that. Board members should not be involved in your building committees. That that is not something you should expect. This is what support would look like and feel like from a superintendent who supported you.

Similarly, Principal Chris reflected by noting,

I student taught here, so this is the only school I have ever worked in and I think there is a value to having varied experiences and maybe working in different schools with different people that you can bring to the table when you are in those situations and I have not been.

Overall, findings suggest internal mentees who transitioned to the principalship yielded different kinds of experiences, but not necessarily negative experiences. At the same time, mentors also articulated concerns over a novice principal’s background and experiences if they only had experience in one district. Specifically, mentor-mentee dyads recognized the novice principal did not have context outside of their current situation.
Informal mentoring dyads expressed more frequent and varied areas of support as compared to formal dyads. Overall, evidence in this study suggests relational aspects pertaining to trust building behaviors and participant identity, such as philosophical alignment, values, and personality were more intense and consistent across each of the five informal dyads as compared to formal dyads. Furthermore, these relational structures provided informal participants experiences such as career advancement, psychosocial support, willingness to disagree, and anticipating a future relationship. Results suggest philosophical agreement and trust was the reason informal pairs formed in the first place. Principal Joseph noted the importance of this issue: “Ashley . . . had the same philosophy as me and I thrived on that whereas the guy that the superintendent assigned me he does not have and I am just like, “This is not working here dude.” Principal Trevor, who acknowledged he and Rita had similar leadership styles and philosophical views also explained what kept them in touch: “She is very caring and very genuine . . . she is someone you put a 100% trust in no doubt.” It was a shared identity and trust that not only started informal dyads but also kept them together over time and likely well into the future.

Next, all participants from informal dyads expressed an expectation and willingness to continue their relationship. Formal participants indicated they would likely lose touch or did once their mentorships concluded; the exception was Principal Madeline and Mentor Jessica. While formal mentorships involved 50 hours of contact time over the course of a school year, some informal mentoring dyads had already been in place for 2 or 3 years and friendships had been established. Mentor Ashley shared that her relationship with Principal Joseph “has been intense and will likely go on” as frequently as Joseph requests her help. Principal Trevor was
direct in his response regarding a future relationship: “I envision staying in touch, I actually just shot her an email this morning about something, so, yes definitely.”

Along with continuing their relationship, informal mentors directly supported mentees’ career advancement and exposure to the principalship. Referencing his time with Mentor Carl, Principal Tyler recalled the autonomy and opportunities Carl provided Tyler while he was an assistant principal. So much so, that Tyler shared, “it is almost like you got the training wheels on and then all of a sudden the training wheels are off, but you know you can call him when you need him.” Carl also recalled how his mentorship of Tyler set up this entire opportunity:

One of the things that we talked about a lot was that if you looked out at the principal landscape that are not a lot of principals being hired into the position that came out of a student services background. . . . What you are seeing are lots of principals who have spent time as assistant principals of curriculum and instruction (APCI) or had been long-time department chairs . . . it was that whole idea of the instructional leadership piece. So one of the things we started talking about was if there was an opportunity within our building for that to look at a move over into that position to better prepare him for a principalship.

It this conversation which lead Tyler to be hired as the APCI prior to the principalship. This direct exposure and help with career advancement positioned Tyler to attain the principalship.

As Principal Sandra recalled, Mentor Nadean pushed her to consider an advanced degree that would allow her to become a school leader. Sandra reflected,

I really see the value in instilling the belief in others that they can make a bigger difference because it was something that I did not see myself doing. but I think it takes someone sometimes to see that before you are like, “okay, maybe?” . . . She is the one to say “I see you as a leader. I see you as this.” And kind of that inspirational side as far as my faith is in you. So, I too feel like I do not want to let her down.

Sandra’s reflection of how Nadean successfully encouraged her to pursue school leadership occurred over time and through multiple occurrences.

Next, informal participants presented greater evidence of psychosocial experiences relative to formal dyads. The informal relationship between mentor Douglas and Principal Sherri
provided evidence not only of psychosocial supports for the mentee but also for the mentor. Douglas and Sherri, who shared a common vision for Sherri’s school, the district, and her leadership often supported and checked in with each other. Douglas shared:

We both had a couple of tough years just because this is a tough district, where the district is at. So, I think there are times that we have just spent some time talking with each other about how you are doing and that kind of stuff.

Douglas and Sherri both provided evidence of encouragement and support, noting reciprocal benefits for both participants. Encouragement and confidence building was found in all informal mentoring relationships. In reference to mentor Carl, Principal Tyler stated, “He is very quick to praise and give you that feedback.” Tyler’s explanation suggests that Carl’s behavior was not an obligation; rather, encouragement was a behavior Carl purposefully and consistently maintained to support Tyler’s development. As noted, a significant aspect of psychosocial supports consists of an opportunity for the mentee to vent. Evidence of venting occurred from mentees and mentors with issues surrounding personnel concerns, policy implementation, or overall work-life balance management. Mentor Douglas recalled a significant portion of his time with Tyler was a chance “for him to vent about personnel issues.” While venting occurred in formal dyads, informal relationships suggested more honest, candid, expressive, and frequent occurrences.

Finally, this study’s findings suggest those in informal dyads were more willing to identify and address conflicts and disagreements as compared to formal relationships. For example, Principal Sandra provided examples of her philosophical disagreement with Mentor Nadean regarding how to handle classroom discipline and when to intervene as principal. The disagreement included dialogue and a conversation, rather than the mentor implying the mentee was in the wrong with a specific issue. The only informal dyad to not report conflict or disagreement was Principal Joseph and mentor Ashley. Evidence from their interviews suggests the relationship relied heavily on Ashley’s psychosocial support of Joseph’s challenging
situation, rather than frequent discussions pertaining to debatable issues such as policy, vision, or situational staffing issues. Joseph explained, “Ashley has helped me stay in touch with those core values and find ways to live them as a principal.”

**Protégés developed informal networks of support.** The final subtheme notes that each of the 10 novice principals developed informal networks of support, which were encouraged and promoted by their mentors in multiple dyads. Principal Garrett explained how Mentor Robert supported him through developing outside professional contacts:

> I think what he is trying to do is trying to help us build our network of people that are going through the same thing or have gone through the same thing. So in another two weeks or so we are getting together with a group of principals that he has mentored and I think, like I said, his main objective is to help us build our network because somewhere down the road we might have some type of interaction or connection or who knows . . . those networking relationships are important.

Robert supported Garrett by organizing social events such as dinner or golf outings to connect principals. Similarly, Principal Chris acknowledged building a network of support; however, his network was a product of underutilizing mentor Roger:

> I probably did not utilize the relationship with Roger as much in the fall and winter as I should have, but I have realized over time I am not the only one dealing with this, many people that are going through this. There has been many people that have these situations and handle them well and they are definitely willing to have a conversation or give advice or just hear people out because they have been through it. So I would say probably since January on I’ve worked to build a network.

Multiple principals who serve in districts containing more than one building shared they tend to lean on other leaders within their district. This network of support occurred in formal settings through weekly or bi-weekly meetings, or serving on various district committees and social settings. Principal Sandra stated,

> Truly our whole elementary team, we are all really close in the sense that if one of us is struggling with something we are going to call and we are all touching base with each other at times. We email different things. You know things will get sent to us and we always respond and “reply all” because I am not going to say something I would not say in front of all of them and everybody is pretty much the same way.
Finally, mentees provided evidence of maintaining a support network involving former colleagues or school leaders. Relationships established in prior roles and over a period of several years continued informally for multiple mentees. Mentees noted, however, their contact was infrequent, but critical when utilized. Principal Michael shared,

I have kind of sought out others a little bit more, but I would say it has been invaluable too . . . and I think we all struggle with this . . . do I call this guy? I have not talked to him in a year . . . and he was like call or email me anytime . . . and I could not write fast enough. In fact, I just called him this morning and said, “I need your perspective on something.” . . . I feel so much better about this afternoon.

These findings suggest that although novice principals identify with or are assigned a primary mentor, a network of additional professionals often support their leadership development.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented findings focused on 10 novice principal mentorships; specifically, how aspects of the mentee-mentor relationship influenced the novice principals’ leadership capacity and overall mentorship experience. This study focused on the elements which influenced the mentee-mentor experience guided by my conceptual theory, *Principal Mentoring Framework*, established using professional mentoring literature and Social Capital Theory. Critical elements to this framework included evidence pertaining to relational structures such as formal/informal arrangements, along with participants’ intent, investment, trust, and identity. Results suggest relational structures directly influenced career-oriented and psychosocial supports, along with opportunities for reciprocal benefits to the mentor. Findings noted relational structures also directly influenced whether participants perceived the overall mentoring experience as positive or negative. Finally, additional influences relative to participants’ background, informal networks of support, relational structures pertaining to power and format were found.
Chapter 5
Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

Chapter 5 provides a summary of this research project. This chapter begins with an overview of the methodology and a brief summary of the findings. The discussion section explains the results by addressing the findings within the context of previous literature. An evaluation of this study’s conceptual framework is also presented. The discussion section is organized through the lens of this project’s conceptual framework, Principal Mentoring Framework. Next, this chapter includes the implications for practitioners (novice principals, district and state educators), and policymakers. Finally, this chapter develops recommendations for policymakers and practitioners, along with suggestions for future research.

Overview of Research Methodology

This phenomenological study sought to understand how principal mentoring relationships supported novice principals’ professional development. A Principal Mentoring Framework, developed from the professional mentoring literature and tenets of Social Capital Theory, guided this research. The following overarching research question guided this study: What elements of the mentor-mentee relationship support a novice principal’s ability to fulfill the expectations and professional responsibilities of their role? Four subquestions supplemented this question:

1. What approaches have novice principals and their mentors used to form and sustain trusting, supportive professional mentor relationships?
2. How has participant identity, investment, and intent affected the mentoring experience?
3. How has participants’ professional practice been affected by the resources or forms of capital (career oriented and psychosocial) exchanged and reciprocated within a principal mentor-mentee relationship?
4. How do mentoring participants negotiate challenges or disagreements that arise as a result of their relationship?
A total of 20 participants, 10 mentor-mentee dyads from Illinois public schools, participated in this research study. Five formal and five informal mentorship partnerships were selected, including 10 females and 10 males in the overall participant sample. The primary means for data collection included in-depth individual interviews for each participant. Additionally, select participants engaged in follow-up interviews and emails. Data were analyzed through my conceptual framework to develop emergent themes and establish findings.

**Findings**

A concise summary of the results is presented in this section and organized by research question. Emergent themes are reported for each subquestion and end with a summary of the overarching question.

**Research subquestion 1: What approaches have novice principals and their mentors used to form and sustain trusting, supportive professional mentor relationships?**

The primary themes that emerged from the data included: both formal and informal dyads were formed to support participants, mentors prioritized the needs of mentees throughout the relationship, and trust was necessary to develop and sustain the relationship.

Novice principals who participated in formal mentorships were often encouraged or required by their school districts to participant in a mentoring experience. The five formal mentees who were required to participate indicated a mentorship is something they would not have experienced without their supervisor’s influence. Formal mentors and mentees expressed varying levels of understanding in reference to why they believe they were matched with their partner. Participants could not explicitly explain the match process but noted experiences of the mentor, mentee goals, and proximity likely influenced the pairing. Formal dyads experienced a range of experiences including required participation hours, forms of communication, site
observations, formal meetings, informal interactions, and social events. With the exception of one formal mentee, all formal participants reported positive experiences.

Informal mentoring participants noted how their partner’s leadership philosophy, style, and values influenced and sustained their relationships. These shared views were pivotal to their relationship and foundational to the formation of initial trust. The five informal dyads formed in two primary ways: the novice principal and mentor met at some stage of their career and continued their relationship over time (three dyads), or the mentor hired the novice principal and served as their supervisor (two dyads). Informal mentors were pivotal for the career advancement of their mentees. Finally, informal mentoring participants experienced formal encounters that included conferences, district meetings, administrator academies, and book clubs.

Regardless of informal or formal structures, mentee needs guided the overall mentoring experience. The 10 mentors intentionally utilized questioning and reflection as a primary component of the experience and avoided providing direct advice unless their mentee asked. Next, mentors were flexible with their mentees’ busy schedules. All five formal mentors articulated they were quick to disregard their training and programmatic requirements, displaying flexibility to support mentees’ emergent needs. Most mentors viewed themselves as mentors, two of the five formal mentors noted they had received additional coaching training and applied those strategies during this overall mentoring experience.

Finally, the importance of forming a trusting relationship was essential. Informal participants noted their levels of trust grew over time, which was an essential reason the relationship continued. The five formal mentors confirmed that levels of trust deepened and also were explicit in sharing the confidentiality aspect of mentoring. Mentees noted that they
respected and valued their mentors’ expertise, experience, and philosophy, which also served to increase their trust. All participants confirmed that trust existed with their partners.

Research subquestion 2: How has participant identity, investment, and intent affected the mentoring experience? Participant identity, investment, and intent were found to influence the experiences of each person and mentoring dyad. Participants defined identity through varying lenses, including educational philosophy and worldview, values and beliefs, background, inherent personality traits, gender, and race. Mentors and mentees articulated the most influential aspect of identity related to their values, philosophical views, and personality traits. Female participants, particularly female mentees, noted their gender identity influenced their experience as compared to male participants; however, within the only cross-racial dyad, the mentee expressed that differences in race had no influence in her experience. Finally, mentees placed significantly more importance on the role of identity and its influence on their relationship than did their mentors.

Next, the motivations and purpose behind why a mentor supported a novice principal highlighted their intent. Mentors articulated it was important to support the next generation of educational leaders and consistently noted their desire to give back to the profession. They expressed their role was to listen and support the mentor as needed—not to tell them how to make decisions. Informal mentoring participants further explained their intent to participate in a mentorship was an extension of their relationship. The preparation of mentors, as noted in the previous research question, did influence the intent of at least two mentors, who utilized a coaching approach throughout their mentorship. Finally, mentees were motivated to participate in a formal experience or to continue their informal relationship because of the invaluable knowledge provided by their mentors.
Participants expressed a high level of shared commitment and investment from each partner. Evidence of investment included the mentors’ willingness to engage in mentoring experiences through a wide variety of experiences and communication platforms, as well as their accessibility to mentees whenever necessary and for any purpose. Formal mentors noted their commitment increased over time as mentees affirmed the value of the experience and their time together. Relative to informal mentorships, formal participants were able to share explicit instances of investment. Two examples of an inadequate investment were noted: One mentee acknowledged his lack of engagement at the beginning of the relationship, and in another dyad the protégé perceived disinvestment of his mentor, a perception the mentor did not validate.

Research subquestion 3: How has participants’ professional practice been affected by the resources or forms of capital (career oriented and psychosocial) exchanged and reciprocated within a principal mentor-mentee relationship? This question focused on the capital exchanged between the mentor and mentee and explored how those resources and supports influenced novices’ professional practices. Forms of capital were categorized into two primary aspects: career-oriented support and psychosocial support. Examples of career-oriented resources mentees found most helpful included the mentor’s advice and knowledge relative to scenarios the mentee faced. Career-oriented supports were found in all mentoring dyads, and mentors engaged in both transformational and transactional experiences. Transformative experiences provided mentees opportunities to develop their visionary leadership, set direction for their organization, and further develop their leadership style. As noted, questioning was a commonly used strategy by mentors to transform their mentees’ practices. Additionally, mentors offered novice principals transactional experiences through providing advice related to school processes and operations.
Next, specific career-oriented themes emerged relative to informal relationships. Informal mentors exposed novice principals to new career opportunities and challenging assignments in each of the five informal dyads. Mentees were able to advance their careers as a result of their relationship with their mentors. Additionally, informal participants noted their mentors protected them by offering career advice, giving a forewarning on an upcoming issue, or being supportive regardless of the issue or even mistake on the mentee’s part.

Psychosocial supports also were provided, particularly in each of the five informal dyads. Mentors provided their mentees counseling experiences to support their concerns and anxieties. Experiencing stress and addressing issues of work-life balance were common throughout participant experiences. Females shared one of the most valuable aspects of psychosocial support included the opportunity to vent about specific school situations, personnel, or stress. In addition to counseling, mentors’ affirming and encouraging behaviors strengthened mentees’ self-confidence and reinforced their decisions. As noted in a previous research question, the use of questioning by mentors was frequently a career-oriented strategy, meanwhile mentees perceived listening as a psychosocial support, particularly when they needed to express their feelings. Finally, informal participants shared aspects of friendship were integral to their relationship and another example of a psychosocial support. Caring for, checking in, social interactions outside of work hours, and humor were expressions of friendship. Psychosocial support was an underlying approach taken by informal participants that directly affected their professional practice.

Finally, mentors also experienced reciprocal benefits. Informal mentors expressed more explicit examples of reciprocal benefits as compared to formal mentors. Specific benefits for mentors included gaining new ideas and advice (career-oriented), reflecting on their practice,
being more satisfied with their current job, and receiving psychosocial support. Participants described career-oriented and psychosocial supports that directly influenced their practice.

**Research subquestion 4: How do mentoring participants negotiate challenges or disagreements that arise as a result of their relationship?** This final subquestion focused on the disagreements mentors and mentees encountered in their relational experiences. Overall, participants experienced no significant disagreements, but participants did need to negotiate forms of communication and meeting times. Mentors were willing to be flexible with scheduling due to the busyness of novice principals; meeting times were negotiated to prioritize the mentee, even if that meant rescheduling. Communication issues were compounded in two mentoring dyads: One example involved a mentee who did not want to bother the mentor who also served as her supervisor, and the other related to a mentee who did not value his time with his mentor.

Additionally, informal mentoring participants reported more disagreements than did formal mentoring participants. The closeness and longevity of the informal relationships suggested informal dyads were comfortable engaging in conflict or actively working through it. Relative to their mentors, novice principals were more likely to recall and provide examples when they disagreed with a mentor’s decision or philosophical viewpoint. Disagreements among formal mentoring dyads centered around issues with a participant’s investment or intent, and a decision made by the novice principal. Overall, participants recalled few examples of conflict.

**Overarching research question: What elements of the mentor-mentee relationship support a novice principal’s ability to fulfill the expectations and professional responsibilities of their role?** The primary research question which guided this study focused on the elements of a mentoring relationship and how the elements influenced the novice principal’s practice. First, an emergent theme found across the mentorships suggested principals
who transitioned internally within the school from assistant principal to principal yielded different mentoring experiences. For example, four of seven novice principals with this background required fewer psychosocial supports. In addition, mentors noted the importance of a mentorship for novice principals who had served in the same school or district for the majority of their careers. Next, formal mentees reported that unspecified expectations for the novice principals or the program influenced the quality of their experiences. Novice principals expected structure, agenda, accountability, and an overall plan of action; yet, mentors strategically let the mentee’s needs guide the direction of the mentorship, which emerged in practice as less structured and requiring the mentee to do most of the talking. The mentors’ orientation to mentoring, which prioritized questioning and mentee needs, was not explicitly explained.

Across multiple subquestions, the use of questioning was a primary strategy utilized by mentors. This questioning, which might have appeared unstructured and open-ended, was strategic: Mentors expressed their attempt to avoid to influence the novice principals’ decision making. The goals were to identify the needs of the novice principal, and then use questions as an opportunity to reflect on leadership, practice, and decision-making. Interview data suggested the use of questioning was the most utilized practice by mentors.

Informal mentors and mentees expressed a greater frequency of relational structures including trust; identity; career advancement, exposure, and protection; intent to continue the relationship; and psychosocial supports. The strong relationship foundation of informal dyads suggests why informal participants were most willing to engage in conflict and disagreements through in person conversations and dialogue. Two informal mentoring dyads also presented aspects of a formal power structure existing between a supervisor/district level administrator and novice principal who identified them as their mentor. Mentors perceived their mentees
sometimes held back information in some situations; supervisors also provided examples of times they directed the principal to do something with which the mentee did not necessarily agree.

The final element was evidence of each novice principal utilizing informal networks of support outside of their singular dyadic mentorship represented. Mentors supported this practice by encouraging their mentees to reach out to other leaders or creating opportunities for them to meet other leaders. The people in novice principals’ support networks included former colleagues, internal district administrators, and other professionals introduced by the mentor.

Discussion

This study explored how the mentorship experience influenced novice principals’ professional practice and supported their capacity to fulfill the unique complexities associated with the principalship. I examined these mentorship insights through the lens of the Principal Mentoring Framework developed for this study. Constructed through the tenets of professional mentoring literature and Social Capital Theory, this framework notes how relationship structures of the mentorship influence participant experiences, the capital exchanged within a mentoring dyad, and reciprocal benefits for mentors (Figure 3).
This section interprets and analyzes the results of this research study. Overall, the discussion is organized by addressing the purpose of this study through the mentoring framework. Additionally, the discussion presents unintended findings, explores findings relative to previous research, and critiques the conceptual framework.

**Relational structures.** A fundamental component to this study’s purpose included examining how relational structures influenced participant mentoring experiences. This section focuses on the five relational structures associated with the conceptual framework. Relational aspects that influenced one other, career-oriented and psychosocial capital, and reciprocity are discussed.
**Trust.** Previous research has found the most foundational aspect to forming supportive relationships is the development of trust between the mentor and mentee (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1998; Mertz, 2004; Putnam, 2000; Schullar, 2007). Similarly, findings from this study posited evidence that trust-building behaviors were critical to sustaining the mentoring relationship and promoting relationship quality. Each of the five formal mentors were intentional to address confidentiality issues, which facilitated relational trust; all five formal mentees asserted their ability to trust their mentor grew over time as they collaborated and appreciated their mentors’ expertise. This finding connects with previous research that asserted trust promotes positive relationships through listening, collaborating, and building confidence among participants (Augustine-Shaw, 2015; Daresh, 2004; Metzger, 2003; Piggot-Irvine, 2004; Young et al., 2005). An important aspect to highlight, trust-building behaviors established among informal participant dyads was perceived as foundational to their relationships, ongoing, and a primary reason their relationships continued. Participants in the informal dyads had known each other at least 3 years, while formal dyads had only recently formed. This distinction suggests trust takes time to establish and strengthen. An exception to note, although all participants within the 10 dyads reported their ability to trust their partner, trust did not directly associate with a positive overall mentoring experience for one formal mentee.

**Participant identity.** Similar to trust, literature also has linked personal identity of the mentor and mentee to the perceived outcomes and quality of participants’ experiences (Allen & Eby, 2004; Chandler, 1996; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Portillo, 2007; Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Tenenbaum et al., 2001). Findings from this study expanded the notion of identity beyond the traditional forms of identity such as gender, ethnicity, race, religion, which is important given it demonstrates the importance of participant identity in the field of educational
leadership mentoring. In all dyads the most important aspect of identity was an alignment of mentor-mentee philosophical views, values, personality traits, and leadership beliefs. Participants asserted that these commonalities reinforced relational bonds that directly affected their ability to engage in meaningful discussions around confidential school situations, school improvement planning, and accessing mentor expertise. If participants within a dyad have misalignment pertaining to their values and educational philosophy, this study suggests the mentoring relationship will suffer, potentially yielding negative outcomes.

Along with philosophical and pedagogical alignment, gender was influential in this study. Both of the same-gendered dyads articulated that they connected on a deeper level as females. Protégés had difficulty verbalizing this feeling, but they often expressed a level of comfort to vent, feel vulnerable, and simply talk through important issues from their shared experiences as female leaders. Both dyads explicitly used the word “friendship” when describing their relationships. These relational aspects provided examples of psychosocial supports directly associated with female same-gendered mentorships, which is consistent with research from Simon, Roff, and Perry (2008), who found female-female dyads received higher levels of psychosocial supports compared to cross-gendered dyads. Additionally, Allen and Eby (2004a) reported that female mentors primarily focused on psychosocial supports, and my study also concluded that four out of the six female mentors provided greater levels of psychosocial supports relative to other forms of supportive behaviors. However, my research expands upon the Allen and Eby finding because psychosocial supports were expressed among male mentors and mentees, notably if they participated in informal mentorships. Finally, consistent with previous research (Chandler, 1996; Portillo, 2007; Tenenbaum et al., 2001) my study found female mentors and mentees experienced higher levels of psychosocial supports relative to male
participants. These results suggest a novice principal who desires high levels of psychosocial supports, such as counseling, affirmation, and confidence building, should consider being matched with a mentor (male or female) who is fully committed to providing such supports.

A limitation of this study is the lack of a racially and ethnically representative sample of novice principals and mentors. While this study included 10 males and 10 females, only one person of color was identified for this study. My research included Madeline and Jessica, a same gendered (female), but cross-racial formal mentorship (African American and Caucasian). Madeline initially was worried that her different racial/ethnic background, personal experiences, and professional setting would hinder her ability to fully connect with Jessica. However, these differences did not appear to affect their relationship quality, due to their shared values, philosophy, and connection as female leaders. In fact, Madeline and Jessica reported one of the most intense and supportive relationships in this study. Other research (Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Simon et al., 2008) has also found that cross-racial dyads did not negatively influence the overall mentorship experience, provided that there is alignment of values, philosophy, and beliefs within the mentoring dyad. Yet, it is important to consider how participants’ gender and race influences mentoring outcomes, which this study was unable to examine.

Finally, an important distinction found in this study that expands the literature, four out of the four male mentors and three of the six female mentors stated gender and race were not important factors in the quality of their mentorship experiences. Mentors felt they could mentor anyone, regardless of their identity, especially around issues of gender and race. This finding suggests mentors may underestimate the influence of their gender or race have on a relationship; furthermore, they might not be fully aware of mentees’ desires for mentor matching, as it relates to gender, race/ethnicity, and identity.
**Intent and investment.** Lin (2001) argued the intent and investment of the mentor and protégé will influence the relationship and outcome of the overall experience. Additionally, understanding how and why someone becomes a mentor (intent) influences the participants’ experience (Allen et al., 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1993, 1999; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). In terms of mentor intentions and investment, my findings have two important underpinnings. First, the five formal mentors were conscious of their efforts to attempt to build a relationship with their mentees, expressing a willingness to do whatever was necessary for the novice principal. Yet, within one formal dyad, the mentee did not see overt displays of intentionality or investment from his mentor; this novice principal felt the mentor was only in it to track the total meeting hours and receive a stipend. In addition, within one formal dyad, both participants noted a lack of investment from the novice principal. These two examples of a lack of investment pertain to formal partnerships and were contrary to all informal dyads associated with this study. This finding is also consistent with distinctions between informal and formal mentorships, which suggest mentoring benefits are stronger within informal relationships (Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997; Mullen, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1993, 1999; Samier, 2000). Mertz (2004) posited two of the most influential predictors in a formal relationship included what the participants wanted out of the program and how much time they were willing to devote to the program. My findings confirm the assumptions from Mertz; negative associations with the tenets described by Mertz adversely influenced the overall outcome for participants.

The second finding pertains to the distinction between formal and informal relationships. Formal partnerships yielded positive or negative outcomes that were aligned with the extent of their intent and investment, which is consistent with literature (Mertz, 2004; Ragins & Cotton, 1999), but those participating in informal mentoring relationships had difficulty explicitly
articulating the notions of intent and investment. Similar to trust building behaviors, this relational structure for informal participants suggests the intentionality and investment of informal participants is what continued to sustain and continue their relationship; yet, these participants did not seem to cite a need to verbalize these expectations for their mentoring partners. All five informal dyads demonstrated high levels of investment through the intense amounts of time they spent together, longevity of their relationships, and willingness to support their career development. These findings suggest that a lack of intentionality and investment from an informal participant would most likely cause the relationship to weaken and dissolve over time.

Another important aspect related to intentionality and investment was the issuing of finding and prioritizing time for the mentoring experience. Contrary to prior research (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013; Hall, 2008; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006), my results suggest that time was not a barrier to fostering supportive mentoring relationships. Mentoring dyads admitted they needed to negotiate times to meet, but participants—particularly mentors—noted a willingness to move almost everything in their schedules to find time to support their protégés. The investment of time, ability to meet formally or informally, and to communicate regularly was not negatively associated with mentoring experiences in this study.

**Formal relational structures.** This study also considered differences between formal and informal mentoring structures on the overall mentoring experience. Similar to participant identity, the distinction of a formal or informal relationship was noted throughout the findings. A finding excluded in my literature review notes instances in which district-level educators or principal supervisors require novice principals to participate in mentoring. The five formal mentees shared that if their supervisors would had not asked them to participate, they likely
would not have entered into mentoring relationships. This finding suggests if school district officials consider mentoring valuable for novices, they will need to encourage or require principals to participate. Without the supervisor’s intervention, none of those participating in formal mentorships in this study would have elected to do so.

Another significant finding involved the lack of communicated programmatic structures in place within formal mentorships. Villani (2006) and Young et al. (2005) presented aspects of formal principal mentoring and induction programs, such as program goals, participant selection, issues of trust and confidentiality, observations and feedback, goal setting, reflection, formalized meetings, and activities. Although formal mentoring participants in my study expressed aspects of structures, novice principals had difficulty articulating the goals and structures of the program. Participants in two formal dyads expressed differences in the total hour requirements of their programs. A novice principal from a formal mentorship believed he was participating in the IPA program when it actually was a local ROE program. Three formal mentees were told mentoring was required by the state of Illinois; however, mentoring is no longer mandated by ISBE due to a lack of funding. This confusion suggests communication and programmatic goals were not directly addressed in the formal dyads. This lack of communication is important, as two formal mentees stated they did not understand what was expected of them. Hall (2008) asserted the importance of programs to communicate their goals, clarify purpose, and develop a common language among participants. My results suggest this recommendation was ignored within two of the five formal mentorships. For example, the purpose of in-person meetings and their structure was not explained. Both mentees expressed frustration with the lack of formal agenda and the perception that they were responsible for guiding the conversation and activities.
Previous research has highlighted the importance of the mentor/mentee match process associated with formal programs (Bush & Chew, 1999; Daresh, 2004), citing the importance of “fit.” Yet, in my study formal mentors and mentees were unaware about how their matches occurred. Participants speculated issues of locality, personal goals, and leadership background contributed to their matches, but most were unable to articulate the process. Although matches in this study may not have been intentional as prior literature suggests (Daresh, 2004), four out of the five formal dyads believed that similarities between their values, leadership styles, and philosophies resulted in an overall positive outcome. Although my study did not purposefully investigate the process of matching participants from the organizations implementing formal programs, this finding suggests either there was process of which participants were unaware, or it was by chance participant values, personalities, philosophies, and beliefs aligned.

Other researchers (Alsbury and Hackmann, 2006; Villani, 2006; Young et al., 2005) have asserted the importance of mentor selection and training. Formal mentors in my study addressed their training prior to becoming mentors, which varied. Mentors described participating in a minimum of a 2-day training administered by the state of Illinois, IPA, or ROE. Training is noteworthy to discuss as all five formal mentors mentioned they altered their designed program criteria to meet novice principal needs or to fit their own personal styles. Three formal mentors described the quality of their training unfavorably. Although my results posit mentors prioritized the needs of mentees, I was unable to distinguish how mentor training influenced participant outcomes, as mentors explicitly noted going off script and doing “what felt natural.” This study did not examine the quality of formal mentor training or investigate the value of this training in mentor preparation.
Evidence from my study also noted a higher frequency of leadership skills development within formal dyads, especially regarding issues of personnel, evaluation, and difficult conversations. Prior research supports the importance of formal program components offering career-oriented experiences (Gettys et al., 2010; Young et al., 2005). Results also demonstrate a possibility that formal mentorships focused more on job-related functions, rather than psychosocial functions such as confidence building, friendship, and counseling. This finding is significant as all formal mentorships occurred during the mentees’ first year of the principalship. Kram (1985) presented the notion of mentorship phases. The first year of the mentorship serves as the initiation period, while years 2-6 are the cultivation period, and Kram asserted the cultivation period involves the most career and psychosocial supports. Because I do not have data from a multi-year study, I am unable to compare the quality or quantity of career-oriented supports across phases; however, my study does align with fewer psychosocial supports in the initiation phase.

**Informal relational structures.** The influence of informal relationship structures was a significant finding in this study. All of the informal dyads represented in this study occurred in the cultivation phase, years 2-5 (Kram, 1985). Literature asserts informal mentorships, relative to formal mentorships, offered greater benefits due to their focus on interpersonal relationships (Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997; Mullen, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Samier, 2000). In other words, informal dyads form around relationship tenets, rather than to fulfill the requirements of a program. Informal participants in this study noted the reason their relationship persisted was a result of the trust, respect, values, and expertise of their partners. The five informal mentees were either hired by their mentor or developed a close collegial relationship over the past several years. Four of the five informal protégés received mentoring experiences that included career
advice and advancement as a result of this relationship. Furthermore, there was an incentive for novice principals to continue this relationship because of the career opportunities their mentor provided, this included hiring them as principal. Examples of career advancement directly support Kram’s framework, specifically aspects of career-oriented mentoring such as advancement, exposure, and protection. Overall, this study suggests the existence of informal mentorships emerges from a positive relationship and directly yields benefits; otherwise, the mentoring relationship would not exist.

The transfer of knowledge and professional advice was prolific in formal dyads; however, evidence of career-oriented supports such as career advancement, exposure, and challenging assignments was exclusive to the informal mentoring dyads. Although informal relationships are often associated with psychosocial supports, my research aligns with the Ragins and Cotton (1999) study that found informal mentorships also increase career-oriented supports. Informal relationships in my study were the only dyads to provide evidence of career advancement, protection, and receiving challenging assignments that promoted their visibility within their organizations. This finding demonstrates how features of informal mentorships allow experiences mentees that expand their career opportunities over time. In this study, two of five informal mentees were hired by their mentors, while another two had an opportunity to apply for a principalship because of their informal mentors’ supports. This finding suggests longevity of the informal relationship benefits mentees through career advancement opportunities.

Ragains (1997) posited that internal mentors provided greater organizational resources to mentees. My study supports that finding relative to two informal mentorships with internal mentors; however, both mentors were district-level mentors—one case involving a direct supervisor of the mentee. A noteworthy finding suggests the influence of formal organizational
authority and power in both of these informal dyads. Neither informal mentee suggested they were unwilling to share or work closely with their mentor, but both mentors did provide examples of power dynamics that shaped their relationships. In one case, one mentor perceived his mentee was reluctant to bother him unnecessarily because he was her superintendent; in another instance the mentor simply gave a directive to his mentee, related to job responsibilities. Although these informal dyads experienced overall positive experiences and outcomes, this finding suggests issues of power in the structure of a mentorship do exist at some level, particularly with in-district mentorships. Interestingly, neither mentees in this example provided evidence that issues of power directly influenced mentorship quality. In fact, informal mentees reported that they were more likely to disagree with their mentors, compared to perceptions of formal participants. This finding suggests informal candidates are more willing to be candid with one other, possibly due to the length and depth of their mentoring relationships.

Previous research has asserted the importance of psychosocial functions within mentorships; these supports nurture, reassure, encourage (Portillo, 2007) build confidence (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Daresh, 2004), and decrease levels of stress and anxiety (Mertz, 2004). My study confirms the existence and importance of psychosocial experiences; however, this finding only pertained to informal dyads. Psychosocial functions identified in my study included supports through counseling, affirmation, encouragement, and friendship. For example, aspects of counseling included resolving mentees’ concerns and anxieties. Consistent through informal dyads, mentees frequently vented while their mentors actively listened. Overall, my results align with the Raggins and Cotton (1999) study, which also found a positive association with informal mentorships and psychosocial supports. Those in informal dyads had known one
other for at least 3 years, which is consistent with Kram’s (1985) observation that the cultivation phase (years 2-5) offers the most opportunity for psychosocial supports.

As noted earlier, one formal same-gendered dyad (female) provided examples of psychosocial supports. This exception is notable, although I did not determine whether the connection was related to participants’ philosophy and values, gender, or both. But, extensive psychosocial supports associated with female participants is noted throughout this study.

**Capital and resources.** A primary component of this study examined types of capital and resources exchanged as a result of the mentorship. Noted throughout the findings, mentors prioritized the needs of their protégés to provide individualized supports and resources; an example included mentors consistently rearranging their schedules to accommodate mentees’ busy schedules. Additionally, the five formal mentors provided evidence of offering individualized supports, rather than sticking to the formal program structure. An unintended finding from this study, mentors recognized that novice principals who internally transitioned to the principalship required different supports. Four of five novice principals who transitioned from an internal assistant principalship, required less psychosocial supports, with the exception of encouragement and friendship. Evidence noted the former assistant principals recalled feeling less stress or anxiety. In these mentorships, participants focused to a greater extent on problem solving situational issues, most often related to school personnel.

The use of questioning throughout this study was articulated by all 10 mentors. Questioning was a strategic element mentors utilized to help their mentees reflect, consider other viewpoints, and conceptualize their own thoughts to make a decision. This finding is consistent with mentoring literature that posits questioning, problem solving, and reflecting as important components to mentoring (Daresh, 2004). Questioning and listening further demonstrated
mentors’ goals to prioritize the needs of the mentors and avoid directly influencing their decisions. Across all mentoring relationships, questioning was a strategic approach from mentors, regardless of whether they viewed themselves as coaches or mentors. Two mentors self-identified themselves as coaches, noting that they had received extensive coaching training through other organizations. In both cases, this training was for their personal leadership development and helped them to develop strategic questions to foster reflection and clarity toward impending decisions.

Mertz (2004) argued there is not a uniform definition for mentoring, particularly due to the uniqueness of each local or organizational context. Kram (1985) also reported that the use of the mentor should not be narrow; she instead relied on the term development relationship. Similarly, the purpose of my study was not to distinguish between differences in coaching or mentoring models; instead, my research sought to examine relational components that influenced the ability for participants to exchange capital and resources as a catalyst for professional development. Consideration of distinct differences between formalized models of coaching and mentoring programs is warranted, however, this likely would exclude informal relationships, which this study found to be highly influential to protégés.

Kram (1985) defined coaching as providing mentees direct knowledge and advice relative to aspects of their positions. Previous research has asserted coaching or mentoring supports include feedback and observation, understanding school operations, teacher evaluation, and implementing policy (Daresh, 2004; Metzger, 2003; Mertz, 2004). Similar to other research, mentees in this study frequently discussed situational problems with their mentors relative to issues such as personnel, school programming initiatives, school improvement goals, hiring, and operational tasks. These conversations are common in principal mentorships and considered a
fundamental pillar to principals’ professional development. Findings from my study are noteworthy as evidence posits career-oriented capital instilled transformative and transactional professional development for novice principals. Transformative conversations included topics related to leadership, vision, and school improvement and programming. Transactional conversations provided advice driven and focused specifically on tangible issues such as hiring, personnel issues, evaluation, and building operations. It is important to note both transformational and transactional conversations were important to the development and support of novice principals. Although the term transactional is sometimes perceived as negative, transactional topics caused novices the most stress and challenges. These findings suggest both transformational and transactional career-oriented supports are essential to principal mentoring.

Finally, participants expressed the fluidity of career and psychosocial functions. Participants suggested a conversation would begin as a situation-based conversation, which required advice and feedback, but would quickly transition to psychosocial supports. Mentees recalled asking mentors how to approach specific situations (career capital), which mentors would listen, affirm their thinking, and build confidence in their leadership approaches. Conversations often included strategizing around personnel related problems while permitting the mentee to vent about the situation. Although this study did categorize functions of mentoring into career-oriented and psychosocial, others (Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Kram, 1985) asserted both forms of support influence job satisfaction and are essential to a successful mentorship.

Noteworthy to this study, participants across all dyads articulated a high frequency of career-oriented supports as compared to psychosocial supports. This finding suggests psychosocial supports might not as be as well defined or are devoid of a common language needed to identify such supports within mentorships.
Reciprocity. Previous research posited reciprocity is the exchange of capital and resources between two or more participants and associated with positive relationships. (Allen et al., 1997; Bush & Chew, 1999; Clayton et al., 2013; Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Kram, 1983; Ragins, 1997). In my study, informal mentors, as compared to formal mentors, articulated meaningful reciprocal benefits as a part of the mentoring relationship. Mentors expressed multiple personal benefits they experienced, including emotional support, renewed appreciation for their current position, currency in issues pertaining to curriculum, alternative perspectives pertaining to job responsibilities, and accessing new literature in the field of education. Consistent with my findings, prior research noted mentoring also provided new learnings for the mentor (Bush & Chew, 1999; Clayton et al., 2013; Daresh, 2004; Dziczkowski, 2013). My study found the five informal mentors were current practitioners; thus, this experience served as a component of their professional development.

Formal mentors also experienced some benefits. All five mentors from formal dyads described taking pride in giving back to their profession and knowing they were helping a new leader. Because each of the five formal mentors were retired, their benefits did not connect with opportunities that influenced their leadership practices or provided professional development. Overall, reciprocity was noted by informal mentors; yet, this component was not as central to my conceptual framework as I anticipated. Mentors articulated benefits from the relationship, but it was evident that the purpose of the relationship was to support the novice principal and the primary benefits accrued to mentees. Overall, reciprocal benefits associated with leadership were unique to active educators, all of whom were informal mentors.

Overall, positive experiences were reported by participants. All informal participants highlighted the success of their mentoring relationship. Participants from two formal dyads
expressed challenges (philosophical mismatch and investment) that at times led to frustrating experiences. As referenced prior, participant identity and the type of dyad (formal or informal) were the most influential relational aspects on participant outcomes. These issues will be discussed in conjunction with my conceptual framework in the next section.

**Approach of research study/framework.** This study’s conceptual framework organized relational structures as the primary aspects that influenced capital exchanged between participants and opportunities for reciprocal benefits. Overall, findings suggested relational structures directly influenced the type and frequency of capital experienced by participants, especially novice principals. These results suggest that relational structures such as trust, intent, and investment were noted and important to both formal and informal mentoring relationships. Aspects of relational structures such as the influence of identity and formal vs. informal dyads were referenced at greater frequency relative to other relational aspects, such as intent or investment. The influence of participant identity was foundational to the outcomes for all dyads, specifically philosophical alignment, values, personality, beliefs, and gender. These findings relative to the importance of participant identity also were consistent for the only cross-racial dyad and found to be more foundational to this mentoring experience than the influence of ethnicity.

Next, my conceptual framework did not place enough emphasis on the formal vs. informal structure of the mentorship experience. This study noted a distinct pattern or timeline relative to formal and informal relationships. Four of the five formal relationships occurred during year one, the initiation stage of Kram’s (1985) framework. However, each of the informal relationships occurred were already in year 2 or 3 of the mentorship, known as the cultivation stage (years 2-5; Kram). As noted earlier, Kram asserts the cultivation phase provides the
majority of career-oriented and psychosocial supports for protégés. As my study confirmed, the majority of psychosocial supports, reciprocity, and career-oriented supports such as advancement, protection, and exposure were all unique to informal dyads. Yet, not all aspects of career-oriented capital were possible in formal relationships, at least not in the first or second year. This framework fell short looking at how the different stages of a mentorship affect the type of capital produced. Findings from this study also could suggest significant psychosocial and types of career-oriented supports are nearly impossible due to the brevity of the relationship, even if it persists to year two.

It is important to discuss with the exception of one informal relationship, three of the informal participants had known each other for over 10 years. Although the protégé was new to the principalship, their relationship to their mentor was not recent. Therefore, this is a unique and important distinction between formal and informal relationships. Building trust, understanding participant identities and how much investment a participant will put into the mentorship occurs during the initiation stage of a formal mentorship. It takes multiple encounters for these relational aspects to intensify for participants. However, these relational aspects are already well established within informal principal mentorships if the participants have known each other for several years. Participants from informal mentorships who have known each other for several years prior to the principalship did not focus on issues trust, identity, intent, or investment in this study. Those structures were already intense and foundational to their partnership on day one, otherwise their relationship would not exist. This conceptual framework should consider the importance of stages of mentorships, but also the influence of participant relationships that exist long before a protégé enters the principalship and informal mentorship.
While these findings were consistent throughout this study, the same-gendered formal relationship presented multiple similarities to trends from informal dyads, specifically relative to psychosocial supports. Research has consistently noted that female participants within a mentorship provide more frequent opportunities for psychosocial supports (Chandler, 1996; Portillo, 2007; Tenenbaum et al., 2001). Given that Jessica and Madeline were both females, my findings suggest their commonality in gender also intensified this opportunity for support. Both participants acknowledged the value in working closely with another female leader. This relationship had an additional layer, in that Madeline identified as African American. The close bond between Jessica and Madeline because of similarities in philosophy, beliefs and personality, supports literature that asserts these aspects of identity are more essential than others such as race (Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Simon et al., 2008). Although my study cannot confirm which aspect of identity (gender vs. beliefs) was most foundational to the success of this formal mentorship, it does suggest that if certain aspects of identity align in a formal mentorship, participants have access to the same benefits of informal dyads.

Additionally, findings from this study suggest the non-existence of one relational structure, or a negative association with one component, does influence the overall mentorship experience despite the other remaining relational structures. For example, two participants involved in a formal mentorship did not have philosophical alignment, which caused the novice principal to be less committed to the relationship. In another example, when a protégé was not fully engaged and invested into the mentorship, the opportunities for supports diminished. While consideration of participant identity and the type of dyad provided frequent contentions and distinctions to the forms of capital and resources provided to protégés, each of the relationship structures (trust, intent, investment, identity, formal vs. informal) were found to be
interconnected. Furthermore, if one relational component was minimized, so was the opportunity for an overall positive mentoring experience.

The most common thread between mentoring literature and Social Capital Theory is the notion of trust. Something to build upon in the future and narrowly addressed in this study are the layers associated with trust. For example, confidentiality was frequently associated with trust by participants in this study, particularly in formal relationships. Prior to this study, I would also suggest my internal bias narrowly defined trust by issues related to confidentiality. Yet, the term trust also suggests a protégé can have confidence in the advice, knowledge, and expertise of their mentor. Protégés from four of the five formal mentorships shared how their trust or confidence grew over time as they learned to respect the expertise and knowledge of their mentor.

Finally, this study was distinct from previous principal mentoring research in that it explored mentoring experiences from the perspectives of both mentee and mentor. A review of mentoring research and literature found most studies were conducted from the protégé’s perspective and were atheoretical (Allen et al., 1997; Higgins & Kram, 2001). My research included data from both mentee and mentor perspectives, providing greater depth and context on this important topic. Furthermore, including both perspectives allowed for alternative understandings or confirmation of consistent trends in the interview data. A limitation of this study was the singular dyadic structure of the relationships. As noted in the findings, the 10 novice principals identified a professional network they also accessed for support. Although not the intention of this research, considering how social network theory influences a principal’s professional development and why a mentee utilizes supports in addition to their primary mentor is a question left unanswered by this study and worth additional exploration.
Implications

This study presents multiple understandings about how relational structures influence the mentorship experience between a mentor and a novice principal protégé. Furthermore, it fosters insights regarding how a mentoring relationship can support a novice principal’s on-the-job professional development and manage the complexities of her/his job responsibilities. The findings from this study provide useful insights to multiple stakeholders. This section provides a sample of implications from the findings of this research study for four stakeholder groups: novice principals, principal mentors, school district leaders, and state education officials.

Implications for novice principals. This study suggests novice principals should consider mentoring as an opportunity to support their on-the-job professional development. This is particularly true for principals who transition into the role from outside the district and do not transition internally from an assistant principalship. Novice principals need someone who can provide confidential, career-oriented and psychosocial supports to help them navigate the complex challenges principals face. Novices who are not provided an opportunity or who choose not to participate in mentoring experiences may experience uncertainties and challenges as they transition into their new roles, since they have no trusted confidantes or advisors to whom they can turn for support. As noted in this study, supports such as receiving professional advice and knowledge, problem solving, reflecting, venting, building confidence, and providing encouragement are instrumental for novice principals. Although participants in informal dyads in this study reported a higher frequency of career-oriented and psychosocial supports, those in both formal and informal mentoring experiences should be aware of the importance of a flexible experience that is tailored to meet the individualized, emergent needs of mentees. Over time, novice principals should recognize the career advancement, exposure, protection, counseling,
and friendship associated with mentoring as an opportunity to further support their overall career development. Finally, over time, novice principals should consider developing informal networks of support in addition to their formal or informal mentor.

**Implications for principal mentors.** This study also offered implications for principal mentors. First, mentors must recognize that one’s background, experience, and identity matters; it is essential to identify these factors for both mentor and mentee and consider how they may influence the complexity and quality of the mentoring experience. Findings from this study suggested mentors did not recognize how their personal identity, with the exception of their educational philosophy, influenced their relationships. For example, mentors noted they felt they could mentor anyone, regardless of their background, needs, gender, or race, which suggested that they were promoting a colorblind approach to mentoring. However, female mentees expressed gender did influence their relationship; most commonly, females noted same-gendered relationships were powerful. This understanding should not be lost as mentors enter into a relationship and reflect on how their experiences and innate identities could influence the relationship. This study noted novice principals began to trust, respect, and identify with their mentor as they learned about their prior experiences, heard their professional advice, and spent time with them.

Additionally, mentors must prioritize the needs of novice principals. Principal mentors must be flexible with their schedules to accommodate the busyness of a new principal and identify the unique needs of their mentees. This study noted principals who internally transitioned from assistant principal to principal, needed less psychosocial supports. Therefore, principals who transition externally or from a role other than an assistant principal may need extensive psychosocial supports. Principals from this study also highlighted the value in hearing
the professional advice and ideas from their mentor. Although mentors should not be quick to provide direct advice, they must remember their extensive expertise is why the protégé is seeking their support in the first place. Overall, mentors should be aware of the type of supports to offer mentees and understand how to assess the needs of a novice principal.

Finally, mentors within formal programs must be clear about the describing the goals of the program and clarifying mentee expectations. This study found mentees who participated in formal programs did not always understand the goals of program, or the expectations for themselves and their mentor. The lack of expectations resulted in mentees becoming frustrated.

**Implications for school district leaders.** School district leaders are instrumental to supporting the needs of principals, including the formation and development of a mentorship. All formal principal mentees in this study admitted they likely would not have sought out a mentor if they were not prompted to do so by their district office personnel. School district leaders must assess not only the unique circumstances of their district but also the individual needs of the principals. In doing so, district officials should consider and support a plan for principals’ on-the-job professional development. District leaders should also understand the variables that influence a mentoring relationship, including internal vs. external mentor, formal vs. informal dyad, issues of participant identity, need for confidentiality and trust, and background of novice principal.

Additionally, school district leaders should explore features of both informal mentorships and formal mentorships. While school districts may require formal mentoring experiences through a professional organization such as the Illinois Principals Association, once the novice principal has completed the 1-year formal mentoring experience, district leaders may consider encouraging principals to develop informal mentoring relationships in conjunction with or subsequent to the formal experience. Evidence from this study noted career advancement,
exposure, protection, counseling, and friendship were beneficial outcomes of informal relationships. District officials also must be aware of potential issues with formal power if the mentor is an in-district administrator—particularly one who is also the novice principal’s supervisor. This study noted internal mentors perceived their mentees often were hesitant to contact them for mentoring supports and guidance at times, due to perceptions of power or an unwillingness to consume their valuable time. In addition, in-districts mentor sometimes reached decisions that required their mentee to take actions with which they personally disagreed. These power dynamics are important to consider if in-district mentoring relationships are approved.

**Implications for state education officials and state professional organizations.** This section speaks to state education officials and state-wide professional organizations who mobilize to support school leaders across Illinois. Time spent with 10 novice school principals reiterated the complexities and challenges of their roles. As I reflected on the novice principal interviews I also recognized how unique and individualized their needs were relative to the local context. That being said, all 10 novice school principals took something away from this experience, with 9 of the 10 principals experiencing an overall successful and positive mentorship. Findings from this study suggest a mentorship does support the novice principal’s on-the-job professional development.

Currently, the principal mentoring requirement in Illinois is an unfunded mandate, and my research confirmed that approaches by districts vary by need and their interpretation of the requirement. Regardless of state mandate, state officials and professional organizations should promote, develop, and implement strategies that lead to mentoring experiences for novice principals, including promoting both formal and informal dyads. Although formal programs may be appropriate for the initial year or two of a principalship, my research indicates informal
relationships provide the highest quality supports over time. Additionally, my findings noted the expectations of formal programs were unclear and not fully communicated to mentees. Therefore, state officials and state professional organizations should be more intentional in developing mentoring materials and mentor training experiences that clearly articulate the goals and expectations of novice principal mentoring programs. In addition, both mentor and mentee should be provided with materials that explain their roles and responsibilities.

Finally, considering persons of color are traditionally underrepresented in university principal preparation program pipelines, and within the profession of school leadership, this study’s sample population of mostly White participants speaks to the need of a greater representation of school leaders of color in the field of education. State education officials and organizations should explore whether the needs of novice principals of colors are different than white novice principals and continue to prioritize the recruitment, training, and hiring of principals which represent the populations they serve.

**Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

This section conveys the recommendations for state policymakers and educational practitioners. The recommendations developed in this section were established from the unique context of this study and therefore include the limitations of this research. All stakeholders should reflect on their unique needs while considering this study’s findings and recommendations. Two policy (numbers one and two) and four practitioner (numbers three, four, five, and six) recommendations are presented.

1. **State policymakers should develop a framework for principal mentoring and induction.** Overall, this study found principal mentoring relationships served as on-the-job professional development for new principals. State officials currently offer wide-ranging
supports and induction recommendations for new teacher mentoring; however, none exists for principal mentoring or induction. Key tenets of a principal mentoring framework should include an emphasis on the development of relational structures, specifically, participant identity and type of dyad (formal vs. informal), as well as goals and expectations for the mentoring experience. Given the complexities of the principalship, state officials should develop a researched-based, principal mentoring framework for local school districts to adopt and adapt to their specific needs.

2. State policymakers should fund principal mentor training. My study found formal mentors articulated brief and inadequate training leading up to their mentorship experience. Multiple mentors, including mentors from informal relationships, sought out additional coaching and mentoring strategies on their own. The need to fund principal mentoring training can help ensure a pool of quality principal mentors exists to support principals’ unique professional development needs. A principal’s individual circumstances might include their background, identity, experiences, and viewpoints, as well the local school context. This study suggested mentors are an important aspect of novice principals’ ability to problem-solve, reflect about decision making, and seek professional advice regarding stressful situations such as personnel issues. Finally, the most utilized strategy to support novice principals included a mentor’s use of questions. Training relative to supportive questioning and listening strategizes is warranted.

3. Novice principals and those who seek to attain the principalship should develop a mentoring relationship. Novice principals should not wait for the state or their district to act. New principals should opt into a formal mentoring program at the onset of their tenure as principal or reach out to another professional to develop or continue an ongoing informal relationship. It is important to note that this study found three of five informal dyads were
already established prior to the mentee’s acceptance of her/his first principalship. Thus, informal relationships had been formed and continued with professionals who could directly support the novice principal once they acquired the position. Although this study found informal mentorships included more psychosocial support and career-oriented support such as advancement, exposure, and protection, formal mentoring also can provide the same quality of supports, provided that careful attention is given to mentee-mentor match. Novice principals from this study articulated such supports as situational problem solving, seeking advice, venting, and affirmation were all essential to understanding their ability to lead.

4. Mentors and school district leaders should assess the needs of novice principals. Mentors from this study expressed a fundamental aspect to their relationship was a focus on flexibility and meeting the unique needs of the novice principal. For example, differences existed for principals who transitioned internally from an assistant principalship to the principalship. Additionally, some novice principals were more inclined to need psychosocial supports, while others desired specific career-oriented supports relative issues pertaining to personnel, leadership for learning, evaluation, and decision making. This study also noted mentors met the needs of their mentees through leading by learning, using questions, accommodating novice principals’ busy schedules, and breaking away from mentoring program content when appropriate. Prior to the establishment of a mentorship, school district supervisors should individually assess the needs of their new principals to understand their background, experiences, and desired areas of growth. This growth assessment will help to establish the type of mentorship that will best suit their needs and provide important information to a mentor.

5. School district leaders should promote the development of informal mentoring relationships. This study found significant benefits for novice principals who participated in
informal mentorships. Informal participants received higher levels of psychosocial supports including counseling, affirmation, and friendship, but also reported career-oriented supports such as career advancement, exposure, and protection. School district leaders should work directly with novice principals to promote their relational development with an internal or external mentor. Although district officials could encourage or require their beginning principals to participate in a formal experience their first year, informal mentorships provide significant benefits to the mentee that extend beyond this first year in the principals. This study confirmed findings from prior research noting significant benefits to protégés in relationships that extended into years 2 and 3 or from a long-term relationship.

6. Organizations and professional associations that facilitate and implement formal principal mentorships should consider opportunities for mentors to prioritize and individualize the needs of the protégé. Given that each formal mentor in this research shared they rarely utilized the framework or training from their formal organization because of their desires to address the unique needs of the mentee, organizations should consider how mentors can take an inventory of the needs of the novice principal and be given flexibility to tailor the mentoring experiences to the professional development needs of the protégé. Organizations should recognize the prior experiences and local context of the novice principal dictate their professional development needs and should play a role in the matching of their mentor.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Six recommendations for additional research are presented in this section.

1.** Additional research should explore whether forms of principal mentoring influence principal efficiency.** This study did not explore whether the supports provided to novice principals improved their practice or how their leadership was perceived by others whom they lead. Future studies should consider the perceptions of principals’ longitudinal professional
growth from multiple sources, including their supervisor, administrative team, teachers, and students. Research also compare experiences and leadership efficacy between novice principals who were mentored (both formally and informally) and those who did not receive mentoring.

2. **Continue to expand upon this study’s mentoring framework by investigating the influence of participant identity and its relevance in the development of mentoring relationship.** As noted in this study’s findings, participant identity was foundational to the development of mentorships that positively influenced a novice principals’ mentoring experience. Future principal mentoring studies could continue to explore how participant identity, including race/ethnicity, gender, philosophical view, values, beliefs, and personality, may affect the quality of the mentoring experience.

3. **Pursue the connection between social network theory and mentoring frameworks.** Findings from this study indicated novice principals utilized a network of professionals to support their success as principal, and research exploring how social network theory connects to this study’s conceptual framework is warranted. Additionally, understanding when and why a novice principal who engages in a singular dyadic mentorship decides to contact another person in their professional network is important to consider.

4. **Pursue a diverse population of mentoring dyads.** This study included a diverse grouping of participants in terms of gender but fell short in finding a diverse participant population in terms of race, ethnicity, and school demographics. Research that examines the influence of race and gender has been noted outside of K-12 mentoring experiences. Continuing to explore how race and gender influence principal mentoring experiences, including cross-gender and cross-racial dyads, is important to examine from the novice principal’s perspective.
5. Explore the long-term effects of a social capital through networking, relationships, and sponsorship. Novice principals in this study described robust networks of support that extended beyond their primary mentor. Understanding the long-term effects of these networks to their career advancement is important to explore. Additionally, given that nearly all participants in this study were White, an examination of how these networks and relationships (or lack thereof) affect school leaders of color and their career-orientated capital is warranted.

6. Future research should explore the matching process for formal mentorships. Mentors and mentors in this study had difficult explaining how they were matched with their partner. Future research should investigate whether professional organizations are prioritizing the match process and using a research-driven approach to determine the quality of fit when making mentee and mentor matches. Prior literature has already posited how crucial finding a suitable match is to the outcomes of participants. However, this study suggested best practices might not be occurring; furthermore, this warrants a larger study to understand current match processes.

Conclusion

The principalship is a complex profession with increasing demands. A mentorship offers novice principals’ opportunities for on-the-job professional develop necessary to navigate the expectations of the profession. This phenomenological qualitative study examined the experiences of 10 principal mentoring dyads. Furthermore, it explored how the relational structures influenced capital or resources exchanged between a mentor and novice school principal. The conceptual framework utilized in this study integrated mentoring literature and Social Capital Theory to explore how relational structures influenced the mentor-protégé experience, including the forms of capital exchanged. Kram (1985) classified two forms of resources exchanged as a result of a mentorship: career-oriented and psychosocial supports.
Findings from this study noted relational structures identified in the conceptual framework influenced participant experiences. Specifically, results from this study indicated participant identity and formal/informal composition were the most influential to overall participant experience; these components also influenced the type of resources utilized to support the novice principal. A notable distinction found in this study, novice principals in this study received more support in the following areas: career advancement, exposure (career-oriented), protection, counseling, affirmation, and friendship (psychosocial). Formal mentorships experienced a high frequency of career-oriented supports that provided professional advice and knowledge which supported a novice principal’s ability to problem solve and make decisions. Overall, mentoring experiences in this study were positive and found to support a novice principal’s leadership practice and ability to navigate the complexities of the principalship.

Finally, this study’s conceptual framework needs additional exploration. The notion of reciprocity was not prolific as anticipated and primarily was associated with informal dyads. Results from this study suggest future research to explore the viability of this framework, including the aspects of participant identity is warranted. This study’s findings also suggest state officials and school district leaders should consider investments in mentorship training and consider developing a framework to guide the professional development of novice principals.
References


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Appendix A

Email Soliciting Candidates

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a Doctor of Education degree candidate in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign requesting your assistance in identifying novice school principals who currently participate in a mentorship program or identify as having an informal mentor/coach. The purpose for this identification is to nominate or self-nominate novice school principals for a qualitative study to examine the experiences of principal mentoring dyads, consisting of a novice school principal and their mentor, to understand how relational structures influence the experiences, professional supports and practices, and overall outcomes for both participants. This study will be conducted as part of my dissertation research. All communication will be treated as confidential. At no time will your name be disclosed to school district personnel or other organizations.

Criteria include:
1. Principal mentoring candidates self-identify as being a part of an active mentoring relationship as either the mentor or mentee. Relationships can be formal or informal in nature.
2. The principal mentee must be in her/his first three years of the principalship and the mentor relationship must have been in place for a minimum of four months.
3. Both the mentor and mentee are willing to share their experiences through an individualized and confidential in-person interview process. Mentor and mentee confirm with each other their interest in participating in study.
4. The principal mentee must currently serve in an Illinois public elementary, middle, or high school.

Should you have any questions or need clarification about the nomination process, please email (young52@illinois.edu) or call (217.781.4747) me at any time. You are also free to contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Donald Hackmann (dghack@illinois.edu, 217-333-0230) with any questions.

To nominate or self-nominate a novice principal who fits the criteria identified above, please send the individual’s name and contact information in the body of an email to young52@illinois.edu. Thank you for considering this request.

Regards,

Andrew Young
Department of Education Policy Organization and Leadership
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Appendix B

Mentor Screening Interview

Introduction and Purpose

Today, I am calling because you have agreed to participate in a qualitative study for my doctoral research at the University of Illinois that seeks to investigate novice school principals’ mentorship experiences, with a focus on understanding how relational structures influence the experiences, professional supports and practices, and overall outcomes for both participants. Nominations, including self-nominations, were sought through solicitations of public information through the Illinois State Board of Education, your local Regional Office of Education, and district superintendent networks from throughout the state.

As indicated on the informed consent form, I will be taking notes of this screening conversation and all personally identifiable information will be removed and replaced by pseudonyms. Should you wish to stop the interview at any time, you may do so.

Questions:

1. Are you currently the mentor of a principal from an Illinois public elementary, middle, or high school? If so, please identify which level.
2. In what city/community is their school located?
3. How long have you participated in a formal or informal mentoring relationship with your protégé? If so, which type of mentorship?
4. (If applicable and the first to be screened)
   a. To your knowledge, is your protégé willing to participate in this study?
   b. Can you provide me with your protégé’s contact information? (Name, phone number, and email address).
5. What is your identified ethnicity and gender (you do not have to respond to this question).
6. Do you have any questions about this study?
7. This concludes the screening interview. Should you and your protégé be selected for participation in the study, you will be notified by email.
Protégé Screening Interview

Introduction and Purpose

Today, I am calling because you have agreed to participate in a qualitative study for my doctoral research at the University of Illinois that seeks to investigate novice school principals’ mentorship experiences, with a focus on understanding how relational structures influence the experiences, professional supports and practices, and overall outcomes for both participants. Nominations, including self-nominations, were sought through solicitations of public information through the Illinois State Board of Education, your local Regional Office of Education, and district superintendent networks from throughout the state.

As indicated on the informed consent form, I will be taking notes of this screening conversation and all personally identifiable information will be removed and replaced by pseudonyms. Should you wish to stop the interview at any time, you may do so.

Questions:

1. Are you currently a principal from an Illinois public elementary, middle, or high school? If so, please identify which level.
2. In what city/community is your school located?
3. How long have you been a principal? How long have you been principal at this school?
4. How long have you participated in a formal or informal mentoring relationship with your mentor? If so, which type of mentor relationship (formal vs. informal)?
5. (If applicable and the first to be screened)
   a. To your knowledge, is your mentor willing to participate in this study?
   b. Can you provide me with your mentor’s contact information? (Name, phone number, and email address).
6. What is your identified ethnicity and gender (you do not have to respond to this question).
7. Do you have any questions about this study?
8. 

This concludes the screening interview. Should you and your mentor be selected for participation in the study, you will be notified by email.
Appendix C

Email Notifying Candidates of Their Nomination

Dear

I am a Doctor of Education degree candidate in the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, studying under Dr. Donald Hackmann in the department of Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership. You have been nominated (self-nominated or by another educator) to participate in a study of novice school principals’ mentorship experiences, with a focus on understanding how relational structures influence the experiences, professional supports and practices, and overall outcomes for both participants. The goal of this dissertation study is to understand how principal mentoring relationships can serve as a catalyst for on-the-job professional development. With the approval of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, this research is being conducted by Andrew Young and Dr. Donald Hackmann, Professor of Policy, Leadership, and Organization at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

We hope to interview novice school principals participating in mentorships throughout Illinois, plus their identified mentor. Mentor and protégé interviews will be individual and the information collected will be confidential and secure. Should you meet the criteria and choose to participate, Mr. Young will contact you for an initial phone screening to ensure you meet the criteria for the study. If you are selected for the study, Mr. Young will conduct an interview with you, either in-person or by telephone, to collect information about your experience as a mentor or protégé. We anticipate that initial interviews will last approximately 60 minutes, with follow-up interviews lasting approximately 30 minutes. The interviews may be audiotaped with your permission. It is our hope that findings from this study will be informative for school principals, school district leadership teams, state policymakers, and stakeholders within university preservice programs, by providing new knowledge implicit to the experiences of a novice principal mentorship, including benefits to the mentor and mentee and how the experience influences professional practice.

Participant criteria includes:

1. Principal mentoring candidates self-identify as being a part of an active mentoring relationship as either the mentor or mentee. Relationships can be formal or informal in nature.

2. The principal mentee must be in her/his first three years of the principalship and the mentor relationship must have been in place for a minimum of four months.

3. Both the mentor and mentee are willing to share their experiences through an individualized and confidential in person interview process. Mentor and mentee confirm with each other their interest in participating in study.

4. The principal mentee must currently serve in an Illinois public elementary, middle, or high school.
We hope that you will be willing to participate in this study. Please indicate your interest by emailing Andrew Young (young52@illinois.edu) or calling (847-932-2214). If you choose to participate, an informed consent form will be delivered to you by email and a phone conference time scheduled. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Dr. Hackmann (dghack@illinois.edu; 217-333-0230). Thank you for considering this request.

Andrew Young
Graduate Student
University of Illinois

Dr. Don Hackmann
Professor
University of Illinois
Appendix D

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of novice school principals’ mentorship experiences, with a focus on understanding how relational structures of the mentee and mentor influence the experiences, professional supports and practices, and overall outcomes for both participants. The goal of this study is to understand how principal mentoring relationships can serve as a catalyst for on-the-job professional development. This research is being conducted by Mr. Andrew Young, Doctor of Education degree student in Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Professor Donald Hackmann. Mr. Young will collect information about your experience as a mentor or protégé via an individual in-person interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. Follow-up interviews also will be conducted, lasting approximately 30 minutes. The interviews may be audiotaped with your permission (see below). If you chose not to audiorecord, hand notes will be taken. You will be asked to review your interview transcription for accuracy and can clarify or add additional information to your responses. Data will be reported out in the aggregate, and information collected through your interviews will be held confidential. Any interview quotes will use a pseudonym. Information collected may be shared through conference presentations and through publications (e.g., dissertation and journal articles). When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. All potentially identifying relationships will be de-identified prior to dissemination such as: school and mentorship location, affiliation with any mentoring organization or school district. However, laws and university rules might require us to disclose information about you. For example, if required by laws or University policy, study information that identifies you and the consent you have provided may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:

- The university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- University and state auditors, and Departments of the university responsible for oversight of research.

Participation is strictly voluntary. You may choose to participate in the interview but decline to participate in a follow-up interview if it is requested of you. You may choose to skip questions if you prefer not to answer. You may opt out of participation at any time during interview without negative consequence or without jeopardizing your relationship with us, the University of Illinois, or the programs and services in which you.

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 217-333-2670 or e-mail OPRS at irb@illinois.edu
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read and understand this project and indicate my willingness to voluntarily take part in this research study. I have been given a copy of this consent form for my records.

I agree to be interviewed for this study  ____YES  ____NO

I agree to have my interview audiotaped for the purpose of transcription  ____YES  ____NO

Printed Name: __________________________________________

Signature: ____________________________________________ Date: ___________________
Appendix E

Interview Protocol and Questions for Selected Principal Mentor

Read: Thank you for answering questions about your experience in a principal mentorship.

A. Review official letter and ask if there are questions
B. Confirm end time or possible impeding conflicts
C. Review and sign content form
D. Ask for permission to turn on the recording device and remind participant it can be turned off at any time if the wish to exclude their comments
E. Share the purpose of the study, date, and time
F. Let participant know I will from time to time take down notes and ask follow up questions
G. Thank participant for volunteering and remind them they can stop at any time
H. Start questions

Background Questions

Please share your Identity Code, age, identified ethnicity, and current position.

How many years have you currently been in this position?

What is your education and professional background?

How would you describe your current school and school district? (If applicable)

What are the biggest challenges you see facing the principalship?

Development of Mentorship

How did your mentorship establish itself? (Why do you have a mentee?)

Describe the mentorship structure and expectations in place if any exist? How do you hold each other accountable? How do you spend most of your time together?
How would you describe your investment (time, energy, effort) in the mentorship?

Describe your mentee?

Does this description affect your ability to trust your mentee?

Describe your professional relationship with your mentee?

Identify the aspects of your mentorship you have found invaluable? Anything you have not valued?

What attributes of your mentee have you found invaluable? Anything you have not valued?

Effects of Mentorship
In what capacity has your mentee contributed to your ability to be an effective school leader?

Describe the information/advice/knowledge from your mentee that has influenced your practice?

How have you contributed to this relationship?/How have you contributed to the mentorship?
If at all, how has you supported your mentee emotionally?

What topics or information have you and your mentee spent the most time discussing?

Has this relationship resulted in developing new beliefs or understandings about yourself as a school leader?

**Mentorship Reflection and Recommendation**

In terms of on-the-job principal professional development, how would you describe the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship compared to other potential experiences for novice principals?

What would you change to make this mentorship a more effective experience?

Share recommendations you would establish for developers of a principal mentoring program.

**Read at conclusion:**

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my principal mentoring study. In the coming weeks I will transcribe your comments and return the transcript to you. At that time you can confirm your statements, make changes, or add additional information.
Appendix F

Interview Protocol and Questions for Selected Principal Mentee

Read: Thank you for answering questions about your experience in a principal mentorship.

A. Review official letter and ask if there are questions
B. Confirm end time or possible impeding conflicts
C. Review and sign content form
D. Ask for permission to turn on the recording device and remind participant it can be turned off at any time if the wish to exclude their comments
E. Share the purpose of the study, date, and time
F. Let participant know I will from time to time take down notes and ask follow up questions
G. Thank participant for volunteering and remind them they can stop at any time
H. Start questions

I. Background Questions

Please share your Identity Code, age, identified ethnicity, and current position.

How many years have you currently been in this position?

What is your education background?

What were your prior professional roles before becoming a principal?

How would you describe your current school and school district?

Identify and describe the most challenging aspects of your role as principal?

How are you held accountable as a leader?
Development of Mentorship

How did your mentorship establish itself? (Why do you have a mentor?)

Describe the mentorship structure and expectations in place if any exist? How do you hold each other accountable? How do you spend most of your time together?

How would you describe your investment (time, energy, effort) in the mentorship?

Describe your mentor?

Does this description affect your ability to trust your mentor?

Describe your professional relationship with your mentor?

Identify the aspects of your mentorship you have found invaluable? Anything you have not valued?

What attributes of your mentor have you found invaluable? Anything you have not valued?

Effects of Mentorship

How has your mentor supported you as a novice principal?

In what capacity has your mentor contributed to your ability to be an effective principal?
In what way, if any, has your mentor inhibited your ability to be effective?

Describe the information/advice/knowledge from your mentor that has influenced your practice?

How have you contributed to this relationship? How have you contributed to the mentorship?

If at all, how has your mentor supported you emotionally?

What topics or information have you and your mentor spent the most time discussing?

Has this relationship resulted in developing new beliefs or understandings about yourself as a principal leader?

**Mentorship Reflection and Recommendation**

In terms of on-the-job principal professional development you’ve experienced, how would you describe the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship to your other experiences?

What would you change to make this mentorship a more effective experience?

Share recommendations you would establish for developers of a principal mentoring program.

**Read at conclusion:**

Thank you for taking the time to participate in my principal mentoring study. In the coming weeks I will transcribe your comments and return the transcript to you. At that time you can confirm your statements, make changes, or add additional information.