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A Phenomenological Study on the Mentoring Experiences of Teachers of Color in New Orleans

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late father, teacher, and mentor, George Kameka.

You taught me how to read, write, and critically think about the world and the people in it. You challenged me intellectually, encouraged my academic pursuits, and saw the potential in me that I did not see. You inspired me to be the best person I can be.

In your lifetime, I did not adequately express my gratitude for the tremendous impact you had in shaping who I am today. I regret that.

I am deeply and eternally grateful.

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To the teachers of color and their mentors, I have the utmost respect and deep admiration for what you do. Your job is so difficult, inspiring, and impactful, and I aim to dedicate my career to supporting your work.

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ABSTRACT

Mentoring has been used for centuries as a way for a person to pass on knowledge, skills, or support to a less experienced person. Mentoring in the workplace, however, was not studied until the early 1980s, and then more than a decade later, mentoring was studied in the context of the K-12 teacher workforce. Mentoring has improved teacher effectiveness (Yuan, 2015; Koedel, 2009; Campbell and Malkus, 2011); increased teachers' self-efficacy (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Saffold, 2005; Louis, 2016); and contributed to teacher retention (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Cohen & Fuller, 2006). Most mentoring studies and theories, however, have been developed with a teacher population that is largely White. While about 50% of students in K-12 public schools in the U.S. are non-White, only 18% of teachers are non-White. Because teachers of color have a profound and positive impact on students, they are worth studying.

The purpose of this study is to understand the mentoring experiences of teachers of color in K-12 public charter schools in New Orleans, and to explore how teachers of color benefited from mentoring in the areas of career development and psychosocial support. The researcher utilized a qualitative, phenomenological approach by interviewing ten participants and analyzing the essence of their experiences. Five themes resulted from this research: race plays a significant role in the mentoring of teachers of color; the charter school system in New Orleans has had an impact on the racial make-up of teachers; informal and formal mentoring form a winning combination; mentors provided teachers of color with validation and cultural navigation tools; and mentoring improved teaching practices and retention. This study can have an impact on mentoring theory as it relates to race and identity. This study also has practical implications for K-12 leaders in the way that teachers of color are supported.

Keywords: mentoring, mentor, mentee, teachers of color, New Orleans, White privilege, intersectionality, cultural navigation.

CHAPTER 1

Many issues have been noted in the literature as contributing factors to what is referred to as the achievement gap between White students and some of their low-income and racial minority peers in the United States (Coleman, 1968). Studies have shown consistently that some students of color will not be successful enough in their K-12 experience to gain access and persist through college to achieve a degree (Gay, 2000). Understanding the factors that contribute to this gap is especially pertinent. Some reasons hypothesized for the existence of the achievement gap include family structure and parenting techniques (Monyihan, 1968); student motivation and misconduct (Ratcliff, 2016); low family incomes and poverty (Jensen, 2019); and socio-emotional factors (Becker and Luthar, 2002). Because the achievement gap largely places the blame on children and fails to recognize systemic inequities (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Verstegen, 2015), the researcher will use the term educational "opportunity gap" instead of achievement gap. The opportunity gap recognizes that the education system creates inequities for students and places racial minorities at a disadvantage, which may lead to students' disengagement and underperformance (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, & Crosby, 2008). The opportunity gap recognizes, for example, that some African American and Brown students are pushed out through suspensions, expulsions, and in-school arrests which led to academic disengagement (Quin & Hemphill, 2014) and are detrimental to the academic trajectory of students of color (Noguera, 2003).

Although all of these issues impact the opportunity gap in the U.S., teacher retention continues to warrant examination as quality teachers continue to leave the field within the first few years of employment (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008). Despite large increases in new teacher hiring over the past twenty years (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), an

estimated 45% teacher attrition rate in the first five years of new teachers' careers plagues the profession (Ingersoll, 2003).

The larger rate of attrition for teachers of color is a significant aspect of the opportunity gap that should be considered. Teachers of color leave the profession at a rate of 24% higher than their White counterparts (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Sealey-Ruiz & Toldson, 2014). One in-school factor that can have the greatest impact on a student's academic achievement is his or her teacher (Rivkin, Hanushek & Kain, 2000; Sunderman & Kim, 2005). Villegas and Irvine (2009) suggested that teachers of color play an important role in the education of racial minority students as the teachers may be able to connect with students of a similar racial background from a cultural standpoint. With this connection, a student of color is more likely to overcome some obstacles that may be holding him or her back if he or she is in a setting with others who share his or her racial identity (Steele, 2010). Additionally, studies show that teachers of color can serve to motivate and inspire students to achieve at higher academic levels, close the opportunity gap, reduce the pushout rate of minority students, and help students of color persist in college (Watson & Smitherman, 1996). As discussed in more detail in the following chapter, culturally connecting to students may lead to better academic outcomes for students of color. This cultural connection is an important topic to discuss because the opportunity gap exists not only between students from low-income families and their wealthier counterparts; the opportunity gap is glaringly racial (Gay, 2000).

Teacher retention, in general, and the retention of teachers of color in particular, is an important topic in addressing the opportunity gap in the U.S. Henke, Peter, Li, and Geis (2005) reported that despite the increase in diversity in the student population, the teacher population has remained largely White and female. Though teachers of color are less likely to leave high-minority and high-poverty schools than White teachers, teachers of color leave the profession

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overall at a higher rate than their White counterparts when all public schools are considered (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Ingersoll & May, 2011). The fact that teachers of color only make up 18% of all teachers in U.S. K-12 public schools makes the situation even more problematic, since about half of the student population is made up of students of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

One promising intervention to improve retention for teachers of color is mentoring. Research has demonstrated an evident connection between teachers who participate in mentoring programs and their retention in the profession. Henke, Chen and Geis (2000) compared the attrition rate of teachers who participated in mentoring programs with teachers who had not participated and found that 15% of teachers who had participated in the mentoring programs left the teaching profession, while 29% of teachers who had not participated in mentoring programs left the profession. The research of Saffold (2005), Louis (2016), and Ingersoll and Strong (2011) produced similar results. These findings, combined with other studies discussed in this chapter, provide a foundation for the potential relationship between the mentoring of teachers of color and their retention.

Problem Statement

Teachers of color serve as mentors to all students and have a particular impact on students of color that is linked to their common backgrounds, insights on race relations, and experiences in cultural navigation in White majority spaces (Quiocho & Rios, 2000). Teachers of color have significant impact on gains in the learning and academic performance of students of color (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Fairlie, Hoffman, & Oreaopoulous, 2011). Of the factors that can be influenced by public policy, teachers have the greatest impact on the quality and academic success of a student's education (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2000; Sunderman & Kim, 2005). Research has suggested that students of color who lack role models in their families

and extended communities are likely to look for role models in their teachers, and the lack of representation of their racial and cultural backgrounds in their teachers may negatively impact their performance. There is also evidence that teachers of color positively impact the performance of all students, particularly that of students of color. Further, research has found that retaining teachers of color can serve to close the student achievement gap, reduce the pushout rate of minority students, and help students of color persist and succeed in college (Watson & Smitherman, 1996). More specifically, research findings have shown that teachers of color impact the academic outcomes of students of color positively resulting in higher test scores, improved attendance, and better preparation for college (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

The absence of a diverse teacher population is a system-level problem that can be improved with retention strategies proven to be effective. Reasons teachers stay include self-reporting on having self-efficacy in their roles; working in a positive school climate where both the adult and student cultures are positive; having a supportive administration that respects the roles of teachers and shows appreciation for their contributions; being granted opportunities for professional development, learning and growth; and seeing the positive difference they are making in the academic and individual lives of students (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Saffold (2005) pointed to a relationship between mentoring and retention linked to self-efficacy, and stated that an ongoing cycle of mentoring at all levels and stages of teaching could be one method to facilitate effective, sustainable retention of teachers of color. Mentoring is at least in part successful in increasing teacher retention due to its ability to increase teacher self-efficacy (Louis, 2016; Saffold, 2005). Self-efficacy is defined as one's belief in his or her own ability about a particular task (Bandura, 1977; Grant, 2006; Kram, 1985; Yost, 2006). In addition, research has shown that individuals who act as mentors also gain increased levels of self-efficacy (Kram, 1985; Yost, 2002). Bandura (1977) stated that self-efficacy determines "whether coping

behavior will be initiated, how much effort will be expended, and how long it will be sustained in the face of obstacles and aversive experience" (p. 191). Accordingly, the amount of self-efficacy that a teacher has will determine how he or she deals with the challenges in his or her school. Research findings have underscored the importance of increasing teachers' self-efficacy through mentoring as a successful strategy that contributes to the retention of all teachers (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

While studies have shown that mentoring improves teachers' self-efficacy and increases likelihood of retention, the research that is missing is nuanced information regarding the specifics about mentoring that worked to retain teachers. The research is also missing the component of race and how mentoring specifically impacts the retention of teachers of color. This study looked at the mentoring experiences of teachers of color, and will provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the career development and psychosocial support that participants gained from their mentoring experiences.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the mentoring experiences of teachers of color; how race, gender, age and other factors played a role in that experience; and how mentoring might have influenced their retention. The researcher used detailed descriptions from the perspectives of participants as a means to examine specific issues.

Research Question

The research question that guided this study was: What are the mentoring experiences of K-12 teachers of color in charter schools in the Greater New Orleans region? The sub questions were: What are the psychosocial effects of mentoring experiences on teachers of color? How have mentoring experiences impacted the careers of teachers of color?

Study Framework

The conceptual framework applied to this study borrowed heavily from professional mentoring theory by Kathy E. Kram (1983, 1985) and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 1983) intersectionality social theory. In a signature study on mentoring, Kram (1983) assessed 18 developmental relationships and identified two major themes in professional mentoring: career development and psychological support. In this phenomenological study, both the career development and psychological support themes were used as part of the interview protocol to better understand the inner workings of mentoring through the participants' lived experiences. This study examined the mentor-mentee interactions, and the changes in behavior, career implications, and impact on retention that the mentor-mentee relationship had on participants. The conceptual framework for this study also used intersectionality social theory because the mentoring experiences of teachers of color could not be separated from their complex identity as it relates to race, gender, socio-economic status, and location. This study explored more deeply the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993) of teachers' identities while examining their mentoring experiences considering Kram's mentoring theory. Both of these theories influenced the design of the study to answer the research question and sub-questions.

First, the research results provided insights into the lived experiences of teacher participants who were retained teachers of color and who had engaged in some form of formal or informal mentoring for at least one academic year. This study also explored the psychosocial and career impacts that mentoring had on teacher participants of color. Third, this study examined how race, gender, socio-economic status, and location played a role in the participants' mentoring experiences.

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Study Context

This study took place in New Orleans, a city where the public education system is starkly different from education systems in other United States cities. While the public education systems in other U.S. cities are made up primarily of schools governed by a traditional, centralized district school board, New Orleans' entire school system is made up of decentralized charter schools. Some are single charter schools, and some are groups of two or more charter schools that are governed by charter management organizations or other agencies. While 95% of the public schools in New Orleans are charters, charter schools nationally represent only seven percent of all public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Charter schools are in fact public schools; however, they have a different governing structure than do traditional district schools. Thus, this study was limited to the experiences of teachers who work within this charter school system.

New Orleans is unique in the racial makeup of its teacher workforce because the city has a non-White teacher workforce population more than three times higher than the national average. In fact, fifty-five percent of all charter school teachers in New Orleans are non-White, including 49% who are African American. Nationally, only 18% of all public-school teachers are non-White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Similarly, New Orleans charter schools reflect a much higher population of students of color than the national average, as 94% of students in New Orleans public schools are non-White -- almost twice the national average of 49%. Thus, people of color make up the majority of both the teacher and student populations in the New Orleans public charter school system. Therefore, the experiences of teachers of color in this environment, where they are the majority, may differ significantly from the experiences of teachers of color in a typical public-school system in the United States, in which teachers of color are the minority.

Another unique characteristic worth noting is New Orleans' recent history with a significant natural disaster, which shifted the governing of the local school system. In 2005, New Orleans experienced a catastrophic event – Hurricane Katrina – which resulted in the failure of the floodwalls and levees causing flooding in more than 80% of the city. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the State of Louisiana passed legislation through Act 35 to dismantle the then-existing Orleans Parish public school system in its entirety. This systemic change altered the New Orleans educational system in three important ways: the composition of the teacher population, the manner in which public schools are governed, and the way teacher performance is evaluated, among other key elements. Therefore, it was impossible to separate the scope of this study from the unique context of pre- and post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. To situate this study, the following sections will discuss the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the public education system in New Orleans, the differences between district and charter school systems, and how the racial makeup and dynamic of New Orleans public schools dramatically shifted when the State of Louisiana took over the local schools following Hurricane Katrina.

Pre-Katrina and Post-Katrina School Systems

In August 2005, Hurricane Katrina, a category five hurricane on the Saffir Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, caused massive flooding in New Orleans and the surrounding regions, shutting down the city, and serving as the catalyst for dramatic changes to public education in the months that followed. Before the storm, the Orleans Parish School Board oversaw a unified school district made up of neighborhood schools whose student performance scores ranked among the lowest in the state and the nation and whose low performance was of deep concern (Cowen Institute, 2012).

Following the storm, there was an emergency legislative session and Governor Kathleen Blanco signed Act 35 (2005) into law. Act 35 expanded the already existing State of Louisiana

Recovery School District. Via the Recovery School District, the State of Louisiana took over the vast majority of New Orleans schools, and the Orleans Parish School board terminated around 7,500 teachers and school staff (*Oliver v. Orleans Parish School Board*, 2015). As a result of this takeover, the New Orleans school district lost local control of about 95% of its schools to the state's Recovery School District (Beabout, 2008). Subsequently, a new system of decentralized, autonomous charter schools emerged (Dingerson, 2006). These schools were rooted in the belief that, in order to achieve academic success for students, schools needed autonomy and control, a commitment to high academic standards for students, and stringent accountability measures for teachers (Sondel, 2016). Pre-Katrina, teachers operated under a collective bargaining agreement under the United Teachers of New Orleans, which was the local labor union branch of the American Federation of Teachers, but the new post-Katrina teacher workforce was made up of non-union employees. The new charter schools were not required to hire certified teachers, opening the door for these schools to employ teachers affiliated with programs such as Teach For America, TeachNOLA, and The New Teacher Project (Buras, 2016). The new teacher workforce in New Orleans became a mix of traditionally trained teachers and teachers who were recruited by aforementioned alternative certification programs. Traditionally trained teachers refers to teachers who earned teaching degrees, practiced in classroom settings, and earned their licenses in a typical manner, while teachers with alternative certification refers to teachers who received their licenses through other methods. This study does not discuss the benefits and drawbacks of traditional and alternative teacher certification. Darling-Hammond's (2009) studies concluded that students performed at the same academic levels whether or not their teachers received traditional or alternative certification. In this phenomenological study on teachers of color, 30% of the participants received alternative certification through The New

Teacher Project and Teach For America, while 70% earned teacher certifications in traditional programs of education.

Charter Schools and Traditional District Schools

As stated earlier, the pre-Katrina New Orleans public school system was made up of neighborhood schools mandated to accept all school-age children who lived in the neighborhood around each school. Today, schools in New Orleans are charter schools, which, like their predecessors, are public schools funded with public dollars. A charter school, however, is operated by an agency or a charter management organization rather than a centralized school board. Charter schools are held accountable to achievement goals that are written in their charter agreements. A charter school does not necessarily serve children from a particular neighborhood; instead, it serves children whose parents have chosen to enroll their children in that school. Finally, charter schools operate free from school district bureaucracies, which means they have autonomy over budgeting decisions, among others (NCES, 2012). The State of Louisiana recently codified this into law through Act 91 (2016), which granted charter management organizations that returned to the governance of the Orleans Parish School Board complete autonomy over hiring and firing of teachers as well as the certification of teachers.

Charter schools are part of a larger conversation on school choice and privatization, greater accountability, standardization, and centralized regulations (Lipman, 2005). In New Orleans, the topics of charter schools and race are intricately linked. Ladson-Billings (2006) stated that inequality could be understood at the intersection of race and property. In the case of the New Orleans education system, the property is a quality education. The likely candidates to receive this quality education in the New Orleans charter system are White, and the least likely to benefit are African American children who are also from low-income families. While charter schools tend to form near urban districts, African American and Brown students in urban

districts do not necessarily benefit (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2002). Buras (2011) found that the charter school movement in New Orleans did very little to respond to the needs of students. The charter school movement segregated students and increased profits of private, for-profit companies that benefited from managing charter schools (Buras, 2011). After decades of promises that charter schools would increase equality, improve student outcomes and close the racial opportunity gap, charter schools have fallen short of delivering these results (Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Wang, 2011).

At the same time, well known policy-makers, education reformers, educators, and advocates for children have hailed the new charter school system in New Orleans as a national model for school reform and improvement (Harris, 2013). Other researchers have found that students who attend charter schools perform no better, on average, than students who attend traditional public schools (Hanushek et al., 2002). Not enough time has passed for a definitive conclusion on the impact that the charter school movement has had on schools, teachers, children, and families of New Orleans. This dissertation is not about the benefits and flaws of the charter school system in New Orleans, but a discussion on the charter school movement in New Orleans is merited because race and charter schools are linked and the study was conducted in a charter school city.

Race in New Orleans Public Schools

The new policies that govern the New Orleans charter school system in the post-Katrina era emphasize a neoliberal "color-blind" agenda that traded cultural learning for rigor and assessments (Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015). Pre-Katrina, 72% of teachers in public schools were African American, which means that the majority of teachers who were fired were African American. Many of these teachers were not rehired (Cook, 2008). Ten years post-Katrina, only 37% of teachers were African American. The percentage of teachers with local roots also

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decreased from 60% pre-Katrina to 34% post-Katrina. In addition, the percentage of younger, less experienced teachers increased from 33% pre-Katrina to 54% post-Katrina. At the same time, older teachers with 20 years or more of teaching experience dropped by more than 20% in the post-Katrina charter school workforce. In large part, experienced African American teachers were blamed for the failures of public schools in New Orleans, and researchers have found that this conclusion is baseless and without merit (Buras, 2016; Cook, 2008). The displacement of African American teachers also displaced cultural contributions (Cook & Dixson, 2013). Policies in public education institutions in the U.S., regardless of the racial makeup of teachers and students, uphold White cultural norms and language as the standard against which all members of a school are measured (Tuck & Gorlewski, 2015). This is particularly true in the post-Katrina New Orleans school system (Buras, 2011). The face of the typical teacher in the new charter system in New Orleans was White, less experienced, and not from New Orleans, and the new norm was to teach to the standards and newly introduced assessments.

The research has shown that when schools close in the U.S., students of color and students from lower socio-economic background are disproportionately affected (Hansen, 2012; Jeffers, 2018). The school closings in New Orleans followed the same pattern in 2005. Students, primarily students of color, did not return to their familiar neighborhood schools, but rather found themselves navigating a decentralized school system in which their teachers, schools, and classmates were new. Some researchers suggested their educational experience and test scores improved, while others noted the displacement of cultural norms, respect and understanding (Buras, 2016). For these reasons, New Orleans presented a unique educational landscape to study the mentoring experiences of teachers of color.

Potential Implications

This study has implications for future research and may help policymakers better understand mentoring functions as they relate to retaining teachers of color, and may prove beneficial in increasing the understanding of the experiences of teachers of color who have chosen to stay in the teaching profession. The significance of a qualitative study that explores the experiences of retained mentored teachers of color, and their perceptions and beliefs about practices that impact their retention, also has the potential to advance educational leaders' practices. As more educators who were not traditionally trained to teach move into the K-12 sector, they may find value in using mentoring methods that have been proven to work efficiently in the private sector. Moreover, this study may inspire newer teachers of color to seek out mentoring relationships that mimic the successful experiences of some of the participants. Finally, by using both Crenshaw's intersectionality social theory and Kram's mentoring theory, this study seeks to expand professional mentoring theory which currently does not explicitly examine issues of race.

Limitations

Weaknesses and limitations of this study may affect the findings. First of all, this was a qualitative phenomenological study that was limited to the selection of ten teachers of color who worked in New Orleans public schools, taught for at least five years, and had a mentor for at least one academic year. Because participants in this study were recruited from various schools, across class lines, and in different parts of the city, there was a wide range of experiences that proved beneficial to understanding where mentoring and retention meet; however, this variety in experiences made it difficult to distinguish among the effects of mentoring and the effects of other retention factors. It was beyond the scope of this study to assess whether these mentoring experiences were truly the overwhelming factor in teacher retention.

Additionally, this research was susceptible to researcher bias in that the researcher is a person of color who was significantly influenced by a professional mentor early in her career. While these are limitations, the researcher's race and experiences in mentoring are also strengths. The researcher has worked in the past indirectly with teachers in public schools in New Orleans; however, she did not know any of the participants before this study took place, in a working capacity or otherwise. A philosophical assumption underlying the interpretive phenomenological approach is that "presuppositions or expert knowledge on the part of the researcher are valuable guides to inquiry and, in fact, make the inquiry a meaningful undertaking" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). Because researcher bias cannot fully be eliminated, the researcher used the interpretive or hermeneutic approach to examining the context of the participants' experience in relation to race, gender, geography and other factors that impacted teachers of color in their mentoring experience (Heidegger, 1962). This approach let the researcher arrive at a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the mentoring experiences of teachers of color because to interpret is to be human, and humans cannot remove themselves entirely from what is their background and history (Heidegger, 1962).

This study was not designed to examine the quality and types of mentoring programs or provide an exhaustive list of best practices or the most common mentoring program components. Nor was this study expected to find a linear, causal relationship between mentoring and the retention of teachers of color. It was also not focused on the improvement of instructional skills through mentoring. Neither was the purpose to make a case that teachers of color have an impact on the growth and learning of students in public schools. Instead, this study was limited to seeking to understand the complexity of teachers' experiences in their mentoring relationships, and focused more on teachers' attitudes, perspectives, and feelings given their unique, complex, multi-dimensional identities.

Organization of the Dissertation

In this first chapter, the researcher introduced some of the underlying issues that impact the student opportunity gap in the U.S., of which one is the attrition of teachers of color. The chapter made a case for retaining teachers of color, particularly when, across the country, public schools are made up of about 50% students of color and teachers of color are underrepresented as only 18% of the entire teacher population. The chapter introduced mentoring as an intervention to reduce the attrition of teachers of color, and provided a foundation for the potential relationship between mentoring of teachers of color and their retention. This chapter expanded on the problem the study addresses, the overall purpose of the study, the two theoretical frameworks that were applied, and the research questions that were investigated. Additionally, the chapter provided a situational context to describe the unique conditions of the K-12 education system in New Orleans as it relates to history, school governance, and racial makeup. The chapter ended with potential implications and limitations.

The second chapter provides an exhaustive literature review on the impact of teachers of color on students and these teachers' underrepresentation, attrition, and retention. One assumption going forward is that racial identity impacts the academic and social development of students and, subsequently, teachers' ability to culturally connect to students, which may lead to better academic outcomes for students of color. The second chapter also covers in depth the conceptual framework that was used in this study. The two theories are Kathy Kram's (1983, 1985) mentoring theory and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 1993) intersectionality social theory, which guided the research design of this study.

Chapter three explains the research methods the researcher utilized in this phenomenological study. Chapter four contains the findings of the study. Chapter five presents

the reader with a discussion of the findings and concludes with recommendations for future

research.

CHAPTER 2

This chapter is a literature review of past relevant research that provides context to the current study. It begins with research on the impact that teachers of color have on students, which provides a rationale for why teachers of color are worth studying. The chapter then covers the underrepresentation, attrition, and retention of teachers of color to set the stage and bridge the rest of the chapter to the topic of mentoring. The mentoring overview that follows provides the reader with research on mentoring, its connections to self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness, the nature of mentoring structures, and the differences between informal and formal mentoring. This chapter concludes with the two theories that the researcher used as the theoretical framework to guide the design of the study. These two theories are Kathy Kram's (1983, 1985) mentoring theory and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 1993) intersectionality social theory.

Teachers of color are significantly underrepresented in K-12 public schools as is evidenced by the disparity between students of color and teachers of color in public schools across the United States. Teachers of color only make up 18% of all teachers in U.S. K-12 public school system while about half of the student population is made up of students of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Studies have shown that the reason for the low percentage of teachers of color is not failure to recruit or hire teachers of color (Summerhill, 2016). In fact, by 2010, 31 states had passed laws that required the recruitment of teachers of color, which resulted in the employment of teachers of color doubling between 1990 and 2010 (Villegas & Lucas, 2012). The challenge that the profession faces is retaining these teachers of color once they are hired (Howard, 2001; Henke, Peter, Li & Geis, 2005). Teachers of color are leaving the profession at a rate of up to 24% higher than are White teachers (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Considering the positive impact that teachers of color have been shown to have on students, this attrition problem may be linked to the racial opportunity gap.

Why are teachers leaving the profession? For the teaching force in general, the research base has suggested that among some of the reasons teachers leave the profession are: increased dependence on students' performance in standardized testing (Hill & Barth, 2004); teacher burnout and feelings of inefficacy (Billingsley, 2004); and lack of financial incentives (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Nelson, 2004). Some of the unique reasons that teachers of color succumb to attrition are discussed at greater length in this chapter. Teachers are leaving because they are pursuing better opportunities, (Connor, 2011), are experiencing a low level of job satisfaction (Connor, 2011; Ingersoll & May, 2011), and are running away from low salaries in a high stress environment (Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Sawchuk, 2009), among other reasons. The following literature review presents the research on the underrepresentation of teachers of color and its impact on the opportunity gap; mentoring and its relationship to teacher retention. A discussion on Kathy Kram's (1983, 1985) mentoring theory and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 1993) intersectionality social theory as applied to this study concludes the chapter.

Impact of Teachers of Color on Students

The mentoring experiences of teachers of color is related to their retention, self-efficacy, growth, and, ultimately, the cultural and academic impact that they have on students. The training and mentoring of teachers should include not just learning pedagogy and content delivery, but also how to critically reflect on their own racial identities to be able to reach students (Howard, 2003). Gay (2002) found that "culturally responsive teaching is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (p. 106). Pedagogy that is culturally relevant to students has been shown to improve the academic achievement of students of color (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003), but many teachers struggle to deliver culturally relevant materials to

students (May, 2011). Therefore, the mentoring experiences of teachers of color could have an impact on their cultural relevance and how they relate to students of color. Additionally, teachers' beliefs and thoughts about race, culture, and the socioeconomic class of groups of people influence their teaching practice and subsequently directly impact student learning and achievement (Howard, 2003). Howard (2003) suggested that teachers need to reflect on their beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about race, culture, and social class and then critically assess how these might influence the way they treat students. In addition, teachers' positionalities influence and shape how students see the world; therefore, teachers need to engage in critical reflection (Freire, 1970; Howard, 2003, p. 167). Howard (2003) noted that teachers should be asking themselves questions about their own prejudices and biases to be able to critically think about their actions in the classroom. Teachers need to validate students and believe in their potential and intellectual ability to succeed without devaluing their students' cultural backgrounds and contributions (Freire, 1970; Howard, 2003; Gay, 2000).

Racial identity is a significant factor in the academic and social development of students of color in the U.S. (Tatum, 2003). Beverly Tatum's writing explicitly focused on the African-American experience, but certainly has implications for all students of color in the U.S. She suggested that teachers of color are more than providers of instruction, and also serve as figures who help students understand that academic achievement is not reserved for White students only. Tatum's work referred repeatedly to the importance of minority students' identity in education and the role of teachers of color in developing it. Similarly, in *Multiplication is for White People*, Lisa Delpit (2012) discussed the important responsibilities teachers have to "create classrooms that…build connections to cultures and communities" (p. xviii). The current educational structures encourage students to "disidentify" as African Americans rather than encourage them to take pride in their cultural heritage and identity (Delpit, 2012). If teachers

operate under the assumption that a culturally-linked group of students do not have the intelligence or capacity to learn, teachers tend to "teach less, teach down, or teach for remediation" (Delpit, 2012, p. 60). Students' learning needs to be linked to their culture and racial identity to be effective (Delpit, 2012). Educators are responsible for students' learning, even when they do not fit the White, middle-class model (Tatum, 1997; Delpit, 2012). Educators who do not fit the White, middle-class model of teachers share the experiences of students who also do not fit. These teachers' experiences, including their mentoring experiences, play an important role in the impact that teachers of color have on students.

Students' lives are complex and multidimensional, and teachers' lack of understanding of this complexity is a major barrier to student learning (Delpit, 1995). Teachers can serve as change agents to interrupt racial inequities in schools, but too often find themselves feeling helpless and accepting of the status quo. In doing so they perpetuate racial inequities. This phenomenon is called dysconcious racism (King, 1991). Compounded by institutional racism that influences policies and teaching practices in schools (Ladson-Billings, 1994), teachers can unwittingly perpetuate racial inequities that negatively impact students of color. Ladson-Billings (1994) argued that for students of color to learn, teachers must use culturally relevant practices. For example, Johnson, Horan and Pepper (1997) wrote about the limited the exposure of African American students' to the natural world. Given this example, a science teacher would not be expected to change the science curriculum when teaching about the natural world, but the teacher would be empathetic to African American students when discussing an avocado pit or basil leaves, armed with the knowledge that students, because of their race, socio-economic status and geography, may have never before seen these plants that occur in nature.

Other researchers have agreed that this an important issue. Teachers of color serve as role models to all students regardless of race, but especially to students of color (Quicho & Rios,

2000). The lack of minority teachers to serve as role models for students of color significantly contributes to the racial opportunity gap and negatively impacts the career trajectories of students of color (Martinez, 1991). Some students of color live in poverty and experience the highest pushout rates across the nation (Williams, Davis, Saunders, & Williams, 2002) and teachers of color can bring cultural understanding, experience, and insight into their students' lives, which has been shown to improve student retention (Irvine, 1989; Villegas & Irvine, 2009). Some White middle-class teachers hold African American students back because of their own implicit biases, an unconscious kind of racism that influences the way teachers assess students. Some may lack the cultural competence and understanding needed to relate to students of color who sometimes come from poverty-stricken communities (Milner, 2006; Lankard, 1994). Lynn (2006) described the African American male teachers' experiences with African American students as mutually positive; in particular, African American male teachers held African American students to high expectations because of their belief in African American students' academic potential. Several studies have shown that teachers of color have significant impact on gains in the learning and academic performance of students of color (Dee, 2004; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Fairlie, Hoffman, & Oreaopoulous, 2011). Despite these positive impacts, teachers of color remain under-represented in the teaching profession.

Study Context: African American History

It is imperative to discuss the history of race in American education when studying teachers of color. Among teachers of color, teachers of African-American heritage have the longest history of experiencing oppression, not including Native Americans (Horton & Horton, 2005). White merchants brought the first African American people to the United States to be sold as slave laborers in the early 1600s. For 250 years, African American people were legal property until slavery was abolished in 1865. During this time, slaves were not allowed to read

or become educated. When slavery was abolished, the Thirteenth Amendment was written as follows.

> When all of the several states shall have abolished slavery, then and thereafter, slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, shall never be established or tolerated in any of the states or territories of the United States, and they shall be forever free. (U.S. Const. amend. XIII § 19)

Even after slavery was abolished, the oppression of African American people was far from over (Blackmon, 2008). Access to education became possible for the African American population after the Thirteenth Amendment, but resources were limited and inferior, and segregation between White and African American people was the norm. During segregation, the goal of the African American community was to bond together to ensure a better future for African American children (Siddle-Walker, 2000). In segregated education, the teacher was an integral component in the students' experiences and growth, while the principal negotiated with outside sources, such as the school board, to create better opportunities for African American children (Siddle-Walker, 2000). In addition, many college-educated African Americans served as teachers during segregation (Brown, 1994).

The 1896 case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruled that racial segregation was fair and constitutional as long as the facilities were "separate but equal," essentially providing a legal license for institutionalized racism. White America remained blind to the inequality and the oppression of African American people, and in 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Plessy ruling was overturned to require racial integration in schools. Integration greatly disrupted African American education and White education in different ways. Central to this study on teachers of color is the fact that in 1954, there were 82,000 African American teachers, but as a result of integration, by 1964, there were only 32,000 African American teachers (Hudson &

Holmes, 1964). African American teachers lost their jobs as an unintended consequence of integration because while African American students were moved to White schools, the same was not true for African American educators (Ethridge, 1979; Haney, 1978; Irvine, 1988; Morris, 2001; Smith & Smith, 1973; Tillman, 2004a, 2004b).

Still, there was significant reluctance to integrate. As a result, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed to outlaw discrimination based on race, color, gender, sexual orientation, and national origin (Balkin & Levinson, 2012). The Civil Rights Act contributed to the lawful protection of not just African American people, but of other marginalized people, including people of color from other ethnicities (King, 1992).

African American people struggled significantly even during integration, but there were advantages to integrating schools. Research shows that African American students who attended integrated schools experienced higher success rates in college than African American students who attended segregated schools (Eckes, 2005). In addition, White students benefited from the integration by learning about cultures and customs, dispelling speculations and assumptions, and gaining social skills regarding interacting with diverse racial groups (Wells, 2001).

African American leaders and educators debated the benefits and drawbacks of integration even before integration was legally mandated and their opinions were often split about whether or not it would benefit African American students (DuBois, 1935). They believed that integration would not guarantee an end to racism and would not necessarily result in a better education for African American children (DuBois, 1935), especially considering the termination of African American teachers and administrators.

Teachers of Color Underrepresentation

While there is significant research on the topic of mentoring, and some researchers have focused specifically on mentoring programs for teachers, very little research exists on the

mentoring of teachers of color. This could be due to the underrepresentation of teachers of color. Despite the increase in recruitment efforts of teachers of color over the years, research and literature on African American teachers is extremely limited and growing painstakingly slowly (King, 1993). African American teachers are sometimes seen as a necessity to provide a balance in teacher racial diversity, but African American teachers have tremendous impact on student achievement and should be studied to have empirical evidence of their value and contributions in the classroom (Dixson, 2003; Dixson & Dingus, 2008; Milner, 2006; King, 1993). Their underrepresentation is linked to retention, which is linked to mentoring, as discussed later in this chapter.

Despite the impact that teachers of color can have on reducing the opportunity gap, they are still significantly underrepresented in public schools. Howard (2001) and Henke, Peter, Li and Geis (2005) agreed that despite the increase in diversity in the student population and the increase of the country's African American and Brown population, the teacher population has remained White and female. More than 80% of the teacher workforce is White while half of the students are not White (US Department of Education, 2016), and 40% of the U.S. population is also not White (US Census, 2016). The underrepresentation of teachers of color is even higher in some urban districts such as Boston, where the gap between students of color and teachers of color is closer to 50% (Murray & Jenkins-Scott, 2014). In the New Orleans public schools, the district in which this study was conducted, 42% of public school teachers are White (New Orleans Equity Index Report, 2017), despite a student population that is 94% non-White (Department of Education, 2016).

While there is evidence that shows that White teachers can have success teaching African American students, Milner and Howard (2004) argued that for White teachers to have meaningful success, teacher preparation needs to change to ensure that White teachers

understand the cultural differences of African American students. In addition to preparing White teachers for success with African American students, it is absolutely necessary for teachers of color to teach in schools where there are students of color (Milner & Howard, 2004).

The small, disproportionate number of teachers of color in public schools may be contributing to the lower success rate of students of color as compared to their White counterparts (Watson & Smitherman, 1996). The lack of minority teachers to serve as role models in the classrooms of students of color significantly contributes "to the underachievement of minority students, provides little incentive for minority students to advance in school, and negatively affects their career and life aspirations" (Martinez, 1991, p. 24). It is important for minority students to see their races represented in the teaching profession, and this may potentially reduce the opportunity gap (Gay, 2000), reduce the pushout rate of minority students, and help students of color persist in college (Watson & Smitherman, 1996).

Some research has suggested that there is a positive correlation between exposure to teachers of color and the academic performance of their students, and that a higher percentage of teachers of color can improve the retention and achievement of students of color by promoting culturally-based instruction and higher expectations (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010). Teachers of color can bring significant cultural capital to a school, serve as cultural mediators and advocates for students of color, and help to counter negative stereotypes of the students of color. These can all contribute to improved student performance and a reduction in the racial opportunity gap.

Teacher Attrition and Retention

Teacher attrition has been a highly studied problem because approximately 220,000 new hires per year are needed to fill the teacher shortage (McCreight, 2000) and "leavers exceed entrants by 23%" (Hammer & Williams, 2005, p. 21). Howard (2003) noted that teacher

attrition has a direct negative impact on student achievement. Students of color in urban schools, in particular, are the most impacted by teacher attrition because highly qualified teachers often seek better funded schools with more desirable working conditions and leave teaching jobs in urban schools (Howard, 2003). Schools that serve students of color are losing their qualified teachers and these schools experience higher rates of attrition which widens the racial opportunity gap.

Some teachers leave the profession because of low salaries (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Nelson, 2004). Some nonfinancial factors include teacher burnout (Bernshausen & Cunningham, 2001; Billingsley, 2004); lack of appropriate training and preparation (Darling-Hammond, 2001); lack of support (Johnson, 2001); increased dependence on students' performance in standardized testing (Hill & Barth, 2004); and not being able to find time for personal growth (McElroy, 2005). Some teachers who have left the profession cite a combination of many of the aforementioned factors (Certo & Fox, 2002). Teacher attrition is one of the major problems plaguing the teaching profession today.

Attrition of Teachers of Color

Some of the same factors that affect general teacher attrition also impact teachers of color. Connor (2011) found that African American teachers were leaving the profession to pursue better opportunities, and that they were dissatisfied with various aspects of their jobs. Ingersoll and May (2011) conducted a study that included African Americans and other teachers of color and found these same two factors as the reasons for the high attrition rate of minority teachers. Henke, Chen and Geis (2000) conducted a study on the relationship between mentoring and teacher retention, and the findings indicated that the lack of mentoring may have a connection with teacher attrition. Reflecting a different perspective, some studies have shown that job dissatisfaction due to low salaries may be a reason that teachers leave and have

suggested financial incentives as a retention method (Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Sawchuk, 2009). Borman and Dowling (2008) found that schools with fewer resources for spending on instructional materials and teacher salaries suffer from higher degrees of teacher attrition. Milner and Howard (2004) cite lack of respect and negative K-12 experiences as reasons that African American males are leave. Finally, schools that enroll higher rates of minority, poor, and low-achieving students also experience higher levels of teacher attrition (Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010).

Strategies for Teacher Retention

Numerous studies have pointed to strategies that have proven effective in retaining teachers in public schools. Bogler (2001) conducted a study on teacher perspectives and found that if teachers perceive their job as a profession that is important to the lives of others, they experience increased job satisfaction and are more likely to stay. Other studies found that teachers stay because they find a collegial, supportive work environment (Berry, Hopkins-Thompson, & Hoke, 2002; Inman & Marlow, 2004.) Some studies have pointed to administrative leadership as a means of teacher retention, particularly when a principal is effective and responsible for a healthy school climate (Liu, Kardos, Kauffman, Peske & Johnson, 2000); the administration encourages professional development and growth (Blasé & Kirby, 2000; Clement, 2000); and principals provide strong leadership and vision (Blasé & Blase, 2004). More recent studies have pointed to self-efficacy as the reason for teacher retention (Grant, 2006; Yost, 2006). Self-efficacy refers to teachers believing that they are making a difference in students' lives (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Some studies have looked at job satisfaction, collegiality, and the support of the administration as contributing factors to teacher retention; and others have pointed to mentoring as a method of retention (Black, 2001; Holloway, 2001; Moir & Barron, 2002).

Mentoring

As mentioned previously, despite the demonstrated need for teachers of color, teachers of color are leaving the profession at the alarming rate of up to 24% higher than White teachers (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Many studies provide empirical evidence for strategies that work to retain teachers, of which mentoring is one, (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004), but these studies are not specific to teachers of color. This section first covers scholarly definitions of mentoring, goes in depth on formal and informal mentoring structures, and highlights the relationships between mentoring and self-efficacy and mentoring and teacher effectiveness.

Mentoring Definitions and Types

Over the years, scholars and practitioners have provided definitions for mentoring. Below are some of the leading definitions arranged in chronological order from the earliest to the most recent to show how the definitions of mentoring have evolved over time.

Kathy Kram (1985) was one of the first researchers to define mentoring. She explained that mentoring helps a young, less experienced adult navigate the workplace. The mentor is an older, more experienced adult at the workplace (Kram, 1985, p. 2). She further asserted that mentoring helps young adults enhance their careers. Mentors provide "sponsorship, coaching, facilitating exposure and visibility, and offering challenging work or protection" (Kram, 1985, p. 111). Mentoring helps the younger, less experienced mentee establish himself or herself within the organization, learn how to do his or her job, and prepare for promotions and growth opportunities (Kram, 1985).

Several years later, mentoring researchers provided a general definition of mentoring as the act of a "higher-ranking, influential individual" in the workplace taking on a less experienced individual to support their development, promote them to higher levels in the organization, and grow them in their job functions and skills (Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000).

In the 2000s, more researchers became interested in mentoring and posited new definitions. Johnson (2002) focused on the purpose and benefits of mentoring and found that mentoring pushes individuals in an organization to innovate, learn, and grow for the benefit of both the individuals within the organization and the organization itself. Around the same time, Stone (2002) studied mentoring as a way to advance organizations. Mentoring aids organizations in using and maximizing the abilities and talents of their top performers for the employers' advantage (Stone, 2002). Three years later, Jase van Rensburg and Roodt (2005) defined mentoring as a transactional process. The "transfer of specific knowledge" from a mentor to a mentee is a transactional process called mentoring (p. 10).

In the mid to late 2000s, multiple researchers defined mentoring relationships; the following are some examples. Mentoring is a relationship between two individuals in which an older, more experienced person who works at an organization is responsible for the professional development of a less experienced mentee until that person becomes a "competent professional" (Pinho, Coetzee & Schreuder, 2005, p. 20). This relationship is beneficial to the mentee, the mentor, and the organization in which they work, and is built on reciprocity and trust (Pinho et al., 2005). Mentoring psychologically motivates, compels and encourages a person to be inspired to action (Blunt & Conolly, 2006, p. 199). Mentoring is a transfer mechanism whereby skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors are intentionally taught to a less experienced mentee (Van Dijk, 2008). Mentoring describes the human condition of taking on another person to ensure that he or she is successful in maturing and in developing himself or herself to reach a "higher level of human accomplishment" (Shenkman, 2008, p. 50).

These definitions have two things in common. One is that there is a transfer of information from one person to another. The second commonality is that mentoring involves at

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least two people. Implied in each of the definitions is that mentoring is meant to be of benefit to someone or to an organization.

Notably, Janse van Rensburg and Roodt (2005) divided the types of mentoring into five categories that are distinguished from each other based on factors such as cultural characteristics and the level of power that the mentee and mentor has in the work place. Below are the five categories.

Executive Mentoring. In this type of mentoring relationship, the selected mentor is an older, more experienced, executive-level or retired employee who agrees to take on a high performing, promising mentee. The purpose of executive mentoring is usually to prepare the mentee to join the top management tier or to take over leadership of an organization. The retired or executive-level, experienced mentor is tasked with teaching the mentee the norms, culture, and behaviors expected at the highest level of management.

Supervisory Mentoring. In this type of mentoring, the mentor is the direct supervisor or boss or manager of the mentee. Supervisory mentoring has benefits and drawbacks. While it could lead to advancement opportunities for the mentee, the mentee is less likely to admit what she or he does not know and is less likely to show vulnerability. The power dynamic in supervisory mentoring is such that the mentor holds all the power of whether or not the mentee advances in his or her career or even keeps his or her job.

Diversity Mentoring. This type of mentoring refers to cross-cultural relationships in which a mentor and mentee are of different races or different genders. This type of mentoring can be a growth opportunity for both the mentor and mentee to learn from each other if they are open to understanding each other's differences. Diversity mentoring can also be problematic if one or both members in the relationship refuse to bring their guard down to have open dialogue about difference.

Peer Mentoring. In this type of mentoring, the mentor and mentee are peers who hold the same level of power and authority within an organization. Peer mentoring allows for a more informal relationship in which the mentor and mentee could have common interests and goals and may interpret their relationship as friendship. This type of mentoring gives the mentor and mentee the ability to be vulnerable and emotional. Peer mentoring could also become toxic if the mentor and mentee have the same goals and are going after the same opportunities. It can also be detrimental if the mentee believes she is not learning from an experienced enough mentor. For this type of relationship to be successful, there must be mutual respect and an understanding of the expectations of the relationship.

Hierarchical Mentoring. The fifth and final type of mentoring Janse van Rensburg and Roodt (2005) outlined is the type of mentoring in which, in a hierarchical structure, the two members in the relationship switch roles. The mentor, a senior member of the organization with more power, experience, and authority teaches the mentee, a junior, younger, less experienced person, to increase his or her knowledge. Additionally, the junior person also mentors the senior person so that senior management can understand subjects and situations that the junior person experiences.

In this study, the mentoring relationships primarily resembled Janse van Rensburg and Roodt's (2005) third and fifth categories; those are, diversity mentoring and hierarchical mentoring. In most instances, the mentors and mentees were of different genders or racial backgrounds. In all instances, the mentors were far more experienced than their mentees; and in some instances, the mentees helped mentors learn and grow in some capacity as the relationships developed over time.

Formal Mentoring

In the corporate environment, the acclimation of new employees to their new work structures and norms is called organizational socialization (Kram, 1985). If a new employee becomes overwhelmed with her new environment and is not provided with guidance to the new work culture, among other things, the new employee may leave her profession for something less frustrating. When entering a complex new job in a large organization, all employees experience organizational socialization to acclimate to the new role, which may lead to stress and apprehension if this transitional process is not managed well (Jones, 1983). To better handle this transition, many organizations establish formal mentoring structures as a tool to attract talented candidates, support new talent in transitioning, further develop existing employees, and retain high performers (Jones, 1983; Kram, 1983; Kram, 1985).

In a formal mentoring structure, leaders within an organization intentionally pair a new employee with a more experienced employee by selecting a predetermined mentor who has been trained to deliver ongoing support, or by pairing the new employee with a more experienced employee in a similar area of work, or by random pairing using personnel files (Russell & Adams, 1997). The mentoring relationship in a formal setting typically lasts one year, but it is common for the mentor and mentee to develop a healthy rapport over the course of the mentoring relationship and continue to have a close bond after the formal mentoring process ends (Kram, 1985). To guide the mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees in a formal program often use a manual that outlines the mentoring procedures, rules, limitations, the level of support from management, the matching process, mentor and mentee orientations, expectations and responsibilities of all parties, the duration of the program, the frequency of meetings, and assignments (Friday, Friday & Green, 2004).

In schools and school districts, formal mentor teacher programs emerged in the 1980's to advance teachers' careers and create shared governance structures (Hart, 1995). Based on their experience and expertise, some teachers were incentivized with pay increases and given the new title of "Master Teacher" to serve as mentors to support the growth and development of less experienced teachers. Master Teachers were also expected to influence policy, have a voice, and participate in new shared governance structures (Hart, 1995). In a typical formal professional mentorship program, mentor teachers experience a title change and serve in an official capacity with a designed role to mentor other teachers (Silva, Gimbert & Nolan, 2000). In this role, they are an extension of the administration. Their purpose is to maintain order, increase efficiency, and ensure that other teachers are complying with the school system and the current operations of the school (Wasley, 1991). Formal professional mentorship can also be designed to make use of the more experienced, expert teachers in the school by placing them in roles where they can serve as instructional mentors to teachers who may need help in improving their practice (Silva, et al., 2000). Formal mentorship, depending on how it is designed, may be able to achieve both efficiency in school operations and the intentional career development of teachers.

Mentoring relationships can also take the form of mentoring teams in a collaborative practice, and are not limited to a two-person structure in which one person is a mentor and one person is a mentee. In schools that support team mentoring, mentorship is not the job of master teachers alone, but rather embedded in the structures of professional development throughout the school and in the roles of all teachers (Darling-Hammond, Bullmaster, & Cobb, 1995). In such professional development structures, mentees and mentors "become immersed and active in the organization" (Silva et al., 2000, p. 800). Darling-Hammond et al. (1995) examined seven established professional development schools and found that leadership roles of teachers varied

and all played a role in teaching and mentoring other teachers, redesigning teacher practices, and collaborating with one another.

Williams (2000) defined team mentoring structures as those that involve a mentor leading and developing a team of professionals through coaching, modeling, and psychological support as a method for peer learning. Team mentoring also requires that team members be responsible in supporting their own learning by serving as mentors for each other (Williams, 2000). Knouse (2001) suggests that team mentoring is useful to provide adjusting feedback, facilitate change, and build shared understanding.

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring are relationships that form without the formality of structures and without assignments; rather, a mentee chooses to place her confidence in a mentor and the mentor agrees to provide guidance and support at work and outside of work (Friday, Friday, & Green, 2004). Chao, Walz, and Gardner (1992) found that informal mentoring relationships can be more successful than formal mentoring relationships. This success hinges on the voluntary, natural development of relationships based on common interests, mutual attraction, and similar backgrounds in race, geography, gender, or socio-economic status (Chao et al., 1992).

In addition, some studies have found that while mentors in a formal relationship gain public recognition for their work, mentors in informal relationships gain intrinsic value and satisfaction of helping another person (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). In doing so, the relationship is more likely to become a friendship, and mentees look to their mentors to guide them in other areas of their lives rather than just a formality at work.

Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that, even in formal relationships, visitations and interactions should not be limited to what is required or formalized in a mentoring program.

This hints at the value that informality has on relationships. In this study, 90% of participants had informal mentoring relationships.

Mentor Selection

An important part of any type of mentoring relationship is mentor selection. In formal mentoring structures, mentees usually do not play a role in selecting their own mentors. In a formal mentoring practice, a third party, usually the organization, serves as the author of the mentorship agreement, the broker of the relationship, and also the entity that selects the person who will serve as a mentor (Stone, 2002; Friday, Friday, & Green, 2004). While the mentor should be a person with similar interest and have similar work responsibilities in the same area of expertise, the mentor should likely not be the immediate supervisor of the mentee due to the power structure in that relationship (Bell, 2000). In a formal mentoring structure, organizations generally go by the book and commit to finding a mentor for new mentees as outlined in the manual, while also ensuring that the selected mentor plays a key role in the new employee obtaining organizational socialization (Wilson & Elman, 1990).

Informal mentoring hinges significantly on self-selection. Smith and Ingersoll (2004) stated that self-selection is a crucial component of an effective mentoring relationship. Trust and respect creates a successful mentoring relationship (Haack & Smith, 2000) and can be assured by self-selection. In a formal mentoring relationship, the initiation phase to build trust is significantly longer than in an informal mentoring relationship, where trust is easily built or already exists in the beginning phases of the mentoring relationship due to self-selection (Chao et al., 1992). In this study, 90% of participants self-selected their mentors and only one participant was part of a formal mentoring program.

Mentoring and Teacher Retention

Older studies from the 1990s found connections between mentoring and the retention of teachers, but were not specific to teachers of color. Spuhler and Zetler (1993, 1994, 1995) studied the relationship between mentoring and retention for three years in Montana by surveying individual schools and entire districts in the state to compare the retention of teachers in a mentoring program to that of non-mentored teachers. They found that teachers who were mentored were 30% more likely to stay in the teaching profession than teachers who were not mentored. Even more impressive, Odell and Ferraro (1992) conducted a survey of teachers in New Mexico four years after their mentoring program experience, with the primary focus of understanding the outcomes of the mentoring program and, more specifically, the retention of teachers as a direct result of the program. They concluded that the mentoring program had cut the attrition rate of teachers by one-half. Cohen and Fuller (2006) found that mentoring programs retained participating teachers at a higher rate than non-participating teachers in schools with high rates of poverty and minority enrollment.

Goldrick, Osta, Barlin and Burn (2012) studied education legislation as it pertained to teacher mentoring programs and found that while 27 states required some kind of mentoring program for new teachers, only 11 of those 27 were multi-year programs, and none targeted the subgroup of teachers of color. The retention of teachers of color to reflect proportionately the percentage of students of color is a complex issue. Teachers of color need meaningful support in order to remain in the teaching profession.

The following two subsections are about the relationship between mentoring and self-efficacy, and between mentoring and teacher effectiveness. The studies in these areas are too significant to ignore; however, they are studies that looked at the population of teachers as a whole and not at the subgroup of teachers of color. Some of the interview questions in this study

asked participants about how their self-efficacy was built and how mentoring impacted their effectiveness in teaching, but these topics were not the central focus.

Mentoring Increases Self-efficacy

While teacher mentoring and mentoring-focused induction programs vary in their approaches and practices (Ingersoll et al., 2011), Saffold's (2005) study provided insight into one of the mechanisms that may underpin the success of the mentoring programs discussed above: increased self-efficacy in teachers. When the above listed causes of teacher attrition are considered together, it is clear that mentoring-focused teacher induction programs alone cannot remedy high rates of teacher attrition, a conclusion supported by Ingersoll et al. (2011). Many of these issues are simply beyond the scope of teacher mentoring outcomes. However, when one considers the school characteristics linked to attrition that Borman et al. (2008) described, the relationship among mentoring, self-efficacy, and retention becomes evident (Saffold, 2005). Self-efficacy is clearly linked to teacher retention, and mentoring is at least in part successful in increasing teacher retention, due to its ability to increase teacher self-efficacy (Saffold, 2005).

Self-efficacy, one's belief in his or her own ability about a particular task (Bandura, 1977; Grant, 2006; Kram, 1985; Yost, 2006), is increased in both the mentee and the mentor in a mentoring relationship (Kram, 1985; Yost, 2002). Bandura (1977) stated that self-efficacy determines "whether coping behavior will be initiated, how much effort will be expended, and how long it will be sustained in the face of obstacles and aversive experience" (p. 191). Accordingly, the amount of self-efficacy that teachers have, especially those in hard to staff schools, will determine the degree to which teachers have at their disposal the tools to deal with the challenges that they face in these schools.

While Ingersoll and colleagues (2011) did not discuss self-efficacy as an outcome that leads to retention, they did discuss the positive impact that mentoring has on teacher

socialization, adjustment, and development, which are certainly related to self-efficacy. It is reasonable to conclude from Ingersoll's 2011 study that mentoring programs may potentially contribute to teacher retention. These research findings underscore the importance of increasing teachers' self-efficacy through mentoring in an effort to retain teachers.

Teachers' professional development programs typically focus heavily on teachers' instructional practices, and their gains contribute to their self-efficacy which contributes to their retention. Boyd et al. (2008) found in a New York City study that more highly-skilled first-year teachers were retained than first-year teachers who were deemed less-effective. This appears to be at least partially a function of higher levels of self-efficacy (Saffold, 2005). While it is beneficial to the teachers and students for teachers to become more highly skilled at delivering instruction, teaching is a complex profession, requiring more than the ability to deliver instruction. Mentoring assists teachers in several areas because it focuses on socialization, adjustment, development, and assessment (Ingersoll et al., 2011). In addition to being broader and more encompassing than professional development alone, teacher mentoring has a more intimate quality that can afford the mentor and mentee an opportunity to address teacher issues and concerns in a more focused way.

Mentoring to Increase Teacher Effectiveness

While mentoring as a means to increase teacher effectiveness is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note that mentoring is sometimes used for this purpose. Recent research indicates that, through mentoring, teachers can have substantial impacts on their peers' assessed performance and productivity (Yuan, 2015; Koedel, 2009). Moreover, Jackson and Bruegmann (2009) observed that teachers, particularly less experienced teachers, learned from their peers who taught in the same grade level and subject area. Overall, Jackson and Bruegmann found that historical peer-learning explains between 18 to 25% of observed teacher learning effects. These

studies indicate that teachers have a sizeable impact on their peers' performance, whether the peer mentorship is formal or organic.

In addition to evidence of teachers' informal impacts on peer performance, a body of research examined the potential impacts of more structured interventions designed to spur teacher development through teacher mentoring. Campbell and Malkus (2011) provided evidence from a 3-year randomized control study that highly trained elementary school math mentors placed in schools positively affected school-wide student achievement. Notably, this effect was evident only after more than one year of teachers' exposure to mentors. While beyond the focus of this study, teacher effectiveness is directly and logically connected to retention. Teachers are retained when they are effective in their roles.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided the design and analysis of this research is a combination of Kathy Kram's mentoring theory and Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory. To understand the intersection between mentoring and the retention of teachers of color, the researcher must first identify the complexities within the mentor-mentee relationship. Kram (1983), in a signature study on mentorship, assessed 18 developmental relationships and identified two major themes in professional mentoring: career development and psychological support. Kram's framework explained the relationship through mentoring functions. In the career functions, Kram placed "sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments" among those aspects of the mentoring relationship that enhance career opportunities. In the psychosocial functions, Kram placed "role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling and friendship" among those aspects of the mentoring relationships that enhance self-efficacy (Kram, 1985, p. 23). These mentoring functions provided the basis for understanding the mentoring experiences of participants in this study.

Kram's mentoring theory (1983, 1985) alone cannot serve as a conceptual framework because Kram did not address race, and neither did other mentoring theorists. Hunt and Michael (1983) discussed mentor and mentee characteristics, but not race specifically. Kram observed that when a mentor and a mentee are of different races or different genders, an unsuccessful mentoring relationship could result if the mentor and mentee have fixed mindsets. On the other hand, a mutually beneficial relationship could result if each participant has a growth mindset (Kram, 1985). Kram's theory does not begin to scratch the surface on the complexities of race.

Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality to describe how race, gender, and social status and location all converge into the multi-dimensional lived experiences of African American women. Many female leaders over the years have argued that second class citizenship stems not only from being a woman, but also from other identities dictated by race and social status. For example, Sojourner Truth, an illiterate African American slave and feminist activist from the nineteenth century, argued that she was a woman, a mother of 13 children, but also, she was an African American slave that was the result of the times and her circumstances, and so she is at the intersection of her multi-dimensional lived experiences (Collins, 1990). She argued that feminist theory and critical race theory look at African American women in a single dimension and that this erases or diminishes their experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). This study examined teachers' mentoring experiences from the lens of their individual, complex identities that include race, gender, socio-economic status, and location.

Kram's Mentoring Theory

Ahuja (2002), Kaplowitz (1992), Phillips, Carson and Carson (1994) and other authors have cited Kram (1983) in academic and professional literature and used her mentoring theory as a conceptual framework in studies on mentoring. Kram's theory has been applied primarily in

the fields of human resources and organizational behavior (Germain, 2011), student and youth development (Sorrentino, 2006), and higher education (Jacobi, 1991).

While Kram's mentoring theory is popular in academic and professional literature, it has received criticism from some researchers. Olian, Carroll, Giannantonia, and Feren (1988) did not support Kram's approach that categorized all mentoring functions into either career or psychosocial development. Kram placed role modeling in the psychosocial category while Olian et al. separated role modeling altogether and created a third category. Similarly, in a factor analysis of a survey involving 80 respondents, Burke (1984) found three distinct categories for mentoring; career development, a psychosocial function, and a role model function. Both Burke and Olian et al., in disagreement with Kram, found role modeling to be significant enough to be a separate category. This difference may be of consequence in evaluating mentoring relationships in this study. In conducting research for this study, role modeling was not a significant factor in the participants' descriptions of their mentoring experiences.

Kram's work has also been criticized for being linear, simple, and lacking in depth. And, indeed, there are many complexities in mentoring relationships that Kram does not address. There are more granular models that would provide more in-depth analyses on mentoring, but for the purpose of this phenomenological study with ten participants, Kram provides a sufficient foundation for analysis of the research problem; and coupled with Crenshaw's intersectionality theory, these provided a deeply complex framework.

Additionally, Kram's mentoring theory has been applied in higher education settings, but not in academic research and peer-reviewed literature that discusses mentoring of teachers in a K-12 setting. This study can be added to the existing literature that uses Kram's theoretical framework in mentoring. The researcher also analyzed where the theory did not fit in the research findings in Chapter four of this study.

There are some mentoring functions that Kram did not cover. For instance, bypassing bureaucracy to gain access to resources (Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Kanter, 1977; Zey, 1984); clarifying organizational goals and values (Blackwell, 1989); providing information (Blackwell, 1989; Burke, 1984; Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Kanter, 1977); changing social status (Nieva & Gutek, 1981; Kanter, 1977); hosting and guiding socialization (Blackwell, 1989; Levinson, et. al., 1987; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Zey, 1984); and stimulating acquisition of knowledge (Blackwell, 1989.) Still, Kram's framework provides the most comprehensive list of mentoring functions among mentoring theorists, and a substantial body of research has confirmed her theory (Allen & Eby, 2010). The behaviors and roles Kram describes bring theoretical clarity to mentoring; the theory is practical, systemic, and organized.

High Quality Connections

Kram bases her professional mentoring research on the concept of High Quality Connections (HQCs). HQCs are interactions between two people who have a mutual interest in something, commit to each other, are empathetic and empowering, and work towards growth and learning (Dutton, 2003; Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Interview questions included some of these descriptors to determine whether mentors and mentees involved in this study have HQCs. The outcomes of HQCs include increased energy and zest, participants who feel empowered to action, a mentee who feels a sense of self-worth, an exchange of new knowledge and skills, and a desire for a continued mentor-mentee relationship (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). The mentor, in his or her role, serves as a model for behaviors that the mentee might replicate; encourages the sharing of personal stories so that he or she can help the mentee with his or her self-discovery; supports the mentee in the activities and goals he or she pursues; and sponsors new initiatives that benefit the mentee in his or her career (Kram, 1985.)

Obstacles to HQCs include expectations that are unclear or unrealistic. Mentees need to feel that their goals are achievable, measurable, and allotted a realistic timeframe, with no undue time pressures or artificial deadlines. An additional obstacle to HQCs is poor interpersonal skills on the part of either the mentor or the mentee. Poor interpersonal skills may manifest in the form of awkward social interactions, inappropriate behavior, long pauses in conversation, and other difficulties in clear communication and expression. A mentee or a mentor who has difficulty receiving feedback may create another obstacle to an HQC. Each party must be able to graciously receive affirming and adjusting feedback that is insightful and can help improve the individual or the relationship. Change must be a factor with which both mentees and mentors are comfortable; as the relationships deepen, mentors and mentees learn, grow, and change.

The essential skills in an HQC are curiosity, questioning, deep listening, self-management and accountability (Kram, 1985.) Ideally, a HQC, or a high relational mentoring relationship that includes both career development and psychosocial support, brings about closeness and mutual learning and growth for both the mentor and the mentee (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). This study may draw a connection between what teachers of color experience in their mentor-mentee relationships and HQC.

Intersectionality

Some challenges that teachers of color may face in a mentoring relationship include managing differences in nationality, gender, politics, socio-economic status, location, or race. In reality, these differences can enrich a relationship if approached with a growth mindset (Kram 1985). Alternatively, these obstacles can lead to a dysfunctional mentoring relationship in which both the behavior and the outcomes are negative (Ragins & Verbos, 2007). Mentoring theory does not touch on the perspective of race or the complex identities that may impact a mentoring relationship. This study would be incomplete if the researcher did not examine the intersectional

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identities that impact teachers' of color experiences in an education system and in an American society embedded with racism, sexism, and other isms.

The macro-level, social theory that is intersectionality refers to system-wide policies and practices embedded into the system that create oppressive conditions for marginalized groups in education (McGibbon, 2012) and advance privileges and dominations for majority groups that are primarily White and patriarchal (Greenwood, 2008, p. 38). Because this research is based in New Orleans and is about teachers of color, it would be shortsighted to only use Kram's Mentoring Theory to analyze the mentoring experiences of teachers of color. "Any discourse about identity has to acknowledge how our identities are constructed through the intersection of multiple dimensions" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1,299), and, in this study, one of those essential dimensions is race. It is imperative that the mentoring experiences of teachers of color are examined through the lens of teachers' various identities, and also how these identities and experiences have been shaped by historical, political, and economic structures in New Orleans and its school system.

Crenshaw (1991) categorized experiences into structural, political, and representational. The structural category describes the experiences within a social location when race, gender, and class intersect to force experiences different from that of the White race. Crenshaw argues that practices that help a White, middle to upper class person are different from the strategies that would help an African American, lower socio-economic class person. The political category refers to women of color existing within a racist, patriarchal society and therefore are part of two oppressed groups. The feminist movement often does not recognize race and the antiracism movement often does not recognize gender, but women of color live within both of these realities. The representational category refers to how African American women are represented in imagery, photographs, movies, and other media. This study used intersectionality theory in the

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research analysis to capture the nuances and complexities of themes that arose from multiple dimensions of the participants' identities and experiences.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the literature in which this study is situated and the theories that the researcher used to guide the design of the research. The next chapter will cover the methodology the researcher used for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 3

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the mentoring experiences of teachers of color in New Orleans K-12 charter schools. Current literature is void of describing the interactivity and complexities among mentoring, retention, and the lived experiences of teachers of color, as discussed in the previous chapter. By collecting data directly from teachers of color who have experienced mentoring, the researcher used first-hand accounts to illuminate the complexities in a mentee-mentor relationship and how it intersects with race within the K-12 public education sector in New Orleans. Through these interviews, the researcher explored perceptions and opinions of teachers, and how mentoring impacted their professional careers and personal growth.

This study has potential academic, educational leadership, and professional significance. The findings illuminate new information on the mentor-mentee relationship critical for the retention of teachers of color. This chapter provides the research design and a rationale for this design. The participant selection and data collection and analysis process will follow, and it will conclude with the research trustworthiness, researcher identity and significance.

Research Question

In this study, the research question explored is: What are the mentoring experiences of K-12 teachers of color in charter schools in New Orleans?

The sub questions are:

1. What are the psychosocial effects of mentoring experiences on teachers of color?

2. How have mentoring experiences impacted the careers of teachers of color?

Methodology

The word phenomenology is "derived from the Greek word phenomenon which…is what appears to us" (Lewis & Staehler, 2010, p. 7). Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach that explores a phenomenon that a group of people is experiencing. The phenomenon is described as it appears to the people experiencing it. In *Phenomenological Research Methods*, Moustakas (1994) defined phenomenological research design as distinct from other qualitative methods.

> Phenomenology is the first method of knowledge because it begins with "things themselves;" it is also the final court of appeal. Phenomenology, step by step, attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions, and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened by customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 41)

In 1928, German mathematician, Edmund Husserl, posited that experimental scientific research was ineffective in studying human behavior and experiences with phenomena, and thus created phenomenology. Husserl "recognized the crucial value of returning to the self to discover the nature and meaning of things as they appear and in their essence" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). A phenomenological inquiry, which "is an attempt to deal with inner experiences unprobed in everyday life" (Merriam, 2002, p.7), is designed to explain a phenomenon and supports the belief that knowledge and understanding are derived from everyday experiences (Byrne, 2001). A phenomenological study takes insights from the perspectives of participants about a phenomenon that they are facing at a given point in time (Clark, 2000).

In this qualitative study, detailed descriptions from the perspective of the research participants were used to examine specific issues (McRoy, 1996). The data collected was used to understand the essence of the shared experience of participants. The following suggestions, which derived from Moustakas (1994), served as a procedural map to explore the shared experiences of teachers of color and their experiences with mentoring. First, the researcher identified a phenomenon of interest; second, the researcher collected data from the individuals who have experienced the phenomenon; third, the researcher conducted data analysis by arriving at clusters of meaning, which evolved into descriptions of the experience and presented the "essence" of the phenomenon.

Descriptive and Interpretive Phenomenology

There are two types of phenomenology, descriptive and interpretive. Descriptive phenomenology asks "what do we know as persons" and focuses on how people live an experience and describe it (Husserl, 1970). It is a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, an approach which derives meaning from the participants' descriptions of their experiences. Husserl argued that each individual exists in the world and the only certainty is each individual's experience of his or her world; therefore, the foundation for all knowledge is the individual's conscious experience in the world and how they describe it.

Interpretive phenomenology, on the other hand, asks "what is being" and focuses on interpreting and understanding, and not merely describing. In interpretive inquiry, there is a concept of situated freedom, which means that "individuals are free to make choices, but their freedom is not absolute; it is circumscribed by the specific conditions of their daily lives" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). In this type of inquiry, the researcher describes the individuals' "being in the world and how this influenced the choices they make" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). In addition to situated freedom, there is co-constituality, which means that the researcher's

knowledge is part of the study and that "a blend of meanings is articulated by both the participant and the researcher" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 730). The researcher's knowledge guides the data collection, including the interview questions. In this way, the researcher used an interpretive phenomenological approach.

In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews as the data collection method and inductive analysis to understand the mentoring experiences of teachers of color in New Orleans public schools. The researcher primarily used inductive analysis, which is an open method that starts with observing the participants, tracking patterns, hypothesizing and exploring meaning from the participants' experiences (MacClure, 2013). The results of this research are detailed narratives from participants about their knowledge, interpretations, and experiences regarding the phenomenon (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Site Selection

Chapter one contains an extensive section on the study context that provides information on where the study takes place and the nuances of its geography and history. It is worth reminding the reader that this study took place in New Orleans which is different from other parts of the country in terms of the structure of schools, the racial make-up and attitudes, and the history of the city. New Orleans does not have a traditional, centralized school system, but rather a decentralized charter school system. This presents a unique perspective because participants in this study had different experiences based on the charter management organization (CMO) for which they work. Each CMO has its own unique culture, rules, and ways of doing things, including how they approach mentoring. The researcher selected New Orleans as the site for this study because of the variety of experiences that teachers have in this city, which added to the richness of this study.

New Orleans is also unique in the racial makeup of its teacher workforce. Fifty-five percent of all charter school teachers in New Orleans are non-White, including 49% who are African American (Louisiana Department of Education, 2016). By comparison, nationally, only 18% of all public-school teachers are non-White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). Similarly, New Orleans charter schools reflect a much higher population of students of color than the national average. Ninety-four percent of students in New Orleans public schools are non-White – almost twice the national average of 49% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). The experiences of teachers of color in this environment, where they are the majority, may differ significantly from the experiences of teachers of color in a typical American public-school system in which they are the minority. The researcher selected New Orleans as the site for this study in part because of the racial make-up of students, which is majority African-American. This study analyzed race as it relates to teacher mentoring and how this impacted their growth, retention, and perceptions.

A third difference worth noting is that in 2005, New Orleans experienced a catastrophic event - Hurricane Katrina – that prompted the dismantling of the centralized school system and the firing of all teachers. Despite the researcher's efforts, it was extremely difficult to find teachers who taught pre-2005. The researcher found four, but they were retired. Many of the New Orleans teachers are newer teachers with less experience, and, in theory, more in need of mentoring. The researcher was interested in the experiences of the mentees of color who received mentoring as part of their personal and professional development. New Orleans is a prime city for this study because of the teacher make-up in both the abundance of African American and brown teachers and relatively inexperienced teachers.

Participants

Research participants are co-researchers because the essence of the phenomenon derives from their experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions, regardless of the researcher's role in analyzing them (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher used purposeful sampling to create a sample size based on specific criteria, project do-ability, and to seek saturation in developing ideas. The participants were thoroughly informed on the purpose of this study (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). In this sampling method, the criteria for inclusion were predetermined, and a thorough, in-depth understanding of the selected individuals was gained (Gall et al., 2007).

The researcher selected participants with the following criteria: 1) have been teaching in public schools for five or more years; 2) plan to remain teaching in public schools for the next five years; 3) are people of color; and 4) have or have had a mentor for at least one school year. The study, more specifically, utilized homogenous purposeful sampling, which involves selecting participants that are similar in nature and uniform throughout (Patton, 1990).

The participants selected were teachers of color, and information regarding their mentors' races was collected during the interview. Meznek, McGrath and Galaviz (1989) suggested that mentors and mentees who share the same ethnic backgrounds can align on values and culture, are not forced to hide their cultural identities, and are therefore effective. Moses (1989) suggested that White mentors may not be familiar with issues of racial discrimination that African American employees face, and therefore would not make effective mentors. On the other hand, Brown, Davis, and McClendon (1999) stated that graduate students of color do not require mentors of color in order to benefit from the mentoring relationship. Kram (1985) suggested that cross-ethnic relationships can be risky in that they may fail, or fruitful in that modes expression and understanding may be improved. Empirical research on cross-ethnic mentoring relationships is in short supply.

The age difference between mentees and their mentors was not a factor in participant selection, but the researcher asked each participant about their thoughts on the role that age and age difference played in their mentoring experience. Kram did not place significance on age, but found that mentors should be in their careers ten to thirteen years longer than their mentees to provide meaningful career mentoring. Participants in this study were asked to describe the career and experience of their mentors and the impact that these played in the mentoring relationship. Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McKee (1978) described a mentor as being 8-15 years older than the mentee. Sometimes the age gap may be even larger. Phillips-Jones (1982) and Zey (1984) supported Kram's assertion that the age gap is irrelevant. They agreed that what mattered most is for both mentees and mentors to fulfill their respective functions in the relationship.

While Phillips-Jones (1982) suggested that a mentoring relationship could be as brief as a single meaningful meeting, most researchers such as Levinson et al. (1978), Hunt & Michael (1983), and Kram (1985) described a more intimate, ongoing relationship that lasts two to ten years. For the purpose of this study, participants were selected if they had been mentored for at least one full school year.

The participants selected were both male and female and so were their mentors. Rowe (1989) suggested that women may prefer male mentors because schools are generally run by males. Speizer (1981) noted mixed results across many studies regarding same-gender mentoring. In this study, participants were asked about the impact that their mentors' gender played in their mentoring experience.

In the fall of 2018, the researcher interviewed 10 K-12 teachers in public charter schools in New Orleans who served as participants in this study. The participant population was made up of 60% African American, 20% biracial, 10% Asian-American, and 10% Afro Caribbean.

Seven of the 10 participants were female, and three were male. They collectively had 92 years of teaching experience and averaged nine years of experience. Five participants had five years of experience, and the other five ranged from 12 to 16 years of experience. None of the participants was a teacher in New Orleans before hurricane Katrina, and only 30% of them were from Louisiana. Programs such as Teach for America (TFA) and The New Teacher Project (TNTP) certified three of the teachers, and the other seven received certification traditionally. The table below shows the participants demographics in more detail.

Table 3.1

Participants' Demographics

Pseudonym	Race	Gender	Experience In Years	Certification	Pre-Katrina	State/ Country
Alana	Asian-American	Female	5	TFA	No	Illinois
Astrid	Biracial	Female	5	TFA	No	Illinois
Justin	African American	Male	13	Traditional	No	Texas
Camille	African American	Female	5	TNTP	No	Louisiana
Deon	African American	Male	5	Traditional	No	New York
Vidal	Afro Caribbean	Male	5	Traditional	No	Haiti
Makayla	Biracial	Female	16	Traditional	No	Florida

Rena	African American	Female	13	Traditional	No	Missouri
Tanesha	African American	Female	12	Traditional	No	Louisiana
Jasmine	African American	Female	13	Traditional	No	Louisiana

The 10 participants named 16 mentors. Four participants focused on one mentor each and six participants named two mentors each. Chapters four and five further discuss the findings and analysis of the data below about the participants' mentors.

Table 3.2

Participants' Mentors Data

Pseudonym	Mentor Race	Mentor Gender	Mentor Experience (in Years)	Type of Mentoring Program	Mentor Selection
Alana	African American	Male	Between 15-20	Informal	Self-selected
Astrid	1. African American	Female	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
	2. African American	Female	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
Justin	1. African American	Female	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected

	2. African American	Female	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
Camille	1. African American	Female	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
	2. African American	Female	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
Deon	1. African American	Male	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
	2. Hispanic	Male	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
Vidal	Afro Caribbean	Male	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
Makayla	1. African American	Male	Between 15-20	Informal	Self-selected
	2. African American	Female	Between 15-20	Informal	Self-selected
Rena	1. African American	Female	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
	2. African American	Male	Over 20	Informal	Self-selected
Tanesha	African American	Female	Between 15-20	Formal	Assigned
Jasmine	African American	Female	Between 15-20	Informal	Self-selected

Recruitment Strategy

First, the researcher sent out an email that detailed the study, and specified the characteristics of the ideal participants for this study. The researcher sent this email to all people in her network related to education to ask them to forward her email to potential participants. The researcher visited seven schools to ask for permission to interview teachers. Three schools sent out information in their monthly teacher newsletters to let teachers know about the study and to let them self-select whether or not they wished to participate.

After securing three participants from the initial outreach, the researcher asked each participant to forward her email to peers who might be interested in participating in the study. This is called snowball sampling, a method for finding participants by recruiting current participants to reach out to their contacts to recruit more participants (Vogt, 1999). By doing so, the researcher gained four more participants. Last, the researcher attended events frequented by teachers and verbally asked teachers to consider participating in her study to secure the remaining participants.

Sample Size

Appropriate saturation occurs when "no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category, the category is well developed in terms of its properties and dimensions, and the relationships among categories are well established and validated" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 212). Boyd (2001) stated that research saturation can be attained with two to ten participants and Creswell (1998) recommended a phenomenological study involve "long interviews with up to 10 people" (p.65). Moustakas (1994) recommended interviewing until redundancy in themes is found and can be eliminated. To align with the existing research and recommendations, 10 individual interviews were conducted utilizing a semi-structured interview approach to understand the experiences of the participants (Merriam, 2009). The 10 participants were

retained teachers of color in New Orleans who experienced some level of mentoring for at least one school year.

Data Collection

Various methods may be utilized to explore mentoring in a study, including spoken words from participants, written words from participants, recording of observations, and extractions from various types of documents (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used individual interviews with participants to collect data because interviewing is an effective technique for collecting data about the lived experience of participants (Van den Berg, 2005). The interviews were between 45 and 60 minutes long and had a semi-structured approach as reflected in the framework presented in the literature. Open-ended interview questions guided the participants, but the exact phrasing and order of the questions were flexible to better navigate the interactive experience with each participant (Merriam, 1998). The researcher interviewed 10 participants in this study in the months of September and October 2018.

To ensure confidentiality, the researcher let participants know that all information shared during the interview would remain anonymous and confidential. Each participant was asked to sign a release form. All notes, recordings, transcriptions, and other information collected during the interviews were locked in a filing cabinet behind a locked door in the researcher's home. The researcher used a pseudonym for each interviewee to ensure that interview transcriptions could not be traced back to the interviewee. All of the materials collected during this study will be kept in the locked filing cabinet for a total of five years post this study and then will be destroyed. No participant received compensation for the interviews and for the time it took for them to review transcripts and participate in follow up interviews.

Protocol

During the summer of 2018, the researcher filed for approval from the Institutional

Review Board (IRB). In August of 2018, the IRB granted approval and the researcher moved

forward with recruiting and scheduling interviews with participants. The IRB is responsible for

ensuring that the researcher follows ethical practices and guidelines in all procedures during

research studies that involve human subjects (Merriam, 2009). The researcher followed all of the

procedures described in her IRB application to ensure participants were treated ethically and that

their welfare was protected.

The Interviews

An interview is defined as a process during which a participant engages with a researcher

in conversation prompted by questions that speak to the experience of the participant and the

topic of the study (DeMarrais, 2004). The researcher met each participant at the location of his or

her choosing. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. A 12-question interview

protocol was used to guide the interview because the interviewer needed specific information

from the participants for the purpose of the study (see Appendix B). However, the researcher did

not follow the exact order each time and sometimes asked probing questions not included in the

protocol.

During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher audio recorded the interviews

sometimes in one full recording, and other times in several intervals. For example, interviews

two and three were conducted in restaurants and the researcher paused the recordings to allow

for ordering food and eating. The researcher observed the participants' actions and documented

both words and behaviors of the participants. The researcher transcribed verbatim and then

analyzed the interviews immediately upon completion of each interview. To ensure accuracy,

participants were provided a copy of their transcribed interview and asked to verify correctness,

clarify discrepancies, and further comment on the interview. Participants were given two weeks to review their transcriptions. A second interview was scheduled with some participants who wanted to provide more context and data.

Some of the interview questions in this phenomenological study centered around Kram's initiation phase. Specifically, participants were asked how the mentoring relationship initiated. Ragins & Kram (2007) pose three ways in which mentors and mentees find each other: administrator-assigned, choice-based, and assessment-based. In the analysis stage, the strengths and weaknesses that participants share were compared with the strengths and weaknesses in the types of initiation that Ragins and Kram outline to determine similarities and differences.

The second phase in Kram's mentoring continuum is cultivation, a phase of discovery in which the mentee develops a "growing sense of competence" and is able to understand and move through workplace systems more efficiently. In this stage, the mentor feels empowered to guide the mentee and takes pride in the mentee's success (Kram, 1983, p. 616). The researcher asked participants about the evolution of the mentoring relationship to better understand the mentees' growth.

The third phase in Kram's mentoring theory is separation, in which both the mentor and the mentee develop an independence and autonomy and the relationship loses its importance (Kram, 1983, p.618). In some cases, the mentee will feel satisfaction and gratitude but if this stage is reached prematurely, there may be turmoil. All participants in this study had mentoring experiences that lasted at least one year. Some participants in this study transitioned out of their mentoring relationships, others remained in their mentor-mentee positions, and some relationships evolved to friendship and collaboration as peers. Participants who have experienced the separation phase were asked to discuss their separation experiences.

The fourth and final phase in Kram's mentoring continuum is redefinition, in which a mentor and mentee redefine their relationship and the new roles and functions that they serve (Kram 1983, p. 620). For participants whose mentoring relationship had ended, they were asked about the process and their thoughts and feelings about the experience in this final stage of the mentoring continuum.

Data Analysis

The researcher conducted data collection and data analysis simultaneously, so the data analysis process began during the first of ten interviews. Hycner's (1999) data analysis process suggests that, first, the commentary needs to be chronologically bracketed. Before conducting each interview, the researcher took about ten minutes to prepare and reflect on bracketing her views and opinions on mentoring and race to ensure that her knowledge, background, assumptions, and biases were not reflected during the interview. To facilitate this process, the researcher used a reflexive journal, which captured biases and subjective experiences (Schwandt, 1997), and served as a diary of perceptions and thoughts throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985.)

"Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (Merriam, 2009, p. 176). The researcher's process involved moving back and forth between data and concepts during the interviews, during transcriptions, and then sitting thoughtfully with the data after it was transcribed. During the interviews, the researcher made notes on patterns, words, insights, and reactions; and the researcher continued this process while transcribing the interviews. After the third interview, the researcher began following Moustakas (1994) prescribed method for data analysis in phenomenological research. First, the researcher started a list of words, phrases, similarities, and differences among the first

three interviews. After each additional interview, the researcher added additional concepts and continued to note where similarities and differences existed. After the seventh interview, the researcher began to create clusters and themes. After the tenth and final interview, the researcher noted words, phrases, similarities, differences, themes and relationships to the point of saturation, which is the point at which the data no longer yields new categories (Dick, 2005). Finally, the researcher developed descriptions of the meaning and essence of the participants' experiences. The goal was to "determine what an experience means for the persons who had the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). This process took about two months.

Coding Scheme

A researcher consolidates, reduces, and interprets what people have said (Merriam, 2009) by developing a coding scheme. The researcher transcribed the interviews, then printed each transcription and took notes in the margins where the participants described their experiences as it related to mentoring and race. The researcher then began the horizontalization of data, which allows the researcher to identify common meanings and essences in a phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, typed the relevant quotes, phrases and topics into the rows, created ten tabs to represent the ten participants, looked across all tabs for similarities, and color coded the similarities to form categories. The researcher read the transcripts again to look for words and phrases that she may have missed and then added these new concepts into the spreadsheet, which added to the categories. These quotes were then grouped into units of meaning. The researcher used the categories to form themes and then analyzed the categories in search for understanding before converting them into themes to compose a descriptive report.   The researcher ensured that all categories were placed in one of the themes.

After confirming the themes, the researcher synthesized the findings with Kram's mentoring theory, in particular as it related to mentoring functions and the mentoring relationship continuum. The researcher also synthesized the findings with Crenshaw's (1989, 1993) intersectionality theory to describe how the mentees' and their mentors' race, age, gender, location, and social status converged to impact the mentoring they experienced.

Researcher Identity

In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to bracket his or her experiences to see the phenomenon with fresh eyes, but it is an impossible task to entirely disengage from past experiences. It should be noted that the researcher is a person of color who, during the first two years of her career, received mentoring that mirrored the way mentoring is described in Kram's mentoring theory (1983, 1985). The researcher believes that this mentoring experience set her up for success in her career, and it also served as a psychosocial support function to build self-esteem and self-efficacy. The researcher also observed that her White peers who had upbringing experiences and a culture different from hers and who were part of the majority culture seemed to assimilate very well early on in their careers without the help of mentoring. Additionally, the researcher's mentor was genuinely interested in the researcher's background and culture and took the time to learn about and respect differences. While these experiences may have influenced the research design, the following steps were taken to ensure that the implementation and analysis were limited in researcher bias.

Trustworthiness

In a qualitative study, the goal of trustworthiness is to support the argument that this inquiry's findings are worthy of consideration (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure trustworthiness, this study followed Lincoln and Guba's four main criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined credibility in qualitative research as studies where "the probability that findings will be found to be credible is enhanced" (p. 296). To achieve credibility, the researcher provided the transcriptions to the participants post the interviews to provide them with an opportunity to agree or disagree with the authenticity of the data and add to the data or correct discrepancies (Hagens, Dobrow, & Chafe, 2009). This process helped "check subjectivity and ensure the trustworthiness of findings" (Jones, 2002, p. 469). Nolan and Behi (1995) recommended this approach, called member checking, for establishing credibility because "all criteria developed for use in qualitative studies rely heavily on presenting the results to those who were studied and asking them to verify whether or not they agree with them" (p. 589). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also advocated for researchers to ask the participants to verify the data to help establish credibility.

Another way in which the researcher established credibility is through reading the interview transcriptions repeatedly and checking the data items from one interview against the other interviews. Checking the credibility of phrases, categories, and themes in the interview transcripts to verify them with data from the other interviews is the testing out process that contributes to credibility (Melia, 1982). The researcher also listened to each recording twice after transcribing. Through this thorough process, inaccuracies and misinterpretations were gradually discovered and corrected.

In addition, the methods and analysis were peer-reviewed throughout the research process, which provided the researcher with balanced considerations and accurate interpretations of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher held discussions of the research process with members of the dissertation committee, classmates, and colleagues in the field.

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined transferability as findings of a study that can be applied in different contexts. The researcher communicated findings through thick, rich descriptions that brought about the voices of the mentees interviewed, which is a process that ensures transferability of findings to other settings (Creswell, 1998). Thick descriptions ensure that "the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of individuals are heard" (Denzin, 1989, p. 83). By interviewing 10 participants who experienced the same phenomenon and by taking detailed field notes, the researcher was able to convey the rich mentoring experiences and contexts that participants described.

Dependability, Rigor, and Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined dependability as findings that are consistent and can be repeated. This assumes that if a researcher employs the same techniques, uses the same methods with similar participants in the same context who are experiencing the same phenomenon, the researcher will find similar results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that dependability and credibility are linked in practice. If the study is credible, the findings will be dependable as described. To ensure dependability, the researcher described the phenomenon, participants' contexts, and research methods in great detail. If nothing else, a researcher would be able to repeat this study. If the phenomenon changes, the results may be different. Considering constant changes in the K-12 charter school system in New Orleans, teacher turnover rates, and the State's efforts to provide mentors to teachers, the mentoring experiences of teachers may change or vary.

To ensure rigor of the data, before designing the research method, the researcher read Moustakas' (1994) Phenomenological Research Method. The researcher also consulted with 12 researchers that earned doctoral degrees, 10 of whom used a phenomenological research method.

In addition, the researcher, in this chapter three, described in great detail how this research was conducted to ensure that readers can assess the research practices employed.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined confirmability as findings in a research study that are shaped by the participants and reduces the researcher's bias. Because this was an interpretive phenomenological study, the researcher's knowledge and experiences helped to shape the results. "A researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions" (Malterud, 2001, p. 483). Three ways to ensure confirmability are for the researcher to include in this report her beliefs and assumptions, recognize the limitations and shortcomings in the study methods, and describe in depth the methods used so that the reader can evaluate the integrity of the results.

To achieve confirmability the researcher utilized an audit trail, a reflexive journal, and wrote a section on researcher identity. In the audit trail, the researcher recorded what topics were interesting to her during data collection, and recorded thoughts on coding during the analysis phase, and provided a rationale for how themes were formed and what they mean.

Because developing a reflexive journal is one way to achieve confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the researcher's reflexive journal captured her background, values, interests and experiences, and how these influenced her thoughts. In addition, later in this chapter, the researcher included a section on researcher identity. "Preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to mention them" (Malterud, 2001, p. 484). The goal was to provide an accurate portrayal of the methods used and the researcher's positionality and experiences to describe the rigor of this study.

Significance

The effort to retain teachers, and particularly teachers of color, is a vital endeavor in narrowing and closing the racial opportunity gap. Researchers and school personnel widely agree that the presence of teachers of color is beneficial for the academic outcomes of students of color. Teachers of color offer a great deal of culturally relevant approaches via curriculum development, teaching and learning, and social interaction (Quiocho et al., 2000). School leaders who are focused on closing the opportunity gap in their districts and schools must consider many options for retaining teachers, particularly teachers of color. School leaders must also recognize the disproportionality in the number of teachers of color and students of color in their particular schools. Mentoring may provide a more holistic approach to teacher retention and has been shown to increase teacher efficacy (Saffold, 2005).

As explained above, mentoring has been demonstrated to be a viable option for retaining teachers in public education. Unfortunately, the literature does not appear to provide definitive content with respect to the implications and potential benefits of mentoring teachers of color. Quiocho et al.'s (2000) review of studies from 1989-1998 found that there were instances when mentoring contributed to the retention of teachers of color and instances where it did not. Ingersoll et al. (2011) theorized that teaching is a complex profession and, while mentoring may alleviate some of the challenges that teachers face and ultimately reduce teacher attrition, mentoring cannot work as a sole remedy for teacher attrition. This is also true among teachers of color; however, teachers of color also face unique challenges. For example, Quiocho et al. noted that teachers of color often face discrimination in the workplace, including the challenge of navigating taboos of raising racial issues, fewer opportunities for promotion, and stereotyping as being unable to lead.

This study illuminates how teachers of color stick together, seek out more experienced teachers to help them grow professionally through mentoring, and look for ways to navigate the education system to survive the profession.

The following chapter covers the findings of the study from the interviews with 10 teacher participants. The final chapter follows with a discussion on the findings and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 4

Through in-depth interviews with 10 participants, this study sought to answer the research question: What are the mentoring experiences of K-12 teachers of color in charter schools in New Orleans? The study also explored the sub questions: What are the psychosocial effects of mentoring experiences on teachers of color? How have mentoring experiences impacted the careers of teachers of color?

Chapter Four reports on the findings from interviews with 10 participants as they relate to answer the above questions. It opens with a description of each participant on their motivations for teaching, followed by the demographics of teacher participants. The researcher then reports on the participants' perceptions and experiences as they relate to their mentors' race, gender, and years of experience. This is followed by participants' perceptions on the type of mentoring they received. The chapter concludes with a section on teacher attrition and reported findings on the impacts of mentoring.

Participants' Complex Identities

Using an intersectional lens, participants' complex identities and backgrounds are an important part of this study. Their diverse backgrounds influenced the perceptions and interpretations of their mentoring experiences.

Nine of 10 participants were born and raised in the United States. One participant was born and raised in Haiti. Of the 10 participants, five had at least one parent who was born and raised outside of the United States. These parents' countries of origin outside of the United States include Nigeria, Haiti, Jamaica, Philippines, and Costa Rica. All five participants with immigrant parents spoke about how that reality impacted their upbringing, perspectives and careers. Three participants were born and raised in the Midwestern United States; three are from the state of Louisiana; one from the northeast; one from the southeast; and one from Southern

Texas. The Western United States was not represented. The geographic origins of the teachers

in this study's sample aligns with the New Orleans' teacher population's geographic origins.

Thirty percent of teachers in this study had local roots, while 70% of the study's participants

were from outside the state and did not earn a college degree in Louisiana. Pre-Katrina, 60% of

teachers had local roots, and by 2014, the percentage of local teachers had declined to 34%

(Harris, 2015).

The following section describes all 10 participants in this study in more detail. The

participants have all been assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. Additionally, the names

of the charter schools that they serve and the names of their mentors have been eliminated.

Alana

Alana identifies as an Asian-American female, not as biracial. Alana felt that biracial has

a connotation of a person who has one Black parent and one White parent. She identifies as the

first American-born child of an Asian immigrant, which she shared was the reason expectations

for her academic and career success were extraordinarily high. She explained that her father left

the Philippines to build a better life for himself and his future family in the United States.

Alana's memories of growing up with a father who was born and raised in the Philippines

involve her father comparing her experiences, both negative and positive, to what he described as

dire situations in the Philippines. No matter what Alana was experiencing, her father

experienced worse in the Philippines. Her father endeavored to use his experiences to motivate

her and encourage her to be grateful for every opportunity she has in the United States.

Alana is from the Midwest and entered the teaching profession through TFA. After she

served as a TFA teacher, she decided to stay in teaching and has been in the profession for a total

of five years. What keeps her going in her career is a deep desire to improve her craft, grow, and

learn. She pushes herself to be better and learns from her experiences and from the experiences

of other teachers. She religiously follows high-performing teachers on social media to learn how they achieve results with students. Alana thinks her racial background has played a major role in her life and career, and often feels overlooked in comparison to her White, male peers. She is the daughter of a male Philippine immigrant and feels that the expectations placed upon her are tough, but this challenge pushes her to develop herself, further her career and achieve her goals.

Astrid

Astrid identifies as a biracial Midwestern female whose father is Black African and mother is Caucasian American. Astrid, like Alana, is the first child of an immigrant father. Her father was born in Nigeria and does not identify as African American, but rather as an African-born, Black immigrant. While Astrid has the skin tone, hair, and facial features that would be stereotypically linked to African American heritage, Astrid does not identify with stereotypical African American culture, music, and history. Astrid shared that her husband and friends are White, which is the race that she identifies with most. Yet, Astrid shared that she does not see color or race and labeled herself as "colorblind" (personal communication, September 8, 2018). Astrid believes that everyone is successful based on his or her own merit. Astrid believes that being seen by others as a person of color has definitely helped her advance and given her privileges. One of those privileges, in particular, was gaining leadership positions in the K-12 landscape in New Orleans that she believes she might not otherwise have had if she were a White person.

Astrid, who is from the Midwest, entered the teaching profession by accepting a TFA teaching placement. She specifically requested to be placed in New Orleans for her teaching experience because it looked warm and fun. She had never been to New Orleans and was not sure what to expect upon arriving. After her two-year teaching experience as a TFA teacher, she realized that she enjoyed her teaching career and liked New Orleans, and so she decided to stay

in the city and in the teaching profession. What keeps her going in her career is that she is a lifelong learner who is constantly looking to learn about new strategies to teach and to develop herself. She also enjoys the support of leadership that lets her try new methods to see what works with students.

Justin

Justin identifies as an African American teacher. He believes in the power of Historically Black Colleges and Universities to help young professionals build a network of people who can help them in their careers after completing college. Justin thinks African Americans need to develop relationships with other African Americans. African American teachers, in particular, need to become active in networks of African American teachers that can serve as collective support that otherwise does not exist for these teachers. Justin believes that, just as his African American mentors served to help him advance in the profession, his purpose is to serve as a champion and supporter to help other African American teachers thrive. "We have to stick together to be able to survive the profession" (Justin, personal communication, September 8, 2018).

Justin is from Texas and comes from a long line of Texas educators. He entered the teaching profession because it was part of his family legacy to be in education. Many of his family members were in education and so he followed in those footsteps. He stayed in the profession because he believes every child deserves the opportunity to learn. Justin believes that his race has kept him from gaining many opportunities and advantages that White teachers have and take for granted. He is also traditional in his beliefs that men and women have roles and traits that are specific to their gender. He also believes in traditional methods of teaching; that teachers should be traditionally certified and not go through alternative methods such as TFA. His perception is that alternative certification programs "cheapen" the profession and are part of

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the reason for the high attrition rates. Teachers who do not go through traditional methods of certification, he believes, are less committed to the profession.

Camille

Camille identifies as an African American teacher who was born and raised in New Orleans. Camille expressed that post-Katrina teachers are young, White, female, and not from New Orleans. They are far removed from "what it means to be a New Orleanean" (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Part of the reason Camille wanted to be a teacher was because she saw a need for teachers who look like her and who are from New Orleans.

Camille had a career as a chef before entering the teaching profession. While she loved being a chef, she quickly discovered that she enjoyed teaching more and that it was an even greater calling in her opinion. She continues teaching because she cares about children and their learning. She believes she can truly make a difference, particularly in the lives of African American children from low income communities, where she recognizes children have the greatest needs and fewest resources. Seeing children grow is the reward for her hard work. Camille thinks that teachers need to understand that the teaching profession is no longer solely about teaching; it is about so much more, including managing children's behaviors. Camille believes that race should be a huge part of the conversation in teaching. She has seen stark differences in opportunity and advancement between White teachers and teachers of color. Camille questioned how much power teachers and principals of color really have, particularly in a charter system that is run by predominantly White leaders in New Orleans. While the majority of teachers in New Orleans are teachers of color, Camille stated that the majority of the leaders in charter management organizations are White. In that system, she believes that teachers are there to execute and enforce the policies that White leaders have written for African American children.

Deon

Deon identifies as an African American male teacher. He does not identify as Afro-Caribbean, even though his father was born in the Caribbean and his mother's parents are also from a Caribbean island. While he is the first born of a Caribbean immigrant on his father's side, and a second generation American on his mother's side, he does not feel a connection to the Caribbean. Deon shared that his upbringing was similar to his African American male friends and he relates fully to the African American music, culture, and heritage. This racial identity is fairly new to Deon because he did not start thinking about his race until he realized it was a big deal to be an African American male in elementary education. He believes he gained many opportunities for being an African American male in education, and simultaneously suffered racist comments and was made to feel like a token on display. When Deon was growing up, he felt that he fit into African American circles with ease. Now as an adult, Deon sometimes does not feel that he fits into the typical African American mold, but still identifies as African American and not as Afro-Caribbean.

Deon got into teaching through an alternative certification method that The New Teacher Project offered and was able to combine his passion and skill for the French language with teaching in elementary school. He is motivated to keep learning and getting better at his craft by learning new pedagogy, reading and applying best practices, and continuing to improve his teaching strategies.

Vidal

Vidal is the only participant who was not born and raised in the United States. Vidal identifies as Black, but not as African American. Originally from Haiti, Vidal got into teaching because he felt that he could make a difference in the lives of youth and children. His other profession is to serve as a pastor and lead an entire congregation. He believes that he cannot lead

his church and his people unless he knows about their struggles. He needed to know what it meant to wake up at five in the morning to get ready for work and sit in traffic on the way to work. He needed to know about struggles in the workplace and what members of his congregation went through living their everyday lives. Vidal grew up in Haiti where he did not have access to books, electricity, and other basic necessities that Americans take for granted. He believes that racial barriers can be broken down and that success for children is not about being African American or White. He believes that, with respect and understanding, people can develop healthy relationships and connect with one another as mentor and mentee, and connect with children regardless of the racial make-up of teachers and students.

Makayla

Makayla is one of two participants who identify as biracial. Makayla is half Latina and half African American. She thinks that her race has helped her in some situations and has been a detriment to her career in other situations. As a biracial female, she sees the power that she has to inspire young women of color. Makayla pursued a career in television before she considered teaching. After deciding to start a family, she began thinking about the time she needed with her children and teaching seemed like the natural choice. While Makayla thinks it is "such a cliché" for teachers to say they do what they do for the kids, she reiterated that "it is true, that children are the reason a teacher keeps going" (personal communication, October 4, 2018). She plans to stay in teaching for the remainder of her professional life to be able to continue inspiring young women to be the best that they can be and to consider a career in teaching.

Rena

Rena's life and career center around her experiences as an African American woman in the United States. She got into teaching because she started paying attention to the statistics of the African American population, and she wanted to make her talents and time available to

African American boys in particular. She grew up at a difficult time in the country where she experienced the racial integration of schools, and that was an awful time for her because her White teachers at the White schools in the suburbs ignored her thirst for knowledge. She experienced being shunned and she wanted to make sure that African American children were not going through what she went through. She wanted them to feel worthy and relevant. Rena has a special place in her heart for African American boys because she believes they have the most difficult time. She wants to remove the hurdles and help them become successful college graduates and professionals.

Tanesha

Tanesha identifies as an African American female from New Orleans. She earned a traditional teaching degree in Louisiana, remained in the state, and cannot imagine ever leaving New Orleans. Tanesha sees tremendous value in understanding deeply the culture of African Americans before teaching African American children in New Orleans. As a teacher, she believes that the responsibility of the future of New Orleans is on her shoulders. She hopes to foster compassion and excellence in African American children so that they can grow up to lead the city with integrity.

Even though Tanesha was a talented student for whom academic achievement seemed to come naturally, she empathizes with children who do not learn as easily and has made it her mission to help them. She loved school and learning so much that she decided as a pre-teen to become a teacher to help other students learn. She stuck with this dream, achieved it, and has never desired to do anything else. Children are the reason she entered the profession and are the reason she has remained in teaching. That she is "able to work directly with African American children from low-income families with varying learning abilities is a blessing" (Tanesha, personal communication, October 6, 2018).

Jasmine

Jasmine is one of three participants in this study who were born and raised in New Orleans and chose to stay in the city. She identifies as an African American female teacher who always yearned to be in a service-oriented profession. At first, Jasmine pursued a career as a nurse. She then discovered that she enjoyed teaching. Jasmine ended up going into teaching because she grew up in a family of educators and found it easy to teach and love children. She feels a deep sense of satisfaction when she helps kids learn and sees them succeed. She explicitly and intentionally chose "happiness and love over money" (Jasmine, personal communication, October 6, 2018). She also explicitly chose to stay in New Orleans. As a local New Orleanean, she believes it is her job to inspire young African American men and women in New Orleans to be the best they can be. She believes that when people talk about children in New Orleans, they see deficits. She says the opposite is true; "African American New Orleans children have tremendous potential to do great things" (Jasmine, personal communication, October 6, 2018).

Participants Experienced Overt Racism at Their Schools

Most participants noted a racial disparity in leadership in their schools and charter networks, and pointed out the difficulties of advancing in their careers as people of color. Jasmine, Camille, and Makayla all expressed that even after getting a master's degree, it did not make a difference in their opportunities to gain leadership positions. "It's not about education level or experience. It is about whether or not the leadership likes you…if you fit the mold," said Jasmine (personal communication, October 6, 2018). "I have seen my White colleagues get promoted when they did not deserve it. It is crushing" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018).

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Four African American female teachers noted the difference in access to support. Alana called it "the White girls club," and witnessed that White female teachers received constant praise and felt comfortable with their White leader because, culturally, they shared many things in common. When asked if she tried to befriend her principal, Alana said,

the principal was not very approachable. I did not try. She just seemed to always be surrounded by White female teachers. I did not feel welcome…it wasn't just me. I talked about it with my two African American colleagues and they felt the same way. It was obviously favoritism" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018)

Similarly, Justin said he had seen his principal befriend White male teachers and, "then a year later, they were promoted. …But I just do my job, you know? …they are hustling to get ahead, you know, just like I would if I had a Black principal" (Justin, personal communication, September 8, 2018). While both Alana and Justin described similar scenarios of their principals befriending and promoting White teachers, Alana responded angrily and Justin justified and accepted the behavior.

In the same vein, Justin shared that he went to a White male principal for guidance and mentoring, and his interpretation of the principal's reaction was that the White principal did not want to engage or get too close to an African American colleague. "Maybe he was threatened, but my feeling is he didn't want to help me or even care," Justin said (personal communication, September 8, 2018). In his experience, "minorities and White people live different lives, and it is hard to find things in common" (personal communication, September 8, 2018). Justin backed away and eventually found two African American leaders who were willing to mentor him in his career. Justin also observed that White teachers lacked interest in children. "For them it's about self-interest," Justin said referring to White teachers. "They lack rootedness. No roots in New

Orleans and no roots in Black culture," Justin said (personal communication, September 8, 2018).

In a 2016 report on diversity and inclusion from the Department of Education, figures showed that only 17% of principals were people of color nationally. Camille noted that even when there is African American leadership, particularly in charter schools, White people with money and power still run the charter management organizations.

You will sometimes see a large representation of African American and Brown people at the schools, but they are not hired as leaders; they are hired to navigate relationships with parents and students. Doesn't matter what their titles are, what titles are given, even with those titles, [African American and Brown people] have no power in changing the systemic issues that affect education today. I mean, what am I doing here? Am I really helping or hurting the situation for African American and Brown children?" (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018)

Deon and Justin agreed with Camille and stated that African American and Brown teachers and leaders have no power or influence in the charter movement. "There is no power. None whatsoever. I have a Black principal and, nope, they can't change anything" (Deon, personal communication, October 1, 2018). The charter school system is coupled with a choice system in New Orleans, and Eidelson (2014) argues that most White parents, White teachers, and White students, when given a choice, will choose to be around people who look like them. This choice was evident in several participants' stories.

Jasmine shared an experience in which a first-year, White, male teacher struggled in the classroom, was ineffective with students, and could not control his class.

But this same teacher, who I know for a fact was not effective as a teacher and students were failing, but he was friends with the principal and he was male and White and after

one year [of teaching], he was promoted to a coaching position. Can you believe that? Higher pay, better position. We [teachers of color] had better scores and were more effective than him [the male, White teacher] but did not get the opportunity [for career advancement]. That's not fair and everyone saw it." (Jasmine, personal communication, October 6, 2018)

Similarly, Justin shared that a White TFA teacher was promoted to assistant principal after two years of teaching. "This TFA teacher didn't know anything. He could not control his classroom! His students were not being managed well at all. They [TFA teachers] just don't have the experience" (Justin, personal communication, September 8, 2018). Justin, who is an African American male with over eight years of teaching experience, did not have respect for his newly promoted boss.

Camille shared a story to illustrate the difference between how a White teacher taught her how to do something versus how an African American teacher treated her in the mentoring process. Camille, who used to be a chef and was not traditionally trained as a teacher, was repeatedly penalized for not being able to create lesson plans effectively.

I had a [White] coach that taught me very effectively about lesson planning. But it came about after being penalized for not being able to do it. I had to admit my failure and humble myself before I even got help. She didn't actually teach me how to do it first. So, it came from constantly getting in trouble for not doing it well. Then it became me having to say, "look, I don't know what you're expecting." I didn't know the expectations! Then she decided to teach me. So, it was after this very intense process of like her telling me, "you're doing this wrong, you're not meeting deadlines, you keep doing this, and we keep giving you interventions." Then, … she finally came to me going, "I don't actually know what I'm doing!" I actually couldn't meet her

expectations. They [the expectations] didn't seem realistic to me because I couldn't meet them. I couldn't see them. So then, after I admitted it, it became a teacher lesson, like this is how you do it. And it was very effective! But it took me getting into trouble first! Whereas working with my [African American] mentors, it was never me getting into trouble. They led the conversation like, "you should do this and this is how I do that and you should try and navigate this situation a certain way." They [African American mentors] are a huge support. I like to be taught how to do something and not just be expected to do it. I feel like White leaders think you should know things and they have these expectations. This view comes from White people who are in leadership and they expect you to just know things. We should be taught things. It should have been taught to us what the expectation is. Like if this is what you expect of me, so this is what you should teach me. This is how my Black mentors have supported me. And…so I think that's the difference. I've seen their leadership, especially when it comes to race. Black leaders teach you and they care. White leaders just expect and penalize. Like, this has been my experience with it. I don't know how I was supposed to know the expectations when no one told me. (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018)

Camille compared the "I-got-your-back attitude of African American mentors" with the "gotcha attitude of White mentors" who Camille expressed are more concerned with "trying to catch you failing." Camille added, "maybe it is not intentional. Maybe they don't see the racism. But I see it" (personal communication, October 1, 2018).

Justin counted the counties in his state where it is safe for an African American to apply for a teaching job, and said that if he were White, he could work anywhere, but because he is not, he has to select the school districts appropriate for his race. Rena shared that she had complained about an African American student who had an issue, but nothing was done about this issue until

a White student and his White mom complained about the same issue. "Then all of a sudden, 'this issue is very urgent, and we must fix it,'" Rena said excitedly mocking her principal. "People say there is an underlying racism. But I think no. I see it plain and clear" (Rena, personal communication, October 4, 2018). Rena shared other experiences in which she witnessed the power of being White, and it made it clear to her that people of color at her school did not have a voice. The only participant who did not express feeling discriminated against was Astrid. However, nine of 10 teachers of color who participated in this study felt oppressed and discriminated against, and they expressed feeling disillusioned with an education system they felt is not designed to support and develop them.

Mentors' Race and Years of Teaching Play a Significant Role in Participant's Mentoring Experience, While Gender Does Not

Four participants talked about a single mentor in their interviews, and the other six each talked about two mentors, for a total of 16 mentors. Of the 16 mentors, 14 were African American, one was Hispanic, and one was Afro Caribbean. No participant in this study mentioned a White mentor, which was not by design. Only Astrid, the self-identified color-blind biracial participant, believed that race did not matter in a mentoring relationship, while all other participants talked at length about why the racial background of their mentors impacted the manner in which they were mentored.

In terms of years of experience, all of the participants' mentors had taught for longer than 15 years, which was not by design. Seven of ten participants shared that the number of years of experience of a mentor played a crucial role in their mentoring experience. All seven participants said that when they selected their mentors, they looked for how long they had been in the profession. "I need to learn from somebody who has been there before," Justin said (personal communication, September 8, 2018). "I would not have engaged my mentors if they

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were not highly experienced," Deon said (personal communication, October 1, 2018). "Young people are still trying to learn like me. I needed someone older" (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018).

In terms of mentors' gender, there were only five male mentors and twice as many female mentors in this study. There were more participants, six out of 10, who believed that gender does not play a role in a mentoring relationship. "The profession is mostly female, so my mentors have been female, but gender wouldn't matter to me" (Rena, personal communication, October 4, 2018).

The following sub-sections and tables are about the participants' perceptions of their mentors' race, years of experience, and gender.

A Mentor's Race Has a Major Impact on the Mentoring Experience

All 10 participants were teachers of color and the 16 mentors they discussed during the interviews were all people of color. Alana, a biracial, TFA teacher, identified as a colorblind teacher and believed that her race and the race of her mentors were irrelevant, that race is a social construct, and that all teachers should focus on doing their jobs well to succeed in their careers. "Race just does not, did not play a role in any teacher's experience as far as I could tell. I just didn't see it. I was raised not to see it, not to focus on this because we are on a merit system" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018). Alana was the only color-blind participant, who, although she appeared African American, stated that she did not share the African American experience. She shared that her mother, husband, and most of her friends are White. "My dad is not, absolutely not African American; he is African, which is different. Like, everything is different, the food, the culture, the music, the attitudes, the work ethic, the education, everything. It's a different experience being African than being African American" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018). Alana wanted to make it clear that her

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background was different from an African American and shared several examples of that difference. Her perspective as a person who does not see color or the impact that race may play on a person's experience was significantly different from the perspectives of the nine other participants. She specifically shared that because she was "viewed as being an African American minority" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018), she had more opportunity and her racial profile, as people interpreted it, helped to get her promotions. Because she grew up in a biracial household and was raised to be "oblivious about race," her belief was that the color of one's skin does not play a role in mentoring or in career development in general. Further, she expressed that being White does not grant any person additional power or privilege. She believes that one's power and privilege are not related to one's race. Biracial identity is extremely complex and beyond the scope of this study. Studies show that African Americans with lighter skin try to assimilate into White culture more so than dark skinned African Americans (Russell, Wilson, & Hall, 1992). Some studies suggest that they do so because they feel marginalized by the African American population that accuses them of lacking racial consciousness and are not black enough (Hunter, 2007). It is worth noting that the mentoring experiences of this biracial participant are with two African American females. Other things she had in common with the other participants were self-selecting her two mentors, participating in informal mentoring relationships, and being a person of color. Almost every opinion and experience this teacher had was different from the nine other participants.

Nine out of 10 teachers shared that their race played a significant role in their teaching careers and that the race of their mentors mattered in many ways, including how they selected a mentor, how the mentoring relationship evolved, and the impacts that mentoring had on their careers. Mentors of color have a cultural awareness that aids mentors in mentoring teachers whose students are primarily students of color. Having navigated the education system as people

of color, mentors of color can pass along valuable social norms, behavior and language lessons to teachers of color so that they can be successful in their careers.

Participants found that mentors of color are more empathetic and willing to listen and understand teachers' experiences with racial discrimination.

My mentor asks me, "What do you need?" It's this idea about worrying about the person and not just the job that I do. That's been the most valuable thing, the most valuable investment in my life. It's not just about the job that I do, but they care that I develop as a person. I have never got this from a White colleague. (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018)

This was only one example that the participant shared to show that White teachers do not show as much empathy for the learner of color as a teacher of color does. For this reason, she self-selected two mentors of color and found that she was able to blossom as a professional with their help. Some teachers find it easier to build friendships with mentors of color because of their shared racial backgrounds and other commonalities. The friendship relationship between a mentor of color and a mentee of color creates a space for vulnerability and openness. The following table summarizes participants' perceptions on their mentors' race and why it impacted their mentoring experiences.

Table 4.1

Participants' Perceptions on Mentors' Race

Pseudonym	Participant Race	Mentor Race	Race Matters	Why race had an impact on mentoring experience
Alana	Asian-American	African American	Yes	The participant's students are primarily African American. Her African American mentor teaches

				Alana about race, culture, and poverty in New Orleans. "I see how students respond to my mentor and I know it is partly because he is Black" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018).
Astrid	Biracial	1. African American 2. African American	No	The participant self-identifies as colorblind. "I think or I hope that I am valued for my leadership skills, intelligence, results, and positive attitude. I don't think race plays a role, no" (Astrid, personal communication, September 8, 2018).
Justin	African American	1. African American 2. African American	Yes	The participants' teaching experience has been shaped by his race. In community, African Americans help each other succeed in their careers. There is a fellowship that exists among African Americans that does not exist with other races. "It absolutely matters. That's why HBCUs are so important" (Justin, personal communication, September 8, 2018).

Camille	African American	1. African American 2. African American	Yes	A person of color is forced to learn cultural navigation and having a mentor of color helps a teacher learn how to persevere and stay in the profession. "I need to survive. I needed a Black teacher to show me how to survive this" (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018).
Deon	African American	1. African American 2.Hispanic	Yes	The participant experienced racism and discrimination and could talk openly with his mentor about race and how race impacted his career. The participant believed that he would not have been able to have that experience with a White mentor. "It would have been different if my mentor was White. I couldn't be as open…or as trusting" (Deon, personal communication, October 1, 2018).
Vidal	Afro Caribbean	Afro Caribbean	Yes	For mentoring to have an impact, there needs to be a deep level of trust and vulnerability. Because his

				mentor had a similar background, a friendship was easily built, and with that came vulnerability. "Oh my god, trust is everything so yes it matters absolutely it matters" (Vidal, personal communication, October 2, 2018).
Makayla	Biracial	1. African American 2. African American	Yes	African American mentors helped the participant realize how valuable it is to be a person of color in a public school and how much of an impact she can have on children. She connected with her mentors because they were African American.
Rena	African American	1. African American 2. African American	Yes	White people often do not recognize their privilege and they question the participant's experiences. African American mentors, on the other hand, realize what it means to be African American in America and how to survive in a racist school system. "A White mentor? No. No, I couldn't do that" (Rena, personal communication, October 4, 2018).

Tanesha	African American	African American	Yes	The participant has only worked in Title 1 schools with a majority of African American students. The participant believes that in this context, the race of the teachers and their mentors absolutely matter. "If it was at a different type of school, like a White school, maybe it wouldn't matter" (Tanesha, personal communication, October 6, 2018).
Jasmine	African American	African American	Yes	"The only thing I have in common with a White teacher is a love of children and being a teacher" (Jasmine, personal communication, October 6, 2018). Jasmine finds it easier to relate to someone with her own racial background.

Participants Place More Faith in Mentors Who Have Taught for Many Years

The researcher only interviewed teachers who are considered retained in the profession, which generally means they have been in the profession for five years or longer. The researcher sent recruitment e-mails that specified that teachers in this study needed to have a minimum of five years of teaching experience. On average, participants had nine years of experience, and the most veteran participant had 16 years of experience teaching. The researcher was interested in

learning how these retained, experienced participants perceived their mentors' years of experience. All mentors had over 15 years of experience teaching and the majority of them had over 20 years of experience. Seventy percent of participants believed that their mentors' years of experience teaching played a significant role in their mentoring experiences. Some participants shared that more experienced mentors teach practices that have consistently worked for generations, and that they learned from their mentors' mistakes and successes. The other three participants, who were Rena, Tanesha, and Jasmine, believed that if their mentors had the knowledge, skills, shared goals, positive attitude, and consistency in mentoring teachers, then their age and years of experience were irrelevant. Rena said, "I can learn from young and old alike. In fact, I am older than most teachers and they still teach me lessons. I don't think it's about age at all, nor experience" (personal communication, October 4, 2018). The following table summarizes participants' perceptions on their mentors' age and years of experience in the teaching profession, and why these did or did not impact their mentoring experiences.

Table 4.3

Participants' Perceptions on Mentors' Experience

Pseudonym	Participant Experience (in Years)	Mentors Experience (in Years)	Experience/ age matters	Summary of how or why
Alana	5	Between 15-20	Yes	This participant leaned heavily on the stories of her mentor and learned from his mistakes and successes. "If someone was just telling me what to do without the experience, I don't think I would

				listen" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018).
Astrid	5	Over 20 Over 20	Yes	This participant shared that she does not believe all mentors need to be older and more experienced, but because she is young and fairly inexperienced, she absolutely needed an experienced mentor to guide her. "Maybe not for every teacher, but in my case, yes, I needed someone with a lot of experience" (Astrid, personal communication, September 8, 2018).
Justin	13	Over 20 Over 20	Yes	To earn this participants' respect and for him to be open to learning, he needed his mentors to be highly experienced. "Oh, yes, very much experienced and also in leadership positions. Or else why be a mentor" (Justin,

				personal communication, September 8, 2018).
Camille	5	Over 20 Over 20	Yes	"Young people are no longer rooted and are looking for the next best fad. I need my mentor to be wise" (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018). This participant was interested in the wisdom, longevity, and sustainability of the teaching profession. Her very experienced mentors taught her what has proven to work with children for many generations regardless of the latest fad in teaching.
Deon	5	Over 20 Over 20	Yes	This participant defines an expert based on the years of experience the expert has in the field. "My mentors needed to be experts for me to respect them as mentors" (Deon, personal communication, October 1, 2018).

Vidal	5	Over 20	Yes	This participant needed to learn the system, not just teaching methods. "To learn the system, a teacher has to be in education for many years" (Vidal, personal communication, October 2, 2018).
Makayla	16	Between 15-20	Yes	This participant believed that with age comes wisdom, experience, and an increase in knowledge. She prioritized learning from teachers who had many years of experience. "I want to learn from the best, the most experienced" (Makayla, personal communication, October 4, 2018).
		Between 15-20		
Rena	13	Over 20	No	This participant was older than one of her mentors. She believes that mentoring has more to do with shared goals rather than age and experience. "I learn from young people all the time. Younger than me" (Rena,
		Over 20		

				personal communication, October 4, 2018).
Tanesha	12	Between 15-20	No	"In my case, my mentor was 10 years older than me and way more experienced, but that did not matter" (Tanesha, personal communication, October 6, 2018). Her mentor gave honest, consistent, constructive feedback. This participant believes that even if her mentor was younger or less experienced, this would not have impacted her mentoring.
Jasmine	13	Between 15-20	No	Jasmine believes attitude and friendship had more to do with the success of her mentoring rather than years of experience. Her mentor was only four years more experienced than Jasmine. "Friendship is far more important than experience in mentoring because you have to get along well with your mentor"

Mentors' Gender is Not a Significant Factor in Participants' Mentoring Experience

Seventy percent of participants were female, and 60% of their mentors were female. In New Orleans, the teacher population is largely female. Only 30% of the participants shared that their mentors' gender had an impact on their mentoring experience. Justin said that he needed his mentor to be female because during his upbringing, he was surrounded by strong female leaders. His life experiences conditioned him to be open to feedback from strong female leaders and he grew accustomed to learning from females in his life. "My father was not around when I was growing up. Many of my friends also did not have fathers around. We had mothers and grandmothers and they were strong and intelligent" (Justin, personal communication, September 8, 2018. Deon, on the other hand, said that he needed his mentors to be male so that he could emulate their behaviors and learn from their successes. "Female teachers are very smart. They are great! But how am I going to copy them? Their experience is different. Females are different," Deon reiterated (personal communication, October 1, 2018). He needed the male role model teacher to be his mentor. There were only three male participants. The third male participant completely dismissed gender. "Nah, I can learn from a female as much as I can learn from a male. My mentors were male but that doesn't mean anything" (Vidal, personal communication, October 2, 2018). All three male teachers had very different points of view on gender, and their opinions were rooted in their upbringing.

Only one female participant shared that it mattered to her for her mentor to be female because she wanted to learn how to culturally navigate the education system as an African American female from another African American female who has already experienced and

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survived as a teacher. "From one older Black sister to a less experienced sister. I wanted that sisterly bond with my mentor," Camille said (personal communication, October 1, 2018). "I think males, because they are rare in education, quickly get opportunities. Not females. Not Black females," Camille added to explain further her preference for female mentors (personal communication, October 1, 2018). All other female participants did not believe that the gender of their mentors played a role in the impact of their mentoring experiences. Many shared that race and years of experience were the two traits of their mentors that mattered the most. The following table summarizes participants' perceptions on their mentors' gender and why it impacted or did not impact their mentoring experiences.

Table 4.2

Participants' Perceptions on Mentors' Gender

Pseudonym	Participant Gender	Mentor Gender	Gender matters	Summary of how or why gender does or does not matter.
Alana	Female	Male	No	The participant believes that many of her mentors' traits and identifying categories impacted her mentoring experience, particularly race. However, gender is not one. The participant, however, repeatedly said throughout the interview that her mentor had significant influence on her because he reminded her of her father, who, like her mentor, is male.
Astrid	Female	Female Female	No	This participant identified her mentors' experience and success as the two major

				factors that impacted her mentoring experience. Her mentor could have been of any race or gender if he or she had the experience and success of her mentors. "They were both female and they were both Black, but that did not matter to me" (Astrid, personal communication, September 8, 2018).
Justin	Male	Female Female	Yes	This participant was raised by strong African American women in his family and community and believed that his mentors needed to be specifically African American females for him to be able to relate to and learn from them.
Camille	Female	Female Female	Yes	As an African American female, this participant felt that she needed to understand cultural navigation from African American females who had the same experiences in education. She believes males have a different experience.
Deon	Male	Male Male	Yes	This participant needed older males of color to be his mentors so that he could learn from their experiences as men in

				the teaching profession. He believed that his mentoring experience would not be as effective if his mentors were female.
Vidal	Male	Male	No	Vidal shared that race and experience mattered, but that he could learn as much from a female as he has from his male mentors.
Makayla	Female	Male Female	No	This participant had a male and a female mentor and while they had different mentoring approaches, she felt they were both effective and that their gender did not play a role in her experience. "They have different styles but I learned from both" (Makayla, personal communication, October 4, 2018).
Rena	Female	Female Male	No	This participant had both male and female mentors and shared that the gender identities of her mentors were assets and both were impactful. "Oh yes to be a female mentor is a strength. And male mentors bring other strengths. Both good" (Rena, personal communication, October 4, 2018).

Tanesha	Female	Female	No	This participant believed that gender did not play a role, but also acknowledged that she had no experience with a male mentor to make an informed comparison. "I really have only had one mentor. She was assigned to me and I think if a male was assigned, he would be good, too" (Tanesha, personal communication, October 6, 2018).
Jasmine	Female	Female	No	Jasmine believed she could have learned as much from a male mentor as she has with her female mentor. "I think my mentor was female because there are lots of female teachers, but a male mentor would be good, too" (Jasmine, personal communication, October 6, 2018).

Participants Self-selected Their Mentors and Pursued Informal Mentoring Experiences

Ninety percent of participants in this study had informal mentoring relationships, and one participant was a mentee in a formal mentoring program. The one participant in the formal mentoring program, Tanesha, was assigned a mentor; set goals and deadlines for the mentoring experience; followed a schedule; had an understanding of the expectations of the mentor, the mentee, and the support they would receive from the administration; and followed a structure to get feedback and one-on-one professional development. This participant, at the time, worked in a Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) school which required participation in a mentoring

program. Tanesha's experience with this formal mentoring program was positive and she believed it should be replicated.

The other nine participants had mentoring experiences that occurred organically and informally. All nine self-selected their mentors. The nine participants specifically stated that their informal mentoring experiences were casual. There were no rules. These relationships moved forward only when mentees initiated contact by seeking help. "I used to call my mentor whenever I had a problem," Jasmine said (personal communication, October 6, 2018). "I picked my mentors based on the results I saw them achieve," Camille said (personal communication, October 1, 2018). "I followed my mentor on social media," Alana said (personal communication, September 7, 2018).

Forty percent of participants shared that there is nothing they would change in their mentoring experiences. Most participants, however, voiced that their mentoring experiences would have been better if the mentoring was more intentional and had more structure through thoughtful goal-setting. A common theme was the desire for mentoring to have rules to govern expectations and measure the results of mentoring. Alana felt that her mentor was sometimes too easy on her because they were friends and that a formal mentoring program may help to increase the rigor of the mentoring she received. "I wanted him to challenge me more, but we're just friends," Alana said (personal communication, September 7, 2018). Many participants who were involved in informal mentoring relationships wished that they had set mutual expectations with their mentors at the beginning of the mentoring relationship. "Since I initiated the relationship, I should have come with goals, but I didn't know," Camille said (personal communication, October 1, 2018). Others felt that they initiated contact each time with their mentors, and it would have been more beneficial and helpful if their mentors had been more proactive about outreach and more consistent in providing feedback. "I was always the one to call, and I only

called when things were not going well," Jasmine said (personal communication, October 6, 2018).

Nine of 10 participants self-selected their mentors based on friendship or their own initiative to seek out high performing teachers to serve as their mentors. Self-selection created the conditions for trust. All nine participants who self-selected their mentors spoke about the level of vulnerability and openness they felt with their mentors.

I have an amazing relationship with my mentor because I can be vulnerable. We were friends before and he just told me, "I am going to mentor you in this job." That is literally how it happened and I was so happy! There was no, like, mentoring structure in place. I have always looked at him as, um, I would say a father figure. I didn't really have a close relationship with my father growing up. And so my mentor, he reminded me of what I wish my father would have been when it came to pushing me and helping me do well. So, um, I have a very close relationship with my mentor. And this matters. It is so important. I don't know if it is the most important thing in any mentoring relationship. But, to me, it is the most important I would say. (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018)

Many talked about the friendships that they built over time. Two participants claimed that a mentor cannot be assigned because a successful mentoring experience is built on trust. Vidal shared his experience in a formal mentoring program and how it did not work because of the lack of trust.

Back in my school at my district, they had a formal mentoring program and they paired teachers with other teachers, beginning teachers were paired with experienced teachers so the new teachers can learn. It did not work. It did not work! How can it work? It did not work because the mentee and mentor did not have a relationship. It was forced.

They were forced to form a relationship to participate in the program. The new teachers felt like they knew what they were doing and were offended by some of the attitudes of the experienced teachers. They felt like they have something to prove, you know? It just was, I don't know how to describe it, like, superficial. It was ineffective. It's all about trust! That is the bottom line. You have to have trust in that relationship. (Vidal, personal communication, October 2, 2018)

Of all 16 mentors, only one was a direct supervisor, but even that mentor was a friend of Astrid before she took on the role of managing Astrid. Almost all participants spoke about the importance of trust in the relationship. In the informal mentoring of the participants, trust existed before the mentoring relationship began in some cases, or trust was built quickly as soon as the informal mentoring relationship began. Despite this trust, there were gaps in the informal mentoring relationships that did not serve the mentees well.

Informal mentoring creates inconsistent support systems. For example, Camille shared that she wished her mentor had had the time to provide classroom observations and feedback and would have liked if her mentor could have gotten some release time to provide more structured support. Jasmine shared that she wished her mentor had reached out more frequently and intentionally and been more proactive in helping her, and mentioned that the times her mentor was helpful was in times when she reached out in the middle of a crisis. Jasmine felt that those crises could have been prevented if mentoring was more structured, allowing for more proactive solutions rather than reactive fixing. "She could have helped me more if this was a formal relationship, but she was doing this on her free time and I am the one who needed help. It is not her fault, but I wish I had a structure," Jasmine added (personal communication, October 6, 2018). Deon described informal mentoring as a Band-Aid solution that would not have long-term impact in a school. Deon opined that informal mentoring will only have long-term impacts

on the individual who sought out the mentoring relationship. "It will only help that ONE teacher, and the students of that teacher, but then that teacher will leave and take that learning with him" Deon said (personal communication, October 1, 2018). He was making the case that mentoring impacts follow the mentored individual, which results in little to no long-term impact on the teachers and students at the school.

Because the majority of mentoring experiences were informal, the mentor-mentee relationship did not follow Kram's (1983) four stages in the evolution of the relationship. Kram (1983) defined initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition phases as the four stages of the mentoring relationship. In the initiation phase, the mentor and mentee establish rules for the relationship and establish expectations. For the participants, the initiation phase involved the mentees self-selecting their mentors by being proactive about seeking out relationships to increase their skills and advance their careers. The cultivation phase is where the mentoring functions occur to support the mentee. The participants experienced a cultivation phase in which there was no structure and mentoring functions occurred organically. Additionally, for most participants, the separation and redefinition phases did not take place. Most participants still had their mentor, and for those who did not, it was because their mentor passed away or moved away and they lost touch.

Overall, while participants involved in informal mentoring relationships emphasized how important it was to have a mentor fill the psychosocial support functions that come along with friendship and argued that the personal approach was extremely important, when questioned about what they would change, some said they would make their mentoring experience more focused on career development and skill building. Participants suggested borrowing from a more formal mentoring program, without taking away from the psychosocial function, by providing informal mentors with structure, systems, support, and compensation. "I would definitely benefit

if there was more structure. Like I said, release time for classroom observations. That would

have been a gamechanger for me" (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018).

All 10 participants reported successful mentoring experiences regardless of the type of

mentoring they received. Seventy percent of participants reported staying in touch with their

mentors even after their mentoring relationship ended. While their mentoring experiences ended,

strong friendships remained. The other participants reported that their mentor died, or moved

away, and they lost touch with each other.

The following table summarizes participants' perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks

of their informal and formal mentoring experiences, and what they would change to make

mentoring more impactful.

Table 4.4

Participants' Perceptions on Their Informal Mentoring Experiences

Pseudonym	Type of Mentoring	Pros of this type of mentoring	It would be even better if…
Alana	Informal	The mentor was real and straightforward. There was a deep level of trust that allowed the mentee to be vulnerable, honest, and open.	- the mentor had pushed harder. "I wish my mentor challenged me" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018). - the mentor had not made adjustments for the mentee; but rather forced the mentee to

		adjust to meet required rules and standards.	
Astrid	Informal	The personal approach made for a deep connection and trust in the mentoring relationship.	• both the mentor and mentee were proactive in reach out to each other more often. "I was not good about reaching out and neither was my mentor" (Astrid, personal communication, September 8, 2018).
			• there were set expectations and intentional goals.
Justin	Informal	Having a common background and an understanding about what it means to be African American in American education was important.	• there is nothing this participant would change about his mentoring experience. "My experiences were great. It was informal but a real friendship" (Justin, personal communication, September 8, 2018).
Camille	Informal	The mentor conducted observations and provided rounds of feedback.	• the mentoring was more intentional.
			• student and teacher evaluation data was part of the mentoring.

		The mentor understood the racial and female experiences of the mentee.	"If I could go back, I would involve metrics" (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018).
			• there was more collaboration rather than just the one-way transmission of knowledge.
			• the mentor was more proactive rather than reactive.
Deon	Informal	The mentoring relationship was an authentic friendship. The mentoring experience was mutually beneficial.	• the mentor analyzed where the mentee was professionally to help him reach his highest potential. "My mentor never really asked me where I see myself in 10 years" (Deon, personal communication, October 1, 2018).
			• the mentoring was more intentional and deliberate.
Vidal	Informal	The relationship was an authentic, supportive, unselfish friendship.	• there is nothing this participant would change about his mentoring experience.

Makayla	Informal	The experience and knowledge of the mentors were extremely beneficial.	• the mentoring was 100% positive with no negativity. "Even if a mentor has something negative to say, he should spin it positively. Don't bring negativity" (Makayla, personal communication, October 4, 2018).
Rena	Informal	The participant learned more from her mentors than from her own experiences, and also learned how to be a mentor herself.	• there is nothing this participant would change about his mentoring experience.
Tanesha	Formal	Role modeling was extremely effective in this participant's mentoring experience.	• there is nothing this participant would change about his mentoring experience.
Jasmine	Informal	The mentor was approachable, eager to share, open, and kind.	• there is nothing this participant would change about his mentoring experience.

Teachers Leave the Profession Because They Lack Support and Guidance

The majority of participants got into teaching because of their altruistic belief that they could make a difference in the lives of children. Other reasons included starting a family and wanting summers off, and finding the TFA program appealing and challenging. The majority of participants attributed their retention in the profession to their love of children and how rewarding the profession is. Some participants were motivated to keep learning, growing, and challenging themselves and found this profession to promote self-development.

Participants' perceptions for why teachers leave included lack of support from school leadership. Makayla shared that the leadership in her school and network spoke in demeaning tones and had little respect for teachers as professionals. "Maybe it was because I was young, but I felt so disrespected. Like one time they commented on my clothes! Who are you to comment on my clothes?" exclaimed Makayla (personal communication, October 4, 2018). Alana pointed out that she was held accountable for her students' test scores but believes that her students' poor test scores are more reflective of the charter network's inability to develop and support her to do her job well. "I felt so defeated and almost left which would have been a shame because I have a lot to give. I love my students," Alana reflected (personal communication, September 7, 2018).

Alana also pointed to the negative effects of competition the charter school system has brought to New Orleans education. She was not referring to charter schools competing for students. She was referring to how teachers compete against each other and work in silos in their classrooms to achieve the best possible results. "In this environment, teachers compete for recognition. We want shout-outs," Alana explained (personal communication, September 7, 2018). "Instead of helping struggling teachers, the charter school environment make teachers feel inept," Camille said (personal communication, October 1, 2018). Jasmine shared that

teachers go into the profession for altruistic reasons, and then leave because the school culture is toxic and competitive instead of a collegiate, collaborative environment that supports the growth and development of teachers.

Some participants shared that the charter school movement caused teachers to skip around to see if the grass is greener with another charter network. They believed that not all teachers are leaving the profession; they are simply changing schools year after year in search of a more supportive environment. "I see it all the time, teachers just go from school to school," Rena said (personal communication, October 4, 2018). "If there was a unified school district, teachers would not leave their schools for another as frequently because it's all the same, it would all be the same thing," Vidal said (personal communication, October 3, 2018). Camille shared that some charter networks are more political than others, and that it took political maneuvering to get promotions and other opportunities.

Justin pointed to alternative certification as a reason for teacher attrition. He believes that there is significant value in learning how to teach, how to manage a classroom of students, and in earning a teaching degree. He described the level of commitment to the profession that a person feels when he has earned his teaching degree and passed his certification. He believes that people who receive some training during the summer and then receive certification through alternative methods are not as committed to the craft and are more likely to leave. "If teachers do not learn to do their jobs well, they will be ineffective and lack the ability and skill to teach," Justin said (personal communication, September 8, 2018). A traditional teaching degree provides teachers with the tools that they need to be successful teachers; it teaches teachers best practices on how to reach all students, from the high achieving to the ones who struggle the most, Justin opined. If more teachers had traditional degrees, as in the past, more teachers would be retained in the profession. Justin, a teacher from Texas who was not accustomed to working

with as many teachers who received alternative certification, was the most opinionated in this area of all the participants.

Other participants shared that the lack of contracts and job security are reasons that teachers are leaving the profession. They questioned how much a teacher could commit to a school when a school is not committed to them. Vidal, for example, mentioned that it takes about three years for a teacher to be fired in New York. He has personally witnessed the process of teachers being fired in New Orleans where it took less than one month. "It's scary and you have to look out for yourself," Vidal said (personal communication, October 2, 2018).

Some participants shared that the high turnover rate of teachers in New Orleans is largely due to the many transplants in New Orleans. A transplant refers to someone who is not originally from New Orleans. Participants have witnessed their colleagues leave New Orleans to go back to their families and to be closer to what they call home. Participants viewed transplants as less committed to New Orleans and more likely to leave the city, but they were unsure about whether most of them left the teaching profession altogether. "This is why I keep saying hire New Orleaneans because we are committed to the city," Camille said (personal communication, October 1, 2018).

Some participants shared that teachers leave because of the constant change and lack of consistency. For example, Jasmine was teaching two subjects to the same children all day one year, and the following year, she was teaching 90 children the same math three times per day. In addition, teacher evaluations change and students are tested differently every year. "I am doing one thing this year and God knows what I'll be doing next year. They change things before we can learn what we are even doing," Jasmine complained (personal communication, October 6, 2018). Participants expressed frustration about not being able to reach proficiency in their teaching methods because of constant change that charter management organizations instituted.

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Two participants, Camille and Rena, pointed to the changed role of a teacher. They believe that a teacher's job is no longer to teach, but to be a social worker, an interventionist, a behavior specialist, a disciplinarian, a person who understands poverty and abuse. Because many teachers go into the profession with the expectation of being able to teach, they leave the profession disillusioned. They arrive to the profession with a teaching degreebut realize they should have earned a social work degree. This disillusionment causes teachers to leave the profession within the first two years of teaching.

> I've seen some good ones leave teaching because they were given the job not to teach, but to discipline or to counsel. I have a friend who went to teach at a private school because she wanted to teach, not be a parent to 30 kids. (Camille, personal communication, October 1, 2018)

Astrid and Alana shared that teachers leave because that is what they planned to do from the beginning of their teaching experience. Both Astrid and Alana were TFA recruits, and TFA is designed to attract high performing college graduates who teach for two years, gain the experience, and then move on with their lives to either pursue graduate studies or new careers. "It's what you're supposed to do; that's the philosophy at TFA. Teach and then move on," Astrid explained (personal communication, September 8, 2018). Some teachers, whether or not they are involved with TFA, pursue a teaching job only until they can find a better paying job in their chosen field. Because of the teacher shortage, people who are not qualified to teach are given the opportunity to be a temporary teacher. "I am one of them. I honestly didn't know what I was going to do, but I got into teaching because it was a job," Deon said (personal communication, October 1, 2018).

Participants believed that TFA teachers are testing out the teaching profession, but do not commit to it. Astrid said she chose to participate in TFA because "if I end up hating it, it's just

two years and then I can move on to something more interesting" (personal communication, September 8, 2018). Her story of why she entered the teaching profession provided evidence for what she and other participants said about TFA teachers who view this as a temporary profession. "After college, I was looking for something to do, and TFA grabbed my attention," Astrid explained (personal communication, September 8, 2018).

Other reasons linked to attrition that participants mentioned are low salaries and few or limited opportunities for significant salary increases. Jasmine pointed out that even if someone teaches for 20 years, a teacher in New Orleans will not make a six-figure salary, which she found disheartening when she compared these data points with other professions. Other reasons for attrition that participants noted are teacher burnout, stress from children and pressure from leadership, living in survival mode, and losing purpose.

All participants said mentoring contributed to their retention. However, participants did not name mentoring as the sole or even primary reason for their retention. Participants consistently named students as the reason that they stay in the profession. The teacher attrition problem was not with students; it was with adults. Participants listed many difficulties teachers face as potential reasons that teachers leave the profession. All of the negative situations mentioned were created and can be fixed by adults.

Mentoring Increases Teachers' Skills, Knowledge, and Effectiveness

The mentoring impacts that participants noted were improvements in skills, retention, and cultural navigation, among others. All participants in this study reported high levels of psychosocial support, particularly in the areas of friendship and validation. This makes sense, since 90% of the mentoring relationships in this study were informal in nature. Nine of the participants sought out their mentors. They built these relationships through their own motivation for growth and learning.

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Not all, but the majority of participants shared that they chose the teaching profession because of their love of children and their desire to make an impact in the world. This altruistic passion is a characteristic they looked for in a mentor. Teachers sought mentors who, by example, showed them how to be servant leaders and placed children at the forefront of all of their decisions in the classroom. They chose mentors who cared deeply about the children and what was happening to them. Participants shared that mentors who were nurturing to both children and adults, for example, changed the mindset of teachers to be more about children and less about self. One participant, Alana, went so far as to say that she sees her mentor as a father figure and stressed how important her levels of trust and respect are in that relationship. "I can't stress how important it is to have trust. I trusted my mentor like I would my own father. Like I said before, he is really, for me, a father figure" (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018).

Most participants described what Camille said: "When I first started teaching, I often struggled miserably every day and had no idea what to do" (personal communication, October 1, 2018). All participants described at least some struggle in their roles. They talked about teaching no longer being just about teaching and more about behavior management. Many participants used words such as "surviving" and "persevering." Participants shared that teaching is a hard and challenging job. It is emotionally draining, mentally tough, and physically demanding. These are some of the reasons why, in the teaching profession, and for teachers of color in particular, the psychosocial support function of mentoring seemed to be more important than the career development function.

Some of the psychosocial functions of mentoring that participants noted are: building healthy relationships with teacher peers; communicating with principals; building community in a school; providing encouragement and affirming feedback; having productive, effective,

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powerful, difficult conversations; making them see the bigger impact they are having on the whole school and even the whole city of New Orleans; increasing their self-esteem and self-efficacy; allowing them to say things that they would otherwise not be able to say openly to others; pushing participants outside of their comfort zones; helping participants to navigate the school system, particularly with respect to politics; teaching participants how to handle complex situations thoughtfully; and cultural navigation when experiencing differences due to race.

Some teachers shared that the charter school environment creates a lack of psychosocial support for teachers. The charter system focuses on competition rather than collaboration. Alana was so tired of the same teachers getting public recognition through "shout outs" that she began to hate those teachers rather than develop a desire to learn from them. "It's disgusting. Only the favorite teachers get shout-outs," Alana shared (September 7, 2018). In the charter environment, teachers are reportedly competing for the most recognition for their work. To these participants, mentors served as a sounding board for some of their frustrations, allowing them to keep doing their jobs without feeling that they need to be publicly recognized as good teachers.

I have only worked in charter schools so I cannot co mpare. The way it is in charter

schools…there is a level of competition that has been ingrained in charter schools. In

charter schools, everyone's all about giving shoutouts, right? I started to notice last year

at my school, and before that actually, that I haven't gotten any shoutouts. If a teacher

got a shoutout, instead of wanting to know what is this person doing, it almost becomes

like, "I hate that person. They're always doing this and I hate it." That competitive

aspect brings down other teachers and it doesn't feel collaborative. My mentor, he's so

straight with me. He's very real with me. He helped me get over things. I can be

vulnerable to him. Because of him, I'm more solutions-oriented when it comes to

problems. He showed me how it has nothing to do with shoutouts. Like I just don't see

problems and start complaining anymore. I, as soon as someone's complaining, I start

thinking of solutions. (Alana, personal communication, September 7, 2018)

Many participants shared the belief that race matters because of the cultural navigation

tools that teachers of color need in order to be successful in their roles. For example, three

participants expressed what Justin put succinctly: "an African American mentor can be straight

and real and does not sugarcoat the truth" (personal communication, September 8, 2018).

Camille added that "the realness comes from a place of love and caring, and that is the

difference" (personal communication, October 1, 2018). Some participants felt comfortable

being vulnerable with their mentors, crying to their mentors, sharing insecurities, and showing

them when they are upset without fear of being judged or evaluated. From their perspective, a

mentor exists to support them and not to serve as another teacher evaluator. Mentors should not

exist to punish them further. Many of the participants described their mentors as family and had

relationships where there was mutual care and respect. Tanesha, for example, had a mentor with

high expectations of her, inspiring her to rise to the occasion each time because she cared what

her mentor thought of her. They shared a close friendship.

The importance of the relationship or friendship was something that all participants

discussed. It made a tremendous impact that mentors saw teachers as humans; that they cared

about the job they did as teachers; but also cared about them as people and as friends. Vidal

shared that the bond between a mentor and mentee is one of friendship or family, and that this is

what makes mentoring effective.

Some participants talked about the traits that allowed their mentor to have such a high

psychosocial impact on them. These included: patience, consistency, role modeling, showing

personal concern, asking about the person and not just the job, encouragement and positive

reinforcement, celebrating the wins, finding solutions for when things go wrong, and being an active listener.

In addition, the following is a list of skills and career development functions that mentors in this study provided to their mentees: increased content knowledge in specific areas such as English Language Arts and math; helped develop strategies for teaching a new writing curriculum; trained teachers on how to look for solutions; provided structures for teacher collaboration; provided explicit feedback after classroom observations; role playing and hands-on coaching; testing new strategies; co-teaching; providing feedback on lesson plans and other materials; pulling from actual experiences to solve problems; teaching protocols; being a better listener; helping to make wiser decisions; providing a different perspective; incorporating a culture of fun into learning; collecting data to improve learning; sharing data to improve other classrooms. Eight of the participants agreed that the above functions would not have been met without their mentors having the many years of experience that they had.

Conclusion

To survive difficult contexts in the K-12 public school setting in New Orleans, participants expressed a need for guidance to culturally navigate their careers. The mentoring relationships of most of the participants were built on friendship. The friendships that participants built with their mentors were often a result of commonalities and shared interests. The most significant commonality that participants named was race. The teachers of color in this study all had mentors of color and expressed that this allowed them to build trust and show vulnerability, which contributed to their growth as teachers. Mentoring helped participants better understand their roles and contributed to their retention.

Chapter 5 will discuss these findings, outline the potential implications for establishing mentoring programs and structures, and limitations of the study. It will also provide a critical

analysis of the interactions between mentoring and race. It will conclude with ideas for further research.

CHAPTER 5

This was a phenomenological study designed to understand the mentoring experiences of teachers of color in public charter schools in New Orleans. The researcher asked teacher participants about how they got into the teaching profession and what retains them; how mentoring impacted their careers; their perceptions on the how their mentors' race, gender, and years of experience in the teaching profession affected their mentoring experience; and reasons for teacher attrition. Participants in this study were teachers of color in the K-12 public charter school system in New Orleans. Each teacher possessed a minimum of five years of teaching experience and experienced mentoring for at least one academic year.

The researcher used mentoring and intersectionality theories to guide the study questions. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1993) provided a framework to examine the impact that race, gender, years of experience, and other descriptors of the participants and their mentors had on their mentoring experience. Intersectionality theory helped to explain the complexities of the mentee and the mentor as individuals who are not only teachers of color, but also individuals with a gender identity and varied experiences that define them. Kram's (1983, 1985) mentoring theory guided some of the interview questions, particularly those about mentoring functions. Kram's mentoring theory helped to answer the research sub-questions about psychosocial support and career development functions of mentoring.

This chapter will start with a summary of the findings, which is a discussion that addresses the research question about the experiences of teachers of color, and the two sub-questions regarding the mentoring functions that participants reported. The researcher then provides recommendations, limitations, and concludes with future research opportunities.

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study suggest that mentoring relationships are complex, particularly in the context of race relations in the New Orleans charter system. The research question was: What are the mentoring experiences of K-12 teachers of color in charter schools in New Orleans? The mentoring experiences can be characterized by the following three assertions: 1) the race of mentors played a significant role in how teachers of color feel supported and mentored; 2) the charter school system in New Orleans is holding teachers to White standards and not providing the support that teachers of color need; and 3) while participants received support primarily through informal mentoring, they recognized and longed for the benefits of formal mentoring.

The first sub-question was: What are the psychosocial effects of mentoring experiences on teachers of color? Teachers of color expressed that their mentoring experiences helped them to 1) feel a sense of validation in their experiences as people of color and 2) learn to culturally navigate the education space as people of color.

The second sub-question was: How have mentoring experiences impacted the careers of teachers of color? Participants in this study believe that mentoring helped them improve their teaching methods and skills. Additionally, mentoring has been one of the contributing factors to the retention of teachers of color.

The findings showed that teachers of color select mentors of color. These mentors understood and accepted without question the internal struggles and external experiences that African American and Brown educators face in their teaching careers. Secondly, participants were critical of their charter school networks' leadership and inability to support and develop them. Third, results showed that the mentoring experiences of teachers of color who participated in this study were overwhelmingly informal, involve self-selecting a mentor, hinge on friendship

and trust, have been largely positive, and contribute to teacher retention. The following is a discussion on race, the charter school system in New Orleans, and informal and formal mentoring. It is followed by a discussion on the psychosocial support and career functions that participants shared were part of their mentoring experiences.

Race Plays a Significant Role in the Mentoring of Teachers of Color

The mentoring experiences of teachers of color reflect the struggles that African American and Brown people face in their careers. "No one is ever completely emancipated from the sociopolitical context that has produced him or her" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 308). This is particularly true in the K-12 context in New Orleans, as participants described in this study. "All racial categories are by definition social relations of power. Within this system of racial stratification, being White typically affords a disproportionate share of status and greater relative access to the material resources that shape life chances" (Gallagher, 2007, p. 13). In this study, 90% of participants personally witnessed White peers receiving preferential treatment. Only two participants referred to those experiences specifically as a result of White privilege. White privilege refers to the preference, opportunities, and benefits granted to White people solely on the basis of being White (Gallagher, 2007). Peggy McIntosh (1997) defines White privilege as "an invisible package or unearned assets" or as White people's "unearned advantage" (p. 291). White privilege keeps power in the hands of those who already hold power and "obliviousness about White advantage…is kept strongly enculturated in the United States so as to maintain the myth of meritocracy" (McIntosh, 1997, p. 298). In the United States, educational and institutional structures systemically perpetuate White supremacist culture and the socio-economic racial divide (Gallagher, 2007). Teachers of color in this study witnessed differences in the way they were treated and in the opportunities they were given in comparison to their White peers. They expressed having fewer opportunities for professional development,

less one-on-one time with their school leaders, and fewer chances of career promotion than their White counterparts, to name a few of the differences. Five participants shared that seeing successful African American female teachers who looked like them kept them motivated in their careers, despite the White supremacist culture that existed in their schools.

From the lack of opportunities to the absence of support for teachers of color, the individual experiences that 90% of participants reported were embedded in the systemic racism that exists in educational structures. Nine participants shared that, often, the discrimination they experienced was not the result of a malicious leader, but rather a result of how institutionalized racism was at their schools. For example, one teacher expressed being punished for not penalizing a student when he did not follow the dress code. That teacher of color knew that her African American student lived in poverty and it was not his fault that he did not have a clean uniform that day. Another teacher of color expressed changing writing assignments to make them more culturally appealing to students, only to have the administration blame her students' poor test scores on her teaching methods. These are only two of many examples. It is also noteworthy that both of these teachers of color were passed over for promotions. Participants claimed that the teachers who were promoted and received professional development opportunities were not better teachers than they were; they were White like the principal. Tatum (1997) discussed that this institutional racism in schools comes from a false belief in meritocracy, in which one gains wealth and power if he or she works for it, because meritocracy blindly ignores the existence of White privilege that creates systemic inequalities.

Some participants shared that because their mentors were people of color, they understood not only the teacher of color, but also students of color. Mentors of color had a positive impact on the way that teachers related to students of color. Students of color interact differently with teachers who look like them and teachers learned from their mentors how to

channel this response. Participants shared that their mentors served as role models for both teachers and students. Mentors of color were able to relate to students' realities; spoke from experience; had higher expectations of African American students; and were impactful, intentional, and purposeful with African American students. These observations are consistent with the literature on the impact that teachers of color have on students (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Fairlie, Hoffman, & Oreaopoulous, 2011; Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Participants were divided on whether or not gender made a difference in how they were mentored, but 90% agreed that race mattered. One participant insisted that it all mattered. The intersectionality of gender, age, race, and years of experience formed the identity of the mentor, and all of these factors played a role in her effectiveness as a mentor. This observation is consistent with intersectionality theory regarding the many attributes that intersect to create identity (Crenshaw, 1989, 1983).

The Charter School System in New Orleans and Race

Findings suggest that the charter school system in New Orleans is contributing to teachers' of color being treated poorly, promoted less, and given fewer opportunities than their white counterparts. Participants shared that leaders in their charter networks are primarily White while teachers and teachers assistants are generally people of color. Directives, decision making, rules, policies, promotions and opportunities came from the White leadership at their charter schools, and teachers of color were expected to follow directions. This was not the case when New Orleans had a traditional, centralized school district where the overwhelming majority of the adult school population was African American (Buras, 2016).

Participants related stories of being forced to fall in line with new rules and assessments that they viewed as culturally White. The participants of color informally looked for mentors who looked like them and who looked like their students to fight against the color-blind charter

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school network agenda. The new policies that govern the New Orleans charter school system in the post-Katrina era traded cultural learning for rigor and assessments (Dixson, Buras, & Jeffers, 2015).   Policies in charter school networks and institutions such as TFA in the U.S., regardless of whether the schools have overwhelmingly majority African American and Brown populations, uphold White cultural norms and language as the standard against which all members of a school are measured, particularly in the post-Katrina New Orleans (Buras, 2011; Cook & Dixson, 2013).

Participants pointed to how much more powerful charter network leaders are in comparison to district school leaders. Many teachers of color expressed fear for not falling in line, fear of losing their jobs, and looking for other ways to culturally navigate to still bring about impactful change in their schools for students of color. It takes about 150 days to fire a teacher in a traditional school district, and as little as 44 days in a charter system (Price, 2011). Participants shared that some of their peers of color left their schools out of frustration and out of fear that they would be fired for disagreeing with some of the charter networks' policies on student discipline.

A large majority of participants placed part of the blame for the high turnover rate on charter networks hiring high numbers of teachers from TFA. Of TFA cohorts 2000, 2001, and 2002, only 14.8% of TFA teachers remained in the low performing schools in which they were placed at the start of the program (Donaldson & Johnson, 2011). Charter schools and other school systems have responded to the teacher shortage by ramping up recruitment efforts rather than solving the attrition problem (Darling-Hammond, 2001). There is evidence that shows that students perform better when they have the same teacher for multiple years (Forsten, Grant, & Richardson, 1999). Also, hiring new teachers is expensive, impacts adult culture and puts a heavy strain on schools (Certo & Fox, 2002). In addition, teachers leaving the school who have

benefited from mentoring contribute to the brain drain by taking with them the skills and knowledge gained through mentoring.

The charter school teacher population also looks significantly younger. In the centralized school district that existed in New Orleans pre-Katrina, there were 20% more teachers with 20 years or more of experience. The current teacher workforce in the charter network is significantly younger, less experienced, and White. In large part, experienced African American teachers were blamed for the failures of public schools in New Orleans, and researchers have found that this conclusion is baseless and without merit (Buras, 2016; Cook, 2008). Fifteen of the 16 mentors in this study who selflessly gave of their time to pass on knowledge and skills to help teachers of color improve their teaching were experienced African American teachers.

Informal and Formal Mentoring: A Winning Combination

Informal mentoring is not facilitated by a third party and is lacking in structure; it happens if one person seeks out another or if both naturally bond over similarities and commonalities, are compatible, want to engage with each other, and want to share ideas on how to improve (Allen & Eby, 2008). Formal mentoring is facilitated by a third party and has structure and rules that govern the mentor and mentee relationship (Allen & Eby, 2008).

Fifteen of 16 mentors were individually selected and sought after by the mentees and all 16 were mentors of color. Left to their own devices, people will connect with other people who have similar backgrounds to easily develop rapport over commonalities, and mentors are more likely to take on mentees when they remind the mentors of a younger, less experienced version of themselves (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). Research shows that informal mentoring, in which mentors and mentees self-select and self-direct their relationship without rules and structure from external forces, is likely to occur when the mentee has specific personality traits because a self-selected mentor is more likely to respond to a mentee who is ambitious, sociable, confident,

extroverted, and articulate (Engstrom, 1997). While the personality traits of participants were not a part of this research study, 100% of participants self-selected to participate in this study; 90% of them proactively sought out informal mentors to develop themselves; and 100% of them, based on the researcher's observations and notes, appeared to possess all of the aforementioned traits. A formal mentoring program would be more inclusive of teachers who need professional guidance but are unsure of how or are unwilling to look for this support on their own. Many participants expressed the need for structure, goals, and other characteristics that can be found in formal mentoring programs. While informal mentoring relationships had many benefits, participants expressed how much more impactful their experiences would have been had there been explicit intention, expectations and purpose.

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has already moved to create formal mentoring opportunities for teachers in public schools in the state. LDOE has established a program to train mentors so that they can serve as support systems for new teachers, aspiring teachers who are still in training, and experienced teachers who still need help. In the 2017-2018 school year, LDOE recruited 475 teachers to receive training to become mentor teachers. In the current school year, it is recruiting 1,000 teachers to become mentor teachers. In the 2019-2020 school year, it will recruit another 1,000 teachers. The goal is to have 2,500 trained mentor teachers in the state by 2020. These mentor teachers will be tasked with building relationships, identifying and addressing needs, delivering coaching, and tracking the improvement of mentees. Starting this school year, the state is requiring all teacher preparation programs to include a one-year work experience for aspiring teachers to work alongside a mentor so that by the time they complete their teacher preparation program, they will be prepared to lead their classrooms. All of this data is located on the Louisiana Believes website. Phone calls to the LDOE office in Baton Rouge were not answered. In a follow up phone call, two participants in this study had

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not heard about this program; one had heard about the program but had not seen it implemented; the other seven participants did not respond.

One of the many positive attributes of this new mentoring program at the state level is that the LDOE has not made the mistake of confusing induction with mentoring. Induction is a process that may include mentoring, but induction includes so many other parts at the beginning of a teacher's career (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Mentoring is not induction; mentoring includes the actions and functions that mentors serve, which can occur long after induction (Ingersoll, 2009). LDOE's website specifically states that mentoring is not only available to beginning teachers and aspiring teachers, but also to experienced teachers. In this study, all of the participants had between five and 16 years of experience, yet many of these experienced teachers sought mentorship. The state recognizes that mentoring is an ongoing need for even experienced teachers, and not only teachers who are being inducted into the profession. Research shows that mentoring is different from induction because mentoring is a developmental relationship that focuses on career development, psychosocial support, and growth regardless of how long a person has been in his or her profession (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Of course, the state would be wise to invest significant time and resources in mentoring new teachers because the population of teachers found to have the highest attrition rates includes those who have only one to five years of experience teaching (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Teachers need support at every level of their careers.

While participants named many benefits that resulted directly from their informal mentoring experiences, many of the teachers of color longed for more formal structures to give their mentoring experiences direction, consistency and purpose. To guide the mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees in a formal program often use a manual that outlines the mentoring procedures, rules, limitations, the level of support from management, the matching

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process, mentor and mentee orientations, expectations and responsibilities of all parties, the duration of the program, the frequency of meetings, and assignments (Friday, Friday & Green, 2004). Some participants expressed the desire to keep the nature of the informal mentoring in terms of self-selecting a mentor and building a friendship, but borrowing from formal mentoring programs to add structure.

Mentors Provided Teachers of Color with Validation and Cultural Navigation Tools

The first sub-question was: What are the psychosocial effects of mentoring experiences on teachers of color? The psychosocial support function in mentoring relies on trust and the strength of social, friendship, and emotional bonds in a mentoring relationship; some examples are validation, encouragement, self-esteem, personal growth, identity, and self-efficacy (Cherniss, 2007). All 16 mentors in this study were people of color, and 15 of them provided teachers of color with validation. The mentors understood the inner struggle that teachers of color face, and accepted without question the stories that they shared regarding racial discrimination. Because of their shared racial background, teachers easily developed or deepened friendships with their mentors and built trust. Every participant either mentioned trust or gave examples that indicated trust. For instance, while a participant did not use the word trust, she mentioned feeling safe in sharing her vulnerabilities and insecurities with her mentor. Another shared that she did not question the intention of her mentor because she knew the mentor had her best interest at heart. Rusbult, Wieselquist, Foster and Witcher (1999) defined the three stages of trust:

> 1. Predictability rests on the consistency of a partner's behaviors. The partner must be observed to be behaviorally consistent before he or she can be regarded as trustworthy.

2. Dependability is the degree to which the partner is judged to be reliable and honest. The more reliable and honest the partner is perceived to be, the more he or she can be regarded as trustworthy.

3. Faith represents the conviction that the partner can be relied upon to be responsive to one's needs and behave in a caring manner, now and in the future.

All three stages described in the Rusbult et al. (1999) definition of trust are found in the data collected from participants. Participants expressed how consistent their mentors were regarding the help and advice they provided; how dependable and reliable they were in responding to the mentee's professional and emotional needs; and how much faith the mentees placed in their mentors' words of wisdom. Trust was extremely important in establishing and continuing the mentoring relationship of the interviewed participants. This trust was linked to teachers of color feeling validated in their experiences.

Cultural navigation was mentioned repeatedly in participants' answers about how their mentor guided and supported them. "Mentoring provides psychological guidance and support to influence or inspire" (Blunt & Conolly, 2006, p. 199). Participants mentioned that mentors taught them how to survive, inspired them to stay, and influenced them to navigate the education space as cultural ambassadors for children of color. White superiority is ingrained and institutionalized in education and social structures to the point where this belief in the inherent superiority of Whites and of the inherent inferiority of African Americans are almost unrecognizable to its White beneficiaries (Taylor, 2006). This systemic racial bias makes it difficult for a teacher of color to express his or her oppression to a White mentor without explicit proof and justification. Teachers of color expressed being able to let their guard down, and felt understood without having to explain further. This created a space for healthy learning, friendship, and trust.

Mentoring Improved Teaching Practices and Retention

All participants relayed that they were able to improve their practice as a direct result of mentoring. Because this is a phenomenological study with interviews as the primary source of data collection, the researcher did not attempt to gain access to teacher evaluations to examine effectiveness; all of the data on effectiveness was self-reported. Research shows that for mentoring to improve the performance effectiveness of mentees, a formal mentoring program in which mentors participate in training needs to be in place (Kyle, Moore &Sanders, 1999). However, despite being in informal mentoring relationships, participants reported that they saw a positive impact in their performance, found solutions to problems of practice, and moved the needle in student achievement for students in their classrooms.

No participant reported being promoted or receiving any kind of career advancement benefit from their mentoring experiences. This may have to do with how flat the teaching profession is. Most schools have very few opportunities for teachers to advance into higher roles of power while still teaching in a classroom. In other professions, mentees could benefit from their mentoring experiences by advancing into more senior or leadership positions more easily and frequently. Participants instead commented on how difficult it was to gain leadership opportunities and spoke about an observed disparity between teachers of color and White educators. Their mentors, who were all also people of color, were not in positions of power to promote them.

Seventy percent of participants said they would have left the profession if it were not for their mentoring experiences. This percentage is not linked to retention in the same school, but rather retention in the teaching profession. There were no formal mentoring programs at the schools of 100% of the participants. The one participant who had had a formal mentor in a

program at her former school shared that this program was not used as a retention tool, but rather as an opportunity for teachers to learn, grow, and develop. Still, participants reported a link between mentoring and retention, and it is that retention that promotes learning and growth for the whole school, not just the individual.

> The challenge is for the campus community to see the mentoring process as a mechanism to increase teacher retention in the profession, which promotes quality education for classroom students and provides lifelong learning opportunities for teachers, addressing their developmental needs. (Kajs, 2002, p. 67)

Research supports the notion that mentored teachers are more likely to remain in the profession than teachers who are not mentored (Benson, 2008; Conway, 2001; Krueger, 1999; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Research is limited and often links mentoring to retention in the profession and does not link mentoring to retention in the school where the mentored teacher works. In other words, it is difficult to see the impact of mentoring on the school if teachers, who are retained in the profession partly due to mentoring, migrate to other schools and take with them the skills and knowledge they gained from their mentoring experience. This indicates that more needs to be done, beyond the scope of mentoring, to retain teachers in the same school so that mentoring can have long-term impact.

Future Research

Mentoring researchers and theorists focus largely on formal mentoring relationships and on the positive career impact that mentoring can have on a mentee. Most of the relationships in this study were informal, and there is not enough research on informal mentoring. More specifically, given the racial opportunity gap and the proven positive contributions of teachers of color, more research is needed about the informal mentoring relationships of people of color. In addition, the need for psychosocial support for teachers of color is highlighted in the results of

this phenomenological study. More research needs to be conducted on why it seemed that the psychosocial support function of mentoring was so important to teachers of color and how to better support them.

Systemic, racial inequalities in teacher preparation programs were beyond the scope of this study, but are worth studying to ensure that all teachers, regardless of their race, are armed with the skills and tools needed to teach children. For about fifty years, new teachers have been voicing that what they are taught in teacher preparation programs is starkly different from what actually happens in the classroom (Serpell, 2000). Mentoring could serve as a tool to arm all teachers with the skills they need to be successful with children, regardless of their teacher preparation experiences. Research needs to be conducted on what this would look like for both beginning and veteran teachers.

Because mentees sought their own mentors, the psychosocial support behaviors were more prevalent than they would be generally in a formal mentoring program in which mentees did not choose their mentors. Would a formal mentoring program be more or less impactful if the mentee owned the assignment of his or her mentor? Research is inconclusive about whether a formal relationship can be as effective in the area of psychosocial support as an informal relationship (Chao et al., 1992; Ragins et al., 2000). Research shows that, in formal relationships, mentees are arbitrarily assigned a mentor (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Perhaps more attention, care, and time need to be invested in mentor assignments. For example, the use of a questionnaire might allow mentees the opportunity to share how and by what type of person they want to be mentored. Additionally, a "meet and greet" or interview where mentees spend time getting to know potential mentors might allow a mentee to choose the mentor best suited for him or her. More research is needed on how a semi-formal mentoring program would work if

teachers are allowed to self-select their mentors, but the administration provided some structure to guide the mentoring outcomes.

Additionally, while the State of Louisiana is moving towards formal mentoring programs for teachers, it might also benefit from learning about the conditions that are creating successful informal mentoring. This phenomenological research study showed that one of the most impactful factors in the informal mentoring relationships of teachers of color is trust. Rather than simply assigning mentors to mentees, the state needs to focus on pairing mentees and mentors in a way that builds trust. Otherwise, teacher mentees will benefit from mentoring in ways that will improve their practice, but will miss out on the psychosocial benefits of mentoring. The psychosocial benefits of mentoring stem from trusting relationships and impact the teacher mentee beyond the classroom. The Louisiana state-run mentoring program would be worth studying.

The researcher did not collect data on whether participants sought informal mentoring because there was no formal mentoring program at their schools, or if, even with a formal mentoring program in place, teachers might still supplement their mentoring needs, particularly in the area of psychosocial support, by finding informal mentors. Research can be conducted regarding whether teachers of color in a formal mentoring program also seek out informal mentors outside of the formal program.

One of the areas that this study highlighted is how few opportunities teachers of color have to learn, grow, and advance because of their race. More data is needed on race relations in public schools and systems of advancement for teachers of color, which may lead to creating more equitable opportunities for all teachers.

Additionally, informal mentoring programs for teachers across the United States are not well understood, perhaps because they take place on a personal level and are difficult to track.

Based on how naturally informal mentoring happened for participants in this study, it is fair to assume that this will continue to happen, regardless of whether a formal mentoring program exists. African American and Brown people seek out other African American and Brown people to help them learn and grow in their teaching profession. Research is needed on strategies for making informal mentoring more impactful. The focus of this study was not on informal mentoring, but this study highlighted a need for more information on how informal mentoring occurs, its impacts, and how it can be improved.

Given the rise of use of smart phones, tablets, social media, and other technology, mentoring relationships could be facilitated online. In addition, a mentor could have an impact on larger numbers of teachers by better using online technologies. More research is needed on the potential of e-mentoring.

While this study showed that gender did not play a significant role in mentoring, the relatively small sample size may have influenced this outcome. More research is needed on the extent to which gender impacts mentoring relationships. In addition, gender may have an impact in mentoring relationships for people who do not have a cisgender identity; that is, individuals who identify as neither male nor female, both male and female, or a gender different from what was biologically assigned to him or her at birth.

One participant in this study highlighted how unprepared she was to teach, how much she was expected to know, and how much she needed to learn to meet those expectations. More research is needed on teacher preparation programs and how mentoring might be a tool that could be leveraged to make-up for poor teacher preparation.

This study highlighted that African American and Brown teachers feel disempowered even in a city where Black students are in the majority. Future research could be conducted on what a mentoring program specifically designed for African American and Brown teachers might

look like. Such a program could eliminate the strong feelings of oppression that the interviewees in this study expressed.

Further, researchers and theorists need to get on the same page about what mentoring is. Often, when the researcher was interviewing teachers, interviewees sometimes responded by using words such as coach, moral counselor, friend, and advisor. Kram (1985) places the moral counselor and friend in the psychosocial support function of mentoring, and the coach and advisor in the career development function category. Often, the way that interviewees described their mentors partially fulfilled the definition and functions of a mentor. The researcher did not define mentoring for the interviewees, and so the participants had their own definitions of mentoring. It became evident to the researcher that participants varied greatly in how they defined mentoring. So that everyone is speaking the same language, mentoring needs to be defined with clear, uniform parameters. Kram and other researchers have begun this work, but more needs to be done to make mentoring language more consistent.

Conclusion

The significant contributions that teachers of color make on helping students of color develop their identity (Tatum, 2007) cannot be ignored. This study highlighted that teachers of color have negative perceptions of how they are treated in their profession and voiced the limitations they face as people of color looking for opportunities to grow, learn, and advance in their careers. Because they were not granted these opportunities, teachers of color in this study sought out mentoring relationships on their own to advance their careers and better serve their students. They developed informal mentoring relationships built on friendship and trust. Mentoring proved to be a powerful psychosocial support system for teachers of color. They felt validated in their experiences and supported in their quest to improve. They gained skills to culturally navigate their schools to gain success in their careers and positive results with

students. Even without structure, compensation, access to resources, or support from the administration, teachers of color proved to be resourceful, resilient individuals who looked to their communities of color for mentorship.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment E-mail

Hello!

My name is Ingrid Alvarado Nichols. I am a PhD candidate studying under Dr. Elizabeth K. Jeffers at the University of New Orleans. I am studying the mentoring experiences of teachers of color in New Orleans. This is an email to recruit participants. Please pass along this email to teachers.

The purpose of my study is to understand the mentoring experiences of teachers of color in K-12 charter schools in New Orleans. Participants must be teachers of color in a public school in New Orleans. Secondly, participants must be teachers who have had a mentor for at least one school year.

Participation will require about two hours of time over the next two months. First, I will interview each participant for about 60 minutes. Participants will receive a typed transcript of their interview and have an opportunity to review their responses. Participants will be able to clarify their answers during a second interview by phone.

Participation in this study may or may not benefit you on a personal level. Participation is optional and confidential.

Please contact me at 504-432-4256 to participate. I will be also happy to answer questions.

Thank you!

Ingrid Alvarado Nichols

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

1. Let's start with your sharing with me how you got into teaching.

2. What are some of the things that kept you going in your career?

3. From your observations, what are some of the reasons some of your peers have left teaching?

4. How has your racial background impacted your career?

5. How did you acquire a mentor?

6. Tell me about your mentor.

     Probe:

         i)   Do you think your mentor's age/years of experience/gender/race played a role in his/her effectiveness?

7. How did your relationship with your mentor evolve?

     Probe:

         i)   How did your mentoring relationship end?

8. Can you describe or tell a story about an experience you had with your mentor?

9. What do you think are the major impacts your mentoring experience had on your career?

10. How do you think your mentoring experiences impacted you beyond your career?

11. If you were to serve as a mentor, what would you change based on your past/current mentoring experience?

12. How do you think your mentoring experience would have been different if you were White?

APPENDIX C

Interview 2 Protocol

Thank you for sharing information about your mentoring experiences with me. Thank you, also, for reviewing the transcript of the first interview we had. This second interview will serve as an opportunity for you to clarify, elaborate, explain, or change any of your answers in the transcript.

1) Is there anything you read in the transcript that you would like to adjust?

2) Are there any additional reflections you have after reading the transcript?

APPENDIX D

UNIVERSITY *of*
NEW ORLEANS

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR ADULTS

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student at the University of New Orleans. I am studying under Dr. Elizabeth K.

Jeffers in the Educational Leadership program. You are invited to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this study is to understand mentoring experiences of teachers of color in K-12

charter schools in New Orleans.

Participation will require about two hours of your time over the next six months. If you decide to

participate, I will interview you for about 60 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded and

take place at a quiet place of your choosing. I will listen to the audio recording and transcribe it.

I will save this document in my computer. No identifying information will be included in the

typed transcript saved to computer. I will print and deliver the document in a sealed envelope to

you. I will call you by telephone to ask if there is anything that you want to change or add to the

document. I will make the changes that you share with me. If you would like to do a second

interview, we will arrange one at your convenience.

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate. You have the right to stop

participating at any time. You may skip questions, refuse to answer questions, or drop out at any

time. You will lose no benefits that are entitled to you.

Confidentiality Statement: Any information provided and identifying records will remain

confidential and kept in a locked file and password-protected computer file in the researcher's

office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with apseudonym

(fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made

public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings, but information from this

study will only be reported as a group, and not individually.

Participation in this study may or may not benefit you personally. But, it may provide you with

an opportunity to reflect on your mentoring experiences. It may also provide you with an

opportunity to share your thoughts and experiences with others.

If you have any questions concerning this study, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Jeffers at

ekjeffe1@uno.edu. You may also contact Ingrid Alvarado at ianicho1@uno.edu or 504-432-4256.

Sincerely,

Ingrid Alvarado

By signing below, you are giving consent to participate in the above study.

_____   _____   _____
Signature   Printed Name   Date

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, please contact Dr. Ann O'Hanlon at the University of New Orleans via email at Aohanlon@uno.edu or via phone at (504) 280-7386.

VITA

Ingrid Alvarado Nichols is a fundraising consultant who helps education nonprofit organizations achieve financial sustainability. Her 15-year career has been dedicated to serving the PreK-16 education sector. Ingrid was born and raised in Belize. Her father was a high school English language arts and literature teacher. Ingrid gained her B.A. in Communications and M.B.A. at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama. Her research interests include the career experiences of teachers of color, retention and promotion of teachers of color, equity in human capital practices and leadership in public schools.