POSITIVE MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS CONTRIBUTING TO EARLY CAREER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

by

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BSc, Mathematics, University of the Fraser Valley 2014

BEd, Simon Fraser University, 2016

MAJOR PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL

FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF EDUCATION

(EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP)

In the

Teacher Education Department

UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY

2021

Approval

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Degree: Master of Education (Educational Leadership and Mentorship)
Title: Positive Mentoring Relationships Contributing to Early Career Professional Growth

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Abstract

It is widely recognized that mentorship has the potential to directly improve teacher quality and student success (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). This research study examined the lived experiences of early career teachers who felt that a mentor had positively contributed to their professional growth. The data for this study was collected from five semi-structured interviews, located in a diverse West Coast of Canada (WCC) school district. This study was conducted during a time of significant change for all teachers as the result of the global Covid-19 pandemic. It was also a time of uncertainty for early career teachers as levels of attrition had continued to persist for several decades (Kutsyuruba et al., 2014).

Five significant textural themes emerged from the data contributing to the experience of professional growth for early career teachers. They are: struggle, fear, feelings of trust and support, a sense of personal growth, and confidence in teaching practice. Additionally, two significant structural themes also emerged from the data: support and observation.

The results of this study support a need for school districts and mentors to continue mutual classroom observations and high levels of support for the mentee.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging that this work has been written on the traditional land of the Stó:lō (people of the river). I would like to recognize and honor the influence of Indigenous Ways of Knowing on this work. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of my supervisor, professors, and colleagues to the development of the theory and knowledge leading to this culminating work. Their time and expertise have been invaluable in my educational development.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this major paper to the many educators, friends, and family that have mentored me throughout this incredible journey.

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Introduction

The purpose of this research study was to examine the lived experiences of early career teachers who felt that a mentor had positively contributed to their professional growth. Specifically, this study aimed to learn more about the nature of early career teachers' experiences through mentorship and the perceptions of change in their professional practice that may have resulted from mentorship. This study makes diverse teachers' experiences and voices from a West Coast of Canada[1] (WCC) school district available to improve current local mentoring practices as well as potentially shape future practices that foster the professional growth and retention of early career teachers in their school district.

Context

What was My Context?

Lifelong learning through mentorship had always been an essential part of my developing teaching practice. Over time, I had become aware of how my mentor had influenced my professional development organically and intentionally. Although I also attributed many personal choices to the professional educator I had become, the mentoring relationship I experienced had by no means been a coincidence; it was intentional. By choosing to pursue a mentoring relationship, I was able to grow professionally as an educator.

In my early professional development, my school district provided valuable mentoring opportunities for me as a physics teacher. My mentor had over 30 years of teaching experience and had spent most of his career as the sole physics teacher at our secondary school. A recent rise in student enrolment meant that there had been a need for a second trained physics teacher, and hence my mentorship began.

[1] Pseudonym

Through regular daily observations, my mentor and I had been able to further develop my professional teaching practice. Due to increasing enrollment at our secondary school, early career teachers often worked without a homeroom, and instead transitioned between several classrooms each day. Due to the nature of being required to transition between classrooms, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to teach in my mentor's classroom once each day for an entire year. During that time, my mentor regularly observed my teaching practice. On many occasions, we would even co-teach a new activity or lesson together. During my own preparation block, I frequently sat in on my mentor's lessons, where I was always encouraged to offer feedback on his lesson or be invited to co-teach the lesson. Additionally, I had been able to help develop his teaching resources, learning through this process and ultimately creating a mutually beneficial relationship. Through classroom observations of each other, not only had our mentoring relationship developed, but my professional teaching practices had improved directly because of the observations we had done together.

Why Did This Interest Me?

As an early career teacher, I had consistently been surrounded by mentors and had also chosen to seek them out, which I strongly attributed to my success thus far in my career. I recognized, however, that not every early career teacher had an experience like my own. In my own experience I had known colleagues that had contributed statistically to the attrition rate of early career teachers by leaving the profession. I had also come to the edge of abandoning the teaching profession, and truly believed, if I had not met my most recent school mentor I would have left the profession altogether, after only two years of teaching.

Working with my mentor had a slow beginning like many professional relationships, however, in what I would claim was one of the most challenging moments of my career, my

mentor was there for me offering an almost infinite amount of support. I realized in that moment that I could trust him, and subsequently we began working more closely together. Looking back, I could see that my practice improved dramatically by working with my mentor. Not only did I not leave the teaching profession, but for the first time in my career I believed that I had become a better teacher and I could also see that directly correlated to my students' growth.

My excitement in this advancement of my career led me to create new relationships with other early career teachers at my school. I noticed amongst my colleagues that although they had a common desire to become more proficient educators, they did not have mentors themselves. This led to my growing concern for early career teachers within my district, and I became interested in learning if there were any other teachers who had experienced a similar positive mentoring relationship like me. I hoped to share their stories to convince other early career teachers on the edge of becoming an attrition statistic, that mentorship could lead to an experience of positive professional growth.

Research Questions

This research study examined the lived experiences of early career teachers who felt that a mentor had positively contributed to their professional growth. The following sub-questions helped to guide this study:

1. What is the nature of early career teachers' positive experiences through mentorship?
2. What are the perceptions of change in the professional practice of early career teachers that may have resulted from positive mentorship?

Scholarly Significance

This study was designed to produce rich descriptions of mentees' experiences and provide insight into the elements that contributed to their learning and professional development

as early career teachers. Through the participants' genuine responses, this research aimed to better understand the lived experiences that had positively contributed to the professional growth of early career teachers through mentorship, in the hope that it would inform local mentoring practices and ultimately improve the relationship between mentors and mentees. Participants benefited directly from participation in the research study by reflecting on their past and their current professional growth. Participants were also able to add their voice to the current local mentoring practices, and potentially shape future practices that contributed to the professional growth and retention of early career teachers in their school district.

Literature Review

Mentorship has a deep and ancient history, beginning with the story of the first mentor, which can be traced all the way back to Homer's epic poem, The Odyssey (Debolt, 1992). The title of mentor was given to an entrusted individual who had the dual role to both care and guide a young person on their journey to adulthood. In a more traditional form, mentorship was typically hierarchal in nature; however, more recently, there has been a shift to one that encompasses shared power and partnership in learning (Ambrosetti, 2010; Smith, 2007).

Canadian Educational Mentorship Landscape

In the first Pan-Canadian comprehensive review of induction and mentorship programs, Kutsyuruba et al. (2014) reports evidence of varied levels of mentorship across each province or territory in Canada. They categorize the variety of mentorship as: (a) provincial mandated/ministry level support, (b) provincial teacher association/federation/union level support, (c) hybrid programs, and (d) decentralized programs. According to Whalen at al. (2019), this may be explained by the regional, social, and cultural differences amongst each province and territory. At the elementary and secondary levels, the Canadian education system is mandated at

a provincial level, with each province and territory developing their own legislation and curriculum for the education system, thus a need for the varied levels of mentorship.

Conditions that Support Mentorship

In the general literature about mentorship of early career teachers, several factors emerge that contribute to the success of mentoring relationships and the subsequent success of students. They are: relationships, school culture, and mentor quality (Hallam et al., 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kardos & Johnson, 2010; Kochan & Trimble, 2000; Martin, 2013; Waterman & He, 2011).

Relationships

Relationships are fundamental to the mentoring process. Mentors and mentees need to be "open to the mentoring process, comfortable with their counterparts, and dedicate the time needed to cultivate the relationship" (Martin, 2013, p. 126). Although the nature of relationship between a mentor and a mentee has often been viewed as hierarchical, Smith (2007) defines mentoring as "a particular mode of learning wherein the mentor not only supports the mentee, but also challenges them productively so that progress is made" (p. 277). Hallam (2012) suggests that personal relationships are able to build trust and promote collaboration, noting proximity to that relationship as being critical. In a contrasting model for mentorship, Hallam (2012) also shares that off-site coaches appeared to have less of an effect when compared to close proximity school mentors at the same school and of the same grade level and subject area.

School Culture

There is a consensus in the literature that school culture can foster quality mentors and has the potential to increase the job satisfaction and retention of early career teachers. Johnson and Kardos (2005) claim that working within a school that has "an integrated professional

culture is strongly and positively related to job satisfaction" (p. 12). Meanwhile, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) discuss how job satisfaction is one of the many reasons that teachers attribute to leaving the profession, suggesting that there is a connection between the culture of a school and the retention of teachers. Furthermore, in order to help retain early career teachers, a sense of job satisfaction can be improved through creating a school culture that fosters mentorship. However, it is important to note that "having a mentor in itself has no statistical relationship to new teachers' job satisfaction" (Johnson & Kardos, 2005, p. 12). Thus, having a mentor alone is not enough; mentors need to be high quality and effective if mentorship is to hopefully lead to positive teacher development.

Furthermore, there is the perception that school administrators must build a culture of mentorship within their schools, specifically targeting the development of early career teachers. More than a decade ago almost all teacher induction programs in the United States had already mandated a teacher mentor for every student teacher as part of their program (Feiman-Nemser, 2012; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Furthermore, a study by Kardos and Johnson (2010) found that 78 percent of new teachers in three different states had new teachers assigned official mentors with an average of 15 years of classroom experience. School administrators in Canada can choose to follow in the same manner by directly incorporating mentorship into the school culture, perhaps as early as during the hiring process. This may only become possible if we understand how mentoring relationships are formed and how to foster long-term professional growth in the mentee.

Mentor Quality

The ability of a mentor to significantly impact an early career teacher, and possibly help retain teachers, may require that they be carefully selected. Moir and Gless (2001) suggest that an

outstanding classroom teacher must still be carefully selected because there is no guarantee that a classroom teacher is necessarily a talented mentor. They recommend that selection criteria include: “strong interpersonal skills, credibility with peers and administrators, a demonstrated curiosity and eagerness to learn, respect for multiple perspectives, and outstanding instructional practice” (p. 112). In a review by Waterman and He (2011), there are mixed results and contradictory studies regarding connections between mentoring programs and new teacher retention (see Table 1, Appendix A). Perhaps it is time to turn the research from macro studies of mentoring programs to more specific micro studies of mentoring relationships and the individual perspectives of the mentor and mentee?

Value of Effective Mentorship

There is consensus that effective mentorship positively correlates with teacher and student success, although debates remain over whether it increases early-career teacher retention (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Empirical research indicates that mentoring can make a difference to teacher quality. Evertson and Smithey (2000) claim that mentoring led to a statistically significant impact in instructional and management practices for proteges with prepared mentors. Instructional and management practices were found as statistically significant in 16 of 22 classroom practices. Eight categories had a corresponding p-value $\leq .01$, and the other eight categories had a p-value $\leq .05$ (see Table 2, Appendix B). Furthermore, Evertson and Smithey (2000) suggest that early career teachers experience benefits to practice in terms of arranging the physical classroom setting, managing instruction, establishing rules and procedures, motivating students, managing student behavior, and creating a focused classroom climate.

Effective mentorship can be mutually beneficial to both the mentor and mentee, although they are often analyzed independently. Evertson and Smithey (2000) suggest the mentee benefits directly from a significant increase in instructional and management practices. In regard to the mentor, Martin (2013) suggests that a mentor will also benefit from a renewed interest in their teaching practice. Comparing the values of mentorship shared by Martin (2013), and Evertson and Smithey (2000), each are categorized as individual benefits to the mentor and mentee. However, according to Zey (2020) mentorship can be immediately beneficial to both parties and extend beyond the mentee-mentor relationship to benefit the entire school.

Effective mentorship may be essential to the teaching profession given that the attrition of quality teachers has become a universal problem. Perhaps early career teachers have been plagued with their own assumptions that graduating from a professional development program is the end of their professional development, when in fact the beginning of their career is their most vulnerable moment. Jones (2003) claims that, “it is the first three to four years after initial training that are crucial in teachers’ deciding whether to remain in the profession or not” (p. 385). If early career teachers do choose to remain in the profession, professional development programs, and effective mentorship, may potentially serve to develop the foundational educational practices required of successful early career teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

Attrition Disrupting the Mentorship Process

Attrition has been discussed as a growing international problem (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). The empirical data suggest that the nature of attrition is becoming U-shaped (Johnson & Kardos, 2005). In other words, most teachers leaving the profession do so within their first five years of teaching, or at the end of a full teaching career (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). It is important to recognize that some of the empirical data is

misleading, because as much as 45% of the teacher attrition can relate to teacher movement (Ingersoll, 1999). In other words, teachers are moving from one school to another and the net retention loss to the profession is close to zero. As such, the empirical research done on teacher attrition may have been inflated, due to the difficulty of obtaining reliable data, rather than the quality of the research.

Several authors warn against assuming that all teacher attrition is inherently detrimental to the profession (Guarino et al., 2006; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). It is recognized in the literature that some teacher attrition is healthy (Borman & Dowling, 2008). An increase in the retention of teachers does not directly correlate to benefits for students. It is important to ensure that quality teachers are kept in the profession. A possible solution is the mentorship of early career teachers, which several empirical research studies suggest positively contribute to teacher quality (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). On the contrary, too much attrition is also detrimental to the profession as it may cause a lowering of standards to fill positions, ultimately having a potential negative impact on student learning (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). An adequate balance of attrition is required to maximize benefits for early career teachers and student learning.

Unfortunately, the process of mentorship and its overall success has largely been affected by the attrition of early career teachers (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). Johnson and Kardos (2005) make a case that teachers should be assigned to work alongside other experienced teachers and their assignments be deliberately coordinated, as part of the mentorship process. This hopeful solution has been mostly unattainable due to an increasing and recurring attrition rate. As teachers leave the profession, teaching assignments change. Ultimately, experienced teachers are given assignments that they desire to teach first and unfilled positions

for early career teachers are posted too late, or after the start of the school year (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Feiman-Nemser, 2012). This can create a cycle of early career teachers being assigned positions without direct mentorship support related to their content area, and may ultimately create further levels of attrition and reset the cycle with each school year, thus the problem may never be addressed.

Closing Remarks

Since the story of the first mentor, mentorship has evolved from its traditional hierarchal format to become a widely varied partnership between both the mentor and mentee, especially true in the complex Canadian educational landscape. Mentorship has been proposed as a solution to teacher retention and may be mutually beneficial to both the mentor and mentee. However, as shown in the literature, mentorship can become disrupted by the attrition of early career teachers, regardless of the conditions that support mentorship, such as: relationship, school culture, and mentor quality. As researchers have attempted to understand the benefits of mentorship and utilize a potentially powerful relationship to address issues surrounding teacher retention through macro studies, I suggest that perhaps a more detailed micro analysis will serve to better understand the individual perspectives, specifically from the viewpoint of the mentee. Using a phenomenological lens, I aim to better understand the lived experiences of early career teachers who feel that a mentor has positively contributed to their professional growth.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

This research employed theoretical perspectives that aligned with phenomenology to guide this study on the experiences of early career teachers who felt that a mentor had positively contributed to their professional growth. “Phenomenological study describes the common

meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 75). These perspectives were appropriate to my research focus because, as the researcher, my aim was to situate myself within and study this phenomenon (Groenewald, 2004). This study specifically employed the use of Creswell and Poths' (2018) transcendental phenomenology which requires that:

> The researcher develops a textural description of the experiences of the persons (what participants experienced), a structural description of their experiences (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context), and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience. (p. 78)

Transcendental phenomenology as a method seeks to remove any prior preconceptions. It emphasizes the need to look at an object like Edmund Husserl (the principal founder of phenomenology) did, distinctly as it is situated. "For Husserl, meaning was an 'intentional object'. By this he meant that it was neither reducible to the psychological acts of a speaker or listener, nor completely independent of such mental processes" (Eagleton, 1996, p. 58). Therefore, the objective of the researcher is to describe the object, or meaning, simply as it is. Lastly, it is important to note that Husserl (1977, as cited in, Moustakas, 1994):

> Does not claim that transcendental phenomenology is the only approach to a knowledge of human experience, but rather he emphasizes that it is a science of pure possibilities carried out with systematic concreteness and that it precedes, and makes possible, the empirical sciences, the sciences of actualities. (p. 28)

Conversely, van Manen's (1990) hermeneutical phenomenology, according to Creswell and Poth (2018), "is not only a description but it is also an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences" (p. 78). To remain as

proximally close to the data as possible, I employed the use of the former, Moustaka's (1994), transcendental phenomenology, because it focuses less on the interpretations of the research and more on the description of the experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Great care had been taken to recognize that our reality is created and interpreted individually, and is influential in discerning the underlying meanings of lived experiences. Through a constructivist paradigmatic lens, I intentionally reflected on my own lived experiences and began to unravel the positive influences that mentorship had on my professional growth. The recognition of my lived experiences was critical to the foundation and development of this work. In honour of these experiences, they were embedded within the research, and careful attention was taken to ensure that they did not disturb the phenomenon being studied.

Research Focus

As a continuation of my lifelong pursuit of learning as an educator, mentor, and leader, this research study was designed to produce rich descriptions of the lived experiences of early career teachers who felt that a mentor had positively contributed to their professional growth. The following sub-questions helped to guide this study:

1. What is the nature of the early career teacher's positive experience through mentorship?
2. What are the perceptions of change in the professional practice of early career teachers that may have resulted from positive mentorship?

The Context of the Study

The mentoring relationships examined in this study were located during a time of significant change and uncertainty for early career teachers. The WCC school district offered early career teachers (i.e., with less than five years of experience) a long standing two-year

formal mentorship program that paired early career teachers with more experienced mentors. Local schools within the district also encouraged informal mentoring relationships between teachers, and in some cases, such as in my experience, directly facilitated these relationships.

The growing support for mentorship was partly in response to the retention issues faced by early career teachers. With some exceptions, there was consensus that the nature of mentorship served as a benefit to early career teacher retention and ability. However, research has suggested that the process of mentorship has become disrupted by the attrition of early career teachers (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The WCC school district was no exception to these widespread challenges and sought to find ways to better support early career teachers, mentorship being a specific avenue of exploration.

Design of the Study

Participants

Prior to initiating any data collection for this study, permission was first granted by the University of the Fraser Valley (UFV) Human Research Ethics Board (see Appendix C), as well as by the Director of Instruction of the WCC school district. Once granted, myself, the UFV primary researcher, invited participants of the WCC school district directly via e-mail.

A purposeful sample had been chosen with the following criteria:

(a) All participants were early career teachers (less than five years) employed by the WCC school district.

(b) All participants were, or were at that time, the mentee in a mentoring relationship that resulted in a form of positive professional growth.

Participants that agreed to be interviewed virtually were first given a letter of informed consent that outlined the intentions of the study and guaranteed confidentiality. During the

interview, the informed consent was collectively reviewed by the primary researcher and participant, and then signed and collected. The subsequent semi-structured interview was audio recorded, transcribed, anonymized, and finally verified within one-week, post-interview, by the participant for accuracy.

Researcher's Perspective

To reiterate, I was the sole researcher involved in collecting and analyzing the data set in this study. My history as an early career teacher had been fortunate in the sense that I had been consistently surrounded by mentors and believed this had largely contributed to my success. I recognized, however, that experiences could differ amongst early career teachers. I had been the mentee of an intentional mentoring relationship for three years at a WCC secondary school. My mentor was a Prime Minister Award winning educator, with more than 30 years teaching experience in the classroom setting, who had positively affected my teaching practice. I tried to be attentive to my unique biases by regularly working with my supervisor to evolve the themes in this study. This served to keep the analysis of this research study within the bounds of inference.

Data Collection

Participants for this research study were interviewed electronically due to the global Covid-19 pandemic; all in-person interviews were suspended for the duration of this study. A total of five semi-structured interviews (see Appendix D for protocol) took place electronically and were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Within one-week following the interview, the transcripts were member checked by the participants to verify the transcript for accuracy and resonance with their experiences.

Data Analyses

The specific, structured method of phenomenological analysis discussed by Moustakas (1994) and further outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018), was utilized to analyze the results of this study, first developing significant statements and then broader themes that were experienced by participants. The approach of Creswell and Poth (2018) involved six comprehensive efforts by the primary researcher. First, as the primary researcher of this study I began by describing in genuine detail my personal experiences with the phenomenon. I then began transcribing the interview data to develop a deep understanding of the experiences of each participant. Once that had been accomplished, a list of significant statements (or descriptive codes) were developed from the qualitative semi-structured interviews with each statement being created equal in comparison. For example, “Participant 1” told a story in which they explained, “I felt that I could open up to her a lot more.” Similarly, “Participant 2,” while telling a very different story explained, “I really felt like she was on my side.” These quotes were respectively coded as “confiding in their mentor,” and “advocated for by their mentor.” Next, the significant statements were grouped into larger themes, creating an opportunity for interpretation. The codes previously described by Participants 1 and 2, respectively, contributed to a common theme expressed by the majority of participants, which was a sense of feeling trust and support. Reiterating, the primary goal of the researcher was to describe what and how the experiences of the participants happened. These were respectively called the textural and structural descriptions, reflecting what happened in the experience and how it happened. Finally, in conclusion, a rich description tells the reader the essence of the phenomenon, incorporating into the description both the textural and structural outlines previously examined separately. The final cumulative analyses were a harmonious phenomenological description of the participants’ lived experiences.

Triple Crisis

In contemplating the terms of validity, reliability, and generalizability, and due to the nature of my personal experiences influencing the formation of this study to ensure the quality of this research, a triple crisis of representation, legitimation, and praxis was confronted to justify the findings of this study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Each of the following terms: validity, reliability, and generalizability refer to a specific crises. The validity of this study was manifested through the crisis of representation. The reliability of this study was demonstrated through the crisis of legitimation. The generalizability of this study was revealed through the crisis of praxis.

Crisis of Representation

The crisis of representation challenges the assumption that qualitative researchers "can no longer directly capture lived experiences. Such experience, it is argued, is created in the social text written by the researcher" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 19). In representing the participants of this study accurately, each participant was interviewed contributing to the rich descriptions produced by this study. Each interview was checked within one-week, post-interview, by the participant, and each participant was given every opportunity to have their story heard. Throughout the analyses, as the researcher, my focus was to have the voices of participants heard, therefore, direct quotes from the anonymized interviews were included in support of relevant themes contributing to the phenomena that is the professional growth of early career teachers in positive mentoring relationships.

Crisis of Legitimation

The crisis of legitimation addresses a second assumption, which "makes problematic the traditional criteria for evaluating and interpreting qualitative research" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 19). As the primary researcher, clearly acknowledging my perspectives and theoretical orientation was critical to improving the reliability of the data. To further extend the

trustworthiness of the findings I employed the use of reflexive bracketing to make transparent the personal experiences, biases, and preconceived notions about the positive professional growth experienced in my own mentoring relationship (Gearing, 2004).

Authenticity and trustworthiness of the themes developed throughout this study were indicative not only of my efforts to make clear the personal experiences I have had as the primary researcher, and bracketing those experiences, but also incorporating further third-party layers of analyses to improve the quality of this study. Throughout the study, to legitimize the findings, themes were member checked by a second reader of the UFV Master of Education cohort, as well as regularly checked with my UFV major paper supervisor. To qualify as a theme in this research study, it had to be experienced by a majority of the participants.

Crisis of Praxis

Lastly, the third assumption, is inherently shaped by the first two crises, "which asks, is it possible to effect change in the world if society is only and always a text? (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 20). Although generalizations from this study were lacking, through the participants' genuine responses, this research was able to better understand the lived experiences that had positively contributed to the professional growth of early career teachers through mentorship within the context of a WCC school district. The research aimed to help inform local mentoring practices and ultimately improve the relationship between mentors and mentees. Participants also benefitted directly from participation in the research study given the invitation to reflect on their past professional growth. Participants were able to add their voice to the current WCC local mentoring practices and helped potentially shape future practices that contribute to the professional growth and retention of early career teachers in their school district. To understand the phenomena, the emergence of experiences that did not qualify as themes also served to

generate new questions, and open new possibilities for further research. Currently, a plethora of research exists supporting mentorship training programs as a possible solution to teacher retention issues. However, notably there are very few phenomenological studies examining the lived experiences of early career teachers in mentoring relationships, hence this study found a niche opportunity to provide an alternative approach to teacher retention through understanding the lived experiences of early career teachers from the mentee's perspective.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations existed throughout this study, some of which were unavoidable due to global circumstances. For example, to quickly build rapport and trust with participants, it was the hope of the primary researcher to be able to interview participants in-person. However, due to the reality of the Covid-19 pandemic, the collection of data for this research was strictly limited to electronic forms of communication. Although every effort was made to give each participant the opportunity to tell their story and verify the accuracy of their account, a certain element of communication was inevitably lost through electronic communication. The emotional context conveyed through body language could not necessarily be detected and included without a personal encounter.

Another limitation of the study was the singular context in which the data was collected in a WCC school district. There were several other local school districts within the region that might have offered different experiences for early career teachers, therefore, the significance of this study could not be extrapolated to have general implications for the field of mentorship. Rather, the results had a local context and must be interpreted from this perspective.

Lastly, a limitation of the study was the purposeful sample that was chosen, specifically, a focus on interviewing mentees that had experienced a sense of professional growth from a

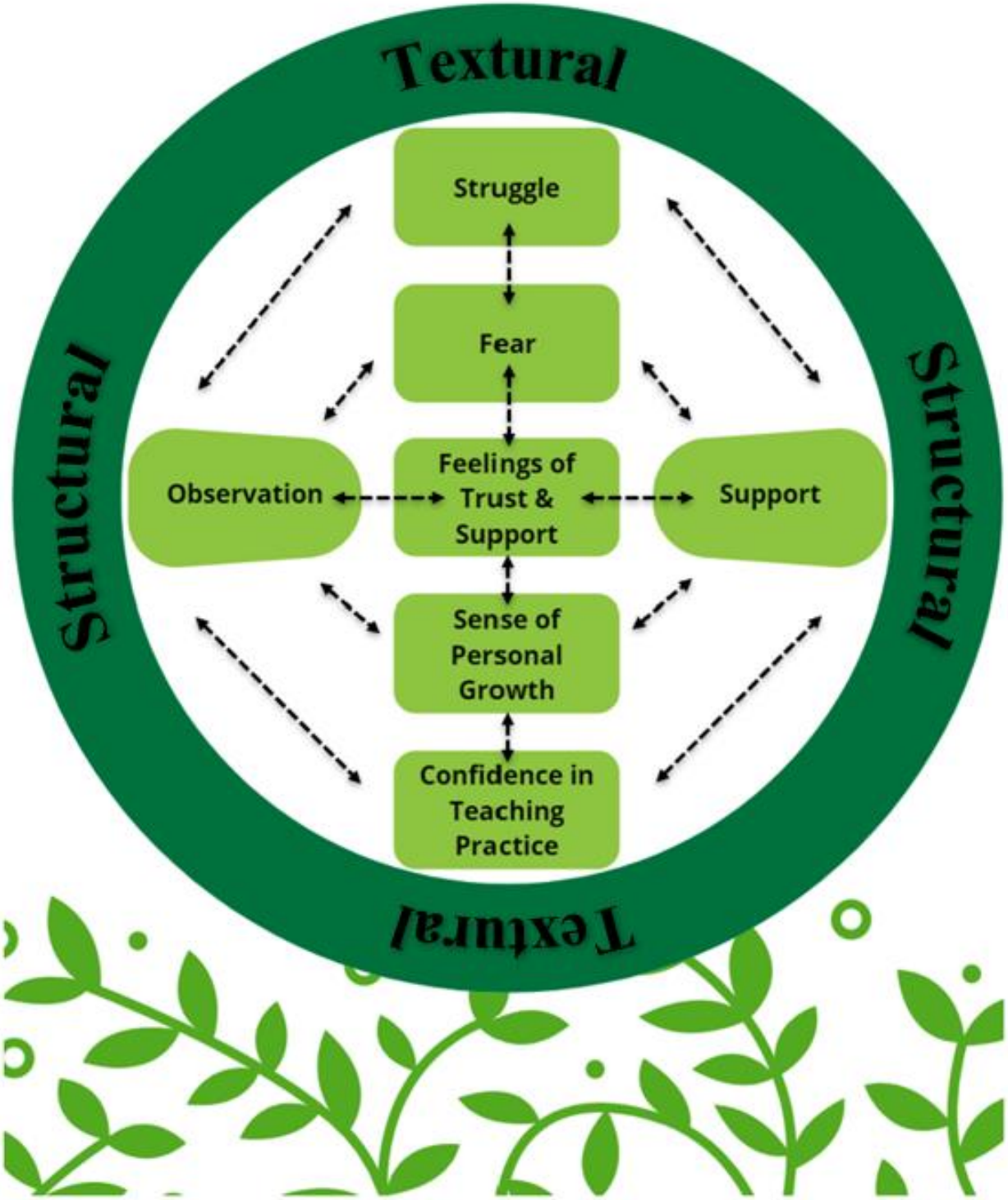
positive mentoring experience. This constraint was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the scope of an individual researcher to be able to thoroughly analyze a large set of data. Secondly, a sense of positive professional growth was the essence of this study and positive experiences of the mentee the focus in order to answer the second guiding sub-question. It should be noted that inevitably, participants contrasted several experiences, some of which were not inherently positive. Although these stories added to the richness of the positive experiences, they were not the focus of the data analysis regardless of their potential to have held valuable insights from a different perspective.

Results

Participants' experiences of positive mentorship were characterized by five key textural themes: struggle, fear, feelings of trust and support, a sense of personal growth, and a confidence in teaching practice as illustrated in Figure 1. Two thematic structural elements included: observation and support, also illustrated in Figure 1. Each of these themes is described below. It is important to note that the themes were not exhaustive of the mentees' experiences, but rather were significant themes pertaining to a very localized context and must be interpreted as such. While it may appear that the themes occurred linearly, the relationship of themes to each other was not clearly sequential.

Figure 1

Interconnected Structural and Textural Themes



Textural Descriptions

Struggle

In subtle ways, three out of the five early career teachers interviewed expressed the common feeling of struggle as they began teaching in their own classrooms. As new members of the profession, each participant held a high regard for improving their practice, however, it was shared that obstacles prevented the majority of the participants from easily achieving this goal. For example, Participant 1 clearly articulated, “I still felt a little scared of her [my mentor], and I was just so overwhelmed with the amount of brand-new stuff that it felt like learning how to drive.” Similarly, Participant 2, like many educators, was burdened with a heavy teaching load: “I was teaching four classes at the time which meant by the end of a week I just was not able to keep up with the marking.” Meanwhile, “Participant 3” had recently joined a new school and although they “tried to make the best of it … obviously it was really overwhelming beginning a new role.”

Fear

Four of the five early career teachers also reported having felt an emotional sense of fear in the early stages of their mentorship. Fear was not expressed in the sense of a response need to fight or flight; however, in certain instances, the power dynamic between mentor and mentee led to feelings broadly classified as a sense of fear. Participant 1 recounted their fear of failure while telling the story of their experience when seeking a qualification upgrade which required a mentor to observe their classroom regularly over the course of an entire year. They boldly commented, “I did not know if she was going to fail me or not.” They also recounted later in the interview another experience in which they felt too scared to communicate with their mentor. “I was way too scared to ask my mentor about it, so I just kept it all inside and really began to freak

out." Similarly, Participant 3 also struggled to communicate with their mentor, however, for different reasons. They felt the fear of becoming a burden, expressing that, "it can feel bad asking them for help all the time." "Participant 4" summarized their entire experience in one simple statement, "I remember being hesitant about doing it."

Feelings of Trust and Support

Although participants vocalized their struggles and fears as early career teachers, three of the five participants also expressed feeling supported and a growing sense of trust in their mentor as their relationship progressed. Many things take time, but Participant 1 beamed when they recounted finally realizing they could trust their mentor. "When I realized I could trust her I did ask her all 43 questions [I had], and she was amazing through them all." Although for some participants it took time to experience trust, Participant 3 expressed the feelings of support they endured right from the beginning of their relationship.

> [My mentor] came to the classroom on the first day of school because she wanted to see the students she had been working with again. She would check in every single day and ask, what do you need? Or how did it go today? What did you do? And what are your plans for tomorrow? She was the glue in those beginning weeks.

Participant 3 also elaborated further on their developed mentorship identifying a shift in which they were able to not only be supported themselves but also support their mentor on a common goal.

> That switch helped us shift from being classroom focused to become focused on our specialty teacher area. It felt even more like a two-way street, like we were supporting each other a lot more and talking through similar things.

Sense of Personal Growth

Another commonality amongst all participants was a sense of personal growth. Like many educators, participants in this study mentioned holding a high regard for improving their practice. Although unverified, this theme could be correlated to other themes that emerged from the interviews, such as the participants' recognition of a sense of struggle. Participant 2 connected these two themes disclosing that their mentor was "brutal and meticulous, but she made me strive to do better." This sense of struggle appeared to be accompanied by a relatable sense of growth. Similarly, "Participant 5" struggled with a difficult class at the beginning of the school year. They reflected upon the following:

> I had an opportunity to recharge and came back in January thinking I can do this. I have been able to do it for a few months and so I know how to meet the diverse needs of my students and that was a positive shift in my mind. I shifted my thinking from surviving until Christmas to working on skills and getting to know my students a bit better to understand what works best for them.

They also gave voice to the contribution of their mentor in this process. "We have been focusing on how to properly run a guided reading lesson. This is a huge area that I have grown in because of her."

Confidence in Teaching Practice

Lastly, three out of the five participants described a sense of confidence in their teaching practice. Specifically, classroom management was amongst the top priorities for the early career teachers in this study. Another example of overlap between themes was the connection between a sense of personal growth and confidence in one's teaching practice. Participant 1 stated, "now I would say behavior management is one of my strongest teaching attributes." This also resonated with Participant 4: "I liked having someone who could help me with classroom management

skills.” Lastly, Participant 5 was able to reap the rewards of teaching. They recognized amongst their students, “they began remembering stuff that I was teaching, and I knew that it was working. The skills that my mentor had shared with me were working.”

Structural Descriptions

Within every experience we perceive there is also a context with which that experience is subjected to. Thus, this study did not intend to determine a causational relationship between the experiences that participants perceived, nor the context they perceived them in. However, it is important to recognize that there were structures within a society, culture, organization, school, or mentorship that may have created the opportunity for recognizable significant factors. The five textural themes determined in this study were the significant factors that emerged within this data set. It is important to remember that they were embedded within two significant structural themes, and although significant to this study, they were not the only contributing factors.

Observation

Amongst the participants, a similar theme became evident in their context as early career teachers. Four of the five participants were observed by their mentor. Although the fifth participant was not observed directly by their mentor, in contrast, they were able to observe their mentor teacher instead. In every case, an immense gratitude was expressed. Perhaps, Participant 4 articulated it best:

> I think it was probably one of the most valuable things about the mentorship program and I remember being hesitant about doing it. I would recommend it to anyone that has not done it. I think being able to see her in action with her students, observe her classroom management, and see some of the routines that she used in class was so beneficial.

Similarly, Participant 3 recounted an experience of observation and how it benefited them long term throughout their mentorship.

> She observed me teaching PE for half the day, and then she observed me in the classroom for half a day. At the end we were able to discuss the day and debrief as well as share ideas on PE and I had a very challenging classroom situation as well last year so for her to be a fly on the wall in that situation, and then moving forward after that, whenever I explained something that was hard that day or challenging, she was able to visualize and understand more from having seen the dynamic firsthand.

Support

Another common theme amongst all the participants was the support offered in a variety of ways by their mentor. Participant 1 recounted an experience common to many early career teachers:

> She sat with me for hours going through every single question, she would wait with me after school to show me how the photocopier worked and which keys I needed for different places, there were so many little things.

Perhaps it was truly all the little things that made a big difference. Participant 3 echoed this sentiment, yet in a slightly different form:

> To have somebody that became a mentor only a couple weeks into the school year was amazing. Having someone who would stop by my classroom on breaks or after school just to check in casually or ask if I needed something specific.

Portraiture

Winstone (1985) created a beautiful analogy that eloquently describes the process of transcendental phenomenology:

> When one weaves together the commonalities of the experience of five individuals into an exhaustive description, it is somewhat like a piece of music being played by several instruments -- the same melody is heard at different times played at different pitches, while counterpoints appear and disappear at various intervals, and the pace and mood vary. It is an harmonious multi-dimensional experience that one is attempting to capture in language, and needs to be viewed in this light. (p. 94)

To completely capture the essence of the experiences described so far, Creswell and Poth (2018) call for the researcher to combine the textural and structural descriptions for an "overall essence of the experience" (p. 78). To do so as authentically as possible, I turned to the work of Featherstone (1989) and Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), in a technique that Featherstone calls "a people's scholarship," which emphasizes that "scientific facts gathered in the field give voice to a people's experience" (p. 376). Further developed by Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005), portraiture is defined as, "a way of reflecting its cross between art and science, its blend of aesthetic sensibilities and empirical rigor, and its humanistic and literary metaphors" (p. 6). To harmonize the textural and structural experiences, a portraiture of Participant 1 is developed through the following story, unedited for authenticity.

Participant 1

> At first it was scary because I knew she was in charge of evaluating me, so I was almost too scared to be honest about what I was genuinely struggling with, because I did not know if she was going to fail me or not. It became apparent through our conversations that she was a genuinely nice person, she wanted me to do the best that I could. So, then I felt that I could open up to her a lot more. Part of what she would do is she observed one of my lessons each week. Every week, I prepared one lesson and I knew that she was

> going to come and observe me, and she had to grade it either as outstanding, good, or required to improve. During those weekly meetings we had so much to talk about because she would watch me for half an hour and then we would spend half an hour discussing everything. It was so helpful because she would write down things that she noticed, lots of good things. So, I would say a huge part of our relationship was her encouraging me as she would go through this big long list of strengths that she saw. Then I felt built up, I thought, okay she is awesome! She sees that I am half decent at teaching and it is going to be okay. Then when she would share something with me that was not so great, something that I needed to improve on, I was ready to hear it, because I felt like she had my best interests at heart.

This participant was applying for a position as a teacher; as part of their induction process, they were required to have a mentor for their first year of teaching and that mentor was part of an evaluative process that determined whether the early career teachers passed or failed, ultimately obtaining their newly qualified teacher status. The fear that this teacher experienced spilled over into the second theme of this study, which was a sense of struggle. “At first it was scary because I knew she was in charge of evaluating me, so I was almost too scared to be honest about what I was genuinely struggling with.” Combined, the experiences of fear and struggle were set within the context of not only an observation but also an evaluation. As a newly qualified teacher there could be more to the story in terms of the emotions this participant felt. For example, uncontrollable factors from their broader professional context could have been impacting their emotions, or it could have been due to the cumulative nature of human experiences. Their personal life may even be a contributing factor to a heightened sense of

emotions. It was impossible to extrapolate a definitive opinion. Instead, it was important to be aware that other factors could also be contributing to such emotions.

Luckily, within the confines of the system at play, the mentor of this participant demonstrated a strengths-based approach, building a sense of trust within the participant: “then I felt built up, I thought, okay she is awesome” (Participant 1)! Clearly, this approach was successful, as demonstrated by the participant’s high approval of their mentor. Ultimately, this story led to a sense of confidence from the participant. They stated: “she sees that I am half decent at teaching and it is going to be okay.” Lastly, a sense of personal growth in the declaration, “when she would share something with me that was not so great, something that I needed to improve on, I was ready to hear it, because I felt like she had my best interests at heart.”

Previously, I noted that the progression of themes, although appearing sequential in nature, was clearly not the case in this participant’s experience. The flow of experiences varied slightly, rich in both context and emotion weaving themselves back and forth like the renowned composer Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the phenomena that were the lived experiences of early career teachers who felt that a mentor had positively contributed to their professional growth. An inductive data analysis technique followed the specific structured method of phenomenological analysis discussed by Moustakas (1994), and further outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018), led to five textural and two structural themes of this study.

The sections that follow (discussion, extending the study, implications for further research, and conclusion) stem from the findings of this study. This study was also guided by the following two research sub-questions:

1. What is the nature of the early career teachers' positive experience through mentorship?
2. What are the perceptions of change in the professional practice of early career teachers that may have resulted from positive mentorship?

Discussion

Participants of this study shared several commonalities between their experiences of early career teacher mentorship. Participants experienced a significant sense of struggle and fear. Combined, these emotions were set within a structure of observation. However, as previously depicted, regardless of a possible connection or cause and effect relationship, there were other structures that were significant contributing factors to the mentees' perceived experiences. While it is difficult to be conclusive regarding the causes of participants' perceptions, it is clear that they experienced a sense of trust and support. Perhaps collectively, the senses of struggle, fear, and trust and support, created a balance that helped to stem the flow of attrition for these early career teachers.

An important aspect of this paper was trying to confirm certain conditions that supported mentorship. Smith (2007) defines mentoring as, "a particular mode of learning wherein the mentor not only supports the mentee, but also challenges them productively so that progress is made" (p. 277). The participants of this study shared a sense of personal growth throughout their experiences. Participants further expressed a sense of confidence in their teaching practice. This directly supports the claim that mentorship has long been understood to directly impact the

improvement of teacher and student success (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

The sense of trust and support experienced by mentees in this study may also have contributed to their fundamental need as early career teachers to simply survive. Evertson and Smithey (2000) discuss how mentoring may lead to a significant impact in instructional and management practices for proteges with prepared mentors. They further elaborated that early career teachers specifically benefited their practice in terms of arranging the physical classroom setting, managing instruction, establishing rules and procedures, motivating students, managing student behavior, and creating a focused classroom climate. It is notable that in terms of a sense of confidence in their teaching practice, the most common evidence provided by participants was directly related to their classroom management abilities. As an example, Participant 1 described their change by saying that:

> Every week I had a new strategy under my belt for behavior management so by the time the last term came I had so many strategies. I did not even realize she was shaping me in new ways. Now I would say behavior management is one of my strongest teaching attributes and I do not think that would have happened if she had not have taken the time to mentor me.

It is plausible that mentorship served to increase the retention of the participants in this study. Given the time invested in the mentee by the mentor, it could be that there was a relationship between the bank of strategies that the mentor provided, and the fundamental need to survive in the mentee.

Lastly, it was not surprising to find a relationship between the textural theme that participants experienced a sense of trust and support in their mentors, and on the contrary, a

structural theme of support provided by their mentors. Indeed, the two were analogous to the opposite sides of the same coin. Quality mentors created a structure of support, which appeared to lead to the mentee's feeling a sense of trust and support through a difficult experience, such as the observation. This supports the theory of Hallam (2012) who reports that personal relationships are able to build trust and promote collaboration, with proximity to that relationship as being critical.

It is important to note that in a singular context, proximity was not a significant factor shared in this study. Alternatively, proximity was a combination of high levels of support and mutual classroom observations. Hallam (2012) later also discusses how off-site coaches have less of an effect when compared to close proximity school mentors at the same school, of the same grade level, and subject area. This research study supports Hallam's claim that proximity alone is not enough, however, there may be a case that it goes even further than beyond school, grade level, and subject area. This may warrant further study.

Extending the Study

One of the limitations of this study that prevented the data from fully saturating each theme was a relatively small and localized sample size. As previously mentioned, due to the nature of the sample size, broader implications and generalizations were unrealistic. Another issue that pertained to this study was that four of the five participants were recruits of the district formal mentorship program. Although this created a rich description of the lived experiences of a mentee that participated in a formal mentorship program, it also left out of the data an undoubtedly rich perspective from the population of mentees that had experienced an informal mentoring relationship. A larger and targeted sample size could be included in the future to extend the findings that have been learned in this study.

Implications for Further Research

Describing the experiences of professional growth for an early career teacher through mentorship was an exceptionally complex endeavor. It was an impossibility to determine an exhaustive list; however, there were certain structures practiced by this WCC school district that appeared to hold merit and could serve as potential considerations for other school districts, and the mentors teaching within them. To continue facilitating the positive professional growth of early career teachers, I recommend that high levels of classroom observation be a continued practice, along with significant levels of support through this process.

Mutual observation served as a potential catalyst for the early career teachers' growth. Although an uncomfortable level of struggle and fear were accompanied with this experience, combined with high levels of support, participants experienced a clear sense of personal growth. It was not a surprise that in pushing the boundaries of their practice, some discomfort was experienced, ultimately creating an opportunity for learning. Over time this growth became a sense of confidence in the participants' teaching practice. Observation was an opportunity to build the capacity of these early career teachers and could be essential to professional growth.

I would also recommend that further research be carried out on the experience of a mentee being observed by their mentor versus observing their mentor. In this research study, four of the five participants were observed by their mentors. Meanwhile, only one participant, although not being observed directly by their mentor, was able to observe their mentor teacher instead. In contrasting these participants' experiences of being observed by or observing their mentor, which might better facilitate the growth of the mentee? Participant 1 of this study articulated this about their observation experience: "I think if there was not a grade attached to it, I probably would not have put as much effort in as I did." Perhaps, the distinction between

observation and evaluation might also be made by the researcher because the intrinsic motivation of an individual can be a contributing factor to their sense of growth.

Lastly, in extending the strength of this micro study it would be beneficial to increase the number of participants and track the trajectories of teachers over increased periods of time. A significant outcome of this study was the varying emotions of participants. A larger sample size outside of the confines of this WCC school district might serve to further confirm the themes of this study, help to exhaust the list of possibilities, or evolve different results due to the diverse Canadian educational landscape. In any case, following the trajectories of early career teachers over an increased length of time would serve to confirm that observation may be a catalyst for personal growth. It would also serve to help differentiate a sense of improved teaching practice with a truly improved pedagogy, and perhaps even provide insight into an increased retention of quality early career teachers.

Conclusion

In concluding this research study, I hope that the work I have done contributes to the literature of mentorship, specifically helping educational leaders and mentors better understand the experiences of the mentee. My continued practice will be to observe others implementing what I hope to improve on, practicing that same competency while others observe me, and in recognizing struggle, offer support just as I recognize all the individuals who have supported me.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Waterman and He's (2011) Connections between Mentoring Programs and New Teacher Retention

Studies	Affirming Connection	Inferring Connection	Finding no Connection	Mixed Findings
Black et al. (2008)	X			
Freemyer et al. (2010)		X		
Fry (2007)				X
Glazerman et al. (2010)			X	
Huling and Resta (2007)	X			
Kapadia et al. (2007)				X
Kardos and Johnson (2007)		X		
McNeil et al. (2006)	X			
Parker et al. (2009)	X			
Perez and Ciriza (2005)	X			
Rockoff (2008)				X
Scherff (2008)		X		
Wechsler et al. (2010)			X	
Wynn et al. (2007)			X	
Percentage	36% (5/14)	22% (3/14)	22% (3/14)	22% (3/14)

Appendix B

Table 2

Evertson and Smithey's (2000) Comparisons of Ratings of Classroom Instruction for Protégés of Prepared Versus Comparison Mentors

Category	Evergreen				Spring Valley				
	Treatment (n=12)		Comparison (n=15)		Treatment (n=11)		Comparison (n=8)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F treatment
Arranging physical setting									
Room has good traffic patterns, no congestion	4.39[a]	.90	3.80	1.07	4.63	.41	4.23	.57	4.64*
Students can see instructional displays	4.60	.59	4.20	.79	4.76	.39	4.38	.60	4.65*
Managing instruction									
Describes objectives clearly	4.38	.62	3.36	.84	3.82	1.12	3.29	1.00	8.16**
Gives clear explanations and presentations	4.42	.42	3.60	.88	3.91	.98	3.62	.95	4.63*
Gives clear directions for assignments	4.55	.63	3.83	.67	3.99	.96	3.73	1.13	
Has instructional materials ready	4.65	.48	4.24	.78	4.43	.59	4.17	.86	

Table 2 (continued)

Evertson and Smithey's (2000) Comparisons of Ratings of Classroom Instruction for Protégés of Prepared Versus Comparison Mentors

Category	Evergreen				Spring Valley				
	Treatment (n=12)		Comparison (n=15)		Treatment (n=11)		Comparison (n=8)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F treatment
Has individualized assignments	2.24	1.51	1.81	.87	2.33	1.57	2.33	.83	
Provides rationales for lessons and concepts	4.00	.89	3.38	.96	3.68	1.01	3.06	.74	5.32*
Paces lessons appropriately	4.42	.62	3.42	.97	3.71	.62	3.25	1.05	7.47**
Checks students' understanding	4.26	.58	3.50	.92	3.82	.88	3.33	.92	6.33*
Provides high levels of interactive instruction	3.85	1.00	3.67	.69	4.01	.84	3.48	.69	
Establishing rules and procedures									
Establishes efficient administrative routines	4.50	.60	3.80	.65	4.00	.62	3.56	.83	7.95**
Establishes appropriate general procedures	4.38	.60	3.64	.65	4.11	.55	3.37	1.09	10.79**
Manages student academic work effectively	4.11	.61	3.54	.56	4.11	.55	3.19	1.04	10.25**

Table 2 (continued)

Evertson and Smithey's (2000) Comparisons of Ratings of Classroom Instruction for Protégés of Prepared Versus Comparison Mentors

Category	Evergreen				Spring Valley				
	Treatment (n=12)		Comparison (n=15)		Treatment (n=11)		Comparison (n=8)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F treatment
Motivating students									
Considers student attention spans in lessons	4.15	.69	3.39	1.08	3.91	.76	3.27	1.14	6.32*
Relates activities to students' interests	4.22	.64	3.49	.64	3.91	.64	3.43	1.11	6.22*
Managing student behavior									
Rewards good performance	3.87	.74	3.16	.95	3.35	1.06	3.98	.67	
Manages behavior consistently	3.98	.77	3.46	.77	4.33	.55	3.35	1.43	7.23*
Monitors student work and behavior effectively	4.34	.81	3.68	.74	4.11	.88	3.17	1.36	7.59**
Establishes efficient transitions	3.36	.75	3.39	.83	4.09	.96	2.83	1.46	

Table 2 (continued)

Evertson and Smithey's (2000) Comparisons of Ratings of Classroom Instruction for Protégés of Prepared Versus Comparison Mentors

Category	Evergreen				Spring Valley				
	Treatment (n=12)		Comparison (n=15)		Treatment (n=11)		Comparison (n=8)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F treatment
Classroom climate									
Class has task-oriented focus	4.54	.62	3.83	.87	4.33	.54	3.38	1.03	12.55**
Class has relaxed, pleasant atmosphere	4.56	.78	4.18	.76	4.43	.63	3.41	1.15	7.66**

Note. F(Site × Treatment) for managing student behavior (rewards good performance = 6.74*).

[a]Means are based on 5-point scales; 5 = highly characteristic; 1 = not characteristic.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$.

Appendix C

Research, Engagement, & Graduate Studies
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Abbotsford BC V2S 7M8

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Website: www.ufv.ca/research-ethics

Human Research Ethics Board - Certificate of Ethical Approval

HREB Protocol No: 100583
Principal Investigator: Mr. David Werner
Team Members: Mr. David Werner (Principal Investigator)
Dr. Chris Campbell (Supervisor)
Dr. Sheryl MacMath (Course Instructor)

Title: Positive Mentoring Relationships Contributing to Early Career Professional Growth
Department: Faculty of Professional Studies\Teacher Education

Effective: January 05, 2021
Expiry: January 04, 2022

The Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) has reviewed and approved the ethics of the above research. The HREB is constituted and operated in accordance with the requirements of the UFV Policy on Human Research Ethics and the current Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2).

The approval is subject to the following conditions:
1. Approval is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.
2. Approval is for one year. A Request for Renewal must be submitted 2-3 weeks before the above expiry date.
3. Modifications to the approved research must be submitted as an Amendment to be reviewed and approved by the HREB before the changes can be implemented. If the changes are substantial, a new request for approval must be sought. *An exception can be made where the change is necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participant(s) (TPCS2 Article 6.15). Such changes may be implemented but must be reported to the HREB within 5 business days.
4. If an adverse incident occurs, an Adverse Incident Event form must be completed and submitted.
5. During the project period, the HREB must be notified of any issues that may have ethical implications.
***NEW** 6. A Final Report Event Form must be submitted to the HREB when the research is complete or terminated.

**Please submit your Research Continuity Plan to REGS@ufv.ca before beginning your research. The plan can be found here: https://www.ufv.ca/research/

Thank you, and all the best with your research.
UFV Human Research Ethics Board

****Do not reply to this email****

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Participant Name:

Teaching Experiences (yrs.):

Pronouns:

☐ ***Review and Sign Consent Form***

Date of interview:

What are the lived experiences of early career teachers who feel that a mentor has positively contributed to their professional growth?

1. How would you define a mentoring relationship?

- Approximately how long did the mentorship last? Alternatively, are you still in a mentoring relationship, and if so for how many years?
- Would you describe the relationship as an informal or formal relationship?
    - How would you define an informal versus formal mentoring relationship?

2. Could you describe your experience as the mentee in your current (or past) mentoring relationship?

3. Could you share a story of a memorable experience working with your mentor as it pertains to your growth?

4. Could you describe any challenging moments with your mentor?

5. How has your mentor inspired you professionally?

6. How and when did you realize a positive change had taken place in your professional practice?

Concluding Remark(s): If at any time you have more to add, remove, or clarify please feel free to contact me at [redacted] or [redacted]. I would love to hear your thoughts no matter when they come to you, if it is at a later date that is not a problem.

Thank you for your time, I appreciate your participation in this research study. Would you like to be contacted when I have finalized the research results, I would like to extend an invitation to you to receive and read the final results or I would be willing to present them to you.

Also, please note that your responses and any identifying information will be anonymized in the produced transcripts. All research data will be kept confidential and anonymous.

Feedback: Is there anything I (or we), have missed that you would like to add, remove, or clarify in this moment?

Lastly, do you have any final feedback or questions for me?