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Understanding the Authenticity of University-Based Mentoring Experiences of Aspiring Principals in the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP): A Multiple Case Study

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Understanding the Authenticity of University-Based Mentoring Experiences of Aspiring

Principals in the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP):

A Multiple Case Study

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Transformational Leadership

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to understand how university-based mentoring facilitates the acquisition of leadership skills in aspiring principals and if aspiring principals are able to make direct connections between authentic leadership responsibilities and what they experienced during their fieldwork. University-based leadership preparation programs are expected to produce graduates who can lead schools to successful outcomes. However, many of those programs do not provide sufficient mentoring support that allows aspiring leaders to experience authentic leadership challenges while being supervised by experts in the field. A multiple case study design was used to examine three cases to investigate the concept of university-based mentoring in leadership preparation programs. The study explored the mentoring experiences of selected leadership preparation graduates and followed them into their current leadership roles to learn how they made sense of that work subsequent to graduation. The results of this study provided insight into the strategies needed to prepare aspiring leaders to meet the demands of increased leadership accountability. In order for graduates of leadership preparation programs to experience success once they are hired into leadership positions, they must not only possess the knowledge and skills needed to be effective, they must also possess a certain confidence and self-awareness that moves them to function at the highest level possible early on in their new positions.

Keywords: mentoring, mentoring effectiveness, instructional leaders, leadership preparation, student achievement, principal leaders, leadership support

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, the late Mrs. Lydia N. Rutledge. I know that you are smiling down from heaven.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders place a strong emphasis on student learning and the ability of administrators to support rigorous instruction (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Yet, principals continue to struggle to meet the demands of education agencies and often leave their principal positions unsuccessful (Daresh, 2007; Seashore, Leithwood, Wahlstron, & Anderson, 2010). As I work to support administrators in their implementation of effective practices in schools, I am a witness to many of their struggles to meet the demands of increased accountability, mainly due to a lack of consistent onsite support. According to Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004), new administrators struggle with the transition from classroom teacher to taking on the responsibility of multiple leadership goals. Their first experiences in the field of administration often occur during their participation in leadership preparation programs. Therefore, I investigated a particular component in university programs that facilitates the transition to leadership roles—that is, mentoring.

Mitgang (2012) reported that although many university programs offered internships, the field experiences included passive exercises minus authentic leadership experiences. In a 2005 report focused on mentoring, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) conveyed that high-quality leadership preparation programs involved internships that included support persons who were capable of modeling and facilitating authentic leadership activities that resulted in the improved skills of the interns (SREB, 2005). Searby (2008b) reported that mentoring support should be offered to aspiring school principals early on in their leadership roles to prepare them for the demands of a principalship. This study focused on the mentoring support received by aspiring administrators during their participation in a leadership preparation program and was

inspired by a 16-state survey conducted by the SREB. The SREB (2005) survey collected data

regarding typical mentoring practices in leadership preparation programs, including selection,

training, and the responsibilities of mentors. Information reported by mentors regarding learning

strategies provided for protégés revealed that very few opportunities were offered for authentic,

field-based experiences that facilitated the transition of theory into practice.

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

  Background. In a final report of research findings from a study commissioned by the

Wallace Foundation, Seashore et al. (2010) conveyed that it takes roughly five years for

principals to fully implement policies and practices that will have a positive impact on the

school's overall performance, yet the average length of a principal's tenure in a school is three to

four years. The tenure is even shorter in low-performing schools serving large numbers of

disadvantaged students. According to Searby (2010), many aspiring principals are not prepared

for the challenges in current education environments subsequent to their participation in

leadership preparation programs. Searby (2008a) asserted that aspiring principals needed

training in continuous learning strategies and protégé behaviors to equip them for the new

leadership experiences. Moreover, aspiring principals will need training in leadership

preparation programs and during their initial experiences as school leaders to develop the skills

they need to carry out current demands in education.

  Context. University-based leadership programs shoulder the responsibility of producing

leaders who can create schools that are successful. New professional standards for school

leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) are propelling university-

based leadership preparation programs to design structures that facilitate graduate students'

ability to translate theory to practice to steer student achievement towards an upward trajectory.

According to Browne-Ferrigno and Muth (2004), researchers found that "a goal of field-based learning activities in redesigned professional preparation is to ensure that graduates have the necessary knowledge, dispositions, and skills to lead schools competently and effectively" (p. 469).

History. According to Mitgang (2012), many states responded to the pressure for increased leadership accountability by holding higher education programs accountable to more rigorous leadership standards. Kochan and Reames (2013) reported that in 2004, the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) required a redesign of leadership preparation programs and instituted a policy requiring that all new principals and assistant principals be certified in the newly redesigned programs. These actions in Alabama were instrumental in improving the leadership preparation programs. However, there is still more work to be done to improve the field experiences and the transfer of theory into practice.

Conceptual framework. A carefully designed structure for administrative field experiences could be the lynchpin to transforming aspiring principals into leaders who can effect change and improve student outcomes in the education environment. Per Anderson, Steffan, Wies, and King (2014), building instructional leadership capacity and a capacity for continuous learning will lead to increased student achievement, as well as increased parent and public engagement. Additionally, Anderson et al., (2014) emphasized that leadership skills are best developed when there are a variety of learning supports. Literature that addresses the issue of a support structure for aspiring leaders that includes authentic practice is rare, even though there is growing literature connecting student achievement to the presence of an effective instructional leader. This lack of guidance in the literature may be the reason why many students graduate from leadership programs unequipped to handle leadership responsibilities in 21st-century

schools. Murphy (2001) asserted that 21st-century school leaders require programs that explicitly connect educational theory with practical application in school settings.

According to information found in research studies, certain characteristics of successful leadership preparation programs include opportunities for authentic practice, simulated problem-solving activities, and active learning opportunities (Clarke & Wildy, 2010; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahltrom, 2004). Deans, Oakley, James, and Wrigley (2009) proposed the coaching or mentoring model as a holistic approach to human development that would increase the opportunity for success. This holistic approach involves establishing mentor/protégé relationships that are conducive to transformational learning and creating an environment that frees the protégé to experience critical reflection and authentic practice to make sense of education theory. Since research has identified the relationship factor and learning as critical components of mentoring, the concepts that serve as a foundation for this research study are adult learning theory and relational mentoring. These concepts support mentoring as a component of a learning organization in the context of adult learning through a reciprocal and collaborative learning partnership.

Statement of the Problem

High-quality leadership preparation programs are essential for supporting a strong educational leadership pipeline and promoting effective practices among instructional leaders. Such programs, which allow for more authentic field-based experiences that facilitate the transition of theory into practice, are crucial to the success of aspiring leaders (Lord, Atkinson, & Mitchell, 2008). The mentoring framework within field-based practices is intended to ease the theory-to-practice evolution, but mentors do not always provide experiences that present authentic and relevant leadership activities for aspiring administrators. There is work to be done

to improve the field experiences and the transfer of theory into practice. Mitgang (2012) reported that although many university programs offered internships, the field experiences included passive exercises minus authentic leadership experiences.

Purpose of the Study

A review of the current literature identified the importance of mentoring as a human development strategy that is motivated by performance and offers timely feedback and support (Anderson & Togneri, 2003; Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Deans et al., 2009; Ehrich, Hansford, & Fennent, 2004; Kuchinke, 2012). Fry, Bottoms, and O'Neill (2005) found that internships for aspiring administrators lacked the opportunities for direct and active leadership. Graduate students need opportunities to grapple with authentic leadership issues. However, mentoring has emerged over the past two decades as a strategy for connecting theory with the application within the context of authentic conditions (Deans et al., 2009; Murphy, 2001). According to Iucu and Marin (2014), authentic learning experiences are relevant from the learners' perspective when steeped in appropriate social context. The purpose of this study was to understand how university-based mentoring facilitates the acquisition of leadership skills in aspiring principals and if aspiring principals are able to make direct connections between authentic leadership responsibilities and what they experienced during their fieldwork**.**

Research Questions

The central question in this study was, "How does the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP) provide authentic leadership opportunities that are intended to prepare aspiring leaders for employment in 21st-century learning environments?"

There were also four subquestions:

- How do TSLP officials select and prepare mentors to facilitate the leadership development of aspiring principals

- What factors do protégés associate with their ability or inability to fulfill their new leadership roles?

- How do protégés describe their current leadership experiences compared to experiences provided during their field practices?

- What leadership behaviors do protégés demonstrate while working in their new leadership roles after graduating from the leadership preparation program?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

Rationale. University-based leadership preparation programs are expected to produce graduates who can lead schools to successful outcomes. However, many of those programs do not provide sufficient mentoring support that allows aspiring leaders to experience authentic leadership challenges while being supervised by experts in the field. A review of characteristics of effective leadership preparation programs revealed that quality programs contained integration of learning strategies with theory, knowledgeable faculty, social and professional support, integration of theory and practice, and time allotted for reflection (Orr, 2011; Sanzo et al., 2010). A closer look at leadership preparation programs may provide additional insight on what it takes to prepare educators to lead successfully.

Relevance. In this study, my questions were formulated around the topic of mentoring in leadership preparation programs. Although there are structures in place that provide mentoring during field services, many graduates leave university-based programs unprepared to meet the current demands in today's education setting (Searby, 2010). Traditional leadership preparation

programs were criticized for not adapting the curriculum to meet the current demands of the student body (Darling-Hammon, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007).

Pressure is felt by states and local school systems to produce school leaders prepared to respond to higher academic standards and the need for increased student achievement. This issue has created a "fresh urgency on addressing the chronic weaknesses of principal training programs, criticized for decades as unselective in their admissions, academically weak and poorly connected to school realities" (Mitgang, 2012, p. 2). Additionally, Mitgang (2012) reported that many states responded to this pressure for increased leadership accountability by holding higher education programs accountable to more rigorous leadership standards. Although the existing literature points to the deep impact that effective instructional leaders have on student achievement, there is nonetheless a scarcity of literature that addresses the issue of creating a support structure for aspiring leaders that allows for authentic practice during the learning process. This issue is relevant as educators continue to struggle to make a positive impact on student achievement.

Significance of the study. In this research study, I examined in detail the mentoring experiences of selected leadership preparation graduates and followed them into their current leadership roles to learn how they made sense of that work subsequent to graduation. Through examination of university documents, I also gained knowledge of the mentoring support that was provided to these graduates. This information provided a new perspective on what supports were needed while preparing aspiring leaders for 21st-century challenges. Additionally, data collected from this study revealed characteristics of effective mentoring, such as opportunities for authentic practice, simulated problem-solving activities, and active learning opportunities

(Clarke & Wildy, 2010: LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004). These characteristics were discussed in the conceptual framework.

Definition of Terms

In the field of education, it is easy to become confused about certain terms and phrases. Similar terms may be used to refer to different, but similar, activities, while other terms are often used interchangeably. Some basic definitions of terms and phrases related to the conceptual framework and research study are provided below for clarity.

Aspiring leaders. This term refers to professionals receiving formal training to prepare them for future leadership positions in their field of expertise (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). In this study, the participants were enrolled in leadership preparation programs in three universities located in the southern part of the United States.

Authentic Leadership. This term is described as "a synergistic combination of self-awareness, sensitivity to the needs of others, ingenuity, honesty and transparency regarding self and others" (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015, p. 284). The term authentic is defined as being real or genuine (Merriam-Webster's, 2008). The literature implied that effective leadership preparation programs provided real or genuine experiences in order to create leaders who exhibited characteristics of an authentic or genuine leader.

Interpersonal. This term refers to personal interactions between the mentor and protégé that can be beneficial to both the mentor and protégé due to their reciprocal nature (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). The relationship factor is an important part of characterizing mentoring and is foundational to a positive working experience. Additionally, communal benefits of interpersonal experiences of mentors and protégés may serve to legitimize formal mentoring programs (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007).

Mentoring and coaching. In this study, the terms *mentoring* and *coaching* are used synonymously and refer to support behaviors that are designed to develop individuals in their area of professional expertise (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). The mentoring/coaching framework is presented as both a formal and informal process. Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennent (2004) focused more on formal mentoring structures with specific goals and objectives. More specific characteristics of mentoring are more difficult to ascertain due to the multifaceted nature of this approach. Several definitions of mentoring and coaching are presented in Chapter 2 of this study.

Mentor. In this study, a mentor is identified as a person who provides supervised learning opportunities in authentic environments where he or she can apply theories, processes, and strategies learned in the university classroom (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004).

Protégé/mentee. The terms *protégé* and *mentee* are used synonymously and are defined as a novice educator receiving training and support that includes opportunities for critical reflection and authentic practice that helps him or her make sense of education theory (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Chun, Sosik, & Yun, 2012).

Professional prowess. This term is used to address one's level of expertise in a field. Based on the mentoring discussion presented by Wright and Geroy (2010), mentors need to be capable of doing more than just training a protégé to perform work-related tasks. A mentor's professional prowess should include the ability to provide measurable, real-life learning situations. The mentor takes direct responsibility for the protégé's development through participation in authentic workplace tasks.

Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP). The TSLP is a grant project designed to provide professional development for current principals and aspiring leaders to support

persistently low-performing schools in rural settings (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). The graduate students participating in this study participated in the TSLP grant program and were assigned mentors for the duration of the program.

Reciprocal relationship. This term refers to a mutually shared rapport between mentor and protégé. Higgins and Kram (2001) offered propositions that viewed mentoring as a reciprocal relationship phenomenon. There was an increase in personal learning when individuals experienced strong developmental relationships in their mentoring environment. Those strong ties were characterized by interactions that included mutual trust, interdependence, and reciprocity (Higgins & Kram, 2001).

Turnaround leadership. This term refers to leadership practices focused on persistently low-performing schools (Fullan, 2005). According to Public Impact (2008), drive, influence, problem solving, and personal effectiveness are predictors of a successful turnaround leader. These competencies are based on a collection of literature related to the successful turnaround of low-performing schools.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Assumptions. I identified three assumptions prior to implementing the research study. The first was that the qualitative research method used in the study fostered an opportunity for me to develop rich descriptions that vividly communicated the participants' experiences (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The second was that a sufficient number of TSLP graduates would be hired in leadership roles subsequent to graduation, therefore, qualifying for consideration as participants in the study. The third assumption was that I could collect rich data about the TSLP through interviews, observations, and document reviews.

Delimitations. Participation in this study was delimited to educators who successfully completed the requirements of the university-based leadership preparation program that was designed as a part of the TSLP grant project. In addition to completing the requirements of the program, educators must also have attained a job in a leadership role subsequent to graduation from the leadership preparation program. Moreover, the study was delimited to the review of mentoring documents from three universities in the southern part of the state that participated in the TSLP project.

This study did not give a voice to the mentors regarding their services or to the professors responsible for pairing and supervising the mentoring process. The inquiry yielded data based on the protégés' accounts of their field experiences, observations of protégés in their new leadership roles, and a review of documents related to the mentoring program. The university grant project managers hired fulltime mentors instead of using mentors from the partnering school districts, so the results cannot be generalized to other graduate students participating in leadership preparation programs and being mentored by personnel with other duties.

Limitations. A criterion purposive sampling method was used to select participants for this study, which caused the sample size to be small. At least two participants from each of the three participating universities met the criteria. The focus of this research was limited to the perspective of the protégés. Additionally, my experience as an educator could have created a bias that placed limitations on my analysis. However, the process of bracketing allowed me to set aside any biases that I might have.

Chapter 1 Summary

In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the need for mentoring support to prepare aspiring leaders for the difficult task of facilitating significant improvement in school settings.

Chapter 2 focuses on the conceptual framework, including an in-depth look at the qualitative research case study, participants, setting and instrumentation, data collection, and analysis. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology of the project, an evaluation plan based on the research findings, the support from scholarly literature that addressed the problem, and necessary resources used with the project. Chapter 4 analyzes the collection of data from the project, an evaluation plan based on the research findings, the support from scholarly literature that addressed the problem, and necessary resources used with the project. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the study and offers further implications and reflections.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to Literature Review

The mentoring program within field-based practices is intended to ease the theory-to-practice evolution, but mentors do not always provide opportunities that present authentic and relevant leadership experiences for aspiring administrators in leadership preparation programs. The sense of urgency is more prevalent considering the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015), formerly known as Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, now place a greater emphasis on student learning and the ability of leaders to support rigorous instruction. Historically, leadership preparation programs have provided courses focused on general management, administrative requirements, school policy, and processes unrelated to student learning and effective teaching practices (Darling-Hammon et al., 2007).

The study topic. Many students graduate from leadership preparation programs unequipped to handle leadership responsibilities once they are placed in leadership roles (Searby, 2010). In order for principals to be prepared for leadership in 21st-century school settings, they will need to participate in leadership preparation programs that allow them to connect educational theory with practical application (Murphy, 2001). Considering these data, it becomes even more important for university leaders, as well as local education agencies, to provide coaching and mentoring support that includes genuine learning experiences connected to current issues in the field.

The context. The search for scholarly literature on the topics of mentoring and coaching yielded a plethora of information. However, the topic of mentoring for leadership development in leadership preparation programs was not as well developed, although some universities are beginning to focus on strategies for strengthening field experiences through mentoring. The

most recent literature related to mentoring as a strategy for leadership development has been published during the past two decades. In a report focused on mentoring, the SREB conveyed that high-quality leadership preparation programs involved internships that included support persons who were capable of modeling and facilitating authentic leadership activities that resulted in the improved skills of the interns (SREB, 2005). Those improved skills included better problem-solving abilities, reflective practice, and effective decision-making (Lord et al., 2008). Additionally, the SREB (2005) found that quality internships designed to create students who have demonstrated a propensity for instructional leadership should include regular feedback from qualified faculty regarding areas that need improvement. In this time of increased accountability and the need for school reform, it is imperative that aspiring school leaders graduate from leadership programs ready to accelerate the improvement of teaching and learning, but the reality is that many students in these preparation programs do not have the opportunity to develop leadership skills before graduation.

The significance. Many university-based leadership preparation programs do not provide sufficient mentoring support that allows aspiring leaders to experience authentic leadership challenges while being supervised by experts in the field. Fry et al. (2005) found that internships for aspiring administrators lacked opportunities for direct and active leadership. Students need opportunities to grapple with authentic leadership issues. Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2008) asserted that one could begin understanding a specific topic by formulating questions, and those questions direct one to the data needed to answer the questions. In this study, my questions were formulated around the topic of mentoring in leadership preparation programs.

The problem statement. High-quality leadership preparation programs are essential for supporting a strong educational leadership pipeline and promoting effective practices among instructional leaders. Such programs, which allow for more authentic field-based experiences that facilitate the transition of theory into practice, are crucial to the success of aspiring leaders (Lord et al., 2008). The mentoring framework within field-based practices is intended to ease the theory-to-practice evolution, but mentors do not always provide experiences that present authentic and relevant leadership activities for aspiring administrators. There is work to be done to improve the field experiences and the transfer of theory into practice. Mitgang (2012) reported that university programs offered internships that lacked authentic leadership experiences.

The organization. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the literature on mentoring and coaching, focusing specifically on the characteristics of mentoring and the use of mentoring as a leadership development strategy in higher education and school-based settings. Additionally, I clarify adult learning strategies and the nature of turnaround leadership, as well as provide an overview of the TSLP grant project, which is a leadership preparation model that was the focus of the qualitative inquiry. To prepare for the literature review, I surveyed scholarly articles, books, dissertations, past research, and other resources that were relevant to mentoring, specifically in leadership preparation programs. I used that information to provide a context for this dissertation.

Conceptual Framework

A carefully designed structure for administrative field experiences could be the lynchpin to transforming aspiring principals into leaders who can effect change and improve student outcomes in the education environment. Per Anderson et al. (2014), building instructional

leadership capacity and a capacity for continuous learning will lead to increased student achievement, as well as increased parent and public engagement.

Many students graduate from leadership programs unequipped to handle leadership responsibilities in 21st-century schools (Searby, 2010). Murphy (2001) emphasized that 21st-century school leaders need practice in connecting educational theory with practical application. According to information found in research studies, characteristics of successful leadership preparation programs include opportunities for authentic practice, simulated problem-solving activities, and active learning opportunities (Clarke & Wildy, 2010; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Deans et al. (2009) suggested coaching or mentoring as a holistic approach to human development. This holistic approach involves establishing mentor/protégé relationships that are conducive to transformational learning and creating an environment that frees the protégé to experience critical reflection and authentic practice that helps him or her make sense of education theory.

Since research has identified the relationship factor and learning as critical components of mentoring, the concepts that serve as a foundation for this research study are adult learning theory and relational mentoring. These concepts will support mentoring as a component of a learning organization in the context of adult learning through a reciprocal and collaborative learning partnership.

Relational mentoring. Mentoring has been defined by several scholars (Godshalk & Sosik, 2000; Lankau & Scandura, 2007; Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007) as a relational process that involves personal learning outcomes related to the acquisition of certain competencies. Dumas, Alexander, Baker, Jablansky, and Dunbar (2014) described relational thinking as thinking that is

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controlled by the relational roles of those who are working together. The literature review explores the possibility of relational mutuality as an important step in a successful mentoring process. Relationships are stressed as central to the theory of mutually supportive relationship models. Relational mentoring stresses the importance of connections between the mentor and the mentee and the insistence on mutuality, which tests the hierarchal nature of some mentoring relationships (Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou, 2002).

Higgins and Kram (2001) described mentoring as a reciprocal relationship phenomenon. The researchers proposed that there was an increase in personal learning when individuals experienced strong developmental relationships in their mentoring environment. Those strong ties were characterized by interactions that included mutual trust, interdependence, and reciprocity (2001). Crane (2002) also weighed in on the mentor/protégé relationship when he asserted that coaching can have a positive effect on employees, as well as on the work environment, but most agree that they need specific training on how to move from the traditional model of supervising to a model that supports workers through coaching and relationship building.

According to Higgins and Kram (2001), mentoring is described as developmental assistance provided by a more senior individual within a protégé 's organization. The relationship factor is an important part of characterizing mentoring and is foundational to a positive working experience. According to Chun et al. (2012), approaches to mentoring that focused on the relational aspect yielded both mentor and protégé benefits that were over and beyond initial mentoring outcomes.

Adult learning theory. Mezirow (2003) declared, "as adult learners, we are caught in our histories" (p. 1). Until those histories are discovered and analyzed, it will be difficult to undergo the authentic learning experience that Mezirow (2003) described as transformative learning. Transformative learning is most effective in an environment that fosters autonomy. It involves reflection, which encompasses deep independent thought. The outcome of transformative learning is the development of new meaning, perspectives, or ideas. As adult learners engage in the reflective process, they will either confirm their interpretation of an experience or transform their thinking. Confirming or transforming ways in which experiences are interpreted is a long-term goal that can be accomplished through a series of objectives designed to be implemented in a setting that fosters autonomy.

Autonomy in learning provides the opportunity for adults to critically reflect on their assumptions and to engage in deep discussions with others who share universal beliefs (Mezirow, 2003). According to Taylor (1997), the practice of fostering transformative learning is based in theory and has little support from empirical research. Therefore, adult educators are being encouraged to practice an approach to teaching toward the outcome of transformation, using a practice that is not clearly defined or understood. Moreover, little consideration is given to the practical implications, such as social, political, and cultural ramifications, associated with facilitating and encouraging learners to revise their meaning perspectives (1997).

Within this model, adult learners are placed in an environment where, through discourse, they are given opportunities for reflective practice. Mezirow (2003) asserted that discourse is essential in helping adults validate what and how they understand, as well as render judgment regarding their beliefs and the beliefs of others. In his review of a two-year study of a group of teachers engaged in collaborative study, Taylor (1997) found that as educators worked to create a

collective vision, there was benefit in providing a setting conducive to discourse, collaborative inquiry, and mediation of social dynamics that affect learning.

For transformative learning to take place, Mezirow (2003) outlined the following absolutes:

- Learners must be able to recognize and criticize their assumptions.

- Learners must be able to recognize and criticize the assumptions of others.

- Learners need practice in being able to identify frames of reference.

- Learners need practice using their reflective skills to look at problems from a different perspective.

- Learners need assistance, over time, with engaging in effective discourse.

- For the learner to be successful, the educator has some responsibilities that are critical.

Hart (1990) believed that Mezirow's theory related to adult learning presented a conflict between the adult learner's need to act in a politically correct manner and the adult learner's role of fostering critically reflective actions. Hart (1990) criticized Mezirow's neglect to acknowledge the role that dominance plays in social relations. Additionally, Hart (1990) asserted that there was a risk of educators not acting on the discoveries experienced during reflective action and not continuing the learning that took place during an explicit educational situation.

It is the responsibility of educators to provide a framework for learning that includes the opportunity for autonomous thinking, as well as experiences that are specifically created to nurture critical reflection and extensive opportunities for discourse. If these responsibilities are assumed, the learner can develop and strengthen the communicative skills necessary for transformational learning to take place. Habermas (1987) stressed the importance of developing

the skills necessary to engage in problem solving through discourse and asserted that a framework is needed to accommodate the processes that make transformational learning possible. Adult learners need multiple opportunities to practice effective discourse and problem solving to develop their competencies in this area.

Additionally, Habermas (1987) discussed two learning domains that set the stage for necessary discourse. The author described instrumental learning and communicative learning and distinguished differences between the two domains. Instrumental learning is designed to control and manipulate the environment. Habermas (1987) further argued that the differences in these two learning domains required differences in approach to inquiry. Instrumental learning is further described as a problem-solving process that is like the scientific process of testing a hypothesis. This type of learning primarily involves determining what is true by use of empirical data. Activities of engagement would involve such strategies as verifying or proving by the use of observation or experiment. An example of instrumental learning would be the act of collecting and analyzing data to determine if what a company claims about its product is true. Habermas (1987) described communicative learning as the act of understanding what is being communicated, which involves two or more persons working to reach consensus. To understand the communicator, one must also have knowledge of the qualifications of the person providing the communication, as well as any expectations he or she may have. Knowledge of the communicator's intentions is also helpful (Mezirow, 2003). If a person makes a suggestion involving a particular expertise, one would want to know whether the person making the claim was truthful and credible.

In Hart's (1990) analysis of instrumental learning, problem solving, and inquiry, he found that those methods followed a theoretical and inferential logic model that involved a more

scientific approach to finding answers, lending itself to deductive reasoning. Communicative learning was found to follow a logic that was more adductive because it began with an observation and then sought to find an explanation for the observation. Both instrumental learning and communicative learning domains are in search of the truth. However, the direction in which they travel to get to the truth is profoundly different. Instrumental learning arrives at the truth by presenting a problem, predicting an outcome, and engaging in problem solving to determine the cause-effect relationship—the truth. Communicative learning takes a more reciprocal approach in that there need only be a shared agreement by at least two people regarding what is true. The consensus is reached through reflection with persons taking into consideration the values, beliefs, and feelings of the communicator.

Review of Research and Methodological Literature

The literature review was conducted to outline the influence of university-based structured mentoring programs on the development of aspiring principals participating in a leadership preparation program focused on preparing them to lead in low-performing schools. According to Anderson and Togneri (2003), building instructional leadership capacity and a capacity for continuous learning will lead to increased student achievement, as well as increased parent and public engagement. The authors further wrote that leadership skills are best developed when there are a variety of learning supports. This review of research literature is organized into the following categories: literature that, (a) defines and characterizes mentoring, the mentor, the mentee, and coaching; (b) describes mentoring environments; (c) emphasizes the use of mentoring in university-based leadership preparation programs; (d) explains adult learning strategies; (e) clarifies turnaround leadership; and, (f) details the TSLP grant project.

The literature indicated that aspiring leaders need opportunities to engage in transformational learning practices that allow for critical reflection and discourse as they prepare for the authentic practice of educational leadership activities. Moreover, the literature outlined the difficult tasks of preparing leaders to effect change in low-performing schools. Successful leaders in low-performing schools are commonly referred to as *turnaround leaders*. Structures such as mentoring and coaching enhance the practices of aspiring leaders during field practice and internships.

Mentoring features. Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) studied several cohorts of aspiring principals and current principals engaged in professional development. They found that the transition from teacher to principal required a careful balance of knowledge development through classroom activities and skill development through authentic work-embedded activities led by qualified professionals. The expectation is for learners to be able to transfer what they are observing theoretically into actionable practices. Graduate students are provided with field experiences, but those experiences do not always provide authentic practice opportunities. If field experiences are to result in authentic learning and transfer of theory to practice, there must be a structure in place that explicitly defines goals and objectives for all participants (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). The implication of this study is that careful selection and training of mentors is essential to creating a learning environment that focuses on experiences that facilitate knowledge transfer.

Daresh (2007) studied the mentoring program for new principals in two different urban school districts. The focus for the mentoring of these new principals was the development of instructional leadership behaviors. The mentors who were selected were chosen based on their expertise and proven record as an instructional leader. The focus of the mentoring support was

helping the novice principals achieve instructional leadership goals and adapt to their new role as

principal. Findings from the study indicated that mentors did not fully understand the

importance of the developmental stages of the principals and the role they played in the

mentoring process. Evidence showed that new principals needed help balancing management

issues with instructional leadership. The new principals primarily contacted the mentors

regarding help with management issues, rather than instruction. Additional findings indicated

that mentors needed help with developing leadership skills in their protégés (Daresh, 2007).

Findings from this study can be helpful to program leaders desiring to create an effective

mentoring program that is not only supportive of the persons being mentored, but the mentors as

well.

Mentoring as a framework for learning. The next important role of the mentor is to

create an environment that is conducive to the reflective process. Mezirow (2003) conveyed that

there are certain conditions that should be in place for the transformation of perception through

critical reflection to occur. He advocated that the learner experienced an environment that is free

from intimidation and where he or she has an equal opportunity to contribute. Multiple

opportunities must be allotted for participation in this type of discourse. Learners must be placed

in a setting that allows them to reflect on the beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that make up their

frame of reference.

One challenge with engaging in the reflective practice might be time. Most often, the

importance of allowing proper time for reflection is overlooked. We often just assume that it

will happen, so we do not intentionally plan for it, nor do we create a setting that allows it to

happen. For reflection to be helpful, the setting must be explicitly planned for and must be an

environment that is nonthreatening. Additionally, several studies (Aiken, 2002; Brown-Ferrigno

& Muth, 2004; Capasso & Daresh, 2001) have confirmed that moving from teaching to administration requires an introduction into a new community of leaders that can best be facilitated by field-based learning or internships that are led by qualified professionals.

Mentoring and coaching comparison. The terms mentoring and coaching are sometimes used synonymously to address certain behaviors related to professional development. However, some literature characterizes coaching and mentoring as containing distinct explications that should be studied to better understand how the constructs interact (D'Abate, Eddy, & Tannenbaum, 2003). Moreover, developmental needs may be misinterpreted if developmental supports, such as mentoring and coaching, have different meanings to practitioners (2003).

Showers and Joyce (2005) presented peer coaching as a viable means of job-embedded staff development. Showers and Joyce revealed that only about 10% of participants implemented what they learned from professional development. The rate of transfer improved significantly with the introduction of a peer-coaching model. Deans et al. (2009) concluded that the coaching or mentoring model offers a holistic approach to human development that increases the opportunity for success.

Mentoring has been characterized as "a complex intellectual, social, and emotional construct with the capacity for professional support, learning and professional knowledge within the context in which it is practiced and within broader societal norms and values" (Simmie & Moles, 2012, p. 109). Further, Chang, Longman, and Franco (2014) described mentoring as a "relationship between a younger adult and an older, more experienced adult who helps the younger individual learn to navigate the adult world and the world of work" (p. 21). Other more recent definitions focus on mentoring as a tool for the personal and

professional growth of others. Ehrich et al. (2004) focused more on formal mentoring structures with specific goals and objectives, the main goal being to increase job-embedded opportunities to improve the skill level of employees. More specific characteristics of mentoring are more difficult to ascertain due to the multifaceted nature of this approach. However, Kuchinke (2012) asserted that mentoring is "enacted in subtle, differentiated, and idiosyncratic ways in different cultures, industries, organizations, and levels within a given organization" (p. 168). The decision to begin a mentoring program should not be taken lightly and should take into consideration all the different components that should be addressed, such as the needs of the mentee, the expertise of the mentor, the setting, and intended outcomes.

According to Ehrich et al. (2004), researchers revealed that the success of mentoring programs hinged on a planning and development process that took into consideration careful pairing of mentors, an explicit process, ample time, and a strong focus on learning as the goal. Garvin, Edmondson, and Gino (2008) presented three main categories as characteristic of effective learning organizations. Those categories included a "supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes, and leadership strategies that provide reinforcement" (p. 110). Ehrich et al. (2004) considered this learning environment an important component of the mentoring framework.

The mentor/mentee relationship can be found in coaching models outlined by Crane (2002), who asserted that coaching can have a positive effect on employees as well as the work environment, but most agree that they need specific training on how to move from the traditional model of supervising to a model that supports workers through coaching and relationship building. In a typical management setting, the boss makes most of the decisions and simply tells the employees what to do. Within this model of leadership, there is little room for employees to

engage in problem-solving activities; therefore, the employees have no ownership in the decisions that are being made or the work that is being produced (Crane, 2002). Leaders who adopt the coaching model aid employees in developing ownership of the work.

Respect is equally as important as building a good relationship. Those who are entrusted with a mentor's leadership deserve to be valued and held in the highest regard. The process of building leaders through mentoring is not an easy one, but can be rewarding for the person who can persevere through difficulties that may surface. Additionally, the process takes the time to develop, so there is a real need for anyone desiring to build leaders to understand the scope of the commitment involved. The ability to bring out the best in others by capitalizing on their strengths and connecting them to the right work is an attribute that can help strengthen a mentoring model.

The mentor prototype. Maxwell (2005) explained that achieving results through other people is more important than the knowledge and experience of the supervisor or person in authority. Maxwell (2005) further explained that the most important thing that a leader can do is empower others. To cultivate and empower leaders, a structure is needed to foster the skills and temperament required for success. The mentoring framework can serve as this structure.

A common message throughout this literature from authors such as Robinson (2011) and Hallowell (2011) is the importance of knowing the strengths and challenges of those who are being supported by mentoring to target those areas specifically for support. Robinson (2011) stated that sensitivity and feelings played a vital role in the development of the personal qualities of those being led. According to Robinson (2011), leaders must be sensitive to the needs of those under their leadership to uncover and develop their creativity. This information affirms the importance of a positive relationship between the mentor and mentee.

Transformative education and all its components are designed to foster an experience that has the potential to change the learner's meaning perspective and create new meaning. This process can prove to be difficult based on whatever deep-rooted assumptions and meaning schemes are involved. Mezirow (2003) conveyed that there are certain conditions that should be in place for the transformation of perception through critical reflection to occur. He advocated that the discourse enables learners to experience an environment that is free from intimidation where they have an equal opportunity to contribute. Multiple opportunities must be allotted for participation in this type of discourse. Learners should have or develop the ability to reflect critically, evaluate evidence, and accept the consensus. Conditions conducive to adult learning do not normally lend themselves to this type of setting. There will need to be an intentional effort to plan for these experiences. Mezirow (2003) recognized several ways to facilitate transformational learning, including role play, journal writing, metaphors, case studies, and group projects. He believed that these tools could help generate critical reflection and logical discourse, which he considers key elements of transformational learning. Multiple opportunities for learners to engage in these processes could lead to a positive and sustainable change in behaviors.

According to Fielden (2005), two main approaches to coaching provide a balanced approach to an employee support model. They are referred to as *directive* and *nondirective* approaches and are touted by Fielden as strategies for facilitating appropriate behavior in employees. The directive approach to coaching is more traditional and involves the manager or coach offering solutions and resources to the coaching subjects. Within this model, the coach provides direct instruction and advice to an employee regarding specific strategies for completing work. Very little emphasis is placed on problem-solving strategies or collaboration

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between the coach and the employee being coached (Fielden, 2005). Nondirective coaching is a more supportive approach and defines the role of the coach as that of a facilitator who guides the employee as he or she works to arrive at appropriate solutions. The coach engages employees with open-ended questions and other thinking strategies that help them arrive at appropriate solutions on their own or in collaboration with others (Fielden, 2005).

Through an effectively implemented coaching model balanced with the directive and nondirective strategies, employees are provided with feedback related to their strengths and areas in need of growth, giving them confidence and allowing them the opportunity to improve as needed. The coaching model encourages employees to take responsibility for their performance and development. The coaching model enables employees to take a critical look at their work performance and overall style of work to adjust. Through a coaching model, employees learn to search independently within themselves to discover ways to understand better their contribution to the work and increase their performance in a supportive, nonthreatening environment.

The mentee prototype. Hamlin and Sage (2011) presented the results of a study that attempted to identify the characteristics of effective mentoring by identifying key behaviors of the mentors and mentees. The results were based on a qualitative inductive review guided by the following questions:

- What do mentees in dyadic mentoring relationships perceive as effective and ineffective mentor behavior?
- What do mentors in dyadic mentoring relationships perceive as effective and ineffective mentee behavior?

After addressing the two research questions with 20 participants, a total of 167 critical incidents were obtained, with 68 examples of positive mentor behaviors and 22 examples of

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negative mentor behaviors, according to the mentees. The remaining 77 critical incidents

included 61 examples of positive mentee behaviors and 16 examples of negative mentee

behaviors, according to the mentors. Examples of negative behavior of mentees included an

inability to commit to the mentor/mentee relationship, a negative mindset, and lack of

preparation. The results of this study support the theory that the interpersonal relationships of

mentoring are vulnerable (Flecher & Ragins, 2007) and negative mentoring experiences are

unavoidable and may not necessarily destroy the mentoring relationship (Noe, 2013).

Interpersonal relationships. According to Mezirow (2003), the mentor's role is to

establish a relationship with the learner to facilitate open examination of his or her core belief

system, engage in critical discourse, and eventually adjust that meaning system to include new

meaning perspectives. Mentors who have been carefully selected and trained to emphasize the

importance of building positive relationships are more likely to provide quality opportunities for

authentic practice (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2005). The process of establishing a relationship

begins with a purposeful connection when considering the pairing of the mentor and mentee.

Ehrich et al. (2004) cautioned that certain conditions, such as poor planning, lack of time, and

poor mentor training could be detrimental to the mentoring relationship.

Defining turnaround leadership. *Turnaround leadership* refers to leadership practices

focused in persistently low-performing schools (Fullan, 2005). "School turnaround is possible,

but it takes a broader, concerted effort with daring leadership at the helm and persistent,

achievement-oriented collaboration among staff. That is the stuff of which rapid, bad-to-great

turnarounds across sectors are made" (Public Impact, 2008, p. 3). Training and development for

aspiring principals who could potentially land in a school that is on the verge of a turnaround or

is currently in turnaround status must possess the skills needed for success in this environment.

Steiner and Hassel (2011) asserted that turnaround leaders should be selected based on these competencies to increase the likelihood of success in low-performing schools. Public Impact (2008) defined competency as "a pattern of thinking, feeling, acting, or speaking that causes a person to be successful in a job or role" (p. 4).

Seashore et al. (2010) used 31 studies published between 2000 and 2010 to identify characteristics of high-performing districts. Most of the districts contained a sizable number of at-risk students or the other authors of the study chose to focus on at-risk students for improvement. Of the 10 characteristics identified, two characteristics revealing the strongest evidence were district-wide, job-embedded professional development, with a total of 21 studies providing this evidence and investing in instructional leadership with 16 studies. Fifteen studies provided information about using evidence to plan for learning and accountability. Additionally, a district-wide focus on student achievement and approaches to curriculum and instruction were the focus in 14 studies. Support structures provided by the districts included mentoring, coaching, professional development, and assistance from external providers. The top 10 characteristics ranked from the highest number of studies providing direct evidence to the lowest were:

1. District-wide, job-embedded professional development (21 studies).

2. Investing in instructional leadership (16 studies).

3. Use of evidence for planning, organizational learning, and accountability (15 studies).

4. District-wide focus on student achievement (14 studies).

5. Approaches to curriculum and instruction (14 studies).

6. Building and maintaining good communications and relations, learning communities, and district culture (13 studies).

7. Infrastructure and alignment (13 studies).

8. Targeted and phased orientation to school improvement (targeting interventions on low-performing schools/students; 9 studies).

9. Strategic engagement with the government's agenda for change and associated resources (6 studies).

10. District-wide sense of efficacy (4 studies).

Evidence has been presented regarding the positive impact effective school leaders have on student achievement and overall school performance (Leithwood et al., 2004). Additionally, the literature indicates that school leaders in persistently low-performing schools can be equally as effective if those leaders possess the skillset to effect change. According to Public Impact (2008), drive, influence, problem solving, and personal effectiveness are predictors of a successful turnaround leader. These competencies are based on a collection of literature related to the successful turnaround of low-performing schools.

TSLP overview. Many school districts across the country are focusing on turning around their lowest performing schools. That includes preparing school leaders for this daunting task. In 2015, the U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, announced the TSLP grant awards, totaling $16.2 million (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). The purpose of the grant funds was to aid states in preparing school leaders to affect change and improve outcomes in the lowest performing schools (The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2015). The participants in this study lived in a state that was a recipient of the TSLP grant. Their grant was unique because it included a partnership with three universities in the state. The university partners focused on leadership preparation and made changes to their master's degree curriculum to include collaboration and feedback from local school district leaders to determine

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the skills needed for principals to be successful turnaround administrators, particularly in a rural setting.

The idea of turning around the lowest performing schools is not new; however, it is a very elusive goal. According to Baroody (2011), school districts are unsuccessful in part due to their failure to customize support and resources based on the individual needs of the low-performing schools. Additionally, the author reported that school districts failed to cull resources and support to focus on the essential needs of the schools. Low-performing schools require strong leaders who know and understand the expectations of the stakeholders as well as the intimate needs of the school to cultivate a relationship of success (Baroody, 2011; Fry et al., 2005; Fullan, 2005). Largely, this meant establishing measurable and agreed-upon academic and nonacademic goals while allowing flexibility in how those goals were achieved (Bell, 2000). University partners of the TSLP program committed to providing a program that would specifically focus on the issues found in low-performing rural schools and creating authentic experiences for aspiring administrators that would help them to apply theory to authentic situations.

Mentoring in university-based leadership preparation programs. An interview with Michelle Young, executive director of the University Council for Educational Administration, revealed that only about 40% of university principal preparation programs have processes capable of producing effective instructional leaders (Mitgang, 2012). As states and local school systems are faced with the pressure to respond to higher academic standards, a means for improving school leadership has become a major focus. This issue has created a "fresh urgency on addressing the chronic weaknesses of principal training programs criticized for decades as unselective in their admissions, academically weak, and poorly connected to school realities"

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(Mitgang, 2012, p. 2). Additionally, Mitgang (2012) reported that many states are responding to this pressure for increased leadership accountability by holding higher education programs accountable to more rigorous leadership standards. Leaders of higher education leadership preparation programs, in turn, are feeling pressure to equip educators to be instructional leaders capable of positively affecting student academic achievement. Kochan and Reames (2013) reported that Alabama responded to the pressure for increased leadership accountability by requiring a redesign of leadership preparation programs in its state in 2004.

The ALSDE partnered with the governor and selected university faculty members and community leaders to address the needed changes in Alabama's leadership preparation programs. Kochan and Reames (2013) further revealed that after all Alabama programs were redesigned, the state education agency instituted a policy that all new principals and assistant principals must be certified in the newly redesigned university-based programs. These actions in Alabama were instrumental in improving the leadership preparation programs. However, there was still more work to be done to improve the field experiences and the transfer of theory into practice. Mitgang (2012) reported that although many programs offered internships, the field experiences included passive exercises minus authentic leadership experiences.

A review of characteristics of effective leadership preparation programs revealed several common features. Orr (2011) highlighted the following features of quality programs: leadership theory, instructional leadership, integration of learning strategies with theory, internships, knowledgeable faculty, social and professional support, and use of standards-based assessments for feedback. Additionally, integration of theory and practice and time allotted for reflection also yielded positive results (Sanzo et al., 2010).

Connecting theory and practice. Ensuring that students in leadership preparation programs can close the gap between theory and practice is of vital importance given the pressures school leaders face to increase student achievement (Drago-Severson, Maslin-Ostrowski, & Hoffman, 2012). The mentor must provide explicit direction on how to apply educational theory in authentic settings. According to Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004), aspiring leaders benefit from supervised learning opportunities in authentic environments where they can apply theories, processes, and strategies learned in the classroom. Noe (2013) found that the knowledge management process would help organizations move quickly from knowledge to application. The best learning or training experiences are ones that help the learners make explicit connections to the work for prompt transfer. Noe (2013) wrote that successful training programs should be based on (a) data outlining the needs of the organization and (b) an environment that is conducive to learning. This information implies that universities would benefit from close collaboration with local school districts to connect aspiring principals with the most relevant and timely leadership issues.

In summary, Mezirow (2003) recognized several ways to facilitate transformational learning, including role play, journal writing, metaphors, case studies, and group projects. Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2005) found that a key component of the transformative learning process that would facilitate the process of becoming a principal is being able to apply classroom learning in an authentic environment. Mezirow (2003) encouraged critical reflection and logical discourse, which he considers to be key elements of transformational learning, in these authentic learning environments. Multiple opportunities for learners to engage in these processes could lead to a positive and sustainable change in behaviors. A purposeful mentor/mentee framework

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can foster the type of transformational learning that is needed to bring about sustainable change to have a positive impact on student learning.

Review of Methodological Issues

The process of research methodology includes selecting the appropriate research design, a method for data collection, and the instrument to be used for data collection. The studies in this literature review were completed using qualitative, quantitative, and mix-methods designs. The quantitative methodology was used most often and involved adopting the survey design and using a cross-sectional data collection strategy, in which data was collected at one period rather than longitudinally. There are strengths and weaknesses evident in each of the methods selected. One way of distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research is that qualitative uses words and open-ended questions, whereas quantitative uses numbers and closed-ended questions. Some of the quantitative studies in this literature collection used a Likert Scale to measure interval data, while other quantitative studies used closed-ended questionnaires to collect data. One study (Ehrich, Hantsford, & Tennent, 2004) used a structure analysis approach to analyze more than 300 articles that addressed mentoring. The studies chosen for the review were required to report results of original studies on mentoring, and the studies were required to focus on mentoring used in educational settings, including schools and university settings. A variety of reputable databases, such as EBSCO, ERIC, and ProQuest were used in the literature search. The studies were analyzed using a coding sheet that focused on descriptive data that outlined the strengths and weaknesses associated with mentoring. Although this study rendered very specific information regarding the strengths and weaknesses, by the researcher's own admission, the articles chosen for the study did not include a cross-section of studies from around the world and therefore should be considered limited in their scope and derivation (Ehrich et al., 2004).

Much of the reviewed journal information examined the quality of the mentoring relationship from the mentor's perspective. Pellegrini and Scandura (2004) found that there was no accepted measure of mentoring. There are some commonly used scales (Noe, 2013). However, there is not sufficient information related to their psychometric properties. Pellegrini and Scandura (2004) inferred that invariant items should be identified and improved to improve research on mentoring. Additionally, researchers have examined mentoring relationships mostly from the mentee's perspective or have received conflicting accounts from the mentor and mentee. Raabe and Bechr (2003) found that the perceptions of the mentees regarding the amount of career support provided by the mentors did not match the perceptions of the mentors. Additionally, the mentees believed that they received more emotional support and role modeling than the mentors said they provided. Measurement perspective is important because it can moderate the relationship between the mentor and its correlates.

This literature review contains a small number of qualitative studies. Creswell (2013) described qualitative research as the approach of inquiry employed by researchers to study an issue. Stake (2010) indicated there is not one way to approach qualitative research, "but a grand collection of ways . . . each researcher will do it differently, but almost all of them will work hard at interpretation" (p. 31). Qualitative research at its core addresses the fundamental behaviors and perceptions of the participants in the study based on interpretation. A study by Dukes (2001) sought to investigate the characteristics of principal mentors. This study consisted of an analysis of six mentoring programs through a series of structured interviews. That information was later coded based on overarching themes that developed from the interview results.

Another study from Chang et al. (2014) was a qualitative study using three different methods for collecting data: writing a response with online discussion, monthly focus group meetings, and document collection. Although multiple strategies for data collection were used, the sampling included an overrepresentation of female participants. Consideration should be given to demographic issues, such as a balance of gender, race, and social experiences to avoid skewing the data. Creswell (2013) cautioned that there are many things that can go wrong during the data collection phase of a qualitative research study. Many of the studies contained in this literature review gather data through an interview or observation method that requires a coding process at the end of data collection.

The interview is reciprocal, with both researcher and research subject engaging in a dialogue, but the researcher must be careful not to influence the responses of the subject. Kvale (2007) described the interview as if it were simply a conversation between two people about a subject in which an interchange of views takes place. The role of the researcher is to record the description of these experiences exactly as they are provided. Kvale (2007) also wrote that the interview process during qualitative research has an extensive history in social sciences even though systematic literature regarding interview research has surfaced only in the last few decades. Moustakas (1994) cautioned that researchers should allow data to emerge naturally during the interview process and encouraged researchers to engage in the epoch process before and sometimes during the interview to remove any bias or urges to influence the interview in any way.

Synthesis of Research Findings

In summary, several researchers have identified behaviors that promoted principal preparedness upon leaving university-based leadership programs (Chang et al., 2014; Kochan &

Reames, 2013; Sanzo et al., 2010). Chang et al. (2014) focused on 14 academic and administrative leaders of color in a higher education setting. Eleven of the participants were female. This collaborative autoethnographic study lasted at least six months for most participants and yielded a wide range of experiences that contributed to their leadership development. Some of those experiences could be categorized as mentoring. Data analysis from the study revealed that factors such as the personal knowledge and beliefs about mentoring influenced the nature of the mentoring relationship. Additionally, the study revealed that the structures and culture in the higher education setting contributed to the facilitation, as well as the inhibition, of the development of leaders of color because there were sanctioned, but also limited, opportunities for mentoring. One specific reason was the lack of role models for people of color. The study by Sanzo et al. (2010) focused on the partnership between the university and a rural school district to better understand how to bridge the theory-to-practice divide. This qualitative study consisted of a year-long account of aspiring leadership students' attempts to put into practice those theories and concepts from the university. According to the findings, the key to connecting theory and practice was an intentional focus on developing relationships and creating an environment that allowed for reflective practice and authentic experiences (2010).

The goal is to produce aspiring principals who can be instructional leaders. Data suggest that principals who model the importance of reflection and growth among the staff to support a culture of critical analysis for continuous improvement are well on their way to becoming effective instructional leaders (Blase & Blase, 1999). The researchers also found benefit in the collaborative approach to the supervision of the development of leadership skills in educators. In this qualitative inquiry of more than 800 teachers across the United States, the researchers produced knowledge about the principal-teacher relationship as it related to instructional

leadership. The participants were provided with an open-ended questionnaire to identify and

describe in detail the characteristics of principals who enhance their classroom instruction and

how they were impacted by those characteristics. The teachers reported such characteristics as

talking with teachers to promote reflection, providing constructive feedback, promoting

professional development, developing coaching relationships among teachers, and applying adult

learning principles to staff development.

Additionally, research studies revealed that effective principals could identify effective

instruction in the classroom, provided helpful feedback to teachers regarding their instruction,

and visited classrooms regularly to observe changes in instruction because of feedback (Fullan,

2005; Public Impact, 2008; Steiner & Hassel, 2011). Aspiring principals should be placed in an

environment that allows them to practice these effective behaviors during their university

studies. Sanzo et al. (2010) found that collaboration between school districts and university-

based leadership programs offered the opportunity for authentic experiences that connect theory

to practice. Additionally, Sanzo et al. (2010) found that positive learning environments should

provide opportunities for shared communication through debriefing and follow-up of

professional experiences.

University-based leadership programs bear the responsibility of producing leaders who

can create schools that are successful. New professional standards for school leaders (National

Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) are forcing university-based leadership

preparation programs to design structures that facilitate students' ability to translate theory to

practice to steer student achievement towards an upward trajectory. According to Brown-

Ferrigno and Muth (2004), researchers found that "a goal of field-based learning activities in

redesigned professional preparation is to ensure that graduates have the necessary knowledge, dispositions, and skills to lead schools competently and effectively" (p. 469).

Deans et al. (2009) identified mentoring as a human development strategy that is motivated by performance and offers timely feedback and support. Mentoring studies found that mentoring could also be of great benefit to people of color (Davis, 2009; Evans & Cokley, 2008). Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) asserted that "preparation programs in educational administration need to rely less on the traditional course- and campus-based preparation models in which aspiring principals are part-time students while full-time teachers" (p. 483). The authors further insert that aspiring principals would be more successful if placed in would-be administrative positions with a full-time mentor assigned to provide on-the-job mentoring support. Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) conducted a study on multiple cohorts of aspiring and practicing principals. The study focused on the ability of the educators to gain authentic experiences that would facilitate their socialization into the administrative environment. Findings from the study revealed that aspiring administrators benefited from internships that included authentic learning opportunities related to leadership and purposeful mentoring structures. Additionally, the data suggested that the study participants must continue their leadership learning experiences beyond completion of preparation programs and placement as school leaders.

Critique of Previous Research

The best practitioners engage in continuous education through professional development opportunities and by reviewing current research in their area of specialty (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Crucial elements of any research study are that it contains clear and concise statements about what is being measured and that the measuring instruments are valid and

reliable tools for providing results (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Validity refers to the instrument's ability to measure what it is supposed to measure, and reliability is the instrument's ability to measure the concept being studied consistently and accurately. To determine if the chosen tool is valid and reliable and that the study has been conceptually well-planned, clear and logical steps by which the data was collected and analyzed should be detectable. The findings and data analysis should connect directly to the research questions.

Much of the research that is reported on in this study was published in professional journals or by professional education organizations. Most the studies are secondary sources, since they report on previously conducted studies. The research studies address the issue of preparing aspiring principals to be effective instructional leaders able to have a positive effect on student achievement (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Mitgang, 2012; Searby, 2010). Most of the research is written in a practical language designed to appeal to educators. However, the information is well-documented, providing a strong research foundation for claims being made.

Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) studied the benefits of mentoring and observed that the transition from teacher to principal required a careful balance of knowledge and skill development. The knowledge is gained through leadership preparation programs, while the skill is developed through authentic work-embedded activities led by qualified professionals. Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) studied several principal preparation programs together and separately over time and reviewed research on leadership preparation, mentoring, and clinical practice to support this claim. The researchers used direct reflections from those participating in mentoring programs for aspiring leaders. One of the methods used was an exploratory case study. Two studies were done at the University of Colorado at Denver (UCD). Creswell (2013) characterized case study research as the study of a case within a real-life setting. Stake (2010)

argued that case study research is not a methodology. Instead, the researcher considered the case study a choice of what is to be studied. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) presented the case study as a strategy for inquiry. Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) used this method to extract information from students planning to become administrators. This was a logical method for determining the benefits of mentoring through clinical practice.

Hamlin and Sage (2011) presented the results of a study that identified key behaviors of the mentors and mentees. Information was collected using Flanagan's Critical Incident Technique (CIT). This technique was described as a method designed for describing and evaluating job performance for a variety of purposes. The method involves the collection of real-world actions that characterize a behavior. Hamlin and Sage (2011) observed and documented real-world interaction between the mentor and mentee to gain intimate details of factors contributing to either a positive or negative relationship. There is a very small knowledge base connected to formal mentoring relationships. Therefore, the findings could provide insight that increases the empirical knowledge base. One limitation of this research method was that the number of critical incidents recorded did not reach the point of data saturation. Of the 187 critical incidents coded, there were only 11 positive and four negative behavioral criteria of mentoring.

Chapter 2 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the critical components of mentoring and present adult learning theory and relational mentoring as a foundation for a reciprocal and collaborative learning partnership. A definition of mentoring was provided, along with a characterization of mentoring, the mentor, the mentee, and coaching. Additionally, the chapter described mentoring environments and the use of mentoring in university-based leadership

preparation programs. Additional topics included turnaround leadership and the TSLP grant project.

Chang et al., 2014 described mentoring as a "relationship between a younger adult and an older, more experienced adult who helps the younger individual learn to navigate the adult world and the world of work" (p. 21). In many cases, however, experience acts as the divide more so than a chronology of age. Many scenarios depict a more experienced professional supporting a novice professional in the work environment. Much of the literature discussed the mentoring process as a means for focusing on learning and skill building (Anderson & Togneri, 2003; Ehrich et al., 2004; Kuchinke, 2012).

The literature addressed the pressure felt by states and local school systems to produce school leaders prepared to respond to higher academic standards and the need for increased student achievement. This issue has created a "fresh urgency on addressing the chronic weaknesses of principal training programs, criticized for decades as unselective in their admissions, academically weak and poorly connected to school realities" (Mitgang, 2012, p. 2). Additionally, Mitgang (2012) reported that many states responded to this pressure for increased leadership accountability by holding higher education programs accountable to more rigorous leadership standards.

The literature indicated that 21st-century school leaders require programs that explicitly connect educational theory with practical application in school settings (Murphy, 2001). Moreover, university-based leadership preparation programs bear the responsibility of equipping their students with the skills needed to close learning gaps and increase student achievement (Drago-Severson et al., 2012). A review of the current literature identified the importance of mentoring as a human development strategy that is motivated by performance and offers timely

feedback and support (Deans et al., 2009). Traditionally, leadership preparation programs have not provided support of this nature as part of field-based services. Mentoring has emerged over the past two decades as a strategy for connecting theory with the application within the context of authentic conditions.

Additionally, the literature emphasized the importance of careful selection of mentors and careful placement of mentors and mentees. The relationship between the two participants appears to be one of the indicators of the success of the mentoring process. Mentors who have been carefully selected and trained to emphasize the importance of building positive relationships are more likely to provide quality opportunities for authentic practice (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Along with the importance of establishing positive relationships, other factors were mentioned as being key to the success of the mentoring process. Ehrich et al. (2004) cautioned that poor planning, lack of time, and poor mentor training could be detrimental to the success of mentoring programs.

Although the literature on mentoring is plentiful, not much of it focuses on the mentoring of graduate-level students in leadership preparation programs during field service activities. Additionally, there is a paucity of qualitative studies exploring the experiences of leadership preparation students in a mentor/mentee setting. A university-based leadership preparation program established through the TSLP grant project was identified in the literature as containing a structured mentoring program as part of a leadership preparation program designed to prepare educators to lead in at-risk schools. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants from the TSLP program to collect data related to the mentoring program. Additionally, observation data was collected as the participants worked in their new leadership

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roles, and documents collected from university officials were reviewed to gain additional

knowledge of the TSLP mentoring program.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction to Chapter 3

The purpose of this study was to understand how university-based mentoring facilitates the acquisition of leadership skills in aspiring principals. According to the SREB (2005), many principals are struggling to meet current demands in the education arena, making it more important for university leaders, as well as local education agencies, to provide genuine learning experiences connected to current issues in the field. High-quality leadership preparation programs include internships that employ support people capable of modeling and facilitating authentic leadership activities that will develop and strengthen the skills of the interns (SREB, 2005). This study included exploration of the components of mentoring frameworks in three university leadership preparation programs that were developed through a federal grant program known as the TSLP. The three data sources that informed the study were (a) the review of documents outlining the components of each university's mentoring program, (b) interviews of program graduates to capture their mentoring experiences, and (c) observations of the program graduates in their new leadership environments.

Chapter 3 includes an explanation of the philosophy and method of the multiple case study approach to research, including key concepts. Additionally, the chapter includes an overview of the purpose and design of the study, the sampling method, and a description of the participants. Following the sampling procedures is a summary of the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures. In addition, a discussion of attributes, limitations, delimitations, and validity of the research design is provided. The chapter concludes with a summary of the methodological process.

A qualitative multiple case study approach was chosen for this study because of the desire to do an in-depth and detailed study of university-based mentoring. I wished to determine

what leadership skills aspiring principals gain through participation in leadership preparation programs in three universities. A qualitative case study is appropriate when there is a need to investigate a phenomenon and provide information about whether the phenomenon is perceived as helpful by interviewees (Yin, 2014). Case studies are most applicable when the purpose of the research is to provide an explanation of a present-day conditions and a broad account of a social phenomenon; however, the results of a case study may not provide a clear, prescribed outcome (Yin, 2014). In this case, the phenomenon was the mentoring program provided through TSLP. Results from the study did not draw specific conclusions about the level of effectiveness or quality of the mentoring programs, but they provided a detailed description of how mentoring strategies were used to provide experiences to develop leadership skills in leadership preparation students.

In this case study, I conducted an analysis from multiple perspectives through interviews, observations, and document reviews in order to present a comprehensive, well-developed account of the mentoring programs. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), qualitative case study methodology that includes a variety of data sources provides a means for researchers to examine complex phenomena within their settings. Yin (2014) asserted that a case study design should be used when the purpose of the research study is to answer "how" or "why" questions, the behavior of the participants in the study cannot be manipulated, and the phenomenon being studied is current, rather than historical. Additionally, Baxter and Jack (2008) asserted that the multiple case study design is used when the goal is to examine more than one bounded case to determine similarities and differences between the cases, which will provide in-depth knowledge of the issue of using the mentoring process to develop leadership skills. Examining multiple cases should have provided more robust and reliable data as I analyzed the components of three

different university-based mentoring programs. My intent was to determine what leadership skills aspiring principals gained through the TSLP leadership preparation program and if those skills were a result of mentoring support received as part of the program of study. Aspiring principals discussed their experiences during the TSLP program and during their involvement in leadership roles since their completion of the TSLP program. My primary interest was to find out if the mentoring services received by the protégés contributed to their ability to implement their new leadership responsibilities.

Stake (2010) identified the process of triangulation to provide quality assurance to ensure that case study research is the result of a disciplined approach, rather than simply a matter of perception. Triangulation in case study research is a method that uses multiple points of data to establish and verify meaning (2003). Using multiple data sources in a case study allows the researcher to look through multiple lenses to fully understand the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The program graduates participating in the study were currently working in leadership roles. Accounts of their field experiences in the leadership preparation program were compared with actions observed in their current leadership roles and documented information explaining each university's mentoring and field study program in order to corroborate the findings. Thus, after reading this multiple case study, readers will have a better understanding of the TSLP program and how mentoring was used to equip aspiring principals with skills needed to successfully take on leadership roles

Research Questions

Booth et al. (2008) reported that the best way to begin understanding a specific topic is by formulating questions, and those questions draw attention to the data needed to answer the questions. Yin (2014) reported that the type of research question typically dictates the research

methodology used to conduct the inquiry. Studies that answer "how" or "why" questions are more conducive to case study research. In this study, my questions are formulated around the topic of mentoring in leadership preparation programs. Such programs, which allow for more authentic field-based experiences that facilitate the transition of theory into practice, are crucial to the success of aspiring leaders (Lord et al., 2008). The mentoring framework within field-based practices is intended to ease the theory-to-practice transition, but mentors do not always provide experiences that present authentic and relevant leadership activities for aspiring administrators.

The case study method of research was chosen in order to provide a comprehensive description of a bounded case, rather than a simple explanation. Binding a case involves narrowing the scope of the study so that it is not too broad. According to Yin (2014) and Stake (2010), placing boundaries on a case will help avoid the tendency to have questions that are too broad or too many objectives. The issue that requires understanding in this study is the means by which mentoring practices can be used to provide authentic training for leadership preparation students to better prepare them for leadership roles.

The central question in this study was, "How does TSLP provide authentic leadership opportunities that are intended to prepare aspiring leaders for employment in 21st-century learning environments?"

There were also four subquestions.

- How do TSLP officials select and prepare mentors to facilitate the leadership development of aspiring principals?

- What factors do protégés associate with their ability or inability to fulfill their new leadership roles?

- How do protégés describe their current leadership experiences, compared to experiences provided during their field practices?

- What leadership behaviors do protégés demonstrate while working in their new leadership roles after graduating from the leadership preparation program?

Purpose and Design of the Study

The TSLP grant was awarded to 12 states in the south and southeastern areas of the United States. The grant application of one of the 12 awardees included a leadership preparation component to be implemented by three university partners in the state. In this study, the name of the state is being kept anonymous. The university partners made significant changes to their master's degree curriculum to include collaboration and feedback from local school district leaders to determine skills needed for principals to be successful. Additionally, the university partners hired mentors to work exclusively with the TSLP graduate students. I believe that a closer study of the mentoring services from the perspective of the graduate students, observation of the graduates in their new leadership roles, and a review of program related documents provided some insight into what it takes to prepare aspiring leaders to meet the demands of increased leadership accountability.

A review of the current literature identified the importance of mentoring as a human development strategy that is motivated by performance and offers timely feedback and support (Anderson & Togneri, 2003; Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Deans et al., 2009; Ehrich et al., 2004; Kuchinke, 2012). Fry et al. (2005) found that internships for aspiring administrators lacked the opportunities for direct and active leadership. Students need opportunities to grapple with authentic leadership issues. However, mentoring has emerged over the past two decades as

a strategy for connecting theory with application within the context of authentic conditions (Deans et al., 2009; Murphy, 2001).

Multiple case study design was chosen to gain in-depth knowledge of university-based mentoring of aspiring principals in the TSLP program, as well as of their experiences after their placement in a leadership role upon completion of the program. Three universities in the state, participated in the TSLP program through the leadership preparation programs. Each of the universities provided a uniquely designed mentoring component for its TSLP students. The details of those designs can be found in supporting documents created by each university. Each university was considered a separate case so that I could distinguish the different characteristics of the mentoring program and the experiences of the protégés.

Through the multiple case study research process, I was able to conduct an in-depth study of mentoring within the context of three university-based leadership preparation programs. Case study research provides the opportunity to gather first-hand experience using a variety of data collection methods (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This multiple case study was conducted to study three cases to investigate the concept of university-based mentoring in leadership preparation programs. The three cases included protégés from the three participating universities who were all placed in leadership roles within one year of graduating from the TSLP program. Also included in the case study was an in-depth review of documents outlining the specifics of the mentoring component of the programs. These documents provided insight into the strategies the universities used to create a unique mentoring component. Yin (2014) concluded that a case study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon . . . in depth and within its real-world context" (p. 16). This case study of mentoring in university-based leadership preparation programs was explored through interviews and observations of selected graduate students and an in-depth

review of related documents that provided the in-depth, real-world context that is needed to meet the characteristics of a case study. The contemporary phenomenon of mentoring was set in the real-world context of university programs that provide graduate students with leadership skills that may contribute to their success in leadership roles.

Research Population and Sampling Method

The university-based TSLP program included 32 graduate students at three universities. These students were selected to participate in the TSLP program in 2015 by their district level superintendents due to their leadership potential. Although there was no guarantee, the hope was that these educators would become instructional leaders in their school districts following completion of the leadership preparation program. The TSLP grant was used to target potential students from rural, low-performing districts in hopes of providing them with skills to address those deficits. The 32 students graduated from the TSLP program in 2016.

By 2017, several of the 32 students had not only completed the TSLP program, which included a mentoring component; they had also been placed in leadership roles after completing the program. These students made up the population that met the characteristics for this study and therefore, were invited to participate in this multiple case study. Purposive sampling was used for this study. Per McMillan (2012), purposive sampling involves the selection of participants because they have certain information that is relative to the study. Therefore, based on this knowledge, the participants were intentionally chosen.

There are several types of purposive sampling methods. The specific type of purposive sampling procedure for this study begins with criterion sampling. According to Seidman (2013), the researcher must assess the appropriateness of participants for the study. In this case, the criterion for appropriateness for a study on university-based mentoring in a leadership

preparation program was that students had participated in mentoring in that setting. These graduates met that criterion and consequently, were given the opportunity to participate to discuss the mentoring support received while completing the TSLP program.

Instrumentation

In naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods are used because these methods can be easily integrated with the inquiry models that use humans as data collection instruments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Naturalistic researchers use participant observations, qualitative interviewing, and written communications as means for collecting data (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Data collection for this study occurred through individual interviews using a semi structured interview guide (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). The semistructured interview protocol can be found in Appendix A. I needed to establish a positive rapport with the participants and ask meaningful questions that caused them to be deeply reflective about their mentoring experiences. I also needed to enhance my ability to capture all of the content during data collection by taking notes and also electronically recording the conversations. I planned to follow Seidman's (2013) recommendation that involves listening on three levels: (a) listening to what participants say; (b) listening for the inner voice; and, (c) listening while remaining aware of surroundings and the time.

According to Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993), the semistructured interview guide is the most common guide used for naturalistic inquiry and contains basic questions related to the issue being explored. However, the guide was not designed to be followed verbatim, but to be used to guide a discussion between the researcher and those persons being interviewed (Yin, 2014). The open-ended interview process as a means for data collection is most common when conducting case study research (Erlandson et al., 1993). According to Kvale (2007), if you

want to know how people understand an experience or phenomenon, you should ask them directly.

Kvale (2007) described the interview as if it were simply a conversation between two people around a subject where an interchange of views takes place. The researcher is attempting to understand a set of experiences from the subjects' point of view. The role of the researcher is to record the description of these experiences exactly as they are provided. I used the active listening technique to guide the discussion without influencing the participants' answers. Active listening is an important trait for the researcher to have during the interview process. Follow-up questions become necessary based on what was said and even how it was said (Beuving & Vries, 2015; Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). My follow-up questions had to be relevant to the topic being discussed. Therefore, I had to have in-depth knowledge of the interview topic and be mindful of the themes that could surface from the discussions. A semistructured interview guide facilitated this process and can be found in Appendix A.

The second method of data collection was through on-site observations. According to Yin (2014), field observations should yield information that describes in detail what is being observed and should also contain the researcher's reflections regarding those details. Reflections can be in the form of summary notes or comments about processes. The observations took place in what Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to as a natural, rather than contrived, setting. The participants were operating in their workplaces in their newly acquired leadership roles. The field notes for these observations were recorded on the observation protocol found in Appendix B. I recorded the length of the observation, descriptive notes about what was being observed, and any comments or reflections I had about each individual observation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that the observer should be aware of nonverbal communications as well as verbal

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communications during observations and interviews. At times, there may be a conflict between what the subject says and does. This information can be noted as a reflection. To facilitate the process of document reviews, a protocol (see Appendix C) has been developed to capture information, such as, (a) who wrote the document and when; (b) skill and experience requirements for mentors; (c) any mentoring training opportunities; (d) guidance regarding mentoring processes; and, (e) any conclusions drawn from this data.

Data Collection

Qualitative research focuses on the detailed study of issues and generally focuses on how people make meaning out of their experiences. Three characteristics of qualitative methodology are: (a) the study of real-world situations; (b) a flexible and evolving research design that pursues the path of discovery; and, (c) purposive sampling, in which participants are chosen according to specific, purposeful criteria, and the goal for the sampling is to provide insight about the research question (Patton, 2015). These characteristics are conducive to my pursuit of detailed information about university-based mentoring programs for aspiring leaders in education.

Collecting data through interviews, observations, and document reviews helped provide contextual information for my study. Additionally, the interview and observation content were helpful in describing the complex interactions of the protégés in their field study environment and their new leadership roles. Although the same interview and observation protocol instruments was used with each of the participants, their responses and behavior reflected their diverse backgrounds, settings, and leadership experiences.

According to Marshall and Rossman (2006), qualitative researchers usually depend on four methods for gathering information: (a) participating in the setting; (b) direct observation; (c) document analysis; and, (d) in-depth interviews. Although I was not an active participant in the

work environment, I gathered data using the other three methods. In qualitative research, knowledge is gained through rich descriptions from a small sample (Patton, 2015). The perceptions of the study participants were recorded through open-ended questions that did not need to fit into predetermined responses. As the researcher, I was the primary instrument of this study, performing field work through interviews and observations of participants and reviewing pertinent documents using a document review protocol. During the interview process, participants had the opportunity to reflect on their experiences according to what they perceived as important and relevant.

I interviewed male and female professional educators who participated in the university-based leadership preparation program funded through the TSLP grant. The grant project was a leadership preparation model designed to develop leadership skills in educators serving in low-performing rural districts. The potential subjects from the participating universities had not only graduated from the TSLP program, but had also been placed in leadership roles. Additional data was collected through observations and document reviews.

The interview instrument for this study was a semistructured interview guide. The guide contained open-ended interview questions designed for the participating graduate students. To ensure quality interview design, the interview process involved the following criteria identified by Kvale (2007): (a) rich specific responses from interviewees; (b) short questions to elicit longer answers from the interview; (c) clarification of interviewee responses; (d) interviewer interpretation throughout; (e) interviewer verification of interviewee responses; and, (f) the interviewer's report of the story. The semistructured interview guide was aligned to the research questions. The first two questions of the interview guide investigated the process for selecting and pairing mentors and protégés and the perceived relationship between the two. The next four

questions on the interview guide pertained to how the participants perceived and experienced mentoring during their participation in the leadership preparation program. The concluding questions inquired about the participants' experiences in their new leadership roles. As the researcher, I asked for clarification when necessary.

Interview times and dates were determined through the online scheduling tool, Doodle.com, to accommodate participants' availability. The participants had a choice of participating in a face-to-face interview, an online video conference, or conference call. Moustakas (1994) cautioned that researchers should allow data to emerge naturally during the interview process and encouraged researchers to engage in the bracketing process before and sometimes during the interview to remove any bias and urges to influence the interview in any way. A semistructured interview guide was developed to facilitate my management of the interview process (see Appendix A for the interview protocol).

Careful consideration was given to the number of questions for this open-ended, semistructured interview. According to Miles et al., 2014, interview questions for a qualitative study should be given careful consideration. Having a dozen or more questions may make it difficult to discern emerging themes across different sections of the data (Miles et al., 2014). Additionally, the questions should be written in a way that allows for thoughtful responses by participants. However, the questions should be used as a guide to help facilitate a dialogue, rather than prompt specific responses (Seidman, 2013).

Before each interview, I reviewed the purpose of the study, procedures for the interview, and the confidentiality agreement with the participant. I also reviewed the informed consent form with each participant making sure they understood what they were agreeing to do. The consent form described the purpose of the study and the procedures for the interviews. A

confidentially clause was included to inform the participants that their names would not be used in the written reports. They were also informed that the interview recordings would be kept in a secure place and would not be heard by a third-party transcriber. Additionally, a clause was included informing participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the process. Following the explanation, each participant was asked to sign the consent form acknowledging he or she fully understood the study. A copy of the signed consent form was given to me to be securely filed.

All interviews were digitally recorded to capture verbatim language and voice inflections. I transcribed the digital recordings to ensure quality. A transcription service was not used. During the interview process, I used the journaling technique, which consisted of using elaborate descriptions to represent the participants' behaviors during the interviews, insights gained during construction of interview knowledge, and other learning that took place throughout the interview process. These detailed notes were compared with other data to help verify whether the findings could be transferred to other settings due to shared characteristics (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Erlandson et al., 1993). According to Miles et al. (2014), validity and reliability issues surrounding data collection instruments used in naturalistic inquiry depend a great deal on the skills of the researcher. Adjustments in the process may need to be done from one interview to the next based on information being gathered. It is beneficial for the researcher to have appropriate familiarity of the phenomenon. Additionally, the member validation process was used to confirm accuracy of the transcribed information. I made follow-up contact with participants, allowing them to state concerns, make corrections, or ask questions.

Member validation. This process is used to establish trustworthiness of the data that was collected. Member validation allows the participants the opportunity to confirm the details of the

data and its adequacy (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to member

validation as a process that contributes to the trustworthiness and validity of the study. After the

conclusion of each interview, I transcribed the content and emailed the transcript to each

interviewee to give them the opportunity to review the interpretation and approve what had been

recorded or suggest some additional information to further clarify their responses (Merriam,

2009; Seidman, 2013). The process assured that the accounts were reported accurately.

The second method for data collection was field observations to collect data in

participants' natural settings as they carried out their new leadership responsibilities. This

provided some face-to-face interaction that enabled me to make direct observations of the

participants and capture thick, rich descriptions through data collected to find emerging themes

and describe the essence of the experiences of the participants in their leadership roles (Yin,

2014). According to Patton (2015), observations can yield data that one might not be able to

obtain through an interview or document review. Moreover, through observations I was able to

see what was going on, rather than making assumptions (Patton, 2015).

The third method for data collection was document reviews. Document reviews are a

good source of data because documents are usually available and are a stable source of data that

can be analyzed at multiple points during the research without altering (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I collected documents connected to the acquisition of mentors, such as criteria for mentoring

candidates, roles, and responsibilities. My intent was to collect any documents that guided the

interactions between the mentors and protégés and provided information regarding skills and

experiences requirements for mentors, mentoring training opportunities, roles and

responsibilities of mentors and the pairing process for mentors and protégés.

Identification of Attributes

In this case study, my intent was to explore the perceived experiences of TSLP graduates after being placed in a leadership role. For the purposes of this study, a leadership role consisted of work assignments such as principal, assistant principal, central office administrator, and instructional coach. These roles include the responsibility of supporting educational goals and objectives from outside of the classroom. Most of the TSLP students began the leadership preparation program as a classroom teacher. While participating in the TSLP program, the graduate students were assigned mentors to facilitate their field-based practice in the school or local education agency. A mentor is identified as a person who provides supervised learning opportunities in authentic environments where they can apply theories, processes, and strategies learned in the university classroom (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). A protégé is defined as a novice educator receiving training and support that includes opportunities for critical reflection and practices that help them make sense of education theory (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). The mentor/protégé relationship is stressed in the coaching models outlined by Crane (2002), who asserted that coaching can have a positive effect on employees, as well as on the work environment. Deans et al. (2009) presented the coaching or mentoring model as a holistic approach to human development that involves establishing mentor/mentee relationships that are conducive to transformational learning and creating an environment that frees the protégés to experience critical reflection and authentic practice that helps them make sense of education theory.

Research studies revealed that successful leadership preparation programs include opportunities for authentic or real-life practice, simulated problem-solving activities, and active learning opportunities (Clarke & Wildy, 2010; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Simulated problem-solving and active learning opportunities would allow leadership preparation students to engage in actual problem-solving activities that are replicated based on current issues taking place in the education setting. Deans et al. (2009) proposed the coaching or mentoring model as a holistic approach to human development that would increase the opportunity for success.

In this study, the terms *mentoring* and *coaching* are used synonymously and refer to support behaviors that are designed to develop individuals in their area of professional expertise (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). The mentoring/coaching framework is presented as both a formal and informal process. Ehrich et al. (2004) focused more on formal mentoring structures with specific goals and objectives. More specific characteristics of mentoring are more difficult to ascertain due to the multifaceted nature of this approach. Several definitions of mentoring and coaching were presented in Chapter 2 of this study.

A holistic approach involves establishing mentor/protégé relationships that are conducive to transformational learning and creating an environment that frees the mentee to experience critical reflection and authentic practice that helps him or her make sense of education theory. Mezirow (2003) recognized several ways to facilitate transformational learning, including role play, journal writing, metaphors, case studies, and group projects. These activities help develop the skills necessary to engage in problem solving through discourse and should be incorporated within a framework that accommodates processes that make transformational learning possible (Habermas, 1987).

Data Analysis Procedures

I followed the inductive data analysis approach to code and analyze the data (Yin, 2014). Saldaña (2016) defined the coding process as "an exploratory problem-solving technique without

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specific formulas or algorithms to follow" (p. 9). According to McMillan (2012), this process of qualitative data analysis begins with organizing the data by separating it into practical pieces per the sources. The coding process was done manually, as all transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure that primary themes and patterns corroborated the data obtained from the interviews. Initially, a broad list of codes was developed. Codes were then merged, modified, and refined. As patterns emerged, themes were identified. The purpose of the research study and the primary research questions were the focus for the theme identification. Focused coding was then conducted and the transcripts, observation notes, and documents were reread line by line to locate and identify themes.

Bernard (2011) described the process of analysis as the act of discovering patterns and ideas in the data that explain why those patterns exist. The process of coding facilitates the organization and grouping of data that are coded similarly into groups or categories based on the shared characteristics (2011). A combination of classification reasoning, tacit knowledge, and intuitive senses will help determine which data pieces fit together (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data from recorded interviews, field notes from observations, and document review data were triangulated to establish and verify meaning. This method is known as methodological triangulation (Yin, 2014). The use of multiple data sources helped to make the case study findings more convincing and accurate. Through triangulation of data sources, I was able to examine consistencies and inconsistencies in the results by comparing responses from participant interviews to their actions in the field and the information recorded during the document reviews.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

Limitations. There were 32 participants in the TSLP program. Not all the participants were placed in a leadership role after completing the program. Those who met that requirement

were asked to participate in the multiple case study. Each of the three participating universities

had at least two graduates who had been placed in a leadership role at the time of the study. All

participants were informed of the research procedures and purpose of the study. Participation in

the study was voluntary. As a State Department of Education employee, I had a professional

relationship with certain administrators of the TSLP program and some of the TSLP participants.

Because it was possible that some participants' anecdotes could be recognized by other

participants, mentors, and university staff, making it difficult to get volunteers to openly share

their stories, a research deductive disclosure method was used throughout this research to protect

the confidentially of participants' responses. The focus of this research was limited to the

perspective of the mentees. Additionally, my experience as an educator may have created a bias

that could have placed limitations on my analysis. The process of bracketing allowed me to set

aside any biases that I may have had.

Delimitations. This study was necessarily limited due to the unique sample

characteristics. The study participants were graduate students who were selected to participate in

a university-based leadership preparation program funded by a federal grant designed to increase

the number of trained leaders in low-performing schools. As a part of this curriculum, the

graduate students participated in a mentoring program established and supervised by university

professors. There were 32 graduate students in the program. Several of the students were placed

in leadership roles after graduation. To learn what effect the mentoring they received had on

their leadership abilities in their new role, only those students placed in leadership roles

subsequent to completion of the program were invited to participate in the study. The content of

the TSLP program was revised to specifically focus on key characteristics of leadership skills

involved in turning around low-performing schools. There was intentional thought by university

professors placed on structuring mentoring support for the participating students. The TSLP

program warrants studying, but I chose not to focus on the overall capability of the program.

I chose not to do a comparison study. Therefore, this research study was also not

inclusive of those serving in the role of mentor. Specifically, this study does not give a voice to

the mentors regarding their services, nor the professors responsible for pairing and supervising

the mentoring process. The results yielded data based solely on the experiences of the protégés.

The graduate students participated in a specially designed leadership preparation program,

whereas the universities hired full-time mentors instead of using mentors from the partnering

school districts, so the results cannot be generalized to other graduate students participating in

leadership preparation programs and being mentored by personnel with other duties.

Validation

According to Brinkman and Kvale (2015), validation is the act of examining sources and

information for inaccuracies. It is the job of the researcher to exam the information critically to

ensure its credibility and dependability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the terms *credibility* and

validity interchangeably. Creswell (2013) considered "validation in qualitative research to be an

attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings, as best described by the research and the

participants" (p. 207). Creswell went on to describe validity as the extent to which the

information is credible, trustworthy, authentic, and dependable (2013). Miles et al. (2014)

suggested that the researcher must examine meanings emerging from the data to determine their

plausibility and confirmability. Otherwise, the information is simply a collection of interesting

stories. Creswell (2013) suggested eight validation strategies to document the accuracy of the

qualitative study. The strategies include: (a) extensive field observation, (b) use of multiple

sources to triangulate data, (c) peer review or debriefing, (d) regular refinement of the working

hypothesis, (e) clarifying researcher bias/bracketing, (f) member checking, (g) use of elaborate descriptions to allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability, and (h) external audits. Creswell (2013) suggested that qualitative researchers engage in at least two of these validation strategies in a study.

Credibility. Qualitative research methods rely on the views of the research participants for credibility because they are the only ones who can justify the authenticity of the results recorded by the evaluator. Therefore, the participants in this study took part in member checks, also known as member validation, to verify their experiences with university-based mentoring as recorded during the interview. During the member checks, I solicited participants' views regarding credibility of the findings and interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by emailing a copy of the transcribed interviews to each individual participant and the focus group participants.

The second procedure for ensuring validity was the process of using elaborate descriptions, also known as *journaling*, to describe the participants' behaviors during the interviews, insights gained during construction of interview knowledge, and other learning that took place throughout the interview process. These detailed notes recorded information, while journaling helped clarify ideas or information presented during the interviews (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Erlandson et al., 1993). Additionally, using the epoche (bracketing) process, I was careful to limit any presuppositions and conducted the research interviews with as little bias as possible.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the degree to which research results and processes are consistent. Maxwell (2005) advocated a process wherein the researcher critically reads the transcripts to uncover consistencies in the information that suggest the validity of the participants' experiences. The credibility and dependability of the study rely heavily on the

assurance that the participants possessed authentic experiences in mentoring in the TSLP

program and were given the opportunity to accurately describe their experiences. To address the

dependability factor, triangulation was used to analyze the research question from multiple

perspectives. These multiple sources included individual interviews of TSLP graduates

(Appendix A), observation of TSLP graduates in their leadership settings (Appendix B), and a

review of documents (Appendix C) from each participating university showing job descriptions,

vitas, and guidance materials for the mentoring program. Triangulation of data is used in

qualitative research to gather information from multiple sources for corroborating the findings of

the study (Yin, 2014). Another strategy advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for improving

the dependability of research is an audit trail. With this technique, a paper trail of the data is

maintained by the researcher in case an outside auditor is brought in to authenticate the steps in

the inquiry process. For this to be done, the researcher must have enough information from the

research report for anyone to follow and verify those steps. Therefore, I maintained an audit trail

that included detailed records of the inquiry process, the data, findings, interpretations, and

recommendations.

Expected Findings

Fry et al. (2005) found that internships for aspiring administrators lacked the

opportunities for direct and active leadership. The professors responsible for supporting the

TSLP program for aspiring administrators sought to address the concern of meeting current

leadership demands by providing authentic experiences that connected theory and practice. I

expected to hear directly from the participants of the research study if those efforts were

successful. At the time of the case study, all the research participants had graduated from the

TSLP program, receiving either a certification or a master's degree in leadership. They were

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able to present first-hand experience of the hands-on opportunities provided during their internships and explained how those experiences benefited them beyond their schoolwork.

I expected to gain insight into whether the participants studied could make direct connections between their current work and what they experienced during their field work. Additionally, I expected to learn of specific ways their experiences during field study either prepared or did not prepare them for their current leadership roles. Keeping this in mind, I expected that the knowledge gained from this inquiry would develop transferrable theory that could be applied to other mentoring programs to provide insight to specific mentoring strategies that support authentic learning for aspiring leaders. One specific concept that may be transferable was the idea that interns who are provided with authentic practice opportunities graduate with better problem-solving abilities and effective decision-making skills (Lord et al., 2008).

Moreover, Deans et al. (2009) presented the coaching or mentoring model as a holistic approach to human development that involves establishing mentor/mentee relationships that are conducive to transformational learning and creating an environment that frees the protégés to experience critical reflection and authentic practice that helps them make sense of education theory. This research study enabled me to not only exam in detail the mentoring experiences of selected protégés, but also to follow those protégés into their current leadership roles to learn how they were making sense of that work and whether their mentoring experiences were instrumental in their success.

Ethical Issues

Conflict of interest assessment. The research was conducted in accordance with the American Psychological Association standards for conducting research. As an employee with a

state education agency, it was made known that my connection with the universities and TSLP was as a state partner. This involvement mainly included facilitating collaboration between the universities, local school districts, and other participating agencies. My involvement with the universities and their programs was minimal and therefore would not be considered a conflict of interest. The participants were graduates from the TSLP program being implemented in three universities in the southern part of the United States. The names of the universities and the location of the TSLP program were kept confidential. The responses of the TSLP graduates participating in the research study were also kept confidential and every precaution was taken to guard against deductive disclosure. Participants were also informed that the interviews would be recorded to ensure accuracy and that the recordings and any notes taken would be stored until the completion of the dissertation process, when the information would no longer be needed. At that point, the information would be destroyed.

Researcher's position. As the researcher, I assumed the role of the principal investigator. I digitally recorded all interviews to capture verbatim language and voice inflections, and I was the sole transcriber of those digital recordings to further ensure confidentiality. In addition, as the researcher, I engaged in the epoche (bracketing) process as an attempt to set aside my personal experiences so that the focus could be directed to the participants. Bracketing allows researchers to bring to consciousness any biases and prejudgments to intentionally set aside those personal ideas and focus solely on the participants and their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). This involved making a list of all presuppositions that I was consciously aware of before engaging in the data collection process. The conscious awareness of these presuppositions helped me to refrain from probing into statements that support my preconceptions and instead focus on the participants' own meanings.

Ethical issues in the study. Yin (2014) postulated that there were several ethical issues that might surface during a qualitative study in all phases of the research process. According to Yin (2014), special consideration should be taken when using human subjects as a part of the research study. Initially, I sought approval for the research project from Concordia University– Portland's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I followed the IRB protocol for approval of all research instruments, such as the interview questions and letter of invitation to participate. Additionally, an assumption in research involving human participants is that the identity of the participants will remain anonymous in studies that involve in-depth interviews (Seidman, 2013). Each participant was given an informed consent document to sign prior to engaging in the research. This document outlined the protection of the participants and detailed their rights during data collection (Creswell, 2009). The participants also signed a statement acknowledging and agreeing to the use of a recording device during the interview process. The use of pseudonyms ensured the confidentiality of the participants. By keeping the identity of the participants confidential, the nature and quality of their participation in the case study is also protected (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It was made clear that all participation was voluntary and each participant had the right to withdraw from the research study at any time during the process.

Chapter 3 Summary

In summary, this chapter included a detailed explanation of the philosophy and method of the multiple case study approach to research, including key concepts. The multiple case study design is used when the goal is to gain more than a general understanding of a bounded case. The multiple case study design is used to gain in-depth knowledge of an issue (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This multiple case study was conducted to study three cases to investigate the concept of

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university-based mentoring in leadership preparation programs. The three cases included

protégés from the three participating universities. The protégés had been placed in leadership

roles within one year of graduating from the TSLP program. My intent was to determine by

what means mentoring practices could be used to provide authentic training for leadership

preparation students to better prepare them for leadership roles. The nature of this research and

the specific research questions has a foundation in the naturalistic inquiry method. In naturalistic

inquiry, qualitative methods are stressed because these methods can be easily integrated with the

inquiry models that use humans as data collection instruments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

Naturalistic researchers use participant observations, qualitative interviewing, and written

communications as a means for collecting data (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Current literature identified the importance of mentoring as a human development

strategy that is motivated by performance and offers timely feedback and support (Deans et al.,

2009). Participation in the case study provided the opportunity for the subjects to recall their

experiences while taking part in a mentoring program to enhance their leadership skills.

Additionally, the participants were observed in the workplace as they carried out their new

leadership responsibilities. The data revealed characteristics of effective mentoring that were

discussed in the conceptual framework. Those characteristics included opportunities for

authentic practice, simulated problem-solving activities, and active learning opportunities

(Clarke & Wildy, 2010: LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004). I expected to gain

insight to whether the protégés being studied could make direct connections between their

current work and what they experienced during their field work. Additionally, I expected to

learn specifics ways their experiences during field study either prepared or did not prepare them

for their current leadership roles. Data collection occurred through individual interviews with

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the protégés using a semi structured interview guide (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). Additional

forms of data were collected through observations to capture data on the subjects' interaction in

their leadership environments and document reviews to capture the complexity of the mentoring

structure prescribed for the protégés.

To address the dependability factor, I stored detailed information from the research study

organized in a manner for anyone to follow and verify the steps taken during the research

process. To do this, I maintained an audit trail that included detailed records of the inquiry

process, the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations. These techniques supported

my efforts to verify interpretations of data and keep detailed records of the inquiry process to

include the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations. Additionally, through a

process that Kvale (2007) referred to as member validation, participants were given the

opportunity to review their interview transcripts to ensure an accurate recording and trustworthy

information. This was important for verifying credibility. The interviews were transcribed

verbatim after the member validation was completed and all corrections were made. To address

the dependability factor, triangulation was used to analyze the multiple sources of data. This

chapter is followed by a detailed discussion of the findings.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the authenticity of university-based mentoring experiences for participants in the Turnaround School Leadership Program (TSLP) and how university-based mentoring helps those TSLP participants to acquire leadership skills. The study was inspired by a report from the Southern Regional Education Board (2005), which found that principals are struggling to meet current demands in education, making it more important for university leaders and local education agencies to provide authentic learning experiences that are connected to current issues in education. Additionally, the Southern Regional Education Board (2005) found that high-quality leadership preparation programs include internships that employ support personnel capable of facilitating authentic leadership experiences.

Recent research literature on mentoring focuses on a style of leadership referred to as authentic leadership (Avolio, Walumba & Weber, 2009; Begley, 2006; Walker & Riordan, 2010). Indicators of authentic leadership were described as "a synergistic combination of self-awareness, sensitivity to the needs of others, ingenuity, honesty and transparency regarding self and others" (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015, p. 284). In this study, mentoring experiences from participants' accounts were examined for features of authentic leadership experiences. Additionally, observations of TSLP graduates were conducted in their new leadership roles, and university documents were examined for evidence that supported authentic leadership characteristics.

This multiple case study used interviews, observations, and document reviews to explore the authenticity of the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP) graduates' field-based

experiences. Observations were conducted at three universities located geographically in the west, central, and eastern parts of the state where the TSLP grant was being implemented. There were two participants from each of the universities, and each university was considered a separate case. Data were first analyzed within each case, and then a cross-case analysis was conducted to compare the experiences from each of the three universities. My first step was to analyze all three sources of data from each university to identify themes and common phrases across multiple data sources. This involved a close scrutiny of the text through reading and rereading the data sources until codes surfaced. Once those codes were established, I engaged in close reading of these codes across individual universities to identify reoccurring themes and codes. Following that process, I reviewed the recurring themes and codes across the three universities to refine the themes and codes and form general explanations. This process is outlined in Table 1. The information was further refined to develop the themes found in Table 3 and presented in this chapter.

Table 1

Within- and Across-Case Analytic Strategies for a Study of University-Based Mentoring in the TSLP Grant Project

Comparison	Data Source	Purpose	Strategy	Themes and Phrases Common Across Individual Universities
Within Individual Universities	Interviews Observations Document Reviews	Identify themes or common phrases across multiple data sources	Close reading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents to determine codes	• Mentor supported field experiences. • Rigorous experience criteria for potential mentors. • Various levels of support provided for mentors. • Collaborative relationship with neighboring school districts. • Explicit expectations for mentor/protégé interactions. • Content focused on leadership strategies for rural schools.
Across Individual Universities	Three sets of themes and common phrases across multiple data sources gathered from individual universities	Identify reoccurring themes and codes across individual universities	Close reading of themes and common phrases across multiple data sources	• Focus on real-world field experiences. • Mentoring program popular among participants. • Focus on development of authentic leadership skills. • Participants highly motivated during and after participation in the TSLP grant project.
Across Individual Universities	Reoccurring themes and codes across individual universities	Refine themes and codes represented across individual universities and form general explanations	Close reading of reoccurring themes and codes across individual universities	

The TSLP grant was unique because it included a partnership with three universities in the state. The focus of the grant was leadership preparation at the master's degree level. The university partners hired mentors to work exclusively with TSLP graduate students. Although the qualifications and some training requirements for the mentors were the same, each university managed the mentoring component autonomously. Two participants from each of the universities participated in interviews and observations. Each of the three universities also provided manuscript notes containing details of how the TSLP was developed. The documents provided were draft manuscript notes that the professors had just completed in preparation for a book they were writing about the TSLP project. They professors felt that everything that I needed to know about the TSLP project could be found in those notes.

The research questions for this study were formulated around the topic of mentoring in leadership preparation programs. Such programs that allow for more authentic field-based experiences that facilitate the transition of theory into practice are crucial to success for aspiring leaders (Lord et al., 2008). The purpose of mentoring in field-based practices is to ease the theory-to-practice transition. Often, mentoring experiences were not considered authentic or relevant as leadership activities for aspiring administrators.

The central question guiding the study was, "How does the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP) provide authentic leadership opportunities to prepare aspiring leaders for employment in 21st-century learning environments?"

There were also four subquestions:

- How do TSLP officials select and prepare mentors to facilitate the leadership development of aspiring principals?

- What factors do protégés associate with their ability or inability to fulfill their new leadership roles?

- How do protégés describe their current leadership experiences compared to experiences provided during their field practices?

- What leadership behaviors do protégés demonstrate while working in their new leadership roles after graduating from the leadership preparation program?

The study will provide readers with a better understanding of the TSLP program and how mentoring was used to equip aspiring principals with skills needed to successfully take on leadership roles.

Description of the Sample

Purposive sampling was used to select participants in this study. The population targeted for possible participation in the study were graduates of the TSLP leadership preparation program (criterion 1) who had subsequently secured jobs in leadership positions (criterion 2). The TSLP program included a mentoring component that was specifically designed to facilitate field study for these graduates. There were three universities and 32 students involved in the TSLP grant project. I contacted the State director of the TSLP grant project to request the names and contact information of the participants who had been hired in a leadership role after graduation. At the time of the request there were 13 graduates who met this requirement. Invitation emails were sent to those graduates requesting their participation. Six participants accepted the invitation to participate. Two of the participants were female and four were male. All participants were educators in a local school district at the time of their participation in the TSLP. The teaching experience of the participants ranged from 5–20 years at the time of the study.

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There were two participants per university (see Figure 1). In order to protect the identity of the six participants, pseudonyms were used in place of their actual names. Also, due to the small sample size I had to guard against disclosure by limiting the amount of potentially identifiable information. Pseudonyms were also used to identify the universities where the participants were enrolled in the leadership preparation programs in order to add an additional level of protection around the individuals who participated in the interviews and observations. There were five assistant principals and one district administrator varying in ages from early

```
        Case One              Case Two              Case
                                                    Three

    University_          University_          University_
        A                    B                    C

    Melvina    Marvin    Jacob     Wesley    Belinda    Donald
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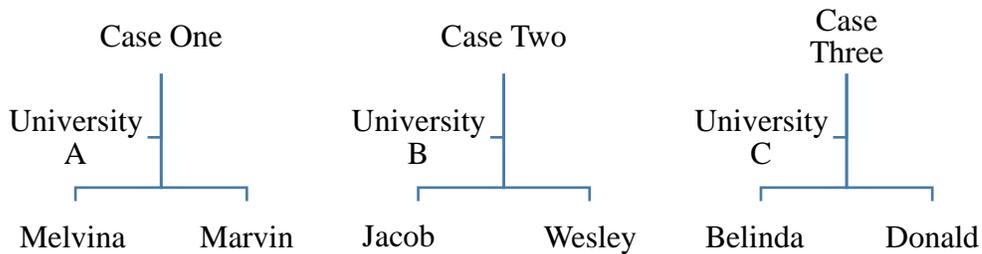
Figure 1. Case organization.

30s to late 40s, but each had been in the position three years or less. All interviews and observations occurred during the spring semester of the school year beginning in March and ending in May.

This distribution of participants enabled me to explore and compare the experiences of an equal number of participants from each of the universities while conducting within-case and cross-case analysis to search for themes. Creswell (2013) recommended not using more than five cases in a study as he believed that this would provide a reasonable number of cases to identify themes and conduct cross-case analysis. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants and universities.

TSLP site profiles. The three universities involved in this study were the recipients of the TSLP grant, which was intended to support the training and development of aspiring

principals in rural communities. Upon receiving the grant funds, the university partners made

significant changes to their master's degree curriculum to include collaboration and feedback

from local school district leaders in order to determine skills needed for principals to be

successful. Each university partner also designed a mentoring program to intensify the

experiences of the graduate students. Those three mentoring programs were the focus of the

study. The participants in the study were recruited to enroll in the TSLP at the university located

in the region where they worked. In order to protect the identity of the universities and the

graduate students, the actual names of the universities and participants were replaced with

pseudonyms. The following pseudonyms were used in place of the actual names of the

universities: University A, University B, and University C. All pseudonyms are depicted in Table

2 to make it easier to keep track of the participants and the universities they represent.

Table 2

Pseudonyms for TSLP Sites and Participants

Case Classification	Pseudonyms for TSLP Sites	Pseudonyms for Participants
Case One	University A	Melvina Marvin
Case Two	University B	Jacob Wesley
Case Three	University C	Belinda Donald

Research Methodology and Analysis

  Qualitative multiple case study. Qualitative research uses words and open-ended questions to explore a particular phenomenon. Qualitative research addresses the fundamental behaviors and perceptions of the participants in the study based on interpretation (Yin, 2014). I used the multiple case study approach to conduct a detailed study of the university-based mentoring component of the TSLP grant project. My goal was to study the perceptions and behaviors of newly hired TSLP graduates to determine specific characteristics of their mentoring experiences and to find evidence of authentic leadership behaviors.

  In this study, mentoring experiences were examined through participants' accounts of activities involving authentic practice, problem-solving, and active learning. Additionally, observations of TSLP graduates that were conducted in their new leadership roles were also examined for evidence of authentic leadership characteristics. The examination of university documents in the form of manuscript notes, outlining the background requirements and expectations for the TSLP mentors provided additional information about the mentoring support and the impact of that support on participants during their enrollment in the TSLP program.

  Data collection and analysis. The study used multiple data collecting techniques to gain an in-depth understanding of mentoring within the TSLP grant project. I examined criteria for selecting mentors, the role of mentors, and the transfer of learning once students had graduated from the program. Information was gathered for analysis through semistructured interviews, observations, and document reviews. That information was later coded, revealing overarching themes that are presented and discussed in this chapter. Participants were interviewed to understand the specific details of their mentoring experiences, including the opportunities to transfer theory to practice during field experiences. Through observations, I was able to record

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participants' abilities to transfer authentic leadership practices to their newly acquired leadership roles.

The first technique used for data collection was a semistructured interview. The instrument used was a semistructured interview guide (Appendix A). The guide contained open-ended interview questions. Additional follow-up questions were asked based on participants' answers. To ensure quality interviews, the interview process included the following criteria identified by Kvale (2007): (a) rich specific responses from interviewees, (b) short questions to elicit longer answers from the interview, (c) clarification of interviewee responses, (d) interviewer interpretation throughout, (e) interviewer verification of interviewee responses, and (f) interviewer reports of their accounts. The semistructured interview guide was aligned to the research questions. Initial questions on the interview guide related to the mentor's ability to connect theory with practice and whether or not those experiences prepared the participants for their current roles. Additional questions on the interview guide asked how the participants perceived and experienced mentoring during their participation in the leadership preparation program. Concluding questions were used to inquire about the participants' experiences in their new leadership roles. The participants were given a choice of either a face-to-face interview or an online video conference.

The second technique for data collection was field observations as the participants carried out their new leadership responsibilities. Observation information was recorded on the observation protocol form found in Appendix B. This provided some face-to-face interaction that allowed me to make direct observations of the participants and capture thick, rich descriptions of the participants' experiences in their leadership roles (Yin, 2014). The overarching question guiding the observations was, "What leadership behaviors do protégés

demonstrate while working in their new leadership roles subsequent to graduation from the

leadership preparation program?"

The participants were located in four geographical areas of the state – North, Central,

East, and West. After scheduling the visits with the participants, I traveled to each of the six

locations to spend a full day in their schools or central office. Observation time totaled

approximately 36 hours. During observations, I recorded descriptions of activities carried out by

the participants, and I also recorded descriptions of the work environment and my perception of

the relationship between the participants and their staff and students. Other recorded notes

reflected my thoughts regarding the overall disposition of each participant. Although I observed

unique activities during each observation, all participants were observed interacting with faculty

and students both formally and informally. Interactions included leading staff meetings,

conferencing about students, participating in IEP meetings, conducting classroom observations,

engaging in general discussions in hall, and conferencing with students regarding discipline

issues.

The third technique for data collection was document reviews. Documents are a stable

source of data that can be analyzed at multiple points during the research without alteration

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At the time of the study, each university partner was in the process of

writing about the TSLP grant project for a book that was to be published at a later date.

Therefore, they provided me with their rough draft notes that contained an overview of each of

their programs and outlined the requirements for mentoring applicants, the selection process, and

explanations of the mentors' responsibilities. Notes from the review of this information were

recorded on the document review form found in Appendix C. The data collection tool was

divided into four quadrants to collect information on skills and experiences of the mentors,

mentor training opportunities, roles and responsibilities of mentors and an explanation of the pairing process. The manuscript notes provided by the professors were explicit about the experience required of the mentor applicants, the amount of time the mentors would need to spend with the mentors, and the details of that interaction. There was no information in the manuscript notes that explained the rationale for mentor/protégé pairing decisions. I reviewed the notes to determine if there were themes common to those drawn from the interview transcripts and observation notes.

I followed the inductive data analysis approach to code and analyze the data (Yin 2014). Saldaña (2016) defined the coding process as "an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas or algorithms to follow" (p. 9). According to McMillan (2012), this process of qualitative data analysis begins with organizing the data by separating it into practical pieces per the sources. Data from recorded interviews, field notes from observations, and document review data were triangulated to establish and verify meaning. This method is known as methodological triangulation (Yin, 2014). Themes were analyzed within each case and across cases. All transcripts were reviewed multiple times to ensure that primary themes and patterns corroborated the data obtained from the interviews. Initially, a broad list of codes was developed. Codes were then merged, modified, and refined. As patterns emerged, themes were identified. The primary research questions were the focus for the theme identification. Focused coding was then conducted and the transcripts, observation notes, and manuscript notes were reread line by line to locate and identify themes.

Multiple data sources. Recorded interviews, field notes from observations, and document review data were triangulated to establish and verify meaning. This method is known as methodological triangulation (Yin, 2014). The use of multiple data sources made the case

study findings more convincing and accurate. According to Stake (2010), the process of triangulation in qualitative research provides quality assurance to ensure that the case study is the result of a disciplined approach rather than simply a matter of perception. Triangulation can be achieved by using multiple points of data to establish and verify meaning (2003). I was able to use multiple data sources to gain a more in-depth understanding of university-based mentoring within the context of the TSLP. Accounts of the participants' mentoring experiences in the leadership preparation program at University A, University B, and University C were compared with actions observed in the participants' current leadership roles and manuscript notes that outlined each university's mentoring expectations and requirements for field experiences. Through triangulation of data sources, I was able to examine consistencies and inconsistencies in the results.

Summary of the Findings

The study focused on university-based mentoring, and it was guided by one central research question and four subquestions that were posed in order to understand the authenticity of participants' field-based experiences. Six themes and eleven subthemes emerged as a result of the coding process. The themes focused on the competencies of the mentors, relationships, relevance of experiences, the support mentors provided for their protégés and the subsequent leadership competences demonstrated by the protégés once hired as administrators.

The three techniques of data collection used in the study were interviews, observations, and document reviews. The participants were very relaxed during the interviews. They did not appear to be reluctant to share information. In fact, many of the participants expressed that they wanted to make sure that I heard how helpful the TSLP grant project was in helping them to acquire the leadership skills needed to be successful as a school administrator. Marvin

commented, "I believe in this program because I know how it has affected me as a professional and I know how much stronger it has made me as a leader now and as a person." Additionally, Belinda expressed, "I think we were lucky. I think we had great mentors as far as that goes and the university really hit the nail on the head as far as preparing us for our next steps to be leaders." Marvin added,

> I wish everybody could do it. In all seriousness, I talk about the TSLP project all the time. The training that I've had – the education through the university. There are teachers that I work with who listen to me talk about the program and they're upset because they didn't get to do it. A lot of what we did was true hands-on, practical experiences. Even when we did research, we would put our ideas together and it was always something that I could turn around and use at my school. I truly enjoyed the training that was provided through the TSLP project.

The participants' responses aligned with what researchers describes as authentic field experiences that connect theory and practice. In addition to the interviews, field observations enabled me to collect data in natural settings as the participants worked in their new jobs as administrators. The participants were observed exhibiting leadership competencies acquired as a result of the leadership preparation program. Document reviews revealed additional data to support the themes.

According to information gathered during the study, university officials designed a framework for the students' field experiences to include mentoring. Additionally, they recruited the most capable mentors by establishing explicit experience criteria for potential mentors and providing ongoing training and support for mentors during the mentoring process. All three universities required mentoring candidates to have at least three-five years of experience as a

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principal, current or recent principal experience, successful completion of a certified mentoring training, active membership in a professional leadership organization, and proof of a high level of success in their principal roles. Once hired, the mentors' processes were guided by a well-designed framework that included a minimum of three face-to-face meetings in the field over the 10-month duration of the mentoring experience and weekly or biweekly communication using email, text messaging, Facetime or other virtual means.

Participants described their field experiences, which were guided by mentors, as being based on real-life or authentic issues. When considering factors that facilitated their ability to fulfill their new leadership duties, the participants recalled several positive factors that attributed to their successes subsequent to graduating from the program. Participants recollected field experiences that focused on current issues with students and instruction. All participants agreed that their leadership experiences while participating in the TSLP shared many similarities to their current leadership experiences.

Moreover, participants expressed that they were very confident in carrying out leadership duties in their new roles. This was verified in the observation data that revealed such leadership characteristics as confident, empathetic, resourceful and self-aware. Several participants referenced being able to retrieve relevant resources collected during their graduate studies that aided in their accomplishment of current work-related goals. Additionally, I observed many of the participants' demonstration of resourcefulness as they used a variety of creative strategies to support their teachers and students. During one observation of Marvin, he worked with a local university's public relations program made up of undergraduate students, to plan strategies for creating a promotional campaign for the school district. The public relations majors had already created and marketed a new motto for the district under Marvin's direction. This was a creative

way for the school to get inexpensive advertisement and the local undergraduates to get authentic field experience. I also observed as Jacob conducted an observation in a teacher's classroom. He recorded notes on his laptop and then joined the teacher in facilitating small group work and giving feedback to the students. He demonstrated a high level of knowledge of pedagogy. Before leaving the room, he emailed feedback to the teacher. Additionally, I observed Melvina as she sat in on an IEP meeting facilitated by the Special Education teacher. The high school student was quiet during the meeting. Malvina was able to get her to speak on her own behalf about which services had been helpful to her and which were services not. Melvina told me later that she felt it important that students' voices are heard when it comes to their learning.

Presentation of Data and Results

The six themes and eleven subthemes germane to the study have been organized under the central research question or one of the research subquestions. Figure 1 illustrates that organization. The following six themes – mentoring expectations, mentor attributes, intentional selection, real-world experience, authentic, and leadership competencies surfaced. Each of the themes contained one to three sub themes. Generally, the themes focused on the competencies of the mentors, relationships, relevance of experiences and the support mentors provided for their protégés. Additionally, there was a concentration on the nature of the field experiences and the acquisition of leadership skills. All of this information is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

Research Questions and Themes

Central Research Question	Research Subquestion one	Research Subquestion two	Research Subquestion three	Research Subquestion four
How does the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP) provide authentic leadership opportunities that are intended to prepare aspiring leaders for employment in 21st century learning environments?"	How do TSLP officials select and prepare mentors to facilitate the leadership development of aspiring principals?	What factors do protégés associate with their ability or inability to fulfill their new leadership roles?	How do protégés describe their current leadership experiences compared to experiences provided during their field practices?	What leadership behaviors do protégés demonstrate while working in their new leadership roles after graduating from the leadership preparation program?
Theme One	**Theme Three**	**Theme Four**	**Theme Five**	**Theme Six**
Mentoring Expectations	Intentional Selection	Real-World Experience	Authentic	Leadership Competencies
Subtheme One	**Subtheme One**	**Subtheme One**	**Subtheme One**	**Subtheme One**
Role of the mentor	Field placement	Student-Centered	Transfer of Learning	Disposition
Subtheme Two		**Subtheme Two**		**Subtheme Two**
Mentoring methods		Instructional Focus		Skills Acquisition
Subtheme Three				
Relationships				
Theme Two				
Mentor Attributes				
Subtheme One				
Transparency				

Central research question. The central research question for this study was, "How does the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP) provide authentic leadership opportunities that are intended to prepare aspiring leaders for employment in 21st-century learning environments?" As the participants talked about their leadership experiences during their participation in TSLP, it was clear that for most of them each school visit and mentoring conversation was intentionally planned to expose them to authentic issues and, often, real-time problem-solving activities. The participants were very excited to talk about the relevance of what they had experienced and the fact that much of it could be replicated in their current leadership roles. Marvin expressed it this way, "Positivity, creativity, being motivated, communication, having that relationship with our faculty and staff and the administration. Everything that I did at University A, I use in my career every single day."

Donald stated that "it's all about having to capability to go and make those changes in your own school. That was one of the things that I took from the program." Additionally, Jacob stated "The world becomes smaller as I got to know all of the people in the program and cooperating schools and now, I can call on people in different counties to ask for ideas according to what they are doing so that I can improve my school." Those experiences were guided by mentors who had been carefully selected, trained and paired to support the leadership development of the TSLP students. Explicit mentoring expectations and a carefully outlined support structure were revealed as contributors to the authentic nature of the TSLP leadership experiences.

Theme 1: Mentoring expectations. The theme Mentoring Expectations surfaced during the coding process. Within this theme, the role of the mentor, mentoring methods, and relationships emerged as subthemes in response to the research question, "How does the

Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP) provide authentic leadership opportunities that are intended to prepare aspiring leaders for employment in 21st-century learning environments?" A review of manuscript notes revealed that the university officials provided authentic leadership opportunities by hiring experienced mentors to dedicate their time and expertise to supporting the leadership preparation students during their field experiences. Historically, mentoring during field experiences was provided by local school level administrators working in the same district as the student and many times by the principal of the student. University officials used funds from the TSLP grant to improve the mentoring component of the leadership preparation program by taking control of the selection and hiring of mentors. Officials from all three universities developed a mentoring component to include persons dedicated solely to facilitating the field experiences of the TSLP graduate students. According to DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond & Haycock (2007), factors such as the mentor's level of experience, reputation in the school and community, effectiveness as a school leader, credentials, training, and educational background can be considered. Each university outlined clear expectations for the mentors beginning with the requirements for the mentoring positions.

All three universities required mentoring candidates to have at least three-five years of experience as a principal. Additional requirements by the three universities were current or recent principal experience, successful completion of a certified mentoring training, active membership in a professional leadership organization, and proof of a high level of success in their principal roles. According to the manuscript notes made available by University C, their mentors were recognized by leadership organizations as accomplished school leaders. In addition to supporting field experiences, officials from University C required mentors to guide participants in their course work, provide seminars, and facilitate action research projects.

Manuscript notes outlined a clearly defined role for mentors and established a structure that set guidelines for the amount of interaction between mentors and protégés including the importance of taking time to build good relationships. According to the manuscript notes from university C, an informal review of the TSLP program revealed that the success of the mentoring component of the program was due in part to the mentors' professional reputations among professional leadership organizations as being top experts in their field, their confidence in their mentoring and leadership abilities, their regular presence and participation in class sessions, and frequent collaboration with the leadership preparation students to develop plans for field experiences and other research projects.

Subtheme 1: Role of the mentor. According to accounts by several of the participants in the study, most of the mentors understood the importance of their role as a teacher who provided an environment conducive to self-reflection and thoughtful application of leadership skills. Participants were exposed to learning environments in the field that caused them to think deeply about the skills needed to become effective leaders and affect change. Melvina who was from University A, spoke very candidly about her experiences. Melvina is serving as a high school assistant principal in a rural community. Melvina, stated,

> the mentoring experience impacted my thought process and helped me open my eyes to other points of view and to recognize the need to analyze and consider different angles/other points of view in all situations, keeping in mind the need of the students. I really think I learn from reflecting on my experiences. That takes a little time to really get used to and really be true to myself, but I have to use that in my role and even in my thoughts and my actions.

Donald from University C, serving as a middle school assistant principal in a small rural

community revealed that he learned valuable leadership lessons such as,

> being able to have those conversations with faculty that a lot of people don't like to have
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> because they are trying to avoid a confrontation. They taught me that you can do it, but if
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> you do it in the right way, you're not doing it to insult them.

The role of the mentors was clearly defined and communicated to all partners.

According to the manuscript notes, the mentors selected for the program were touted as being

highly skilled as principals and had formal training in mentoring practices. The manuscript notes

also revealed that these two attributes were a part of the criteria for mentoring candidates. The

explicit criteria for mentoring candidates laid the foundation for a successful mentor/protégé

experience.

Subtheme 2: Mentoring methods. Manuscript notes provided by the university outlined

very specific requirements for interactions between mentors and protégés. All three universities

required at least three face-to-face meetings in the field over the 10-month duration of the

mentoring experience. Additionally, the universities required weekly or biweekly

communication using email, text messaging, Facetime or other virtual means. The mentors

arranged for the TSLP students to complete observations and intern hours in schools led by

highly successful principals. According to Donald, a TSLP graduate from University C, his

mentor was very strategic about schools selected for him to visit. Donald stated,

> Each mentor took people to different locations. I think she wanted to connect me with
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> the principal in Carolina because of his background and how he changed a couple of
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> schools, so I think she did that for a reason. She understood me. She knew where I
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> needed to go.

Donald lived in the community where he worked, so he was able to develop a relationship with his students. On the first day that I arrived to do observe him, Donald had driven a bus load of students to the Career Technical Center to receive an orientation. He stated that he would do whatever it took to make sure his students got what they needed. His mentor seemed to find field sites with leaders who modeled this same determination. Donald recognized and appreciated this effort. The mentors from University C collaborated with the aspiring leaders, using self-assessment data from the Leading-Edge Development Program (Murphy, 2014) to create individualized plans for their leadership development. The plans for development focused on the following domains: personal leadership, cultural leadership, visionary leadership, organizational leadership, instructional leadership, and influential leadership. I did not find any information in the Manuscript notes that indicated that the other two universities developed plans for their protégés using such formal resources. However, manuscript notes from University B revealed that mentors were chosen based in part on their specialized experience (e.g., school turnaround), and mentor training or certification. The manuscript notes for University B also indicated that their mentors were required to model desired leadership behaviors, guide mentees through the setting and completion of learning plans, and assist mentees in arranging and completing defined field experiences.

Additionally, participants from other universities mentioned that many of the school assignments were tailored to their needs. Jacob is a TSLP student from University B. At the time of his participation in TSLP he taught in a district where many of the schools in the most rural areas of the county had a very low student enrollment where some elementary grades may need to be paired because of low numbers. His mentor arranged for him to visit schools with similar demographics since his chances of acquiring a leadership role in his current district was

great. After graduating from the program, Jacob became an assistant principal at a small rural high school in that same school district. He believed that the experiences provided by his mentor in rural schools prepared him for his current responsibilities. Jacob stated,

My mentor helped me by putting me in a school that was rural. Say, for instance, she put me into H. High School as well and a school in another state call M. Intermediate. Those schools were rural schools, so she set me up to where those schools were related to my current district. It helped me out tremendously because it was basically the exact same as my school currently. And so, it pretty much set me up to understand how a rural school should run throughout a schoolyear.

Subtheme 3: Relationships. It was clear from the interviews that the relationships between mentors and protégés were nurtured throughout the duration of the leadership program. The mentors hired by university C were expected to plan and lead four internship seminars (double the traditional number of seminars) for the purpose of presenting additional information, clarifying internship information, and strengthening the mentoring relationship with the aspiring school leaders. The mentors collaborated with the aspiring school leaders and developed extensive internship plans that outlined a schedule of experiences, activities, and supplemental work to ensure successful internships. It appears that the mentors from university C took on more of a structured teaching role than mentors associated with University A and University B. This allowed more time for the mentors from University C to get to know their aspiring leaders and therefore, further customize their time spent in the field. One of the participants commenting on the mentors was Belinda who was an assistant principal in a rural high school. Belinda was very energetic during my visit with her. She monitored the halls during the morning, met with teachers during their planning periods, collaborated with the counselor regarding testing issues,

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consulted with the principal about scheduling and so much more. She credited her confidence and ability to do her work with ease, mainly to the support she received from her mentor. When responding about University C mentors, Belinda stated,

> I would say that the group of mentors we had, I couldn't express how professional, and how organized they were, and how even when you were down, they would lift you up – and literally teach you how to do things. They let us know exactly what was required and showed us how to write an action plan for our research when we started to do that. They really sat down with us and talked about our ideas.

Although the relationships between the mentors and their protégés was mostly positive, there were some issues revealed during the interviews that may have caused a disconnect for some protégés. Wesley, one of the TSLP students from University B, had difficulty building a relationship with his mentor due to scheduling problems. Wesley struggled with getting release time from his district to do observations in other schools. He also did not have regular communication with his mentor as was required according to university manuscript notes. When asked about his working relationship with his mentor, Wesley commented,

> That mentor meant well and everything, but I'm just going to be honest. That mentor really didn't help me out a whole lot. When it came to going out in the field where I had to do my internship, I never really saw my mentor. Actually, I talked with her briefly on the phone. She did come to visit me in my office when we first started, and she talked with me about some things that I wanted to do in this program and how she could help. She wanted to be very helpful, but she just didn't reach out to me much after that. I think some of that was my fault. My superintendent didn't really want me to be released for a lot of these different classes and internships… It was just kind of different for me, so I

think some of that had an impact as far as her (the mentor) not being able to schedule time to spend with me like she could have.

Despite not having regular contact with his assigned mentor, Wesley was able to solicit help from principals in the surrounding area. Once being hired as a high school principal, Wesley maintained contact with those principals and also received mentoring support from University B due to his difficult experience during the program. Of the six study participants, only one reported not having a positive relationship with his mentor. All other participants could not say enough about the positive relationships. Based on the expectations of the universities, the mentors were required to know their protégés well enough to provide field experiences designed to meet their specific needs and required to communicated regularly with them. Additionally, the mentors were formally prepared for their roles. All of these factors may have played a role in the building of positive relationships.

Theme 2: Mentor attributes. The participants spoke favorably and often of the positive attributes of their mentors. Melvina stated that her mentor was "an accomplished turnaround school administrator who held to core values and beliefs that fostered leadership skills necessary to take the theoretical principles and implement those in an effective practice." Marvin spoke about how his mentor modeled the art of thoughtful decision making. Whenever he was approached with a difficult situation his mentor was able to handle the situation calmly after taking time to think things through. As he reflected on his mentor's characteristics Marvin stated, "whenever he received a phone call or whatever, he was never getting excited or jumping up and down, it was – let me look into it. That was something I really was able to learn from him – to back up – to think about it." Donald mentioned that his mentor was thoughtful about his field placement. He stated, "She wanted to connect me with the principal in this one high school

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because of his background and how he changed a couple of schools, so I think she did that for a reason. She understood me. She knew where I needed to go."

There were several mentions of the importance of transparency which emerged as a subtheme during the analysis of the transcripts. Selection and training of mentors are essential to creating a learning environment that focuses on experiences that facilitate knowledge transfer (Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). As discussed previously, the three participating universities provided explicit criteria for potential mentors during the selection process. According to participant interview responses, the careful selection and preparation of mentors yielded a team of mentors who were successful in building positive working relationships with their protégés. The graduates spoke of mentoring support that was unbiased and transparent, making it easier to create relevant connections during field experiences. The mentors who were selected came with reputations that included successful leadership and mentoring. Participants commented on the mentors' high level of knowledge, expertise, and confidence regarding leadership practices and the ability of the mentors to prepare them for future leadership roles. When commenting on his ability to connect with his mentor, Marvin stated,I think the parts that attributed to that is transparency and his openness, being able to talk about the theory of education and what we know and how we can improve that to get better. And always have that open line of communication that was huge. I feel that from the very beginning he didn't have a personal agenda. Sometimes when I get with administrators, and district leaders, and state leaders, you can almost tell that there is an agenda that's not 100% about students.
 Marvin's work with his mentor became even more valuable after he graduated from the program. Marvin's mentor was an administrator at a district office. Once Marvin graduated from the TSLP he was hired as a district administrator to manage a special program. He stated during

his interview that he was still able to keep in touch with his mentor to continue to learn from him.

It was revealed during the interviews and verified in the manuscript notes that the mentors did not work in the same districts as their protégés. This strategy removed the mentors from any possible connection to inside office politics, or any other problems going on in that district. Many of the participants commented on the fact that they felt much more comfortable sharing sensitive information with their mentors because they were not connected to any of the people in their district. Additionally, there were comments made about the mentors being able to remain unbiased throughout the mentoring process. Melvina stated, "Because they were removed by distance, my specific mentor was able to really provide me with unbiased opinions, thoughts and talks that were completely unrelated to the political ambitions of those around me." The intentional decision to select mentors outside the districts where the students worked made it possible for mentors and their protégés to develop relationships grounded in trust.

Subtheme 1: Transparency. The mentors were described by the participants as being open and transparent. Five of the six participants expressed that they could talk to their mentors about anything. According to information from the document review, the universities selected mentors who worked outside of the districts where their protégés worked. One participant expressed that they believed this was the reason for the mentors' candor. Marvin, from university A, expressed that he really felt connected to his mentor early on in the relationship because of his open line of communication and willingness to talk about anything. Additionally, Marvin's mentor invited him to his district for a first-hand view of an innovative program that he had developed. The mentor was very open about obstacles that caused problems for the project and how those problems were solved. The program was highly successful at the time of Marvin's participation

in TSLP. Therefore, the mentor was not obligated to share any negative aspects of the program, but chose to do so in order for Marvin to understand the complete process. Donald, from university C, mentioned transparency in reference to one of the school sites where his mentor arranged for him to visit. He ended up going back for several visits because the principal was highly successful and very transparent about what was going on in his school. Donald expressed the following thoughts about those visits:

The principal really gave me a transparent view of his leadership process. One of the things he instilled in me was that the process needs to be looked at before anything changes. You look at it from the start – all the way back to someone driving up to your school. That process has to be looked at when you are planning to do something. Also, involve your school and find out what they think. That really got into my head.

Transparent leadership from the mentors and most of the principals in the field sites appeared to have a positive effect on the participants. This was evidenced by their comments during the interviews.

Research subquestion 1. Research subquestion one for this study was, "How do TSLP officials select and prepare mentors to facilitate the leadership development of aspiring principals?" The document review process revealed that the three participating universities had a similar process for selecting mentors for the TSLP program. One common practice already mentioned to recruit outside of the TSLP students' districts. Aspiring students were often mentored by someone in their district and even in their school while participating in a leadership preparation program. Some participants revealed that this common practice often made it difficult to build trusting relationships where mentor and protégé could have candid dialogue. According to Melvina and Marvin, the fact that the mentors were removed by distance, enabled

them to provide unbiased opinions that were not influenced by political issues. Additionally, there was the requirement for mentors to have some type of prior formal mentoring training. This ensured that they would come into the job with an understanding of their role as mentors. Moreover, the selection of mentors and their preparation appeared strategic.

Theme 3: Intentional selection. Manuscript notes provided by university officials and interview transcript information were used to answer the research question, "How do TSLP officials select and prepare mentors to facilitate the leadership development of aspiring principals?" This question was also answered when addressing the central research question. The mentoring program was touted as being the reason for the positive experiences reported on by the participants. Intentional selection was the common theme that surfaced. Specifically, participants commented on the level of expertise and knowledge possessed by their mentors. Participants believed that the universities searched for and acquired high quality mentors by establishing high standards for qualification. In order to qualify as a candidate for mentor, applicants were required to have successfully completed training from a nationally recognized mentor training program. Although there was not specific information provided by the universities regarding how decisions were made regarding specific pairing, there appeared to be great care placed on the selection of the mentors as well as the selection of the students participating in the TSLP grant program.

According to University A, "The mentors were selected because they had successful experiences in Alabama's rural schools and understood ramifications of the job." The focus on rural schools was a key component of the TSLP grant. Therefore, the students chosen for the program worked in rural school districts in several locations across the state. The goals for the mentor-protégé relationship were communicated at the onset of the mentoring process. This set

the stage for a safe environment where both mentor and protégés built a positive mentoring organization. From selection of the mentors and protégés, to outlining the expectations of the mentoring relationship, nothing was left to chance. All the actions related to creating the mentoring environment were intentionally planned.

One responsibility of the mentors was to work collaboratively with their protégés to pair them with certain school principals or district leaders to see good leadership practices. Participants commented that the mentors made good choices regarding this pairing. The participants spent a considerable number of hours in schools observing principals and district administrators. As the participants spoke of these observations, they mentioned the commonalities between them and the principal. It was apparent that the mentors spent time studying their protégés' strengths, interests, weaknesses, and current environment to intentionally expose them to leaders who would provide them with meaningful experiences and help them make important connections in the leadership field.

Subtheme 1: Field placement. As mentioned earlier, the mentors were responsible for finding locations for mentors to observe leadership competencies. These selection decisions were made in collaboration with the protégés. Manuscript notes from University A revealed lessons learned in field placement. An official from University A wrote,

Customizing field experiences to prepare aspiring school leaders requires collaboration. Intentional planning of relevant experiences must occur in collaboration with multiple parties for true customization. Though the rural education grant targeted a similar demographic population, the individual rural school environments were vastly different. Recognizing the various areas that need to be considered can guide the planning for effective field experiences.

This speaks to the difficulty of making meaningful placements, and it also speaks to the importance of intentional placement. One of the participants from university A spoke very highly of his field experiences and the relevance, providing several examples, while the other agreed, but did not have as many examples to support her belief. Marvin described his experience at two of the main locations where he was provided field experience as follows:

> It was the same as what I do all day and what I see principals do all day. The way they kind of just turned me loose to see how things worked from a practical side again, instead of kind of giving me the dog and pony show. And the school was almost exactly like the school where I taught in. To see how they dealt with those students, those teachers and then seeing how we could do it better and more effectively.

Malvina had a slightly different perspective regarding the selection of field sites. She stated,

> I feel like when I go in as a visitor, I really don't see the inner workings of a school. I get to see the wonderful things going on and maybe an area of weakness that the school is focusing on, but I think I was sheltered from the 'real' inner workings in those settings which I observed and participated.

Through document research, officials from University A expressed that one of the barriers to effective placement was the time that was needed to plan intently with participating district partners to allow for authentic experiences. Communication was also listed as an essential component to the success of field placements.

In the manuscript notes provided for review, University B officials indicated that they required mentors to provide modules documenting the field experience of their protégés, including support from mentors during field experiences. The documentation showed that although all mentors from University B met the requirement to select and arrange field

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experiences, the degree of implementation varied among the mentors. However, manuscript notes also revealed that the amount and quality of feedback mentors provided their protégés varied. An official from University B wrote,

> All three mentors were judged to have fully completed the responsibilities assigned to them; however, a review of feedback provided indicated variation in the amount of quality of feedback mentors provided their mentees. This was confirmed as a concern in the mentee survey.

Wesley expressed the following concerns about his mentor,

> When it came to going out in the field where I had to do my internship…, I never really saw my mentor. I talked with her on the phone. She did come to visit me in my office when we first started, and she talked with me about some things that I wanted to do in this program and how she could help. She wanted to be very helpful, but she just didn't reach out to me.

In contrast, Jacob was very pleased with his mentor:

> She helped me out tremendously because it was basically the exact same as my school currently. And so, it pretty much set me up to understand how a rural school should run throughout a schoolyear. I helped write what instruction should look like within a teacher's classroom pertaining to different areas, such as how it should look while teaching, using the technology, how students should be reacting and things like that. Also, I learned how to keep up with my budget. The school's budget, the Title I budget, I did this at the high school. There was a very experienced bookkeeper which I talked to because I had to understand how the books were working because the money for Title 1

schools are very important. The money needs to be spent, but it must be spent the correct way. There were real life situations.

Manuscript notes provided by University C explicitly stated that field experiences were "guided by accomplished expert mentors." The notes also revealed that the mentors worked side-by-side with the participants to develop content and assignments for field experiences. The mentors also collaborated with the participants to develop action research that was conducted in the schools by the participants. The mentors played a key role in collecting data throughout the duration of the mentoring program in order to inform officials of the status of the program.

A distinction can be made between the mentoring communities of University C and the other two universities. Participants from University C spoke of several times where mentors who were not directly assigned to them helped them with an assignment, collaborated on several group projects, and even helped them with job searches at the end of the program. Participants from the other two universities only spoke of services provided by the mentor specifically assigned to them. Belinda from University C had the following to say about the mentors:

> Not only did my mentor use her connections in the system where she was from, I also used other mentors that were in our cohort, but not my personal mentor, and their connections as well to get into as many schools that we possibly could that had success in turning around struggling schools – so that we could get a good view of what made them successful. Without those connections, left to do it on our own, I don't know if we would have had the same experience.

Donald added, "I got to see a variety of things in the field: high end, low end and medium, which is the school where things just kind of flowed every day and then there were some with a lot of drama with kids dropping the 'F' bomb regularly."

As stated earlier in the study, the universities took great care in setting the criteria and expectations for the mentors during the selection process. The mentors then had to learn about their protégés in order to plan quality and relevant experiences in the field. The participants spoke extensively about their mentors knowing just what they needed and providing them with field experiences matched to their needs. There was an intentional selection of mentors, resulting in highly skilled partners for protégés. Additionally, mentors collaborated with their protégés to make intentional choices regarding field experiences.

Research sSubquestion 2. Research subquestion two for this study was, "What factors do protégés associate with their ability or inability to fulfill their new leadership roles?" At the time of the study, participants had completed the TSLP leadership preparation program, received certification in education leadership, and were working in their first or second year as principal, assistant principal or district administrator. They had many comments about what contributed to their abilities to do their job and what could be considered a hindrance. Their responses showed a consistent focus in the TSLP on leadership strategies for improving teacher performance and increasing student achievement. Some participants were able to get hands-on experience, participating in classroom observations and developing teacher practice indicators, while others spoke of candid dialogue between mentor and protégé related to innovative practices. Additionally, some mentors had opportunities to be exposed to effective leadership practices through multiple observations in schools.

Theme 4: Real-world experience. The Southern Regional Education Board (2005) expressed that university leaders should provide authentic learning experiences that are connected to current issues in education. That connection emerged as a theme titled real-world experience and two subthemes which were student-centered and instructional focus. The

participants stated that the experiences they were exposed to in the field and through conversations with their mentors were relevant to what was currently happening in schools. Many participants expressed that their mentors were very candid about issues they dealt with on a regular basis and how they engaged in problem solving. To add additional real-world experiences to that being provided by their mentors, University A provided two face-to-face meetings and multiple online meetings led by a principal who had be recognized nationally for his success in turning around struggling schools. The purpose of this ongoing seminar was to provide students with collective, real-time, on the job work with this principal as he modeled how to create a system to build teacher capacity for success. The participants spoke of responsibilities such as building teacher capacity for success and motivating at-risk students as they reflected on their current responsibilities.

Participants from University C had the opportunity to conduct action research projects facilitated by their mentors. The action research topics dealt with current issues that were relevant to the schools where the action research was being conducted. Additionally, the mentors worked with participants to develop extensive case studies of those schools in order to showcase the results of the action research in several professional settings. Belinda, from University C, asserted,

> The action research project that we worked on in our team, with our mentor helped me to know that any school could do an action research project – that they could have an idea and work together to research and test it out. I have carried that knowledge and those skills to the school where I am now. As far as looking at the data and participating in action research during the program. Learning how to break down that data and compare and analyze it.

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Jacob commented about several opportunities to solve real-world issues such as a bullying issue where he was able to provide input after consulting with the principal on the details involved. Also, he participated in leadership development meetings where he provided input on classroom evaluation tools and other discipline issues.

Generally, the participants were placed in settings where there was transparency and they were able to experience situations that matched the reality of what is going on in today's classrooms. However, one participant did feel that in some instances the schools were not letting them see a true picture of their school. The participant stated that with some placements the principal would take them to a small number of previously selected classrooms and then take them to the office to answer questions rather than letting them roam freely to choose areas to observe.

Subtheme 1: Student-centered. All the participants made a connection between the student-centered focus in their leadership program and their tendency to be more focused on students rather than managerial tasks in their current roles. Although the participants stated that their professors and mentors did provide knowledge about certain managerial tasks related to school leadership responsibilities, the main focus was on being an instructional leader. Emphasis was placed on strategies to motivate both teachers and students, interpreting a variety of data, and strategies for how to respond appropriately to needs based on data.

University A participants spoke more about their mentors' experiences with improving student achievement and the dialogue they shared as they learned about the practices that their mentors employed to achieve their goals. Malvina mentioned that her mentor had been directly responsible for turning around a struggling school in a neighboring district, and he shared with her some strategies that led to that success. One strategy that stood out to her was the

importance of leveraging competing perspectives to achieve organizational goals. She believed this to be important when reaching consensus about the direction of one's program and goals. Marvin's mentor was responsible for starting an innovative program in his district that allowed flexibility of when high school students received instruction. The school days were customized to meet the needs of students rather than teachers. Marvin spoke of how candid his mentor was about the difficulties encountered along the way. At the time of Marvin's mentoring experience, the program was highly acclaimed, but his mentor shared the process from its inception to the present to reveal all the negatives that came before the positives during the development process. It was evident that the students were the focus and any problems that occurred were solved based on what the students needed. Marvin expressed that the problems he encountered in his current position have been solved by using his newly learned ability to, "face those problems with the students in mind."

University B participant, Jacob, spoke of opportunities to get hands-on experience working with students. One encounter involved a discipline issue with a high school student who felt that she was being bullied. Jacob had the opportunity to listen to the student and provide feedback that led to a positive solution. Jacob commented that he was also able to provide input related to the reinstatement of a student who had been expelled. He could review the data on the student and the circumstances of the incident to provide input.

University C participant Donald was exposed multiple times to one environment in a high school where students were the focus. Donald spoke very excitedly about a high school principal located in a neighboring state who made sure that every student had an individualized learning plan complete with short term and long-term goals. According to Donald, the students knew their academic status based on data and could hold a conversation with you about that data, their

goals, and the activities they were engaged in that would help them realize their goals. Donald stated that he visited the school several times and at every visit he pulled several random students with whom he could hold this conversation.

Subtheme 2: Instructional focus. One of the domains studied in the aspiring leaders' program is instructional leadership, so it is no surprise that there was a strong focus on instructional standards and strategies designed to improve instruction. However, the focus on instruction was strong enough to influence participants' behavior after graduating from the leadership program. In his new role, Marvin was responsible for all career tech programs in his school district. He worked very closely with the curriculum department to ensure that the career tech students meet all necessary requirements for instructional standards and academic technical skills completion. Marvin also identified opportunities to integrate the work of standards-based and technical skills-based instruction. He expressed that working with his mentor gave him the opportunity to see first-hand an innovative instructional program that served students who were not able to attend school during regular school hours. Marvin learned strategies from his mentor as he worked to establish the program which gave Marvin the confidence to apply for a grant to establish an innovative program in his own district.

Jacob spent several hours in classrooms, participating in the development of instructional indicators while participating in TSLP. As an assistant principal, he was responsible for observing teachers and providing feedback on their instructional practices. While in his school, I watched him completing an observation and he was comfortable in that role. He used a laptop to record observations and emailed feedback to the teacher before leaving the classroom. In that email, he arranged to meet with the teacher during her planning time to discuss the visit in more detail. He participated in discussions with faculty about instructional goals and spoke based on

data. At the time of the study, Jacob was in his first year as assistant principal, however, during two of my visits to his school, he was trusted by the principal to manage the school while he was away.

Wesley had to be ready to move into the role of instructional leader very quickly since his new role was that of principal. He talked extensively about one of the principals he observed who was very data-savvy and modeled how to be an instructional leader. According to Wesley, this principal knew the data in detail and knew how to help teachers use the data results to make needed adjustments in instruction. This principal led all of his data meetings and had his data on display in a special location within the school. He worked with his leadership team to track the data and improve instruction. This is a leadership skill that Wesley aspired to adapt as a new principal. Wesley stated, "that's something I want to do here. I don't want to just depend on my instructional coach to lead these data meetings." Wesley's goal was to engage his faculty in an active and intentional focus on instruction.

Belinda was able to use her field experience in a practical way as she focused on the continuous improvement process. Response to Intervention and the Problem-Solving Team to determine how those processes affected instruction. Once she took on the role of assistant principal, Belinda took on those same responsibilities and used what she had learned during participation in TSLP to collaborate with the faculty. Belinda's responses in the interview and behavior during onsite observations revealed that she was very data-driven. She mentioned that her TSLP professors and mentors always focused on data in order to making an impact on instruction.

Donald was also driven by the data, and he was exposed to schools where the principals were driven by data as well. Donald wanted to be a visionary leader who plans with a positive

end in mind. Additionally, he wanted to the mirror actions of a principal he observed who made sure that all of the students in his school followed their own data and set goals for their future. Donald believed that following student data closely would help determine a focus for students. Donald had been thinking about this for the students in his current school. He envisioned the students planning for college, a military career, or some sort of skilled labor, with educators making sure that students left school prepared for one of those paths.

Research subquestion 3. Research subquestion three for this study was, "How do protégés describe their current leadership experiences compared to experiences provided during their field practices?" The participants all referenced the fact that the real-life version of an instructional leader was much more intense than the student version from the university. However, the participants mentioned that they were surprised at how many strategies they were able to use in their current role. Five out of the six participants used the term "real." They talked about the fact that they had been exposed to a variety of real-life situations in the program and they were currently handling those same situations in their current role. Only one of the five participants felt that she was often sheltered from real-life situations because schools only wanted her to see good things going on within them.

Theme 5: Authentic. Within the theme Authentic, transfer of learning emerged as a subtheme in response to the research question, "How do protégés describe their current leadership experiences compared to experiences provided during their field practices?" Iucu and Marin (2014) referred to authentic learning experiences as those experiences that are relevant from the learner's perspective and positioned within suitable social contexts.

"Real" is the term that several of the participants used to describe their field experience in the program. They also stated that those experiences were relevant to the experiences occurring in their current roles as instructional leaders.

The participants talked about either witnessing or experiencing authentic situations that were going on in schools today. Their field experiences took place outside of the districts where they worked at the time, and many even traveled to a neighboring state for field experience. The terms "real," "realistic" and "real-time" were used to describe their experiences during participation in the TSLP leadership program and their current practice in their new leadership roles. There was a distinction made between those who were exposed to real-life situations through observation only and those who were able to gain hands-on experience during field work. All six participants agreed that their current work mirrored what they had been exposed to in the program, but also expressed that the program experiences could not compare to the actual responsibility for that work.

Melvina and Marvin from University A, Wesley from University B, and Donald from University C described experiences in the field that included more observation than hands-on opportunities. They all agreed that their experiences were valuable and that it was beneficial to see realistic best practices being modeled. They also spoke of the benefit in engaging in candid dialogue with highly effective leaders in the field.

Jacob from University B and Belinda from University C described more hands-on opportunities during their field experiences. Jacob engaged in collaborative classroom observations that included assisting with the development of indicators for effective instruction. These activities helped him to develop instructional expectations for teachers in his current school. Belinda also engaged in the development of expectations involving instructional

delivery and intervention support for students. This experience was immediately transferred to her new role when she recognized the need for similar efforts at her school soon after being hired.

Subtheme 1: Transfer of learning. The term "transferability" was used to describe the ability of participants to take strategies, skills, and knowledge from their experiences in the TSLP leadership program and begin using them immediately upon being hired in a leadership role. The program content was designed to equip students to be instructional leaders after graduating from the program. There were some ideas in the program that the participants thought would not be feasible in real-world situations. Exercises such as reflective practice and use of technology to engage in collaborative dialogue did not seem to transfer into real work situations. However, most of the participants talked about using reflective practice, facilitating collaborative dialogue, and using technology more than they normally would.

As Marvin transitioned from the classroom to his new leadership role, he also had to contend with new district leadership. With the new leadership came many changes in infrastructure and philosophy. Marvin recalled that his mentor and professors talked about the difficulty of change and strategies for how to deal with and facilitate change. Marvin was able to transfer what he learned about handling change into his new role. When asked about what the program had prepared him for, he replied,

> The other thing that I feel like they did prepare me for and this is what we've said all
> through the master's program and that is, change is hard. And we always had that mantra
> when I got the administrator job. The first year I kind of thought that it would be pretty
> easy because of all the changes that were taking place and it was going to be exciting.

Then year 2 would be much more difficult because that's where you have to start figuring

out where your returns are being made.

Because of his preparation in the leadership program, Marvin was able to embrace the change

with confidence and preparedness.

Wesley also spoke about being able to directly transfer some of what he learned in the

program into his new role as principal of a preK-12 school. Although Wesley did not have a

positive experience with his mentor, the university ensured that he spent time in schools where

he could make relevant connections. He had a strong background in technology but no

experience using technology as a management and communication tool in schools. Wesley was

assigned to a principal who used technology to communicate with teachers, perform

observations, and plan. Wesley spoke of how he was able to transfer this knowledge to his new

responsibilities:

I have incorporated some technology with the remind app. I connect with the teachers a

lot by sending little quick announcements to their cell phones. For instance, I just sent

out one reminding them to bring their book study books to our faculty meeting this past

Monday. So, things like that. Even when I am at home, I can send them a quick

announcement that will go straight to their cell phone. I also use email a lot for

communication. Also, School Cast. I use that a lot. They jokingly tell me that I overuse

School Cast. I use that a lot to communicate with parents and the community.

The participants spoke about the confidence of their mentors and some of the principals

they observed. After observing them in their new roles, I would say that they have all managed

to transfer that confidence to their own character. They all displayed a confidence that gave the

impression that they had been serving in their leadership roles for far longer than their actual experience of 1-2 years.

   Research subquestion 4. Research subquestion four of this study was, "What leadership behaviors do protégés demonstrate while working in their new leadership roles after graduating from the leadership preparation program?" This question was answered based on direct observations. I visited each of the participants and followed them throughout their workday, capturing their actions. Most of the behaviors I observed mirrored those the participants had talked about during the interview as they recalled their field experiences. Each of the participants exhibited strong leadership skills and exhibited a great deal of confidence in their new roles.

   Theme 6: Leadership competencies. Workplace observations of each of the participants were conducted to learn first-hand what responsibilities were contained within their new leadership roles. This was in response to the research question, "What leadership behaviors do protégés demonstrate while working in their new leadership roles after graduating from the leadership preparation program?" The theme that emerged from this observation was Leadership Competencies. Disposition and skills acquisition emerged as subthemes. The purpose of the TSLP grant project was to create leaders who were ready to take on leadership roles upon exiting the program. Authentic leadership was described as "a synergistic combination of self-awareness, sensitivity to the needs of others, ingenuity, honesty and transparency regarding self and others" (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015). As I observed the participants in their work setting, I was able to determine what leadership competencies were demonstrated and if any of those competencies could be characterized as authentic leadership. Based on my observations, all participants demonstrated their newly acquired leadership skills with

confidence, and they appeared to enjoy themselves as they worked. Their coworkers and students responded to them in a positive manner and those who were assistant principals had the full support of their principals. During observations, I was introduced to each of the principals of the participants serving in the role of assistant principal, and they expressed that they were very pleased with the preparation of their assistants and pledged their full support.

During interviews, some participants revealed that they were reflective about their current practices as a result of participating in the TSLP. Many stated that this was a carryover behavior from their participation in the leadership preparation program. Donald expressed that reflecting helped him to find a balance between dictating to others and partnering with others to accomplish goals. Melvina stated, "I think I'm more intentional on a daily basis when it comes to self-reflection. And I think that's important. I know people say we learn from our experiences, but I really think I learn from reflecting on my experiences."

Subtheme 1: Disposition. I have written extensively about the tasks the participants were exposed to during their field experience and the tasks they completed in the new roles as instructional leaders. I also observed the disposition of the participants as they carried out these duties. The temperament of the participants can be described as anywhere from happy to completely ecstatic. They were full of energy, moving about the school and handling their business with confidence. The following dispositions were discovered among the participants:

- Confident. Each of the participants were responsible for major duties that involved collaborating and conversing with faculty and community stakeholders. In addition, several worked with students to resolve behavioral or academic issues. All participants handled these duties with ease and were met with positive responses from faculty and

students. It was clear they had established positive relationships with the faculty and students.

- Empathetic. The participants showed empathy for faculty and students and, in one case, parents as they went about their duties. Marvin had this to say about having empathy: "That's something that's new that my university program really prepared me for. Having empathy for your teachers, for your administrators. I knew it was right to have that for students, but now I realize that goes across the board. It can't just be at the student level. So, that was big. Positivity. No matter how loud you get behind closed doors, when you walk out it's all positive and what's best for students."

- Pro-social. When visiting the schools, I noticed that all participants exhibited a positive behavior and expressed that they enjoyed coming to work every day. The environments were very pleasant and the participants were helpful to the adults and students they encountered. In one case, there was an altercation between two students while I was there, and not even that spoiled the positive atmosphere in the school.

- Initiative. Each of the participants had taken the initiative to participate in continuing professional development. Four of the six participants were enrolled in another leadership program to receive another degree. The other two were engaged in ongoing professional development to hone their leadership skills.

Subtheme 2: Skills acquisition. During the interviews, participants talked about the skills they learned in the program and how they were able to use those skills in their new roles. One skill was intentional decision-making. Melvina stated,

This educational program prepared me to be intentional. And that's intentional in everything that I do, but especially in ongoing development of skills that I need to lead in

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a manner that creates an environment for success, but also allowing for risk-taking and failures.

The words "intentional" and "purposeful" were used several times to describe leadership skills along with the terms "positive," "creative," and "motivated." Marvin also expressed that he learned to that it was acceptable to take risks. He stated, "we constantly talked about that in the master's program. When we fail, we've got to fail up. That's something that really hit home with me."

Jacob expressed that leadership skills involved how one treats people. Even though you may be the person responsible for the school, if you want people to work willingly for you, you must treat them well. Jacob added, "Even though you are the leader you're not there to badger anyone or shoot them down. We're trying to work as a team to improve the school as a whole." Wesley also felt that the ability to treat people with respect was important, along with being an effective communicator. He also added that he had to acquire the ability to stand in front of a group of people and effectively communicate his vision. In his previous role he did not have to work directly with people. He communicated just enough to get his work accomplished. Now, people looked to him for leadership, and he felt that it was time for him to step up and be that leader. Being in the TSLP program gave him the confidence to do that.

Additionally, both Belinda and Donald talked about the importance of building capacity among the faculty. Belinda stated, "It's about getting people together and building the leadership within the school – to take chances." She spent a lot of time working collaboratively with the faculty on honing their instructional and intervention strategies and building a learning community among the staff. Donald had a military background and was accustomed to giving commands and expecting subordinates to follow them. Through participation in the program he

learned the benefit of collaboration and building the capacity of the workers around him. Donald shared the following thoughts:

> With a military background I was more of a "take charge," "make sure I get it done" kind of person. That kind of gave me (I think) a plus and a minus. It made me kind of step back and utilize my staff's strengths and to find those things they were good at and allowing them to take over and go on with the next steps. Like, you know, the counselors and others. I knew they could take care of those things, so I needed to allow them to rather than micromanaging.

According to responses from the participants and observations conducted in their schools, the participants acquired many valuable leadership skills that prepared them to function as an instructional leader with confidence. At least one participant expressed that even though he was hired as an assistant principal, he felt that the program prepared him for a principalship. He felt assured that he had been prepared to lead and make all the decisions involved in running a school effectively.

Chapter 4 Summary

In Chapter 4, I provided a detailed analysis of the findings in this study. This detailed account of findings provides rich descriptions in the form of quotes highlighting the experiences of two female and four male graduates of the TSLP mentoring program who are now working as principals, assistant principals, or district leaders. The findings reflected the experiences of TSLP graduates during their participation in the program and after graduation while serving in a leadership role. In addition to the narrative accounts, observations and a review of manuscript notes were used to provide in-depth and detailed analysis of the three cases. Data were first

analyzed within each case, and then a cross-case analysis was conducted to compare the experiences from each of the three universities.

Six themes with subthemes emerged from the data: mentoring expectations, mentor attributes, intentional selection, real-world experience, authentic, and leadership competencies. While some themes and subthemes appeared similar, each major theme defined the context of the subthemes. Each of the themes contained one to three subthemes. These themes focused on the selection and competencies of the mentors and the support mentors provided for their protégés. There was also a concentration on the nature of field practice and the acquisition of leadership skills. A more detailed discussion of the results will be provided in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss conclusions, implications, and recommendations based on my research which focused on the mentoring experiences of graduate students participating in a leadership-preparation program. The findings were reported in Chapter 4; this chapter includes a discussion of the findings and interpretations. I discuss results in relation to the literature, highlight implications for practitioners, describe suggestions for future studies based on information gathered during data collection, and draw conclusions from that information.

My intent in this chapter is to make connections between the findings and what it means to the community of practice. I discuss how the findings inform the literature and determine how those who develop education policy might benefit from the findings. I also discuss the limitations of the research design and possible improvements that might strengthen future research of this nature. Finally, I provide a summary of the dissertation by recapping the answers to the research questions, pointing out key points and providing closure to the manuscript.

Summary of the Results

The central question guiding the study was, "How does the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP) provide authentic leadership opportunities that prepare aspiring leaders for employment in 21st-century learning environments?"

There were also four subquestions.

- How do TSLP officials select and prepare mentors to facilitate the leadership development of aspiring principals?

- What factors do protégés associate with their ability to fulfill their new leadership roles?

- How do protégés describe their current leadership experiences compared to experiences provided during their field practices?

- What leadership behaviors do protégés demonstrate while working in their new leadership roles after graduating from the leadership preparation program?

The central research question and subquestions were answered based on findings from data collected during interviews, observations, and a review of manuscript notes that outlined the details of each university's approach to the TSLP. This study was informed by other studies that indicated successful leadership preparation programs allow for authentic, field-based experiences that facilitate the transition of theory into practice (Lord, Atkinson, & Mitchell, 2008). Those leadership preparation programs also include internships that employ support personnel who facilitate authentic leadership experiences that will develop interns' skills (Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2005). Moreover, indicators of authentic leadership were described as "a synergistic combination of self-awareness, sensitivity to the needs of others, ingenuity, honesty, and transparency regarding self and others" (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015, p. 284). Figure 2 depicts a pictorial representation of the indicators of authentic leadership.
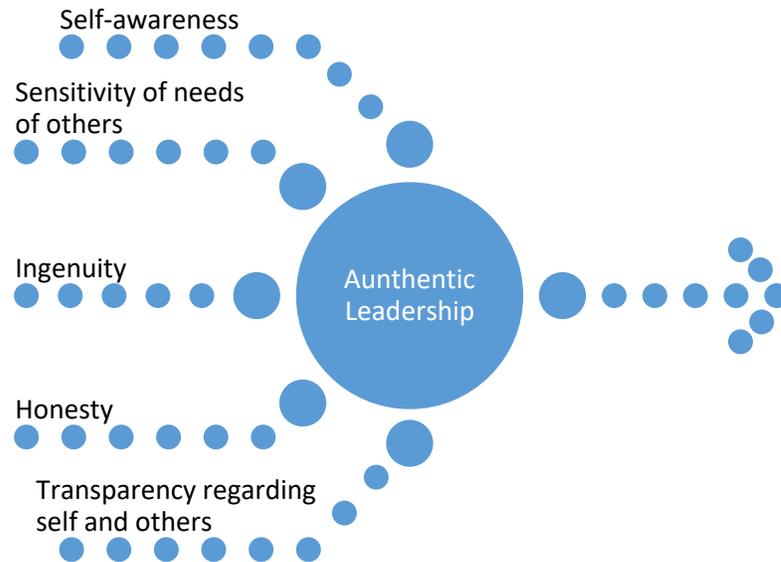
Figure 2. Indicators of authentic leadership (Shapira-Lishchinksy & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015). Iucu and Marin (2014) referred to authentic learning experiences as those experiences

that are relevant from the learner's perspective and positioned within suitable social contexts.

The literature implied that effective leadership preparation programs provided real-life

experiences in order to create leaders who exhibited characteristics of an authentic leader.

Additionally, Augustine-Shaw (2016) reported that a comprehensive mentoring program is the

key to equipping aspiring leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully take on

new leadership roles. A close examination of the TSLP mentoring component revealed specific

features that were aligned with the literature.

After an in-depth analysis of data, six primary themes—mentoring expectations, mentor

attributes, intentional selection, real-world experience, authentic experience, and leadership

competencies—emerged from the data. Each of the themes contained one to three subthemes.

Discussion of the Results

This section presents a summary of the results and interpretations of the qualitative data

used to answer the central research question and subquestions. There were three universities

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involved in the study. Data from each university was analyzed separately. After examining

themes for each university, I conducted a cross-case analysis to examine similarities and

differences. There were no discernable differences in the themes across the three cases.

Therefore, the results are discussed in aggregated form. The six themes will be discussed in this

section within the context of the associated research questions.

Preparing aspiring leaders. To determine how the Turnaround School Leaders Program

(TSLP) provided authentic leadership opportunities to prepare aspiring leaders for employment

in 21st-century learning environments, I examined the framework designed by university

officials to ensure that participating graduate students were supported by highly skilled leaders

who were well equipped to provide authentic opportunities for the duration of the program. The

TSLP framework was explained in manuscript notes provided by the university officials.

Findings from an examination of the manuscript notes were used to answer the central research

question, and those findings were supported by accounts from participant interviews. As I

reviewed manuscript notes and interview scripts, the following themes that emerged were

mentoring expectations and mentor attributes. The manuscript notes indicated that there were

five strategies outlined as a step-by-step approach to providing a framework that would lead to

the success of the TSLP graduate students. The university officials presented the following

strategies for designing the TSLP for the leadership preparation students:

- Design framework for graduate students' field experiences to include mentoring.

- Establish explicit experience criteria for potential mentors.

- Establish explicit expectations for the mentoring support framework.

- Provide ongoing training and support for mentors during the mentoring process.

- Collaborate with neighboring school districts to include current leadership issues in coursework and field experiences.

According to the manuscript notes, the university officials recruited the most highly skilled and knowledgeable mentors available. Potential mentors were required to have current or recent experience as a successful principal and formal training as a mentor. According to Wright and Geroy (2010) mentors need to be capable of doing more than just training a protégé to perform work related tasks. A mentor's professional prowess should include the ability to provide measurable, real-life learning situations. According to the section of the manuscript notes outlining the criteria for mentors, the university officials took into consideration the professional prowess of the mentors. Additionally, the university officials had specific requirements for the number of interactions as well as the process for interactions between mentor and protégés. Although virtual collaboration was allowed, there were required face-to-face sessions. Officials also required protégés to collaboratively plan field experiences based on the interest and needs of the protégés.

University officials intentionally chose mentoring as the strategy for bridging the gap between theory and practice. Manuscript notes revealed that university officials worked collaboratively to design a framework to include mentoring for graduate students' field experiences. Searby (2008b) reported that mentoring support should be offered to aspiring school principals early on in their leadership roles to prepare them for the demands of a principalship. University officials sought to hire the most capable mentors by establishing explicit experience criteria for potential mentors as well as providing ongoing training and support for mentors during the mentoring process. According to the manuscript notes, the

professors expected mentors to take direct responsibility for the protégé's development through participation in authentic tasks.

When asked about their experiences in the program, the participants spoke excitedly about the relevance of what they experienced and the fact that much of it was being replicated in their current leadership roles. Those experiences were guided by mentors who had been carefully selected, trained, and paired to support the leadership development of the TSLP graduate students. According to the manuscript notes, once selected, the mentors received very explicit instructions for supporting the mentors and also met with university officials regularly during the program to monitor the processes and adjust as needed.

The mentors' processes were guided by a well-designed framework that included a minimum of three face-to-face meetings in the field over the ten-month duration of the mentoring experience and weekly or biweekly communication using email, text messaging, Facetime, or other virtual tools. Additionally, mentors arranged for TSLP students to complete observations and intern hours in schools led by highly successful principals.

The primary responsibility of the mentors was to facilitate the transfer of theory into practical application during field experiences. According to specific accounts from participants, mentors were able to establish positive relationships during their interactions. As the participants talked about their mentoring experiences during their participation in TSLP, they characterized their mentors as being extremely knowledgeable about the latest research, confident in their roles as mentors, thoughtful about the selection of field experiences, approachable, and dedicated to increasing the skill level of their protégés.

Mentor selection and preparation. Subquestion one focused on the selection and preparation of mentors. In order to develop a successful relationship between mentors and

protégés program developers must not only hire mentors with effective leadership experience, they must also provide mentors with the knowledge, skills and support needed to successfully support protégés (Spiro et al., 2007). Additionally, Spiro et al., 2007 found that many states that require mentoring do not provide rigorous training for mentors that includes skills such as goal setting, active listening and self-reflection.

Content from the manuscript notes was used to answer this sub question. After reviewing the manuscript notes I found that the university officials used specific selection criteria and expectations for potential mentors to ensure that those selected were prepared to carry out the duties of the mentor with a high level of expertise. According to the manuscript notes the university officials implemented the following strategies to select and prepare TSLP mentors:

- Recruited outside of the TSLP students' school districts.

- Established explicit experience criteria for potential mentors.

- Communicated explicit expectations for mentor/protégé relationships.

- Created a safe environment in which to nurture mentor/protégé relationships.

- Communicated explicit expectations for mentors' roles during field experiences.

Aspects such as the mentor's level of experience; reputation in the school and community; effectiveness as a school leader; credentials; training; and educational background can be considered as selections that are made for mentors (DeVita et al., 2007). University officials required additional prerequisites such as being professionally trained as a mentor and actively engaged as a member of a professional leadership organization.

Interestingly, information from the manuscript notes also revealed that the mentors were selected from outside of the districts where the participants worked during their time in the

leadership preparation program. Undoubtedly, this narrowed the pool of mentoring candidates. The manuscript notes did not provide a rationale for this requirement, but some participants commented on this fact and counted it as one of the reasons they were able to build a positive relationship with their mentors. The participants stated that working with mentors from outside their district allowed them to have candid discussions free from local issues that were problematic.

A major responsibility of the mentors was to work collaboratively with the protégés to plan and facilitate field experiences. Researchers found that one goal of field-based experience is to ensure that graduates have the disposition and knowledge to successfully lead schools (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Data from the study revealed that the university officials directed mentors to focus on field-based experiences. A structure was provided to ensure that ample time and consideration was given to the schools that would be visited. Additionally, the mentors used information they knew about their protégés to choose the type of activities the participants would see during field experiences. Mentors also planned follow-up meetings with the protégés to reflect on the practices from the field.

The officials set baseline requirements for the amount of time mentors would spend in the field with their protégés. They required mentors to sit down and plan field experiences with their protégés, taking into consideration the strengths and weaknesses the protégés brought to the table. Every interaction between mentor, protégé and school was strategically planned as university officials mapped out the mentoring program. I would characterize the planning for what would happen during field-based experiences as intentional. University officials took on the responsibility of selecting highly skilled mentors and developing an explicit framework to guide interactions between mentor and protégé. Clayton, Sanzo and Myran (2013) reported that school

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districts and universities should work together collaboratively to develop activities for aspiring leaders and their mentors to complete during field experiences allowing aspiring leaders to connect to the vision and goals of the district. These authentic experiences will better facilitate the transfer of theory to practice and produce graduates who are more readily able to take on formal leadership positions. The interactions between mentors and protégés in this study are aligned with this research.

Responses from five of the six participants during interviews revealed that their relationship with their mentor was very positive. They felt safe to talk about any issues related to leadership, such as how to build relationships with staff and students, how to maintain a focus on instruction rather than management, and how to deal with political issues. Participants spoke of group meetings between mentors and protégés that were arranged by the universities to hear from other leadership experts. Participants also spoke about attending several leadership conferences with their mentors to participate in additional learning opportunities. All of these activities were planned and orchestrated collaboratively by the three universities. With respect to the selection of mentors and their preparation and support throughout the program, the university officials appeared to be strategic and explicit.

Positive factors and program imperfections. Leadership preparation programs are designed to prepare aspiring leaders to successfully manage responsibilities as administrators in the education field. Subquestion two inquired about factors protégés associated with their ability or inability to fulfill their new leadership roles. This subquestion was designed to discern if the participants felt that the program was responsible for their successes or failures in their current leadership positions. The participants recalled specific experiences that equipped them for

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success in their current jobs as administrators. A review of the participants' interview responses revealed that the following factors contributed to their ability to do their job:

- Consistent focus on leadership strategies that led to increased teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

- Hands-on experiences related to instruction, data analysis, and supervision of students.

- Less of a focus on managerial duties of principals.

- Candid discussions and problem-solving activities facilitated by mentors.

- Focus on importance of building relationships with adults and students.

The participants also recalled only two program imperfections that could have possibly contributed to difficulties once leaving the program. According to the participants, their field experiences focused on current issues with students and instruction rather than on managerial type responsibilities. All participants agreed that their experiences as a part of the TSLP were responsible for their successes in their current roles. Even the participant who did not have ideal interaction with his mentor was able to participate in and observe leadership behaviors in the program due to activities such as seminars provided by the university, and participation in professional conferences.

Participants expressed that their participation in real-world experiences was the main factor that contributed to their ability to thrive in their new leadership roles. They were given the opportunity for hands-on experiences related to instruction, data analysis, and supervision of students. One participant spoke of specific instances where he was able to provide input in meetings regarding student issues such as discipline and academic development. Additionally, participants were able to participate in classroom observations and reflection dialogue, and other

practical activities that brought to life the theories they learned about during their coursework. There was little focus on management issues; however, some participants expressed that they had management discussions with principals whenever it was relevant when observing those processes in the school. For instance, one particular school served a student population that was categorized as being in high poverty. The students, however, were very focused on learning and their overall success in school. Several conversations with the principal revealed the details of how this cultural transformation took place. Likewise, participants spoke of many candid discussions with principals and their mentors about the positive and negative experiences encountered while leading a school.

The main focus of the field experiences and simulated activities was on students and instruction. According to Steffan, Wies, and King (2014), building instructional leadership capacity and a capacity for continuous learning will lead to increased student achievement. To this effort, the participants were exposed to activities that involved strategies for increasing skills of teachers through observation and feedback, and data analysis activities that focused on determining student strengths and weaknesses as well as targeting instruction to meet student needs. These are all activities they later engaged in subsequent to being hired as administrators. Malvina stated that her participation in the program helped her understand the need to analyze and consider different points of view in all situations while keeping in mind what students need. She was given many opportunities to reflect on her experiences and that act of reflection is one of the behaviors she carried into her new position.

With respect to factors they associated with an inability to do their jobs, none of the participants expressed that they were unable to do their jobs successfully. In fact, my observations revealed that they carried out their duties with precision and confidence. However,

many expressed that they felt that there were some unavoidable imperfections in the leadership preparation program. One program imperfection was that there was no way for them to prepare for everything they would experience once hired in a leadership role. The other program imperfection was that field experience was no substitute for actual work once hired as an administrator. Additionally, the participants expressed that nothing could fully simulate the actual experiences of someone serving as an administrator. Yet, Mentors in the TSLP program were able to provide individualized, tailored mentoring support specific to preparing educational leadership.

   Current leadership experiences. High-quality leadership preparation programs are essential for supporting a strong educational leadership pipeline and promoting effective practices among instructional leaders. Research subquestion three was intended to explore how protégés described their current leadership experiences compared to experiences provided during their field practices. Participants expressed that their current responsibilities as instructional leaders were identical to those experiences they witnessed during their field work. However, they expressed that their current experiences were more extensive and intense. Moreover, the participants expressed that although the field experiences were real-life experiences, those experiences were limited and were experienced without the pressure of having the actual responsibility. The main descriptor for their current practices as well as their field experiences was the term *authentic*. Participants acknowledged that their field experiences provided realistic practices and they had no problem transferring what they learned from their field experiences to their current roles.

   If field experiences are to result in authentic learning and transfer of theory to practice, there must be a structure in place that explicitly defines goals and objectives for all participants

(Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). The participants in this study discussed how their mentors guided their reflection and dialogue as they participated in field experiences. They spoke of having the luxury of learning how to be an instructional leader and having mentors there to talk them through misconceptions, without the pressure of having the actual responsibility of leading a school.

Leadership competencies. According to Lynch (2012) the role of the principal as an instructional leader is directly connected to the academic performance of the students; making it imperative that universities move from the traditional preparation approach that focused on theoretical functions to a practical approach that focused on instructional leadership. However, many graduates leave university-based programs unprepared to meet the current demands in today's educational settings (Searby, 2010). Research subquestion four explored leadership behaviors of protégés after they began working in their new leadership roles. The question was addressed through onsite observations. After observing the participants in their new roles, I conclude that they all displayed a confidence that gave the impression that they had been serving in their leadership roles for far longer than their actual experience of 1-2 years.

According to Yin (2014), field observations should yield information that describes what is being observed in detail, and it should also contain researcher's reflections regarding those details. My observations and reflections are used to respond to subquestion four. Given that the focus was on behaviors, the theme that emerged during the coding process was leadership competencies, with specific attention given to disposition and skills acquisition.

With regard to the previous sub question, participants provided accounts of their current experience compared to their experiences while in the leadership preparation program. In order to answer subquestion four, I collected observation data that described the actual day-to-day

responsibilities of the participants. While observing, I recorded reflections regarding their dispositions and the skills they demonstrated as they carried out those duties. Brown-Ferrigno and Muth (2004) studied the benefits of mentoring and observed that the transition from teacher to principal required a careful balance of knowledge and skill development. Additionally, Schunk and Mullen (2014) expressed that one of the outcomes of mentoring is for protégés to gain the skills and beliefs needed to continue learning outside of the context of mentoring. The authors refer to this disposition as *self-regulated learning*.

Knowledge is gained through leadership preparation programs while skill is developed through authentic, work-embedded activities led by qualified professionals. The findings from this study suggest that not only can knowledge be gained through leadership preparation programs, but leadership skills can also be developed when graduate students are provided with authentic field experiences led by qualified professionals serving in the role of mentor. Based on my observations, I described the participants as resourceful, empathetic, pro-social, confident, and willing to take initiative. Interview responses revealed the participants perceived themselves as being intentional, resourceful, creative, and driven. Both the observed and perceived leadership behaviors were similar even though the terminology was slightly different.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

As an education administrator, I often provide training and technical assistance to aid principals serving at-risk students. During that time, I have observed the principals' struggles to meet the demands of increased accountability, mainly due to a lack of consistent onsite support. Some principals and assistant principals ended their administrative career after less than five years on the job. A report from the School Leaders Network (2014) puts into perspective the importance of retaining effective principals. The 2014 report revealed that successful principals

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have a positive effect on the school's culture and the instructional effectiveness of the teachers. Additionally, the School Leaders Network (2014) reported that during the first year after the principal's departure there is a decline in student achievement in reading and math.

The literature confirms this predicament regarding sustained school-based leadership. According to Béteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2012), "More than one out of every five principals leaves their school each year" (p. 904). Often times those principal turnover rates are due to termination, intra-district transfers, or voluntary resignation (Béteille et al., 2012). Research has shown the "annual principal turnover rates in school districts throughout the country range from 15% to 30% each year with especially high rates of turnover in schools serving more low-income, minority, and low achieving students" (Béteille et al., 2012). According to a more recent report by School Leaders Network (2014) 50% of new principals do not last beyond their third year mainly due to lack of support and training needed to be an effective leader.

Programs are needed to equip aspiring leaders and novice principals to address the current issues in education with confidence and to increase their chances of longevity in the profession.

Crisis in educational leadership. Fullan and Young (2009) found that the overall issues of principal turnover were accountability pressures, the complexity and intensity of the job, lack of support from the central office, and unsatisfactory compensation. Additionally, schools experiencing exceptionally rapid principal turnover are often reported to suffer from lack of shared purpose, cynicism among staff about principal commitment, and an inability to maintain a school improvement focus long enough to actually accomplish any meaningful change (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010). These findings in the literature substantiate the crisis among the educational leadership community and the pressure felt by states and local school systems to

produce school leaders prepared to respond to higher academic standards and the need for increased student achievement. Mitgang (2012) reported that many states responded to the pressure for increased leadership accountability by holding higher education programs accountable to more rigorous leadership standards.

Role of leadership preparation programs. University-based leadership preparation programs bear the responsibility of equipping their students with the skills needed to close learning gaps and increase student achievement (Drago-Severson, Maslin-Ostrowski and Hoffman 2012). However, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007), found that in traditional leadership preparation programs coursework was often out of touch with real-world issues and concerns related to school leadership. In response to this criticism Kochan and Reames (2013) reported that leadership preparation programs were required by governing authorities to redesign their programs and all new principals and assistant principals were to be certified in the newly redesigned programs. These actions were instrumental in improving the leadership preparation programs.

In order to meet the growing demands of principals to be instructional leaders that possess the knowledge and skills necessary to improve instructional practices in their schools and increase student achievement, mentoring support is needed for both aspiring and novice principals as they acquire effective leadership strategies.

The School Leaders Network (2014) reported that the following components should be included in a highly effective mentoring program:

- A strong connection between the expertise and leadership style of the mentor and protégé.

- A focus on instructional leadership.

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- Appropriate training and support for mentors.

- Support specific needs of the protégé.

A carefully designed framework for field experiences intended to support aspiring principals could be the lynchpin to transforming them into leaders who can positively effect change and improve student outcomes.

Role of mentoring in leadership preparation programs. Additionally, a review of the current literature identified the importance of mentoring as a human development strategy that is motivated by performance and offers timely feedback and support (Deans et al., 2009). Spiro, Mattis and Mitgang (2007) cited that mentoring benefits all parties involved. Effective mentoring benefits the protégé with guidance, the mentor with opportunities to enhance their own knowledge, and the organization with higher retention rates.

I attempted to understand the preparation of aspiring principals by examining a university-based leadership preparation program subsequent to program re-design. I also needed to find a program that placed emphasis on the importance of incorporating mentoring as a critical component of leadership development. Consequently, this study investigated mentoring programs designed and implemented by officials from three universities who were the recipients of a federal grant known as the Turnaround School Leaders Program (TSLP), that provided funding to support leadership development programs.

The TSLP federal grant was awarded to 12 states in the south and southeastern areas of the United States. The grant application of one of the twelve awardees included a leadership preparation component to be implemented by three university partners in the state. These university partners made significant changes to their master's degree curriculum to include a mentoring component that was solely supervised by university officials. My original belief was

that a closer study of the mentoring services from the perspective of graduate students, observation of the graduate students in their new leadership roles, and a review of manuscript notes containing an explanation of the TSLP, would provide some insight into what strategies were needed to prepare aspiring leaders to meet the demands of increased leadership accountability.

The mentors selected for participation in the leadership preparation programs were highly effective leaders with formal training as mentors. University officials also provided ongoing training and support for mentors for the duration of the program. According to the manuscript notes university officials included a framework for graduate student field experiences that was planned and facilitated by the mentors. Fry, Bottoms, and O'Neill (2005) found that in order to address principals' struggle to meet current demands in education, university leaders and local education agencies should provide authentic learning experiences that are connected to current issues in education. This study of the TSLP grant project revealed that the participants were provided with authentic field experiences that were planned and facilitated by highly skilled mentors.

Authentic leadership experiences. Participants recalled experiences that enabled them to successfully translate theory into practice. These findings coincide with literature revealing that programs which allow for more authentic field-based experiences that lead to a transition of theory into practice are crucial to the success of aspiring leaders (Lord et al., 2008). The assumption is that authentic field experiences lead to authentic leadership behaviors once graduates are placed in leadership roles. Recent research literature on mentoring presents a style of leadership referred to as authentic leadership (Begley 2006; Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber 2009; Walker & Riordan 2010). Research studies found that certain characteristics of successful

leadership preparation programs include opportunities for authentic practice, simulated problem-solving activities and active learning opportunities (Clarke & Wildy, 2010; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahltrom, 2004).

Observations from the study revealed a demonstration of skills and dispositions by the participants that were similar to authentic leadership behaviors. Participants were very confident in their new administrative roles. The participants credited their mentoring support, which included genuine learning experiences connected to current issues in the field, as the main reason for their ability to successfully handle their new leadership positions.

Limitations

Limitations for this study included a small sample size that was not conducive to generalizability, as the purpose to the study was to understand the TSLP grant project, rather than to make generalizations to the larger population of leadership preparation students. A purposive sample of six TSLP graduates who had been hired within a year of the study was interviewed. Although there were 32 participants in the TSLP program, at the time of the study not all the participants had been hired in a leadership role after completing the program. In order to qualify as a participant in the study, the graduate students had to successfully complete the program and acquire a job as an administrator in education. Due to the small sample size, I had to guard against disclosure by limiting the amount of potentially identifiable information included in this study. Detailed information about the participants might cause their identities to be disclosed.

Additionally, I chose not to do a comparison study. Therefore, this research study did not include those serving as a mentor, nor the professors responsible for developing and supervising the mentoring program. Also, the degree of transferability to other university leadership

preparation programs is limited since the study focused on preparation programs that were developed within the context of a federal grant project that targeted leadership preparation programs.

Further, my intent was to collect and review any documents that guided the interactions between the mentors and protégés and provided information regarding skills and experience requirements for mentors, mentoring training opportunities, roles and responsibilities of mentors and the pairing process for mentors and protégés. The information that I received for review was a compilation of notes describing the development and implementation of the TSLP from the perspective of each participating university. Although I was able to gather some of the expected information from these manuscript notes, I was not able to obtain information regarding the pairing process for mentors and protégés, and explicit details related to mentoring training and support.

Moreover, the study was conducted subsequent to university officials in leadership preparation programs coming under scrutiny for not providing rigorous programs. University officials of leadership preparation programs, in turn, made changes to their programs to better equip educators to be instructional leaders capable of positively affecting student academic achievement. Therefore, the results should be interpreted in light of the study's context. A study of this nature conducted in a university program that has not gone through a major overhaul that includes more rigorous leadership standards might yield different results.

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

The findings in this study lead to implications for university leadership preparation programs and school districts with internal mentoring programs. This study has also provided insight into the roles that officials of university leadership preparation programs might play in

supporting its students' successful transfer of theory to practice. As mentoring interactions are designed for universities and school districts, university faculty and district personnel should remember that when interactions are carefully planned and structured mentors and protégés can engage in a way that provides for rich interaction and quality work outcomes. he findings pointed to important implications for university leadership programs, state-level leadership support programs, and school level programs responsible for supporting leadership development through practice, policy development, and theory.

Implications for practice. The first implication for practice is that it provides much-needed empirical data on how university officials establish mentoring programs to support graduate students in leadership preparation programs. This information is important given the importance of the university's role in preparing graduate students to effectively lead in schools when hired in leadership roles. The lessons learned from the activities of university officials and mentors in the TSLP grant project will provide a guide for other educators as they develop tools and frameworks designed to better equip aspiring principals with the knowledge and skills needed to be highly-effective school leaders.

A second implication for practice derives from findings related to the selection and preparation of mentors. Understanding the process of selecting and preparing mentors is helpful for organizations seeking to hire mentors to strengthen leadership skills in their organizations. Information derived from this study could possibly reframe how organizations plan for and implement mentoring support. Data revealed that university officials set rigorous standards for potential mentors and provided training and support for them as they carried out their mentoring duties. As a result, their protégés had very positive experiences that led to their ability to successfully carry out leadership duties once hired as administrators.

Moreover, this study also revealed that how aspiring leaders are prepared can directly influence the extent to which they positively support and develop their staff and how they distribute leadership responsibilities throughout their schools. Considering the advancement of better leadership preparation approaches in the education field (Orr, 2011; Sanzo et al., 2010) and the current emphasis on developing policies that encourage the development of quality leaders for better schools (Fry, Bottoms, and O'Neill, 2005), the findings indicate a connection between innovative leadership preparation and positive benefits for teachers.

Implications for policy. Often, program implementation is hindered by policies and procedures that lack coherence and innovation. Information from this study can be used to create policies that include appropriate regulatory frameworks for the development of mentoring programs at the state and local levels. The study revealed an explicit strategic approach taken by the universities as they developed a means of support for the leadership preparation students. This supports the inclusion of quality mentoring programs in university-based leadership preparation programs as a reform strategy for policy makers to consider.

The mentors in the TSLP were highly skilled and well supported for the duration of the program. Organizations should create polices that facilitate the development of mentoring programs using innovative strategies that are streamlined for coherence with a clear roadmap based on the organization's specific reality and desired outcomes. The results also showed that the effective leadership practices can be influenced by the nature and quality of leadership preparation. The findings are consistent with prior research that was foundational to this study and suggested that a relationship existed between rigorous preparation and leadership practices (Clarke & Wildy, 2010; LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahltrom, 2004).

Implications for theory. The concepts that served as a foundation for this research study were adult learning theory and relational mentoring. According to Mezirow (2003) transformative learning is most effective in an environment that fosters autonomy. It includes an environment that allows adults to engage in the reflective process and either confirm their interpretation of an experience or transform their thinking. Autonomy in learning provides the opportunity for adults to critically reflect on one's assumptions and to engage in deep discussions with others who share universal beliefs (Mezirow, 2003). The participants in the study declared that they were given multiple opportunities to reflect on their learning and grapple with their beliefs. Many shared that they continued that important process of reflection even after graduating from the program.

Additionally, the participants spoke of positive relationships with their mentors, although the information was gathered solely from the perspective of the protégés. Dumas et al. (2014) described relational thinking as thinking that is controlled by the relational roles of those who are working together. The literature review explored the possibility of relational mutuality as an important step in a successful mentoring process. Findings from this study support Mezirow's (2003) adult learning theory and relational mentoring as a foundation for a reciprocal and collaborative learning partnership.

The findings also pointed to important implications for the roles that university leadership preparation program structures might play in supporting its students' successful transfer of theory to practice. Literature revealed that mentoring has emerged over the past two decades as a strategy for connecting theory with the application within the context of authentic conditions (Deans et al., 2009; Iucu and Marin, 2014; Murphy, 2001). A review of characteristics of effective leadership preparation programs revealed that quality programs contained integration of

learning strategies with theory, knowledgeable faculty, social and professional support, integration of theory and practice, and time allotted for reflection (Orr, 2011; Sanzo et al., 2010). Findings from this study reinforces the importance of connecting theory with application. Researchers must expand and deepen the research base on mentoring needs in leadership preparation programs to represent the full breadth of educational leadership students' experiences and needs as they prepare for a career in leadership. **Recommendations for Further Research**

Several researchers have identified behaviors that promoted principal preparedness upon leaving university-based leadership programs (Chang et al., 2014; Kochan & Reames, 2013; Sanzo et al., 2010). However, this research offers findings that could be of value regarding further development of mentoring programs at the university level. The following are recommendations for future research:

The first recommendation would be to expand the number of studies of this kind to get a true idea of the impact mentoring can have on leadership preparation programs. The topic of mentoring in leadership preparation programs was not well-developed, although some literature claimed that universities are beginning to focus on strengthening field experiences through mentoring. Additional studies focusing on the use of mentoring to support field-based experiences can provide guidance in the support of aspiring principals.

The second recommendation is to conduct a study that includes the mentors' perspective. This study was limited to the protégés participating in the TSLP grant project. Including the mentor's perspective may provide a more balanced view of the interactions and relationships between mentors and protégés. Additionally, it would be helpful to include a focus on the

process of selection and preparation of mentors. This could provide insight into the mentoring support framework.

The final recommendation is to study graduates of university-based mentoring programs 3–5 years after being hired in an administrative position to learn more about sustainable practices. This study included participants who had been working in their leadership roles for two years or less. No information was collected regarding mentoring support provided by their school districts after being hired.

Conclusion

The results of this study provided insight into the strategies needed to prepare aspiring leaders to meet the demands of increased leadership accountability. This inquiry into mentoring services from the perspective of the graduate students, observations of the graduates in their new leadership roles, and review of manuscript notes revealed positive field experiences guided by mentors who had been carefully selected, trained, and paired to support the leadership development of the TSLP students. The results also showed that the mentoring program within field-based practices successfully facilitated the transition of theory to practice. The study indicated that mentors provided field experiences that presented authentic and relevant leadership experiences for the TSLP graduate students.

The results of this study will also contribute to an expanding body of research pertaining to university-based mentoring in leadership preparation programs. With mounting pressure to prepare principals for leadership in 21st-century school settings, leadership preparation programs that connect educational theory with practical application will become more important (Murphy, 2001). Considering this, it is crucial for university leaders and local education agencies to provide mentoring support with access to genuine learning experiences connected to current

issues in the field. The findings from this study will serve to inform leadership preparation programs about best practices for developing effective instructional leaders.

This study will raise awareness about the support framework that is needed to help leadership preparation students make sense of education theory and translate that theory into actual practice. This is significant given the pressure to equip educators to be instructional leaders capable of positively affecting student academic achievement; with a great deal of that pressure being felt in university-based leadership preparation programs. In order for graduates of leadership preparation programs to experience success once they are hired into leadership positions, they must not only possess the knowledge and skills needed to be effective, they must also possess a certain confidence and self-awareness that moves them to function at the highest level possible early on in their new positions.

My hope is that the findings in this study will help create a new sense of urgency on addressing the issue of how to prepare educators to be instructional leaders that know how to create positive change in the field of education. As mentoring interactions are designed for universities and school districts, university faculty and district personnel should remember that when interactions are carefully planned and structured mentors and protégés can engage in a way that provides for rich interaction and quality work outcomes.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol Form for Individual Interviews with Protégés

Date: _____ Time: _____ Location: _____

_____ Interviewer: _____ Interviewee(s):

Opening statement/brief description of project: *[READ]*

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to speak with me regarding your mentoring experiences in the

TSLP program. The purpose of this study is to explore university-based mentoring as a strategy

for developing leadership skills in aspiring principals. I am interested in understanding how

your mentoring experiences prepared you for your current leadership role. To facilitate

accurate note-taking, I would like permission to record the interview. Is that acceptable?

_____ If not, I will be sure to take explicit notes. For your information, only I and my

dissertation committee members will be privy to the recordings, which will be destroyed after I

have transcribed them and verified that they were transcribed correctly so that they are no

longer needed. The interview will be recorded and stored on a password protected computer

and with password protected software. Additionally, you were asked to sign a consent form.

This consent form described the study and asked if you wanted to participate. I want to remind

you that your participation is strictly voluntary and you can discontinue your participation at

any time.

I want to begin by collecting basic participant background information.

Name _____Gender _____

Age _____ Race/Ethnicity _____ Number of Years as Educator _____

Email _____ Phone number (s) _____Cell

_____Home

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University (TSLP) Program_____

School District _____

How long was your mentoring experience while participating in the (TSLP) leadership

preparation program?

____ 1-5 days ____ 1-3 months ____ 1 year or longer ____ other time limit (Please specify)

When did the mentoring experience end? _____

Interview Questions

1. Describe how your mentor helped you connect theory and practice during your field
   work.

2. Discuss some of the current problems you've encountered in your new role and how your
   field work prepared you to handle those situations.

3. In what ways did the mentoring experience impact you as a leader?

4. What situations or preparation do you feel that your mentoring experiences and studies
   did not prepare you for?

5. What situations or preparation do you feel that your mentoring experiences and studies
   did prepare you for?

6. How do your leadership experiences during field practices compare with your current
   leadership experiences?

7. Discuss the leadership skills you acquired in your education program that prepared you to
   fulfill your new leadership role.

Closing statement: *[READ]*

Thank you for taking the time to reflect on your mentoring experiences according to what you

perceived as important and relevant. I will review all the information and email the content to

you to verify the content. I will follow up with a telephone call to give you the opportunity to

state concerns, make corrections, or ask questions.

Appendix B: Observation Protocol Form for Individual Observations of Protégés

Date: _____ Time: _____ Length of activity: _____ minutes Site: _____ Participant:

_____

Overarching question: What leadership behaviors do protégés demonstrate while working in

their new leadership roles subsequent to graduation from the leadership preparation program?

Physical setting: visual layout	Description of participants/activities	Reflective comments (Researchers thoughts on what is happening.)

Appendix C: Document Review

Document Type_____

Author of Document_____

Date Written_____

Compensation for Mentoring Services _____

Skill and Experience Requirements for   **Mentoring Training Opportunities**

Mentors

Explanation of Pairing Process   **Role and Responsibilities**

Appendix D: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does "fraudulent" mean?

"Fraudulent" work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one's own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate's final work without full and complete documentation.

What is "unauthorized" assistance?

"Unauthorized assistance" refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another's work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Christine R. Spear
_____
Digital Signature

Christine R. Spear
_____
Name (Typed)

January 8, 2019
_____
Date