

WATERMAN, SHERYN ELAINE SPENCER, Ph.D. Using a Complexity-Based Perspective to Better Understand the Relationships among Mentoring, School Conflicts, and Novice Retention. (2011)

Directed by Dr. Barbara Levin. 356 pp.

In this study I used complexity-thinking, ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building, narrative methodology, and pragmatism to explore the relationships among mentoring, conflict, and novice retention. In order to explore these relationships, I constructed stories from my interviews with six mentor-novice dyads in a southeastern 9-12 high school that was struggling with teacher retention. I analyzed these stories that addressed the nature of the mentor-novice dyad in light of eight primary indicators of complex systems as defined by Davis and Sumara (2006). I also found examples of teacher conflicts with administrators, students, and other categories. I noted how the mentor-novice dyad's complex nature and its use of ecologically-based sustainable capacity building helped mentors and novices handle those conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution. The findings from this study suggest that the mentor-novice relationships were distinctly different from other helping relationships at my research site; however, the relationship between novice retention and the ways mentor-novice relationships handled school conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution were inconclusive.

Key words: mentoring, retention, school conflict, complexity thinking, narrative inquiry

USING A COMPLEXITY-BASED PERSPECTIVE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND
THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG MENTORING, SCHOOL CONFLICTS,
AND NOVICE RETENTION

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2011

Approved by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of my committee chair, Dr. Barbara Levin, for her valuable feedback and guidance through this process. I also acknowledge the support of other committee members: Dr. Beverly Faircloth, Dr. Carl Lashley, and Dr. Rick Reitzug. In addition, I acknowledge my mentor and novice participants and the mentor coordinator who contributed greatly to this study.

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CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In late summer it all begins again—school, and the new teachers introduce themselves as faculties gather for orientation. The veterans look at them and wonder, “Do they have what it takes to make it at our school?” and the novices, who expect to do fine, are eager to get started with their own classrooms. According to the latest statistics, about one fourth of novice teachers move from their schools or leave the profession all together (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Even though researchers do not always agree that teachers leave their profession more often than any other profession that employs young adults (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007), they do agree that teacher turnover is costly (Brill & McCartney, 2008) and that it can have significant negative effects on the lives of students (Kersaint et al., 2007). Studies have examined why teachers leave the profession (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll, 2002b; Kersaint et al., 2007) and at least one has shown why teachers might stay (Inman & Marlow, 2004).

Among the many reasons teachers have given for leaving the profession the following stand out: poor monetary compensation (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daly, 2006); poor working conditions (Blair-Larson, 1998; Stockard & Lehman, 2004); “identity and career trajectories” (i.e., personal aspirations) in the teaching profession (Smethen, 2007, p. 469); overwhelming work requirements (Smethen, 2007); wanting to prioritize

relationships with their families (Kersaint et al., 2007); stressful relationships with students' parents (Attanucci, 2004; Grumet; 1988; Kutcy & Schultz, 2006; Lasky, 2000; Lawson, 2003; McCoy, 2003); student bodies dominated by low-achieving, minority, and low-income students (Hanushek, Kain, & Rivkin, 2003; Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2002); and difficult school cultures (Ingersoll, 2002b), including those that seem structured to disregard the extreme vulnerability of novice status and do not address their needs for support and validation (Weiss, 1999). Even though these reasons are important, the two reasons that researchers consistently cited were conflicts with administrators (Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Ingersoll, 2002b; Ingersoll, 2002a; Kersaint et al., 2007) and conflicts with students (Ingersoll, 2002a; McCoy, 2003; Kapadia, Coca, & Easton, 2007; Wynn, Carboni, & Patall, 2007); therefore in this study I focused mostly on these two major conflicts, but I also added those that emerged from my interviews with participants.

Understandably, most people who are involved in education are concerned about teacher turnover. Regardless of the costs and the strain on administration, it is obvious that when teachers leave, students can suffer. In an attempt to deal with teacher turnover educational leaders and policy makers have supported mentoring programs to address the needs of novice teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These leaders and policy makers have allocated funds for mentoring programs, books explaining "how to . . ." line the shelves of book stores and the display tables of conference booths, and teachers volunteer to take on the mentoring role. Although research on mentoring novice teachers has been steadily increasing since the late 1980's

(Hobson, Ashby, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009), most studies have been quantitative (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Wang, Odell, & Schwille, 2008; Waterman & He, 2011) and have focused on the effects various components of mentoring programs have on retention (e.g., frequency of time mentors and novice work together; matching mentors and novices by subjects and grade levels, and awarding stipends). Unfortunately, rather than moving closer to a consensus about how mentoring functions to improve teacher retention, the research community disagrees about the effects of mentoring programs (Guarino et al., 2006; Waterman & He, 2011). For example, although some research (Huling & Resta, 2007; Perez & Ciriza, 2005) concluded that mentoring programs had a positive effect on teacher retention, other studies have found no significant effect (Glazerman et al., 2010; Wechsler, Caspary, Humphrey, & Matsko, 2010), and others found mixed results (Fry, 2007; Rockoff, 2008). Therefore, even though studies have provided some interesting and useful ideas about why novice teachers leave the profession and how mentoring program components might address those reasons, there is still a need to increase our understanding of how pairing a mentor and a novice might play a role in addressing the various reasons novice teachers leave the profession. In this study I focus on the conflicts teachers experience that could lead to turnover.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the benefits of mentoring and its relationship to teacher retention by (a) describing the nature of the mentor-novice relationship, (b) describing how the mentors-novice relationship handled major conflicts in a high school setting, and (c) explaining how their methods of handling conflict might

have a relationship with teacher turnover. I found a wealth of research literature addressing these issues from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. However, because they honor the complex environment in which mentoring occurs, I selected four perspectives that were especially useful in framing this study: (a) complexity thinking, (b) ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building, (c) narrative inquiry, and (d) pragmatism. I describe them next.

A Complexity Thinking Theoretical Framework: The Mentor-Novice Dance

To address my purpose, I chose to use a complexity thinking theoretical lens. Complexity thinking, according to Davis and Sumara (2006), came from a merging of relatively recent findings from hard and soft sciences. It is a theoretical perspective that acknowledges the unpredictability of complex systems, but also provides a way to describe and interpret them.

I realized that no one can describe an entire complex system; therefore, I acknowledged that my descriptions of the nature of mentor-novice dyads and how they addressed conflicts related to teacher turnover could never fully represent what happens in these systems. In addition, although my major focus was at the level of dyadic (mentor-novice) complex systems, I understood that these complex dyads existed in larger complex contexts including the school and district. I also understood that these dyads were formed by two individuals who each represented a complex person system. I was especially interested in how the larger context shaped the dyad and how the smaller novice person system made the decision to stay in a school or to leave it.

Complexity thinking provided a lens through which I viewed the nature of the complex systems relevant to my research questions. These complex systems, of which mentor-novice dyads were most prominent in my study, had the following eight indicators: (a) “nested structure,” (b) “self-organized” and “bottom-up emergent,” (c) based on “short-range relationships,” (d) “organizationally closed,” (e) unstable (“far from equilibrium”), (f) “decentralized,” or “scale-free” networks (p. 53), (g) “structure determined,” including the processes of redundancy and diversity; and (h) “ambiguously bounded” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, pp. 5-6) (See Appendix A for full explanations of these “8 Indicators of Complex Systems”).

As I viewed mentor-novice dyads and teacher conflicts through the lens of complexity thinking informed primarily by the work of Davis and Sumara (2006), a metaphor that came to mind to explain these theoretical ideas was that of a dancing couple. The idea of using dancing couples to describe complex systems is not a new one (Bateson, 1994; Smitherman, 2005), but as far as I know, no other researchers have used it to specifically describe the mentor-novice relationship. This image provided an organizing metaphor to help me explain complex systems.

There are three kinds of systems: simple, complicated, and complex (Davis & Sumara, 2006); therefore if my dancing couple were a simple system, they might be toy dancers who did one dance to one song in a music box. I could predict all of their movements (unless they were broken) because I knew that when I opened the box, I would hear the one song and the one dance the toy-maker created. If my dancers were a complicated system, they might look like the same toy dancers, but when I opened the

music box, I might experience a variety of songs and they might perform a variety of dances that were more intricate and varied than the simple one song and one dance of the simple system. Nevertheless, I would still be able to predict what they would do because their actions, although more complicated, were still determined by the toy-maker.

However, if my dancing couple were a complex system, they would be real people (as opposed to toy dancers) who danced together in response to the music, to their surroundings, and to each other. I might be able note their dance patterns, but noting them in order to predict future dances may not be useful if I am trying to understand how they dance together. Also real dancers do not change based on our traditional notions of cause and effect, which says that something (like a toy maker or my opening the box) makes another thing (like toy dancing) happen. Cause and effect work fine for simple and complicated systems, but in complex systems other processes describe how they change.

Complexity theory says that all human social systems, like a human dancing couple, share certain features and change in certain ways (Davis & Sumara, 2006). First of all, what they do as a system differs from what they might do individually (e.g., self-organized/emergent). Also, the interactional processes of triggers (i.e., actions or thoughts that could precipitate change in a complex system) and emergence (i.e., how the system determines the form and nature of that change) describe how they change rather than the linear processes of cause and effect. They also organize their own structures and identities rather than being organized by someone or something else (e.g., a toymaker), and they maintain those identities even though they are constantly responding and adapting to changes within and around them. Because they are close to each other (i.e.,

short range), the information they share is highly relevant to determining how they decide to behave even though they may be functioning within another complex system that wants to make those decisions for them. Also, traditional measurement scales in statistics (e.g., normal distribution-bell curve) are not inherently useful when one is trying to understand complex systems (i.e., they are scale-free). For example, a single, but powerful occurrence, or the absence of an occurrence, could be as important as, or more important than, typical occurrences.

In this complexity-based study, I also wanted to be able to capture how dancers learned (or in ecological terms, built capacity) to dance together, and I wanted to be able to better understand how building capacity/learning together helped mentor-novice dyads sustain their ability to respond to conflicts they experienced. To help me determine how complexity thinking might inform my study of mentor-novice dyads, I generated the following eight propositions aligned with the “8 Indicators of Complex Systems” to describe the sustainable capacity-building nature of the mentor-novice dyad as a complex system.

- I. Propositions about the nature of sustainable capacity-building complex systems
 - A. Complex systems are “networks” that are “nested,” which means they can include or be included in other complex systems, (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5).
 - B. The mentor-novice dyad is “self-organized” and “bottom-up emergent” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5), which means the mentor and novice

organize their relationship even if someone else has paired them, what they do as a dyad differs from what they do as individuals, and the way they change is based on triggers and emergence as opposed to cause and effect.

- C. The mentor-novice dyad is “short-ranged,” which means mentor and novice are close together in order to make decisions about the issues they experience in the larger system and with each other (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5).
- D. Complex systems are organizationally closed and stable, which means they maintain their identities in spite of disturbances from outside and from within (Davis & Sumara, 2006).
- E. Complex systems are unstable and continuously moving and changing so that they may adapt to thrive and survive in their surroundings. Also they can evolve, become flexible, learn, and build capacity (Davis & Sumara, 2006).
- F. Complex systems are “decentralized networks” that are robust, efficient, and flexible learning structures because they can make decisions at the level of the problem rather than waiting for the hierarchy to decide how to solve it (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 53). They are “scale-free networks,” (p. 5) which means that useful information about them comes from power dynamics rather than from statistical measurement methods that rely on normal distributions (bell-curve).

- G. Complex systems are “structure determined” which means they can change their own structures in order to learn. One of the ways they learn is through a balance redundancy and diversity, meaning they have many commonalities and differences that help them work together (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 6).
- H. Complex systems are “ambiguously bounded,” which means their edges are open to input from their surroundings (Davis and Sumara, 2006, p. 5).

Ecologically-based Sustainable Capacity-building

As I continued to explore the movements of my mentor-novice dancing couple, I realized that some mentors and novices might be able to begin to perform a graceful and elegant dance that was responsive and resonant with the other dancers, the music, and the dance party. But I also realized that other mentor-novice dancing couples may not ever perform in this manner. Therefore, I also proposed that there were the important aspects of sustainable capacity building/learning that might be useful to look at closely in this study: a robust and efficient complex system (described previously) and ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building (Jaworski, 1996; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009). These propositions also guided both data collection and data analysis during this study.

Because I was learning how my mentor-novice dancing couple functioned as a dyad, I focused primarily on sustainable capacity building at the mentor-novice relationship level; however, I also acknowledged that the individual complex system, like the individual dancers; and the school culture, like the dance party, may be difficult if not impossible to keep separate. While I addressed the individual and organizational levels of

the system as they influenced or acted as triggers to the mentor-novice dyad, I narrowed my view in order to focus on how the mentor-novice dyad handled conflict as opposed to how individuals or the organizations handled it. In order to guide my interpretation of the mentor-novice dyad vis-à-vis school conflicts, I added more propositions from the literature on complexity-based thinking, which were (a) developmental (Kram, 1988), (b) structural-functional (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001), and (c) ecologically-based (Bohm, 1980; Jaworski, 1996; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009) and described as follows:

II. Mentor-novice dyads may use ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building as follows:

- A. “Collegial dynamics,” sustainable practices that help dyads and groups move past denial in order to work together to approach tough issues (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 70). Included in collegial dynamics are the processes of
1. Sponsorship and protection, which refers to the ways in which the mentor might endorse the novice to the school leadership or may make efforts to keep the novice from being harmed in some way (Kram, 1988),
 2. “Authentic Professional Dialogue,” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 74), which is conversation closely focused on the learning process. This kind of dialogue includes acknowledging others’ ideas (acknowledging was adapted from the term “affirmation” from Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, p. 6), advocating one’s own ideas (i.e.,

“advocacy”), inquiring about others’ ideas (i.e., “inquiry”), and inviting others’ ideas (i.e., “invitation”) (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, p. 6).

- B. “Collaborative cultures” form naturally based on the larger systems’ acceptance of the benefits of working together to address common challenges in order to sustain capacity-building/learning (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 87)
- C. “Shared understandings” are those common and often unstated beliefs that unite people for sustainable capacity-building/learning (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 94).
- D. Synchronicity: Captures the often unexpected or unplanned occurrences between and among people in order to bring about inspired solutions to problems (Bohm, 1980; Jaworski, 1996).

Conflict

As mentioned previously, because I was interested in how mentor-novice dyads handled various conflicts in their schools, I chose to focus on what research literature considered to be the two most significant sources of conflict for novices: (a) administrators (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Eggen, 2002; Ingersoll, 2002a; Kersaint et al., 2007), and (b) students (Friedman, 1995; Ingersoll, 2002a; Kapadia et al., 2007; McCoy, 2003; Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Weiss, 1999; Wynn et al., 2007). Researchers have argued that those conflicts, among others, have an impact on teacher retention. In addition to these two types of conflicts discussed in the literature, I added a category

called (c) “Other” in order to capture additional conflicts that reflected other findings from the research literature and from participants’ stories.

In looking at conflict in terms of a dancing couple, I could imagine how some dancers might continue to dance with their partners and even find other partners with whom to dance because they believed their skills were ever growing and improving, but other dancers might allow conflict to frustrate them so that they felt awkward and stop dancing.

Also in the realm of conflict were the barriers to conflict resolution. Although barriers to conflict resolution generated conflict, they were also emergent responses to it; nevertheless, I have included these barriers within propositions addressing teacher conflict rather than in propositions related to emergent responses. I did this because I was interested in how dyads handled the conflict generated by those barriers rather than how barriers emerged in response to conflicts. Although there could be many other barriers to conflict resolution, the two barriers in which I was interested were triangulation and denial because they seemed to be the most relevant to conflicts in schools. Triangulation (Bowen, 1978) (not be confused with data triangulation) happens when a member of a two-person system experiences a conflict with another member, and then approaches a third or even fourth person to help him or her address that conflict from a more powerful position. Denial occurs when the mentor-novice dyad relationship functions under a “culture of collegiality” in which they do not acknowledge or they cover-up conflict rather than dealing with it (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 101). The following propositions address conflicts and barriers to resolving them.

III. Propositions about Teacher Conflicts

A. Major Conflicts: The major conflicts mentors and novices experience are with administrators and students, but there are also other conflicts of note, especially personal conflicts, which based on my findings, I also included as major conflicts.

B. Barriers to Conflict Resolution

1. Triangulation: Occurs when two people are in conflict and one or more of them go to a third or fourth person to assist them with that conflict (Bowen, 1978).
2. Denial: Occurs when a conflict is covered-up or ignored (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009).

Using Narrative and Pragmatism as Additional Research Lenses

In addition to using complexity thinking, developmental, structural-functional, and ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building as theoretical rationales to develop propositions for this study, I also used narrative inquiry, which is both theoretical perspective *and* methodology. Narrative inquiry seemed to be an ideal fit for my study because, like complexity thinking, narrative inquiry (or narrative thinking) accommodates ambiguity (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), which is inherent in complex systems (Davis & Sumara, 2006). As a methodology, narrative provides a way of learning about phenomena through the stories people tell about their experiences with it (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Riessman, 2008). Narratives convey rich and context-based accounts of participants' experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry

was useful for gathering and presenting my research data because it had the potential to address the complex nature of mentor-novice relationships and how they might handle conflict. Most importantly, because narrative inquiry provides a way to capture the voices of mentors and novices who tell how they helped each other grow in the profession, I believed narratives would better help me understand the mentor-novice dyad, a relationship that has become “imprecise” as well as the concept of mentor, which has become an “umbrella term” for all kinds of “affiliations in teaching” (Semeniuk & Worrall, 2000, p. 405).

Narrative inquiry allowed me to describe how the mentor-novice complex system looked and how it functioned to build the sustainable capacity for mentors and novices to deal with school conflicts. Nevertheless, in order to generate useful knowledge about these issues, I needed another theory to limit my view of ever moving and changing complex mentor-novice dyads. That theory, pragmatism, enabled me to determine what was useful to describe, analyze, and interpret in my data (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Davis & Sumara, 2006).

Pragmatism, in alignment with the narrative approach, acknowledges the importance of the “individual’s experience in the world” and proposes that those experiences are “storied” as they are experienced and as they are told (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 43). For example, pragmatism allowed me to accept the stories my participants told me as useful knowledge of their experiences in the world (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). In addition, pragmatism as a knowledge claim is not aligned with any one philosophical stance so that it allows researchers “a freedom of choice” in terms of

methodologies; it does not see the world in positivistic terms, and it defines truth as “what works at the time” (Creswell, 2003, p. 12). Therefore, pragmatism provided the research rationale for me to pause the naturally moving complex system and to limit my focus to a part of it because it would have been impractical to do otherwise. This kind of knowledge claim may seem arbitrary to some, but I argue that even though I am foregrounding the role of participants and researcher in determining what represents useful knowledge about my topic, I am also connecting those experiences with well-established theoretical perspectives and the research literature.

In sum, based on my review of theoretical and research literature surrounding mentors and novices, findings from my pilot study, and my own experiences as a novice and as a mentor, I developed a conceptual framework, which included: (a) complexity thinking, (b) developmental and structural-functional concepts, (c) ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building, (d) narrative inquiry, and (e) pragmatism. Using these ideas, I sought to answer the following three research questions by interviewing six mentor-novice dyads from one southeastern high school with a history of high teacher turnover.

Research Questions

1. What do mentor and novice stories reveal about the nature of the mentor-novice dyad?
2. What do mentor and novice stories reveal about the manner in which mentor-novice dyads address school conflicts?

3. What do mentor and novice stories reveal about how their interactions around conflicts relate to teacher turnover?

Definitions

The following definitions of terms and concepts I used in my study are not *the* definitions expressed in positivistic terms, but they provide a key to understanding the theoretical perspectives that guided my thinking about this study (for expanded definitions of these terms, see Chapter II).

Acknowledgement: An aspect of “authentic professional dialogue” (Mitchell & Sackney 2009, p. 74) which I adapted from Mitchell and Sackney’s (2001) notion of “affirmation” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, p. 6), that includes the manner in which novice and mentors approved of each other’s practices.

Advocacy: An aspect of authentic professional dialogue which occurs when someone promotes his or her own perspectives, ideas, beliefs, and values (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, p. 6).

Authentic Professional Dialogue: The professional conversations between novices and mentors that I witnessed or that were inferred from their stories. This kind of dialogue demonstrated that mentor and novice were focused on teaching and learning processes, which was an important aspect of the collegial dynamics. This kind of dialogue built the mentor-novice dyad’s sustainable capacity to deal with school conflicts and included the following: acknowledgment, advocacy, inquiry, and invitation (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009).

Collegial Dynamics: Are the sustainable ways in which teachers work together to move past a “polite veneer of harmony” in order to construct relationships that enable them to deal with challenging issues. Important aspects of collegial dynamics include sponsorship, protection, and authentic professional dialogue (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 71).

Collaborative Cultures: Emerge naturally when teachers join together to co-create solutions that address their common challenges. Hierarchical decision makers cannot institute or plan these kinds of sustainable cultures (Capra, 2002; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 87).

Complex Systems: Are defined by eight overlapping indicators (detailed in Appendix A). Descriptions and interpretations of them are always approximate because they are in constant motion, interaction, and transformation (Davis & Sumara, 2006).

Complexity Thinking: Is a theoretical perspective that comes from the merging of hard and soft sciences and helps researchers describe and interpret complex systems (Davis & Sumara, 2006).

Decentralized Control: Decentralized structures are both robust and efficient because they are scale free, have weak links, and can function regardless of the loss of various nodes, which are smaller complex systems within a larger system. Weak links allow for efficiency because nodes have their own sources of knowledge and can make their own decisions. The decentralized network is the “‘fingerprint’ of a complex unity” and the “architecture necessary for an intelligent system” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, pp. 88-89).

Denial: Blindness to or reluctance to acknowledge a problem, which becomes a barrier to resolving it (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009).

Disturbance, Trigger, and Emergence versus Cause and Effect: The term *trigger* describes an occurrence that disturbs the status quo of the system so that it might move or change (Davis & Sumara, 2006). In other words the *disturbance* of a complex system can trigger change. *Emergence* explains how the system determines the form and nature of that change (Capra, 2002; Davis & Sumara, 2006). The processes of cause and effect assume that cause makes something happen and effect shows the results of that cause. Recognizing the differences in these two processes is critical for understanding complex systems (Davis & Sumara, 2006) because disturbances may yield various, unpredictable emergent responses. Note that the terms *trigger* and *disturbance* mean essentially the same thing although Davis and Sumara (2006) refer to the disturbance of a complex unity as a trigger and Capra (2002) does not use the term *trigger*; he only uses the terms *disturb* and *disturbance*. The term *trigger* functions as both a verb and a noun; however *disturb* is the verb and *disturbance* is the noun when one is referring to what happens that might generate an emergent response from a complex system.

Ecologically-Based Sustainable Capacity-Building: An application of complexity thinking that describes how complex systems become more capable of solving problems and learning (capacity-building) and that they are able to continue using that capacity (learning) over time because what they have built is deeply embedded in the system (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009).

Inquiry: An aspect of authentic professional dialogue that occurs when someone shows an interest in learning about the perspectives, ideas, beliefs, and values of others (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, p. 6).

Invitation: An aspect of authentic professional dialogue which disputes exclusivity and keeps the paths of communication open to everyone (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, p. 6).

Mentors: Veteran teachers who collaborate with novice teachers to help them both grow in the profession (Semeniuk & Worrall, 2000).

Mentor-Novice Dyad: A two-person relationship (Simmel, 1950) between a mentor and a novice that functions as a social system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Mentoring: The interactions between veteran and novice teachers that help them both grow in the profession. [I realize researchers have typically used the terms *mentoring*, *mentoring program*, and *induction program* interchangeably (Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004); however, I am not using them this way. Although I recognize the mentoring process as inseparable from its context in a mentoring or induction program, my study does not describe mentoring in terms of its components within mentoring or induction programs. Rather, my focus is on the interactions of mentor-novice dyads].

Narrative Inquiry: A way of learning about a topic through the stories people tell about their experiences with that topic (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Riessman, 2008).

Novice: Those who have three years of teaching experience or less.

Person Complex System: Is a complex system that has the same eight indicators as do all complex systems; however, because the indicators function within an individual, it may help to further describe this specific complex system. My understanding of the person

system is based on the “Santiago Theory of Cognition” developed by Maturana and Varela (1997) and explained by Capra (2002). This theory states that we cannot “direct a living system;” we can “only disturb it” and that living systems determine what to attend to and what will disturb them. The process of thinking or cognition occurs when the person’s structure (i.e., brain and body) is disturbed in some way and that structure changes in some way. These changes form “acts of cognition” in which the person’s entire structure participates (Capra, 2002, p. 36). These acts of cognition include, according to Maturana and Varela (1987), a person’s “inner world of abstract thought, concepts, beliefs, mental images, intentions, and self-awareness” (Capra, 2002, p. 54). For example, novices decide what represents conflict to them and how they will respond to it. These acts of cognition are *unknown* to everyone outside the person system and can be so complex and infinite that the individual may also be unaware of all of them. Once internal cognitions are verbalized or acted upon with someone or others, they become aspects of other complex systems. Understanding this concept was important in terms of my study of retention because it helped me understand how novices might make personal decisions related to complex systems outside of the school context regarding their commitment to a school or the profession.

Pragmatism: A theory promoted in America by scholars, such as John Dewey, who defined reality in terms of that which is useful or that which works (Davis & Sumara, 2006; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Redundancy and Diversity: Redundancy recognizes the importance of commonalities. Diversity (i.e., differences) works as the counterpart of redundancy to allow a complex system to learn and/or survive (Davis & Sumara, 2006).

Retention: Describes the stability of a teaching workforce. Retention data are limited because of the lack of frequency of national reports and because accurate information about why teachers leave or move are difficult to capture (Huling & Resta, 2007; Waterman & He, 2011).

Shared Understandings: Are common thinking patterns that unite a group, and which are expressed openly or are hidden. An example of a shared understanding is that all students can learn (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 94).

Sponsorship and Protection: Refers to the ways in which a senior individual publically promotes the career of the novice by endorsing that novice to organizational leaders and protection occurs when that individual makes efforts to shield the novice from damaging contact with those leaders and decision-makers (Kram, 1988).

Structure-determined: Complex systems can change their own structures in order to learn (build capacity). Within this indicator of complex systems, I included the dyad's use of redundancy and diversity to help describe an aspect of this learning process (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 6).

Sustainable Capacity Building versus Deficit Perspectives: A view of learning that assumes learners grow and develop when the actions they choose align with their purposes so that they will continue to use those actions over time. A deficit perspective

assumes that learning flows one way from a superior person or group to an inferior person or group (Gold, 1996; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009).

Synchronicity: Something that seems to happen without cause and reason, but that has tremendous importance (Jung, 1960; Jaworksi, 1996).

Triangulation: Occurs when one member of a two-person system experiences a conflict with the other member and goes to a third or even fourth person to form an alliance in order to address that conflict from a more powerful position (Bowen, 1978; Smith, 1989).

Turnover: Some researchers refer to leavers (i.e., those who leave the profession) and movers (i.e., those who transfer to another school) (Bobbit, Farpel, & Burns, 1991). In this study I use the term turnover to refer to both leaving the profession and transferring to another school.

Summary

What will happen to those new teachers who introduced themselves at the beginning of the school year and were eager to have their own students? Will they decide to keep teaching or will they leave the profession they thought they wanted to join? Will it matter that they had a devoted and caring mentor to “dance” with them and to help them learn to adjust when their rhythms and style did not match the music or the dance floor grew treacherous? What if they or their mentor did not make good dancing partners? Using complexity thinking, ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building, narrative inquiry, and pragmatism it is the aim of this study to better understand the nature of mentor-novice dyads, their experiences with conflict, and how those experiences might relate to new teacher retention. This study may be useful to decision

makers, practitioners, and researchers concerned with assessing the benefits of mentoring to address new teacher retention.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although the act of mentoring, which has been traditionally known as a more skilled person helping a novice (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978), began in ancient times with the story from Homer about the character, Mentor, who guided and directed Odysseus' son Telemachus, educational researchers are still trying to understand its potential to address teacher turnover. According to sources highlighted in this review, teacher turnover continues to be a significant problem. Unfortunately, the research community is no longer aligned in believing that mentoring programs have the effect of helping to solve that problem (Guarino et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2008; Waterman & He, 2011). In this literature review I present an overview of research that addresses these specific areas: (a) the pervasive problem of teacher turnover, (b) the manner in which novice teachers experience the conflicts that might play a part in teacher turnover, and (c) how mentoring programs have addressed teacher turnover. Next I present my conceptual framework, which includes theoretical perspectives I used to describe and explain the nature and actions of the mentor-novice dyad.

Effects of Teacher Attrition

According to Certo and Fox (2002) we need quality teachers even more than ever, and we need them most in hard to staff content areas like math, science, and special education. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010), which

reported data from school year 2007-2008, 9.1 % of novice teachers left the profession and 13.7% moved to other schools. Some sources claimed that as many as 50% of teacher leave the profession within the first five years (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Ingersoll, 2003).

Teacher attrition is a tremendous drain on resources especially because it takes money, time, and effort to bring new teachers into a school program. Notably, Barnes, Crowe, and Schaefer (2007) found that the cost of losing a teacher varies among districts. For example in a small New Mexico district it costs over \$4,000 but in a larger district, such as Chicago, it costs well over \$17,000. As a matter of fact, according to Barnes et al. (2007) the total cost of teacher turnover in Chicago public schools was \$86 million per year. According to Moir (2003), the funds allocated for advertising for the position, doing background checks, interviewing, and providing orientation services go to waste when teachers leave. Data from Texas provides the most startling example of the sheer volume of funds that go to waste when teachers leave. According to the Texas Center for Education Research (TCER) (2000), when they computed the cost for their 15.5% turnover rate, which translated to about 40,000 teachers, conservative estimates were at \$329 million; however, less conservative estimates put their loss at as high as \$2.1 billion. Even though data about the cost of teacher turnover varies based on the way statisticians figure cost, research has shown that it is truly expensive (Brill & McCartney, 2008). Even more troubling than the statistics showing how expensive it is when teachers leave the profession is the irreparably negative effect on students and school culture (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

[NCTAF], 2002; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). According to NCTAF (2002) teacher quality, which is highly related to student achievement (Sanders & Rivers, 1996), drastically diminished in schools that experienced high levels of teacher turnover. Johnson and Birkeland (2003) explained that losing a good teacher has an exponentially damaging effect on school culture because of the lost relationships that good teachers develop in their schools.

Although I seemed to be working with some dated statistics about teacher attrition because there were none available, for the purposes of this study I assumed that there have been no radical changes in educational systems to reverse this problem; however, I acknowledged that the economic downturn in 2008 may at some point prove to have an effect. I also assumed that the teacher turnover is not universally applicable to all school districts, but when it is a problem in a district, it clearly drains a community's financial resources and has the potential to damage the lives of its most vulnerable citizens.

Why do Novice Teachers Leave?

The literature cited numerous reasons regarding why teachers leave the profession. Historically researchers such as Veenman (1984) focused almost exclusively on teachers' personal traits and perceptions that had an impact on their leaving the profession (Certo & Fox, 2002) and some of those reasons had nothing to do with factors school leaders might address. For example, Smethen (2007) found that teachers left the profession based on their own motivations and personal "career trajectories." These trajectories were categorized as follows: "career teachers," who had a strong commitment to the teaching profession and intended to advance to leadership roles; "classroom

teachers,” who were content not to move beyond the level of their classrooms; and “portfolio teachers,” who saw teaching as a temporary step toward another career (p. 469).

According to Guarino et al. (2006), teacher compensation continued to contribute to the factors teachers listed regarding their decisions to stay or leave the profession. For example in districts that paid higher salaries, teacher turnover was less of a problem and teachers continued to cite poor salaries as a reason to leave the profession (Guarino et al., 2006). In addition researchers found that teachers tended to leave schools where low-achieving, minority, and low-income students were in the majority (Hanushek et al., 2003; Lankford et al., 2002).

Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that teachers left the profession because they had unrewarding experiences with their colleagues and their students, and they did not have access to the support and guidance from veteran teachers. In addition, they found that one of the most disturbing factors related to teacher turnover was that teaching is one of the few professions in which the underlying expectation is that novices perform at the same level expected of veterans (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Weiss, 1999). Johnson and Birkeland (2003) argued that knowing if teacher turnover came from negative interpersonal relationships with students and colleagues or if it came from poor working conditions might affect how leaders planned mentoring programs.

From a school structure perspective, teachers’ satisfaction with their school’s working conditions was highly related to their decision to stay or leave (Blair-Larsen, 1998), and working conditions were more related to teachers’ job satisfaction than new

teacher demographics or their teaching assignment (Ingersoll, 2000; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). The working conditions that had the most significance related to teachers' decisions to stay or leave their schools were as follows: the amount of support others provided them, the level of control they felt they had in terms of their teaching environment, the safety and orderliness of that environment, and the amount of mentoring services they received (Stockard & Lehman, 2004).

Research from Weiss (1999) concluded that educational systems seemed structured to disregard the extreme vulnerability of novice teachers, and school leaders did not seem to always acknowledge or attend to how critically these new teachers needed support and validation. Weiss (1999) also noted that far too often those teachers with the most commitment to and enthusiasm for teaching were the most likely to become frustrated by working conditions that did not recognize their passion for the profession. The paradox was that these highly committed teachers were often the first to leave because they felt so disillusioned.

Problems with school culture also affected teacher turnover (Ingersoll, 2002b). For example, a school culture led by a top-down organizational structure that was overly controlling and overly concerned with accountability could increase teacher turnover because it took away the idealism and personal investment in the well-being of students that motivated people to join and remain in the teaching profession (Ingersoll, 2002b).

To summarize, teachers left schools for reasons that were purely personal, such as feeling they had not been successful with students and/or established rewarding relationships with colleagues (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). They also left due to changes

in their own personal commitment to teaching that they brought with them to the school (Smethen, 2007), or due to their personal commitments to issues outside of school, such as to their families (Kersaint et al., 2007). They also left for reasons related to school structure (Ingersoll, 2002b; Weiss, 1999), such as poor working conditions (Blair-Larsen, 1998; Ingersoll, 2000; Stockard & Lehman, 2004), low salaries (Guarino et al., 2006) and schools whose student bodies were predominantly low-income, minority, and low-achieving (Hanushek et al., 2003; Lankford et al., 2002). Unfortunately, most studies of teacher retention claimed that the highest risk of losing teachers occurred during the first three years of their practice and that schools with the most challenging student populations had the highest dropout rate (Bartell, 2005). In addition, it was often the best and brightest teachers who did not stay in the profession (Weiss, 1999).

Even though the reasons I have discussed so far have been associated with teacher turnover, those usually at the top of the list that seemed to be the major reasons teachers left were related to lack of administrative support and student discipline. For example, Ingersoll (2000) found that about one third of the teachers who left the profession cited a lack of support from administration as the main reason. In addition, some researchers found that poor relationships with administrators were the number one reason teachers gave for leaving (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Eggen, 2002). Also, several studies (Friedman, 1995; Hirsch, 2005; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kapadia et al., 2007; McCoy, 2003; Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Weiss, 1999; Wynn et al., 2007) cited students' misbehavior and motivation problems as the main reasons teachers left the profession. Even though these studies did not always agree on the number one reason

teachers left the profession, all of them found that conflicts with administration and students were two of the major reasons. Therefore, although I have addressed other conflicts reported in the literature that emerged from my data, my study focused primarily on how mentor-novice dyads addressed conflicts in these two areas: conflict with administrators and conflict with students.

Conflicts: Administrators

Several studies found that novices' relationships with their principals were related to novice teacher retention (Brill & McCartney, 2008; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kapadia et al., 2007; Kutcy & Schulz, 2006; Worthy, 2005; Wynn et al., 2007). For example, Kapadia et al. (2007) concluded that the manner in which administrators and other teachers welcomed novice teachers into the school culture and the capabilities of the principal strongly influenced their decision to stay in the profession. Wynn et al. (2007) also found that principals played a critical role in new teachers' job satisfaction because they had the ability to create opportunities for novices to participate in supportive networks that provided encouragement and guidance. However, many studies reported conflicts between teachers and administrators. According to Brill and McCartney (2008), teachers' relationships with administrative teams often resulted in hostility or neglect. For example, according to Blasé and Blasé (2004), administrators used abusive tactics to drive teachers out of their schools. These tactics ranged from mild but consistent neglect and criticism, to severe interactions that included yelling and threatening. Such poor treatment of novice teachers, according to Johnson and Birkeland (2003), occurred when administrators did not respond to their requests for help. Johnson

and Birkeland (2003) determined that many administrators did not seem to allow for the fact that teaching is a complex endeavor and that it takes several years to be able to function at a competent level.

Worthy (2005) found that the principal of the novice she studied was overly demanding, often highly critical of him, and did not support him when he had conflicts with students. In addition, Kutcy and Schulz (2006) found that novice teachers expressed extreme frustration with administrators because they showed favoritism, gave them the most difficult teaching assignments, offered them little to no feedback about how they were doing, and generally did not support them. These novice teachers noticed that they received no acknowledgment for closely following directives issued by administrators; however, there were no consequences for veteran teachers who seemed to ignore those directives. Principals' decisions that negatively affected their ability to do their jobs also frustrated the novice teachers in this study. An example was that novices felt their principals made decisions about resources that did not afford them the materials they needed to teach their classes (Kutcy & Schulz, 2006).

One of the most important sources of conflict between novice teachers and administrators found in the literature reflected the ways in which the teaching force has changed (Johnson, 2003). According to Johnson (2004), novice teachers no longer feel they have to devote their entire personal lives to the teaching profession. Kutcy and Schulz (2006) found that teachers from this new workforce were often frustrated when administrators suggested or assumed they should take work home to work after hours and on weekends. Johnson et al. (2004) also found that novice teachers from the new

generation were less tolerant of the traditional hierarchies that still dominate many school districts. They insisted on collaboration and shared decision-making. Some of the best and brightest of the teachers from this new generation were highly frustrated when administrators did not allow them to work with others and did not acknowledge their personal growth and improvement. In alignment with Johnson et al. (2004), Weiss (1999) argued that school leaders lacked responsiveness to the needs of highly committed and zealous teachers, and they did not tend to find ways to “channel” that initial passion in order to keep potentially excellent teachers in their schools (p. 869). Finally, in alignment with Johnson and Birkeland (2003), Ingersoll (2003) argued that administrators often withheld support from teachers who they felt called on them too much for help, and McCoy (2003) concluded that the principals’ lack of support increased students’ misbehavior, which was another major reason teachers gave for turnover.

Conflicts: Students

Among the reasons novice teachers cited for leaving the classroom, the second most often stated was disruptive students (Wynn et al., 2007). Also, when McCoy (2003) asked novice teachers why they thought teachers left the profession, problems with students was a significant factor among the many reasons they gave. Researchers also noted that severe student behavior problems had a negative correlation with teachers’ satisfaction with their jobs and their decisions to continue in the classroom (Kapadia et al., 2007). Finally, according to Kapadia et al. (2007), one of the most important influences on novice teacher turnover was the types of students their principal assigned

them to teach. They discovered that in their school system novice teachers tended to have assignments that included more educationally challenged and disruptive students.

Friedman (1995), who studied the effects of challenging student behavior patterns on teacher burnout, noted that a significant number of teachers attributed their job dissatisfaction to students showing disrespect, inattentiveness, or inappropriate sociability, and he also noted that student misbehavior was especially problematic for novice teachers. One of Friedman's (1995) most interesting findings was that students were quite aware of what caused stress for their teachers and that such awareness did not cause them to stop upsetting their teachers; contrarily, it caused them to increase their upsetting actions.

The novice teachers McCoy (2003) interviewed complained that their students were so apathetic about learning that it was difficult to get them to do their class work and impossible to get them to do homework. These teachers were frustrated that students did not bring supplies like pencils and paper to class and that many came late or were absent. Other teachers complained that their students were lazy and spoiled and expected to get good grades without doing the work. Students' apathy and sense of entitlement had the effect of not only frustrating novice teachers, it also had a negative impact on their emotional well-being and made them feel tired and depressed. Other novice teachers complained that students had a general lack of respect for them and for school rules. They complained that students disrupted their classes so that no one could learn and that these disruptions included ignoring them, talking to friends, yelling out, swearing, fighting, and generally disrespecting the teacher. One teacher said she began to dread each and every

day because she knew she would experience something disturbing. Unfortunately, even though she asked for help, no one seemed to have suggestions that helped her. Another disturbing finding was that although the novice teachers McCoy (2003) interviewed were working in schools where guns and violence were not prominent, these teachers often did not feel safe in their classrooms, and this lack of safety at times led them to avoid taking tough disciplinary actions to address students' misbehavior. McCoy (2003) also said that some novice teachers described themselves as babysitters or prison guards rather than teachers, and one novice teacher complained that he felt out-numbered and overwhelmed with the sheer diversity of what he needed to be able to do to address students' needs.

Beyond the interpersonal conflicts between teachers and administrative teams, Ingersoll (2002b) also cited problems with the ways in which the educational leaders structured the organization to address student discipline problems, especially in urban schools. For example, according to Ingersoll (2002b), when educational leaders ignored or denied the many factors that influenced students' behavior and instead held teachers solely responsible for student misbehavior, they could generate conflicts that drove teachers from the profession (Ingersoll, 2003).

To summarize, many studies found that student discipline issues were among the most common reasons teachers gave for leaving teaching, and that administrators tended to assign novices a large number of challenging students. Other researchers addressed the effects of student misbehavior on novice teachers (Kapadia et al., 2007) and another dealt with specific student behaviors novice teachers found troubling (McCoy, 2003). Other than suggesting that teachers might resolve teacher-student conflicts by improving

relationships with those students who tended to challenge them the most (Johannessen & McCann, 2004; McCoy, 2003; Stanulis & Ames, 2009; Worthy, 2005), few studies seemed to have focused on how novices might better address the conflicts they experienced that showed up as disagreements or clashes between, among, and within people, and which are inevitable in any social system.

Addressing Conflict

According to Balay (2006), most schools by the very nature of the work are environments plagued by extreme levels of conflict. One of the first researchers to study conflict as an important concept within organizations was Follett (1924) who argued that it is our inability to constructively and directly address conflict that damages relationships rather than the conflict itself. Organizations, groups, and individuals could take steps to minimize conflicts (Follett, 1924); however, rather than focusing on how they might reduce or even attempt to eliminate conflicts that might create turnover, this study focused on how mentors and novices did or did not seem to handle it when it occurred.

The conflicts between novices, administrators, and students mentioned so far have implications for this study; however, another important conflict arose between novices and administrators as they *both* attempted to deal with novices' conflicts with students. Two important factors make this response to conflict especially troubling. First, administrators too often hired novice teachers for positions that required them to teach students who were the most difficult to teach (Sclan & Darling-Hammond, 1992). Second, researchers have for all intents and purposes ignored the powerful effect on teachers when one or more of their administrators failed to back them up when their

students misbehaved in class and that this lack of support from administrators was highly related to the possibility that teachers would leave the profession or the school (Ingersoll, 2003).

Regarding the second factor, the research literature said the conflicts around novices having support from administration came from at least two levels: one from the personal level and the other from the organizational level. From the personal level, Martin, Linfoot, and Stephenson (1999) determined that the teachers' confidence affected the manner in which they dealt with students' misbehavior, and they discovered that teachers who lacked confidence in dealing with students' misbehavior were more likely to refer them to administrators. In addition, Ingersoll (2003) concluded that teachers were highly vulnerable and powerless when it came to having an affect over the manner in which administrative teams handled misbehaving students. Novices might be especially vulnerable because they had very little input regarding the policies that addressed student discipline and they had to rely on administrators to back them up if a student in their class misbehaved. From the organizational level, according to researchers (Ingersoll, 2003; Weiss, 1999), in many cases, teachers became discouraged and frustrated when they could not directly discipline students because of school or district policies that required them to rely on the decisions of administrators. I refer to these cases when teachers could not directly discipline their students as triangulation.

Triangulation

Although some researchers (Ingersoll, 2003; Martin et al., 1999; McCoy, 2003; Worthy, 2005) described school procedures which often resulted in teachers involving

principals to help them handle conflicts with students, none of these studies used the term *triangulation* to explain this specific way of handling student-teacher conflicts nor did they discuss the role a mentor might take in mitigating them; therefore, I consulted the work of systems theorist and psychologist Murray Bowen (1978).

Bowen (1978) proposed a theory of the triangle to describe how one member of a two-person relationship (e.g., a teacher and student dyad) in times of stress may go to a third less involved person (e.g., an administrator) to make a coalition to strengthen his or her stance against the other member of the dyad. Also, the triangle may bring in a fourth person (e.g., a mentor) to help balance the conflict. Examples from educational researchers (Ingersoll, 2003; Martin et al., 1999; McCoy, 2003; Worthy, 2005) showed that some school polices inherently form triangles that result in triangulation. For instance, in many classroom disturbance situations, novices wrote office referrals that brought in an administrator to join them in dealing with students. Of the reasons they might do this were their own lack the confidence (Martin et al., 1999) or the lack of accessible natural consequences (Ingersoll, 2003). However, instead of joining with and supporting the teacher, researchers (Ingersoll, 2003; McCoy, 2003) have found that administrators often joined with the students against the teacher and thus undermined teachers' practices. Also, in at least one case, not only did the principal not support the novice teacher, neither did his assigned mentor (Worthy, 2005). The fact that the destructive potential of triangulation is not discussed in the education literature suggests that Ingersoll (2003) may be correct in assuming that the effects of a system that promotes and even requires triangular interactions may be underestimated. Another

serious barrier to conflict resolution is often more subtle than triangulation, but equally disturbing; that barrier is denial.

Denial

Mitchell and Sackney (2001, 2009), whose ideas are prominent throughout this study, acknowledged that in many cases individuals, groups, and organizations can function in a state of *denial* that conflict exists. In other words, they avoid it, cover it up, or ignore it. The destructive power of denial, which is often presented as a pretense that all is harmonious, makes it impossible for authentic forms of communication to emerge that might address significant school conflicts (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, 2009). One of the most poignant examples was that when teachers collaborate they often “run headlong into conflicts over beliefs and practices” (Achinstein, 2002, p. 9; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001). Mitchell and Sackney (2001) pointed out that conflicts may not be resolved without some challenges to novices’ beliefs and practices that might initially feel uncomfortable to them. Helping novices directly deal with those uncomfortable feelings by confronting them rather than denying them may be necessary to promote the novice’s growth in the profession. Helping novices see that their “theory of practice” (Argyris, 1992, p. 92) did not match their “theories-in-use” (p. 25) could be an important role for mentors and an intervention that may improve novices’ job satisfaction and make a difference in terms of their commitment to teaching. However, denial can eliminate or greatly inhibit this process. Unfortunately, it seemed that school leaders and school cultures showed evidence that they sometimes denied conflict (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001, 2009; Worthy, 2005), and so did some mentors (Worthy, 2005).

In alignment with Worthy (2005), researchers have challenged the assumption that teachers who perform the role of helping other teachers result in a positive process between equals and that the mentor-novice relationship is necessarily collaborative (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Lam, Yim, & Lam, 2002). The problem was that in some instances mentors serving as helpers could promote “contrived congeniality,” which is a form of denial that undermines authentic collaborative professional development (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Lam et al., 2002). According to Mitchell and Sackney (2001, 2009), school leaders (e.g., mentors) could improve the chances that novices would grow stronger in the profession by acknowledging rather than denying the inevitable conflicts that arise in any social system.

How Mentoring Addresses Teacher Turnover

Despite some recent empirical evidence challenging the usefulness of mentoring to address teacher turnover (Glazerman et al., 2010; Guarino et al., 2006; Rockoff, 2008; Wechsler et al., 2010; Wynn et al., 2007) others have shown that novice teachers who had mentors felt a greater sense of support and stayed in the profession longer than non-mentored teachers (Andrews & Quinn, 2005; Huling & Resta, 2007; Ingersoll & Kralik, 2004; Parker, Ndoye, Imig, 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Even though researchers are not aligned regarding the effect of mentoring programs on teacher turnover, interest in mentoring has increased over the years. For example by 1996 about half of the new teachers in the U.S. stated that they had participated in a formal new teacher induction program and about 11% of veteran teachers had functioned as mentors (Humphrey et al.,

2000). By school year 1999-2000, 83% of novices said they had participated in such a program (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Many studies showed that mentoring programs improved teacher attrition rates (Black, Neel, & Benson, 2008; Huling & Resta, 2007; McNeil, Hood, Kurtz, Thousand, & Nevin, 2006; Parker et al., 2009; Perez & Ciriza, 2005) and interest in mentoring programs has obviously increased (Waterman and He (2011)). For example, studies of mentoring programs have addressed the following topics: the various roles of mentors (Clutterbuck, 1998; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993; Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Little, 1990; Picket & Fraser, 2002), the skills mentors should have (Carver & Katz, 2004), formal versus informal mentoring roles (Arends & Regazio-DiGilio 2000; Humphrey et al., 2000; Johannessen & McCann, 2004), the aspects of planning and implementing a successful mentoring program (Johannessen & McCann, 2004; Orland, 2001; Patton & Kritsonis, 2006; Zuckerman, 2001), the effects of a mentoring program on the mentors themselves (Gilles & Wilson, 2004; Zuckerman, 2001), the effects of the amount of support from the mentor (Angelle, 2002; Brown & Wynn, 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wynn et al., 2007), the effects of the principal's support of the mentoring program (Kapadia et al., 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Tillman, 2005; Wynn et al., 2007), the effects of having a mentor with knowledge of the school (Rockoff, 2008), how mentoring decreases teacher isolation (Brown & Wynn, 2009), and how mentoring can promote a novice teacher's identity as a professional teacher (e.g., Brown & Wynn, 2009). Regardless of all these positive findings about the benefits of mentoring programs, researchers have also found many limitations.

Limitations of Mentoring Programs

Some researchers reported the small percentage of novice teachers having access to comprehensive mentoring programs especially due to the school's lack of capacity to implement them, as the major problem (Humphrey et al., 2000; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Smylie, 1994; Wynn et al., 2007), and at least one study found that "marginal programs" could possibly "do more harm than good" (Bartlett, Johnson, Lopez, Sugarman, & Wilson, 2005, p. 51). Other researchers have found that mentoring programs had other limitations as follows: they were fundamentally flawed (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004); they had no effect on teacher retention (Allen, 2005; Glazerman et al., 2010; Wechsler et al., 2010; Wynn et al., 2007); they were ill defined (Healy, 1997; Mertz, 2004); school leaders implemented them poorly (Worthy, 2005); and they had no important effect on improving novice teacher's practices (Carver & Katz, 2004; Evans-Andris, Kyle, & Carini, 2006). Most unfortunately, some studies found that not only was mentoring not effective, novices included having a poor mentor as a reason they left teaching (Johannessen & McCann, 2004; Scherff, 2008).

Among the many limitations of research on mentoring, the one that relates most closely to this study is the lack of consensus regarding its definition. For example, Mertz (2004) said that we have no commonly held or unified understanding of what the term mentor means. *Most importantly researchers and practitioners do not know exactly how we can distinguish it from other helping relationships* (my italics). Mertz (2004) said that although Kram (1988) and others attempted to develop a comprehensive definition for mentoring, twenty years later we still do not have consensus about its meaning in the

field of education, but nevertheless we proceed with research as if consensus is unimportant. According to Healy (1997) our inability to come to consensus about mentoring of teachers has limited our ability to answer important questions and to develop a non-idiosyncratic body of empirical findings.

Mentoring—Evolving into Complexity

According to some researchers we have much to learn about mentoring (Healy, 1997; Mertz, 2004) and theoretical perspectives that describe it seem to be changing. For instance, early researchers (i.e., Levinson, et al., 1978; Kram, 1988) based their seminal works about mentoring on the foundations of developmental psychology, which focuses on the psychological and biological changes that systematically occur in varying degrees of regularity in human beings. Next, Healy (1997) proposed expanding developmental theories of mentoring to include a developmental-contextual theory of mentoring (Vondracek, Lerner, & Schulenberg, 1986), which assumed an interactional relationship between the individual and his or her environment.

Although early researchers (Healy, 1997, Huling-Austin, 1992; Kram, 1988; Levinson et al., 1978; Odell & Ferraro, 1992) provided important information about mentoring relationships, they addressed them mostly from the perspective of the ways mentoring affected individual people. In other words, research on mentoring saw dyads, small groups, and organizations as made up of individuals who had their own discreet effect on their context. Although Healy (1997) offered a major shift in perspective by suggesting that research move from a developmental perspective to a developmental-contextual level, it was not until researchers like Garvey and Alred (2001) and Kalin,

Barney, and Irwin (2010) that research on mentoring made a move toward considering complexity thinking.

Garvey, Stokes, and Megginson (2008) also suggested the importance of studying mentoring through a “complexity informed perspective” (p. 131). They argued that the historical view of mentoring has evolved from earlier views of Homer’s Mentor that were linear and one-directional to more recent views that take interactional and contextual forces into consideration, and they claimed that a complexity-informed perspective aligns with their interpretation of the manner in which the first Mentor used a kind of developmental and complex network of interactions as a way to guide the first novice, Telemachus. Kalin et al. (2010) presented a particularly helpful model for exploring an application of complexity thinking to the mentoring process.

Complexity Thinking Mentorship

In order to better explain “complexity thinking mentorship,” Kalin et al. (2010) compared it to technical mentoring (Mullen, 2005, 2009). Technical mentoring focuses on the skills of the mentor and the knowledge the novice develops as a result of that relationship, whereas complexity thinking mentorship attends to the “relationships, interactions, and conditions that foster innumerable possibilities” (Kalin et al., 2010, p. 353). In order to describe complexity thinking mentorship, Kalin et al. (2010) drew upon complexivist notions of emergence, redundancy, diversity and decentralized control to explain how the mentor-novice relationship generated new learning and change within the novice and the mentor and within their relationship (see definitions of these terms in Chapter I).

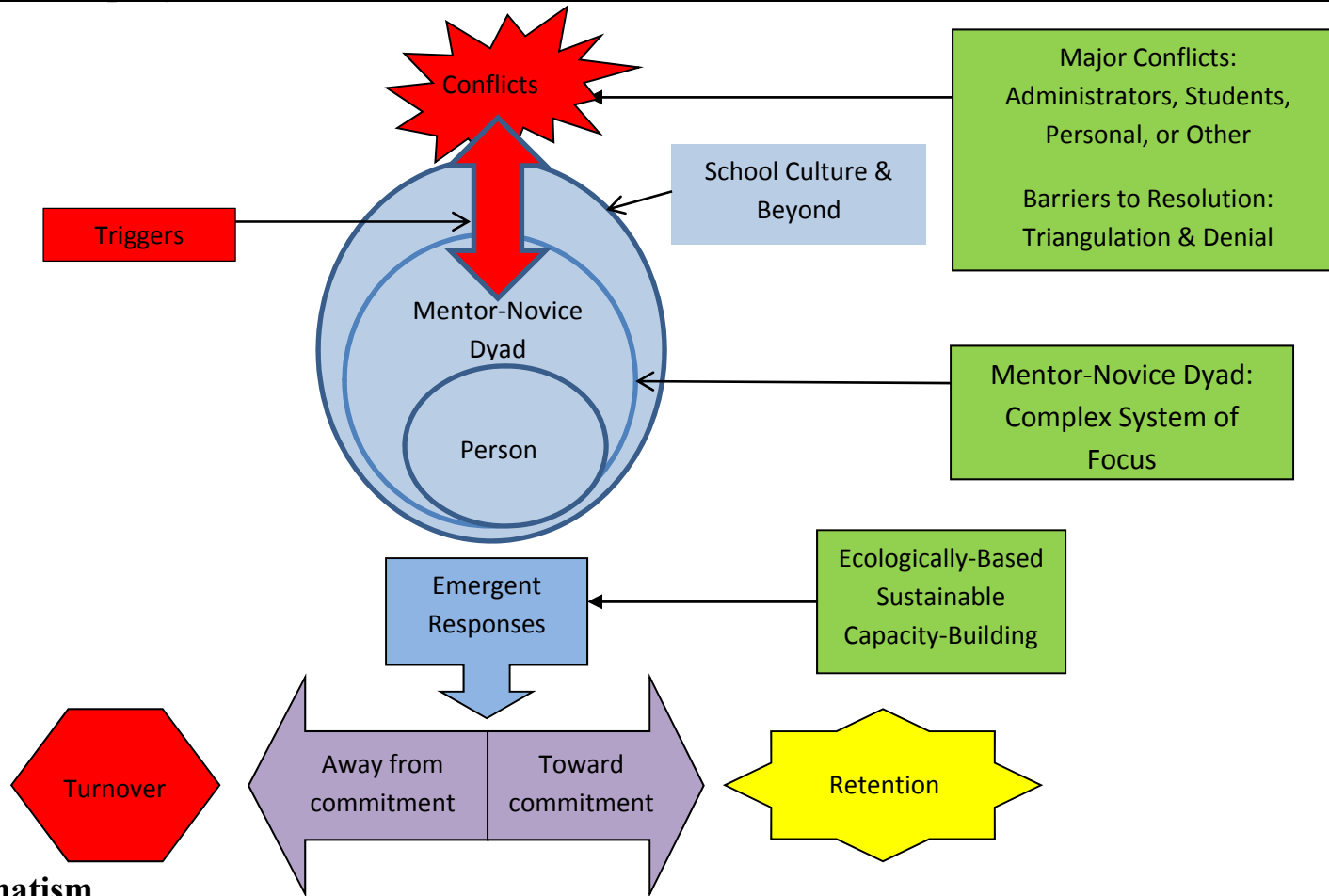
Complexity thinking mentorship differs from other relationships, such as counselor, supervisor, or advisor, because it allows “space for emergence” (Kalin et al., 2010, p. 357). This space allows novices to generate their own learning and to find their own solutions because mentors, although nurturing and supportive, typically do not advocate an agenda or insist on their interpretation of the right ways to behave. “This ‘emergentist’ pedagogy requires mentors” (p. 357) to co-create meaning with their novices rather than transferring knowledge to them. In other words, mentors “enable” emergence by positioning themselves as mutual generators of knowledge (p. 357). Although complexity thinking mentorship is “largely at odds with more traditional mentoring” perspectives (Kalin et al., 2010, p. 354), it resonates with other post-modern views (Hargreaves, 1994) and it provides the following useful applications of complexity theory: (a) how mentors and novices might enable emergent ideas and solutions to problems by co-creating a space in which to experience them, (b) how redundancy works to create mutuality and collaboration between mentors and novices and other teachers, (c) how diversity accommodates a variety of perspectives including acknowledging the value of novice’s views and capabilities, and (d) how a decentralized organization allows for mentors and novices to function as co-inquirers and decision-makers rather than being bound by hierarchical and one-way relationships. Researchers like Kalin et al. (2010) provided valuable ideas for me as I developed my conceptual framework for this study, which I describe next.

Conceptual Framework

Like Kalin et al. (2010), my study also employed complexity thinking, which I introduced in Chapter 1, to provide the theoretical lens through which I viewed mentoring. I proposed that the mentor-novice dyad might move toward commitment to teaching or away from it based on the manner in which it responded to conflict. Even though I recognized the immensity of the nested systems ranging from the level of the micro-organism to the vastness of the biosphere that define the complexity involved in studying the mentoring process, I narrowed my view so that I focused my attention at the level of the mentor-novice dyad. My conceptual framework graphic shows the following (see Figure 1):

- Mentor-novice dyads interact with the person system, the school culture system, and beyond (implied) (i.e., the three blue nested circles labeled “School Culture and Beyond,” “Mentor-Novice Dyad,” and “Person”).
- Conflicts (i.e., a red jagged figure) with administrators, students, personal, and/or other types of conflict and barriers to conflict resolution may act as “Triggers” (i.e., red box) to the mentor-novice dyad.
- Mentor-novice dyads’ “Emergent Responses” (i.e., a blue box and arrow) to triggers may occur as ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building through the nature of the system and emergent responses from the dyad.

Narrative Inquiry



Pragmatism

Figure 1. A Graphic of My Conceptual Framework

- Emergent responses may show movement (i.e., lavender boxes and arrows) from the mentor-novice dyad toward commitment and toward “Retention” (i.e. yellow figure) to teaching or movement away from commitment toward “Turnover” (i.e., red hexagon). Commitment could be to the profession, to a specific school, or to the classroom.
- These processes are discovered through the lenses of “Narrative Inquiry” and “Pragmatism.”
- All explanations are considered to be approximations of how the mentor-novice dyad behaves.

This graphic represents my application of complexity thinking to the description, analysis, and interpretation of the mentoring process vis-à-vis conflict, but it by no means attempts to address the entirety of the complex systems that could be at work to influence outcomes such as teacher retention. Acknowledging the limits of researchers to generalize about and predict the behaviors of complex systems is a major premise of my study; nevertheless, complexity thinking may provide a better understanding of those behaviors.

Complexity Thinking

The notion of complexity thinking began in 1948 when physicist and information scientist Warren Weaver identified three categories of phenomena: simple, complicated, and complex (Davis & Sumara, 2006). Ancestors of complexity theory included systems theory, which was introduced by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) and popularized by Senge (1990), and cybernetics, which was popularized by scientists, such as Norbert

Wiener. Researchers have also divided complexity into three basic branches: (a) hard complexity science, which defines complex systems through physics and other analytical sciences; (b) soft complexity science, which is a way of seeing the world as a system of interpretation rather than a way to represent reality; and (c) complexity thinking, which lies philosophically somewhere between hard and soft science (Davis & Sumara, 2006). This study is based in complexity thinking because it employs ideas from both the hard side of complexity (Bohm, 1980; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984) and the soft side (Bateson, 1972, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

On the hard side of complexity science, new science has dismantled long held modernist notions of biology (Maturana & Varela, 1998), physics (Bohm, 1980; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984), and mathematics (Mandelbrot, 1977) in order to better describe the complex and chaotic nature of our world (Fleener, 2005).

On the soft side of complexity science, a number of postmodern theorists, such as Bateson, Bronfenbrenner, Foucault, and Derrida, challenged our ability to know the truth about any individual based on theories of correspondence (also called representation), which assume that there is a one to one correspondence between what a person experiences and that which represents a universal truth or reality (Cilliers, 1998). Foucault (1970, 1972, 1977) and others (Derrida, 1988) dismantled correspondence theory in favor of coherence theory, which according to Davis and Sumara (2006) sees truth as a matter of framing or perspective rather than “hard and fast assertions” (p. 33) and that the test of the truth claim is the manner in which it coheres with that frame or perspective. Davis and Sumara (2006) claimed that we have evolved from

correspondence to coherence and now to complexity thinking, which is based on a combination of findings from the new sciences (Fleener, 2005) and those from post-modern theories of the nature of reality (Davis & Sumara, 2006). More currently, organizational theorists (Senge, 1990; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004; Stacey, 1992; Waterman, 1987; Wheatley, 2006) have shown how applying knowledge of complex systems can transform the ways organizational leaders and policy-makers deal with their workforces, and philosophers (Cilliers, 1998; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1995) have explored complexity in terms of its application to social and biological systems—including education.

Additionally, complexity thinkers have challenged some of the deeply embedded metaphors we have used to explain our world and the processes of change, including how learning (capacity building) occurs (Capra, 2002; Davis & Sumara, 2006; Wheatley, 2006). For example, one of complexity thinking's most significant challenges is to the notion that we can motivate others. According to complexity thinking, we can only “disturb” someone or a group, and it is up to them to decide how to learn or change. This idea disputes developmental theories that suggest we can predict, manage, or control another person's growth and development. Instead, we might trigger a change in others by disturbing or challenging their perspectives (Capra, 2002).

Disturbance, Triggers, Emergence, and Paradox

Four concepts from complexity thinking that reflect its distinction from other theories and that have applications for mentoring programs are *disturbance*, *trigger*, *emergence*, and *paradox*. According to Davis and Sumara (2006) learning is not a one-

way process that modifies behavior and experience does not cause something to happen. Some theories of learning (e.g., behavior modification) seem to be based in the premise that a teacher or a teaching strategy can cause a student to exhibit certain behaviors. Instead of using the terms cause and effect, complexity thinking uses the terms disturbance, triggers, and emergence to describe how learning takes place in a complex system (Capra, 2002; Davis & Sumara, 2006). For example something from inside of or outside of a complex system can disturb the manner in which the system is functioning. This disturbance acts as a trigger or can trigger a response to emerge from the system.

Notice the term trigger can be used as a noun or a verb, but it does not determine *how* the system changes. A trigger can begin the process in which the mentor-novice dyads as complex unities establish a “consensual domain” with “mutual specification” resulting in a “structural dance,” “co-dependent arising,” and “co-emergence” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 100). In other words, emergence explains how the system co-determines the form and nature of that change. The teachable moment expresses the idea of emergence, which occurs when the actions and purposes of the parts of or members of the complex system come together to address a single outcome (Davis & Sumara, 2006).

For example, in the teachable moment, a mentor might have something important to share with a novice about improving relationships with challenging students. The mentor must utilize innumerable social and intellectual skills in order to approach this subject with the novice. At the same time, the novice must be open to or willing to hear and apply new ideas about relating to challenging students. In the teachable moment the mentor’s approach and the novice’s reception are in alignment so that they are able to co-

construct a new way for the novice to relate to challenging students that *combines* ideas from them both. It is also important to realize that the teaching in the teachable moment might also be initiated by the novice. Socio-cultural perspectives have similar concepts like hybridity (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) and/or third space (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Tejeda, 1999), which are co-constructed places that combine the actions and purposes of individuals.

Complex systems are also inherently paradoxical because many of their features seem to be contradictory or opposites of each other. Three examples demonstrate this idea: (a) even though complex systems, including the mentor-novice dyads that are the focus of this study, are organizationally closed so that they have a specific identity, at the same time they are also ambiguously bounded and thus open to constant change and transformation; (b) they function best when they are both redundant (i.e., the same) and diverse (i.e., different); and (c) their behavior is both random and structured (Davis & Sumara, 2006; Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Glassman, 1973; Smitherman, 2005; Stacey, 1992; Weick, 1976). Those who study complex systems see these paradoxes *not* as contradictions but as the ways complex systems function.

Concepts like bounded instability (Stacey, 1992), loose and tight coupling (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Glassman, 1973; Weick, 1976), and bounded infinity (Smitherman, 2005) provide explanations for the paradox in which the mentor-novice dyad has a limited sphere of influence but infinite approaches within that sphere. Organizational theorists addressed how organizations could apply these apparent paradoxes inherent in complex systems. For example Stacey (1992) showed how

organizations might become comfortable managing the unmanageable or unknowable, Waterman (1987) explained how organizations might structure unstructured solution spaces for problem solving, and Wheatley (2006) explored how by letting go of tight controls over their employees in order to make them more efficient, organizations might become more efficient and even creative in their ability to resolve organizational challenges.

In this study, understanding the processes of disturbance, triggers, and emergence and being attuned to the paradoxical nature of complex systems allowed me to better understand how complex systems learn. Complexity thinking defines “*learner*” as “. . . a complex unity that is capable of adapting itself to the sorts of new and diverse circumstances that an active agent is likely to encounter in a dynamic world” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 14). This definition captures the essence of the mentor-novice dyad as a learner, and it aligns with the concept of ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building.

Ecologically-based Sustainable Capacity-building

In 2001, Mitchell and Sackney proposed that capacity-building occurs at the organizational, interpersonal, and personal levels, and that it was important to understand how each of these levels functions to improve teachers’ practices. In 2009, Mitchell and Sackney adjusted their thinking that was initially based in structural-functional assumptions that were “holistic” (p. ix), to include ideas that were “ecological” (p. ix), a complexity-based concept (Capra, 2002). They distinguished between these two perspectives by saying that a holistic perspective sees the system as a whole and

examines how its parts work together interdependently; however an ecological perspective, is “embedded in its natural and social environment” and takes into account a larger part of the complex system that includes communication with the biosphere (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. ix). In other words, an ecological perspective acknowledges the unpredictability of complex systems and ideas like synchronicity that may not be explained empirically or rationally.

Based on this change in thinking, Mitchell and Sackney (2009) added the notion of sustainability to replace the structural-functional notion of planning. Adding the term *sustainable*, acknowledged that changes to the system only continue over time if they emerge from or are accepted by the self-organized system. Sustainability comes from the match between learners and what they are trying to learn as opposed to being arbitrarily imposed from outside sources that might plan how learners should behave. For example, novices might receive training on how to use a specific strategy to help them relate to students, but if those novices do not accept that strategy into their own self-organized ways of behaving, they will not use that strategy and it will not be sustained.

Interpersonal Capacity-building Commitment

In 2009, when Mitchell and Sackney changed their concept from interpersonal capacity building to “commitment building” (p. 69) they transformed their ideas about social functioning and the language they used to describe it. For example, they included the idea of “authentic professional dialogue” (p. 74) to describe the kind of conversations that opened a safe place for novices to share sensitive information with their mentors. Using this kind of dialogue helped dyads build the sustainable capacity to handle school

conflicts. Three terms presented in Mitchell and Sackney (2001) continued to be useful descriptors for my study: (a) advocacy, which is promoting one's own beliefs and ideas; (b) inquiry, which is showing interest in examining the beliefs and ideas of others, and (c) invitation, which resolves any issues of exclusivity and brings people together, regardless of their perspective. I also found useful a fourth concept, acknowledgement, which I adapted from the term "affirmation." Mitchell and Sackney (2001) said affirmation helped a person maintain a positive stance in the midst of violent disagreement and thus was useful when dealing with conflict. The term acknowledgement refers to a process of affirming or agreeing with what someone does and it connotes support and mild praise. These processes within authentic professional dialogue help to build the level of trust that is critical for meaningful professional learning to occur.

I borrowed two additional useful terms from organizational theorist Kram (1988), especially because even though they come from a developmental perspective, they specifically addressed the mentor-novice dynamics that emerged from my research site. These concepts are sponsorship and protection. Sponsorship refers to the ways in which a senior colleague (e.g., a mentor) publically endorses and advocates for a novice. In business organizations sponsorship might result in a promotion for the novice; however, in schools it might mean that a student teacher is hired, a talented teacher is assigned a desirable group of students, or a struggling novice is given a second chance. Protection refers to the ways mentors might shield novices from making bad choices or might encourage an administrator to give them some growing room.

Although concepts from the developmental and structural-functional perspectives (Kram, 1988; Mitchell & Sackney, 2001) also helped me describe the sustainable ways a mentor-novice dyad might build capacity, the major categories in the conceptual framework for this study came from a complexity-based ecological perspective (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009). They are as follows:

- “Collegial dynamics” (p. 71)—Collegial dynamics are those factors that allow teachers to move beyond contrived harmony into authentic relationships that confront conflict in order to promote learning together and problem solving. I have subsumed the six descriptors (sponsorship, protection, acknowledgement, advocacy, inquiry, and invitation) under this category.
- “Collaborative cultures” (p. 87)—collaborative cultures dispose of the structural-functional perspective which assumes that collaboration can be instituted or planned rather than existing as a “way of life” (p. 94). Teachers who feel personally relevant reasons to address “disturbances in their world” join those with similar issues in order to create a “collective creative response” to those disturbances (p. 94).
- “Shared understandings” (p. 94)—a common belief that helps teachers get past their need to cover up or ignore the conflicts that naturally arise among most groups of people. Shared understandings help teachers learn to have the important conversations that promote genuine collegiality and collaboration.

Also, in alignment with Mitchell and Sackney (2001, 2009), Achinstein (2002) reached the conclusion that it takes both “dissent and consensus” (p. 152) to resolve conflicts in

schools. She also concluded that schools whose constantly renegotiated vision included “inclusion, critique, and diversity, balanced by some traditional communication notions” (p. 153) had a better chance of resolving destructive conflicts that drive teachers from the profession.

Avoiding a Deficit Perspective

Another important concept from Mitchell and Sackney (2009) and Gold (1996) is the idea that an ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building perspective is more useful in explaining the actions of the mentor-novice dyad than a deficit perspective. Gold (1996) suggested that within a deficit model perspective, policy makers assume that novice teachers are ill-prepared through teacher education programs and thus need support that helps them survive their first year. On the other hand, she suggested that if policy makers saw mentoring as a step in a continuum of professional development services, then mentoring support might address differing levels of novice teachers’ needs for professional growth and development that might take them beyond merely surviving their first year. Gold (1996) argued that lessons learned in the first year were critical to novice teachers developing the characteristics that sustained professionalism and commitment to teaching. In all cases, my intent during this study was to take a sustainable capacity-building perspective and to avoid deficit thinking during data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Synchronicity

One of my propositions regarding the ability of the mentor-novice dyad to build the sustainable capacity to deal with school conflicts included the concept of

synchronicity. To explain synchronicity, Jaworski (1996) combined Jung's (1960) initial definition along with Bohm's (1980) explanation of the implicate order. Jung (1960) defined synchronicity as an occurrence with no apparent cause that seemed highly improbable and was extremely significant. Jaworski (1996) connected this idea of synchronicity with Bohm's implicate order by saying we are all part of an "unbroken whole which is continually unfolding from the implicate and making itself manifest in our explicate world," and as part of this whole we can "individually and collectively . . . create an opening, or to 'listen' to the implicate order unfolding, and then to create dreams, visions, and stories that we sense at our center want to happen" (Jaworski, 1996, p. 182). According to Bohm (1980), our universe is not fragmented by the separateness that our language and culture have trained us to believe. Instead, it is one whole interconnected entity. In the explicate order we can actually observe interdependence, for example the interdependence between a mentor and a novice. However, in the implicate order, which we can only access by being open to its existence, we become aware of our interdependence with forces in the universe. People might experience the explicate order as the interdependence between a mentor and novice, and they might experience the implicate order as the interdependence between humans and what is beyond that which they might be able to explain rationally or empirically. The concept of synchronicity allowed me to capture events that seem inexplicable but nevertheless highly important factors that addressed the nature of the mentor-novice dyad and how it functioned to deal with school conflicts.

Another important aspect of my conceptual framework was narrative inquiry, a theoretical perspective and a research methodology, through which I viewed complex mentor-novice dyads.

Narrative Inquiry

The narrative approach to qualitative research, according to Riessman (1993) addresses our deeply embedded connection with story and the ways people present and order first person accounts of their experiences. It asks specifically why the participant told the story “*that way?*” (Riessman, 1993, p. 2). In addition, narrative asks questions whose goals serve to illuminate the conceptual and social “contexts in which we position our inquiries” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 124) and it makes a space for unheard voices (Semeniuk & Worrall, 2000). According to Casey (1995), narrative resides in no one discipline, and it encompasses a wide range of genres or traditions including autobiography and oral history. Finally, narrative inquiry is an organic process that captures our natural tendency to tell stories (Schram, 2006), and it turns those stories into a formal process through which we discover their deep meaning (Shank, 2006).

Other Researchers Who Used Narrative Methodology to Study Mentoring

Although rare, I found three researchers who used narrative methodology to study mentoring (Hirschhorn, 2009; Scherff, 2008; Semeniuk & Worrall, 2000). These studies provided examples for me as I developed my own narrative study. First I will describe them and then I will explain how my study differed from theirs.

Scherff (2008) used a combination of case study and narrative inquiry to study teachers during their first years of teaching and to determine factors that contributed to

their commitment to the profession. She based her understanding of case study on definitions proposed by researchers such as Creswell (2003) who explained that case study is a useful method for empirically examining phenomena in a real setting especially if the “case” helps define the boundaries between that phenomena and that setting. She agreed with the idea from Connelly and Clandinin (1990) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000) that narrative is both a phenomenon and a method that allows participants to be both the storytellers and the characters in those stories.

Scherff (2008) used a “polyvocal analysis method” to explore the transcripts of emails and interviews that contained information from 12 first-year English teachers (p. 1322). From these transcripts she chose two cases (Luke and Toni) whose stories she wrote in her “Findings and interpretations” section (p. 1322). Scherff presented their stories separately in these segments: (a) introduction of the person, (b) exposition, (c) rising action, (d) climax, (e) falling action, and (f) resolution. In her section titled “conclusions and implications,” she discussed in detail “the most salient issue to emerge” from “the plotlines of Luke and Toni’s narratives,” (p. 1328) and finally she presented the implications of these issues in terms of school culture and teacher retention. Although retention was more a focus than mentoring, the lack of attention from and poor information from mentors were mentioned as factors related to the fact that both Luke and Toni left teaching.

By presenting and interpreting written conversations between themselves about their mentor-novice relationship, Semeniuk and Worrall (2000) sought to replace what they called the “dominant narrative” that they argued has failed to adequately clarify the

mentoring process. By publishing excerpts from their written communications, they sought to show a “counternarrative” that avoids researchers’ tendencies to oversimplify and reduce mentoring to a set of specific techniques. Through an interweaving of the mentoring research with their personal communications about teaching and how their relationship functioned to deal with issues they both faced, they added to the scholarship that continues to attempt to understand the mentor-novice relationship in schools. Significantly, this interweaving of research and conversation led them to discover that at the core of their relationship was the fact that neither of them questioned the other’s competence as teachers. Finally, the methods Semeniuk and Worrall (2000) used did not intend to “nail down” a definition of mentoring, instead they published their conversations so that researchers and decision-makers might more closely examine the “language used to promote mentoring as a useful means of teacher development” (p. 424).

Hirschkorn (2009) collected data from one teacher, Ben, through pre-service and his first year of teaching (i.e. a three-year long study). He collected these data through individual and group interviews, reflective journals, and observations that he analyzed “using an emergent, grounded theory framework.” By using group interviews to establish a “collective awareness” of how other novices experienced their first years of teaching, Hirschkorn had a better understanding of the “cross-contextual” value of Ben’s specific experiences (p. 206). Hirschkorn concluded that because his design was longitudinal and his focus was on Ben’s unique experiences within the context of other novice’s experiences, his work qualified as narrative and it represented a departure from

traditional studies of mentoring. Hirschhorn began Ben's story by providing biographical information including an overview of his life prior to teaching, he then proceeded chronologically to describe Ben's experiences. After each of three critical stages in Ben's career: "introductory practicum" (p. 208), "advanced practicum" (p. 210), and "in-service teaching" (p. 211), Hirschhorn injected discussions of the themes that emerged from Ben's reported experiences and his observations of Ben's work. Hirschhorn discussed three major recommendations he gathered from Ben's story: (a) "Assign beginning teachers a mentor and cohort" (p. 213), (b) "Encourage and reward efforts to build positive student-teacher relationships" (p. 214), and (c) "Give beginning teachers more time" (p. 215). Of note is that Ben did not leave the profession as of the publication of Hirschhorn's article.

My study was similar to these three studies in several ways. For example, like Scherff (2008), I transformed the information my participants provided into stories that had plots. Like Semeniuk and Worrall (2000), I sought to better clarify the mentoring process, and I interwove my conceptual framework into my analysis and interpretation of my data. And Like Hirschhorn (2009), I identified themes from the research literature and my conceptual framework, which I called propositions in order to address my research questions and to draw conclusions about mentoring and retention. Basically, my purpose was most like Semeniuk's and Worrall's (2000) because both of us intended to clarify the mentoring process, my focus was most similar to Scherff's (2008) because we both addressed retention, and my methods were most similar to Hirschhorn (2009) because we both used a story to generate themes. Unlike Scherff (2008) and Hirschhorn (2009),

however, I structured participants' stories around specific conflicts rather than around chronological events, and unlike Semeniuk and Worrall (2000), I created stories from which I drew conclusions, whereas they drew conclusions from the language of experience not written as plot, but as conversation. Although there are similarities, my study differed considerably from these three studies, I nevertheless learned from their methodologies and findings.

Narrative Approach

Although narrative has a wide and often contentious set of definitions, which can seem to include just about every possible idea and tradition, it does have certain descriptors that bound it into a specific approach to life and to research. In some ways narrative is "a metaphor for telling about life" (Riessman, 1993, p. 17) and most scholars seem to agree that narrative structure includes a distinct beginning and ending that researchers can pull out of situated experiences, sometimes with great difficulty (Riessman, 1993). In other words, narratives are not always clearly bounded, and the researcher must often find them in the middle of other kinds of discourse (Riessman, 1993). As an open tradition, narrative appears to welcome a wide variety of epistemologies and ontological views; however, according to Casey (1995), most often those who choose narrative as their approach have become increasingly, but not exclusively, opposed to positivism (Casey, 1995).

Schram (2006) described the basic assumptions made by those who choose the narrative approach as follows: humans do not deal with the world in sentences and phrases; they deal with it in contextualized stories; the story, as a form of natural

discourse, is an authentic representation of the ways human beings view, structure and make meaning of their experiences; the basic structure of narrative is related through sequencing; the way a person tells a story is a window into their perceptions of past, present, and future experiences; narrative does not have to be real to be powerful, for example it can come from the person's imagination; the narrative approach is "rooted in human agency," and researchers from this tradition are devoted to exposing voices of research participants (Schram, 2006, p. 205).

Narrative inquiry was useful as a method of data collection and data analysis for my study for several reasons. First of all it resonated with the tendency human beings, and especially teachers, have of telling about their experiences in storied format. As a researcher interested in capturing the substance and emotion of my participants' experiences with school conflicts, the narrative approach seemed invaluable. In addition, the inclusivity of this approach and its stance on the nature of useful knowledge had the potential to allow me to describe, analyze, and interpret my data so that I might capture the complex nature of the mentor-novice dyad and the manner in which it built capacity/learned. Finally, some interpretations of the narrative approach also utilize a theory of pragmatism as a lens for analysis and interpretation of the experiences participants present via their stories (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Pragmatism

Another lens through which I viewed the mentor-novice dyads and how they responded to conflict helped me resolve the dilemma of generating useful knowledge about complex and therefore unpredictable phenomena. I knew that I could not halt the

dyad so that I could position myself as a knower of truth about its nature and how it behaved; nevertheless, I realized I could pause or frame the infiniteness of possibilities by addressing what is useful or practical within the interactions of the mentor-novice dyad. This practical approach coheres with the notions of pragmatism (Dewey, 1916; Peirce, 1978). According to Doll (2005), complexity thinking aligns closely with the pragmatist view as proposed by Charles Peirce, its originator; William James, his close friend who popularized it; and John Dewey, who applied it to education and added an element of humanism. Pragmatism revolutionized traditional notions of truth and reality when it basically claimed “truth is what works” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 73). Pragmatism acknowledges the limitations of knowing an entire complex system, and it foregrounds the potential for addressing educational problems when those limitations do not narrow one’s view toward positivism or Essentialism or widen it to the point of absurdity.

Pragmatism offers a kind of clarity that might allow solutions to emerge. Dewey (1916) was a strong believer in the power of science, not specifically the limited science of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but the potential of science to help us deeply interrogate our experiences through the lens of not only our personal beliefs, but also scientific processes that help us make some kind of useful sense of our world. Using a pragmatic lens allows a researcher to accept no universal truth but at the same time to include the idea that complex systems have certain distinct features that are knowable and useful (e.g., the “8 Indicators...” as described in Appendix A). Even though scientific understanding may help researchers describe and interpret complex systems, they cannot or should not attempt to accurately access the essence, structure, or absolute meaning of

an experience (Geertz, 1973). Pragmatism aligns with narrative and phenomenology in the belief that researchers can provide an interpretive lens that helps to approximate what it means to be a participant in a specific program, and it recognizes the legitimacy of personal accounts of reality. Although the information for this research may come from limited sources, I considered the data from those sources to represent significant aspects of the experience of the participants regardless of the perspective they represent.

In sum, I used pragmatism as a research lens in order to allow me to accept my participants' stories as useful knowledge without having to conduct comparison studies or experiments that rely heavily on scale statistics. As I have mentioned, mentor-novice dyads as complex systems cannot be understood by subjecting them to these processes. Pragmatism provided a lens through which to describe, analyze, and interpret mentor-novice dyads without attempting to manipulate, plan, or predict the ways they might function in a school system that that experienced conflict.

Summary

My review of the literature showed me that researchers have often discussed the effects of teacher turnover, and they have proposed many reasons for it. My study focused primarily on how conflicts with administration, students, and other categories of conflict might lead to turnover. Researchers have also explored the use of mentoring programs to address teacher turnover, but results of this research were inconclusive. My conceptual framework which included complexity thinking, ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building, narrative thinking, and pragmatism, provided various lenses through which I examined the nature of the mentor-novice dyad, how that dyad

dealt with school conflicts, and how those conflicts related to teacher turnover. I addressed these topics keeping in mind the context of a school system that had experienced issues with new teacher retention and that incorporated a mentoring program. I used a narrative methodology because it provided me with the versatility to address these complex issues within a pragmatic framework. In the chapters that follow, I lay out the steps I took to complete this study of mentor-novice dyads and how they handled or did not handle school conflicts.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Why Narrative?

Taking a narrative approach to this study allowed me to qualitatively explore the lived worlds of mentors and novices in a high school context without quantifying or essentializing their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I chose narrative methodology, as I explained in more detail in Chapter 2, because it was inclusive of my theoretical perspectives, which included complexity thinking and Deweyan pragmatism (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). It also reflected the nested nature of storytelling, acknowledged that researcher and context are inseparable (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), was useful for discussing conflict, an important factor in stories (Axt, Milososki & Schwartz, 2006); and narrative methodology allowed me to focus on understanding as opposed to prediction and generalization (White & Klein, 2008).

Site of Research

I conducted this study in an urban school system in the southeastern U.S. in a secondary school that I named Lincoln High School. I chose this school because it had a recent history of such low student achievement and high teacher turnover that the state categorized it in 2006 as a struggling school. However, retention data for this school were somewhat misleading. For example, turnover rates at the time of the study were listed as 13%, and the district and state percentages were listed as 14% (Education First: NC

Schools Report Cards, n.d.). In addition, the national turnover rates were listed as 15.6% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2010). Therefore, it appeared that at the time of this study, the school's retention rates were better than both the state and national averages. However, other statistics seemed to tell another story. At the time of the study, 26% of their faculty had taught fewer than four years as opposed to the state average of 21%, and the percentage of teachers who had taught over ten years was only 42%, whereas the state average was 52% (Education First: NC Schools Report Cards, n.d.). Also of interest is that the school had been recently recognized as one of the most improved in their local district (Education First: NC Schools Report Cards, n.d.). Ultimately, this school had a large number of beginning teachers still in their induction period and receiving mentoring, which made it a useful site for collecting data in relation to mentoring relationships, conflicts, and retention.

Even though a limitation of my study is that my participants were mostly specially selected by the mentor-novice coordinator at this school, this gatekeeper helped me find and schedule cooperative participants. The purpose of my study was not to investigate or evaluate the design and implementation of this school's mentoring program, nor was it concerned with comparing their mentoring model to other local, state, or national models. The purpose was to understand how the mentor and novice participants at this specific site interpreted their experiences with their roles as mentors or novices and with conflict, and to possibly understand how those experiences related to teacher turnover.

Participants

For my pilot study, I asked the mentor coordinator at the research site to help in the identification of mentors and novices who might be willing to participate in a study of mentoring, conflict, and retention. She recommended I interview the following people: (a) Mr. Manzeitti (M), who had been Mrs. Herman's (M) novice, but was now a mentor himself; (b) Mrs. Herman (M), who was a mentor and also a content coach; and (c) Mrs. Stewart, who was in her first year of teaching. Following my pilot study, I asked the coordinator to recommend three additional mentor-novice dyads, and I specifically asked to see Mr. Manzetti's (M) mentee, Mrs. Baker (N), and Mrs. Herman's (M) informal mentee, Mr. Cook (N). Even though Mr. Manzetti initially provided some information from the perspective of a novice, I mainly focused on his stories as they related to his role as a mentor.

The main criteria for choosing mentors and novices for my study were (a) that they were willing to participate, (b) that the mentor coordinator had identified certain teachers and content coaches as mentors, and (c) that novices had taught no more than three years. I met with participants prior to interviewing them to make sure they understood the purpose of my study and the ways in which I would maintain confidentiality, and to ask them to give their informed consent. The participants in this study were five mentors and six novices which formed six mentor-novice dyads (Mrs. Herman (M) had two novices). The following table shows participants' pseudonyms, genders, races, years of experience, and relationships:

Table 1***Study Participants***

Participants	Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Years of Experience	Dyads
Novice A	Mrs. Stewart	F	W	<1	Stewart/Herman
Mentor A	Mrs. Herman	F	AA	30+	Herman/Stewart
Novice B	Mrs. Baker	F	W	1+	Baker/Manzetti
Mentor B	Mr. Manzetti	M	W	3+	Manzetti/Baker
Novice C	Mr. Cook	M	AA	<1	Cook/ Herman
Novice D	Mrs. Captain	F	W	<1	Captain/Rankin
Mentor C	Mrs. Rankin	F	AA	14+	Rankin/Captain
Novice E	Mr. Hansen	M	W	<1	Hansen/Truitt
Mentor D	Mrs. Truitt	F	W	4+	Truitt/Hansen
Novice F	Mrs. Lawson	F	W	1+	Lawson/Stanley
Mentor E	Mrs. Stanley	F	W	32+	Stanley/Lawson

Although Mentor E, Mrs. Stanley, was formally assigned as mentor for Novice F, Mrs. Lawson, she appeared to function primarily as a content coach for her. In addition, as a part-time employee she was only at the school two days per week; therefore, based on the manner in which my participants established the identity of a mentor-novice dyad, she did not appear to qualify as a mentor. Therefore, many of her stories reflected her work as a content coach rather than a mentor. For these reasons, I decided to leave out many of her ideas when reporting my findings because they seemed reflective of her coaching role rather than her mentoring role.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Although I was an outsider in terms of the school and those I interviewed, I saw myself as a co-creator or collaborator in terms of the stories our interactions generated. I diligently tried to establish a trusting and open relationship with the participants I

interviewed, and as a result they seemed to feel comfortable sharing their perspectives with me. I assured participants that I would work hard to avoid deficit thinking and that my sole purpose was to act as a facilitator for their perspectives to be presented to the research community. However, due to the controversial nature of my topic (i.e. conflict), I also realized I had an obligation to do no harm to my participants or the larger system that included other stakeholders such as administrators, parents, or other teachers or students not participating in this study. I also realized it would be important to choose my words carefully in order to describe any participant's perspectives that seemed to be especially harsh or judgmental, given that I could not know or include the perspectives of everyone at this school.

My original data came from the interviews I conducted with participants from both my pilot study and after my proposal was accepted. I visited Lincoln High School a total of eight times and conducted 19 interviews. In retrospect, it seemed important that I conducted the majority of my interviews during second semester because I was able to hear that novices had learned from their mentors during the first semester. I interviewed each mentor and each novice one time separately, and I also interviewed them one time together. I interviewed them as I could gain access to them based on their schedules. I interviewed a total of five mentors and six novices. These semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B) lasted between thirty minutes and one hour. My questions during interviews prompted my participants to tell me stories about their relationships, the conflicts they experienced, and how those conflicts affected their decisions about teaching at that

school, and teaching in general. Although I did a great deal of probing based on my propositions and participants' responses, some of my basic questions were as follows:

- To novices and mentors: Tell me the story of how you became a teacher.
- To mentors: Tell me the story of how you decided to become a mentor.
- What are some examples of what it is like to be a mentor/novice in this school system?
- To mentors: What are some examples of how you helped your novice deal with school conflicts?
- To novices: What are some examples of how your mentor helped you deal with school conflicts?
- To mentors: What effects do you think these conflicts have had on your novice's decision to continue in the teaching profession? Or to continue at this school?
- To novices: What effects have these conflicts had on your decision to continue in the teaching profession? Or to continue at this school? (See Appendix B for "Interview Protocols.")

From my interviews with participants, I created several sources of data. These transformed data during the process of data analysis included the following: (a) my transcribed interviews, (b) the stories I constructed from the interviews, (c) sets of charts that organized data in terms research questions, individual participants, their stories, and my propositions (i.e., Chart 1), (d) sets of charts that re-organized Chart 1 in terms of research questions and propositions (i.e., Chart 2), and (e) sets of charts that organized

examples in terms of research questions one and two, my propositions, and sub-categories that emerged from the organization of data (i.e., Chart 3). What follows is a description of how each of these was used in my data analysis.

Stories

I transcribed all initial interviews with mentors and novices verbatim, and then created stories from those interviews (see Appendix C for two examples of stories), which were based on my interpretation of procedures suggested by Riessman (1993). I took the following steps to create stories from participants' interviews:

1. As I was interviewing, I started hearing stories and I tried to get more detail on some things.
2. Then when I was transcribing, I started to see stories in the text of the interviews. I marked phrases with a time notation so I could better see them.
3. I read through the text and took those phrases that seemed well-elaborated. I decided if there was enough information for a whole story or if those phrases fit inside another story. Sometimes a part of the interview veered too far from the topic of mentoring, conflict, and retention, so I left those segments out; otherwise, the majority of the interview text was included in the stories.
4. Next, I wrote the title of the story, and I found the parts of the interviews that fit there.
5. I copied and pasted those parts under the title and went through them line by line to begin the creation of the story.

6. I started making paragraphs based on subtopics within the story. I used the words of the participants as much as possible, but I had to supply connecting phrases and ideas to make sure the story flowed and made sense as a narrative. I had to constantly adjust tenses and pronouns. Sometimes I needed to move ideas around if they were scattered through the interview transcript.
7. After I completed the stories, I checked each story with participants to make sure they were accurate in terms details, tone, and overall message. I did this via email.

Some of my participants corrected a few of the facts from the stories because I had misunderstood some specific words, but none of them had problems with the tone and general meaning of the stories I created from their interviews. Some of my participants said they were proud of their stories. For example, one participant said he wanted to preserve his stories because they made him feel like a hero, and another participant said he read them to his girlfriend because they showed her what his experiences were like at Lincoln. Overall, participants validated the stories and made minimal corrections.

Data Transformation and Analysis

In order to transform my data further, I created a table that outlined my major propositions and sub-propositions that emerged from my theoretical framework (see Appendix D: Propositions from Theoretical Framework). This outline became a “matrix of categories” (Yin, 2009, p. 129) which included a code for each proposition. For example, proposition A under category I. “Complex Systems” became “IA,” proposition

B was “IB,” and so forth. I used these codes to generate my first sets of charts. Each of these sets of charts allowed me to create a clear visual representation of my evidence that stated specifically how the information in each story addressed each of my research questions and propositions (Creswell, 2003). In order to determine how, and if, stories exemplified my propositions, I used three criteria to determine how information from my constructed narratives represented key factors and their relationships in terms of my study (Wolcott, 1994). These criteria were as follows: (a) the research question as an overarching criterion, (b) the propositions as narrowing criteria, and (c) the information in the story as specifying criteria. I used the processes described next to create each of the five types of charts. This also created a chain of evidence (Creswell, 2003) linking my findings back to the interviews. What follows are examples of my first sets of charts.

Description of Chart 1

For each of the research questions, I created charts with a column for each participant and row for each story. By organizing the charts in this way, I was able to preserve the identity of individual participants and their specific stories. To follow my chain of evidence, I read participants’ stories in order to look for examples within them that addressed *both* the question *and* the appropriate propositions within the three basic categories (i.e., complex systems, sustainable capacity-building, and teacher conflicts). When I found those examples, I wrote short explanations of how that story provided an example related to the question and the proposition. I put those Roman numeral, letter, key words, and statements into Chart 1 (see Table 2).

Table 2***Chart 1: Examples by Research Questions, Participants, Stories, and Propositions***

Mrs. Stewart	Mr. Manzetti	Mrs. Herman
<i>Sucking the Attention</i>	<i>The Fourth Block from Hell</i>	<i>The Right Thing</i>
IB: Self-Organized: At the beginning of the year the assigned mentor-novice dyad had not organized itself and other colleagues were attempting to support the novice.	IB: Self-organized: Mentor listened to novice's emotional responses to unbalanced classroom culture. IC: Short-ranged: Mentor was available for novice's venting his frustrations.	IA: Nested: Mentor interpreted for receptive novices what leaders of the organization really meant when they talked about cultural norms and what they wanted from teachers.

Note. For Research Question 1: What do mentor and novice stories reveal about the nature of the mentor-novice dyad?

For example, I began with research question one, which addressed the nature of the mentoring role, I read a story (e.g., *Sucking the Attention*) from a participant (e.g., Mrs. Stewart) regarding a proposition category (e.g., I. Complex Systems) and a proposition (e.g., A. Nested, and B. Self-Organized). As I read the story, I looked for examples that addressed the research question and the propositions. Also, while some examples of propositions included in the stories were specific phrases or sections of the story, often examples came from inferences I made based on the story's general content. I followed the same procedure to address research question two and three. To cross check my categorizations, I then reread each story in terms of the research questions, the propositions and sub-propositions, and my statements to make sure I had found all

relevant key factors and relationships within the stories. I also remained open to data that did not match my propositions, and I noted them (Creswell, 2003; Wolcott, 1994).

Description of Chart 2

I then created a second set of question-based charts for all three research questions (see Table 3). I used the same information from Chart 1, but reorganized it according to propositions addressed by the examples provided by participants. I gathered the examples from individual stories and reformatted them under the relevant propositions. By doing this I was able to develop the sub-propositions and themes for Chart 3, and I was able to note the prevalence and types of propositions the examples addressed. I noted not only the numbers of times the proposition was exemplified in a story, but also the specific manner in which it was exemplified. Although I had reformatted the examples from participants' stories, I was still able to identify from whom the examples came by referring to Chart 1, thus preserving the chain of evidence.

Table 3

Chart 2: Examples by Research Questions and Propositions

Proposition	Descriptor
IB	Self-Organized
1	At the beginning of the year the assigned mentor-novice dyad had not organized itself, and other colleagues were attempting to support the novice.
2	Novice beginning to form a mentor-novice dyad with a member of curriculum team.

Note. For Research Question 1: What do mentor and novice stories reveal about the nature of the mentor-novice dyad?

Description of Chart 3

Next I created a third set of charts, in which I noted patterns of examples. For instance, in Chart 3, I categorized the examples from participants' stories for research questions one and two into several categorical levels. In other words, for each of the major proposition categories I noted how examples fit within specific propositions and subcategories. For example, for Complex Systems, I noted how the examples fit under specific propositions (e.g., A. Nested). Next I saw how my examples fit into sub-propositions (e.g., Supportive Environmental Factors) and finally, I saw where they fit into themes for those sub-propositions (e.g., university school connection and induction/mentoring services) (see Table 4).

Table 4

Chart 3: Propositions, Sub-propositions, and Themes

Proposition	Sub-Proposition	Themes
A-Nested	Supportive Environmental factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. University-School Connection: Mentor-novice nested in a school culture that hired teachers who had practice taught at the school if their cooperating teacher advocated for them . . . 2. Induction/Mentoring Services: Mentor-novice dyad nested in a system that has a mentor coordinator who arranged for the bus trip into the neighborhoods as an orienting event . . .

Note. For Research Question 1: I. Complex Systems

For Ecologically-Based Sustainable Capacity-Building, I saw how my examples fit into propositions (e.g., A. Collegial Dynamics) and specific themes from propositions

(e.g. Sponsorship and Protection). For Teacher Conflicts, I also saw how my examples fit into propositions (e.g. A. Major Conflicts) and sub-propositions (e.g. Administrators), and themes from propositions (e.g. Classroom management/pedagogy and Student achievement). Finally, I saw how my examples fit into to propositions (e.g. B. Barriers) and sub-propositions (e.g. Triangulation) and themes. The following first section of Chart 3 exemplifies how I categorized examples from participants' stories for Research Question 1 and Category I. Complex Systems, as one example of this additional level of data analysis.

By placing examples from participants' stories in various sets of charts, I was better able to analyze and interpret them in terms of how they addressed my research questions. By interacting with my data in these ways I became familiar with them and I was often able to recall specific examples from specific stories so that I began to synthesize and understand how participants' stories addressed my research questions, propositions, and conceptual framework. What follows next explains my additional methods of data analysis and interpretation.

Additional Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation

In order to discuss my findings regarding research questions one and two (RQs 1 and 2), I outlined my data sources and created additional tables (i.e., Tables 5, 8, and 9) to examine propositions and themes within propositions. These tables are presented in Chapter IV. For interpreting each part of my findings as presented in Chapter IV, I included relevant examples from my data sources, cited the participants who provided those examples, and noted the prevalence of those examples.

For research question three (RQ3), I used my Conceptual Framework (see Chapter II) to help me organize summaries of the data I had already used for my first and second research questions. In this way I was able to answer the research question and avoid some repetition. These summaries included the following categories: (a) nature of the dyad, (b) conflicts, (c) triggers, (d) emergent responses, (e) direction of capacity to handle conflict—toward commitment and away from commitment, (f) result of the dyad, and (g) mentoring relationship to retention.

Summary of Analysis of Data

I transformed and analyzed data based on participants' stories developed from their interviews. By transforming and analyzing I was able to determine the stories' meanings based on key findings from my conceptual lens (which informed my propositions), and I was able to discuss how these propositions specifically addressed my research questions (Wolcott, 1994). During the analysis process, I constantly re-evaluated all propositions, sub-categories, and emerging themes in light of my data and drew conclusions about how these data addressed my three research questions. Each proposition became a section of my findings and each example provided evidence that addressed all aspects of that proposition with its many categorical levels. Prior to writing an interpretation of my findings, I asked my participants to check my analyses to determine if they seemed to be trustworthy insights regarding my research questions.

Trustworthiness

In order to address threats to trustworthiness, I took specific steps. For example, I made every effort to assure that the voices of my participants emerged during the

interviews and were represented in the narrative I constructed from those interviews. I was also careful to maintain the chain of evidence from the original interview transcripts to the constructed narratives and then to each of the charts I developed for analysis of the narratives in light of my research questions and propositions. These linkages allowed me to move back and forth within my data so that I could readily choose examples to examples from the narratives to explain my findings. In addition, I employed member checking to assure the accuracy of stories' events and even their moods and tones. In fact, I used member checking after each of the three phases of my research process: (a) after I wrote the first stories, (b) after I revised the stories based on feedback from participants, and (c) after I analyzed them based on their relevance to my propositions, conceptual framework, and research questions.

I was gratified by the responses I received from participants regarding their stories and all of them confirmed that other than adjusting a small number of details, I had understood and conveyed the information, tone, and meaning of their interviews. In addition, prior to meeting one last time with my participants, I sent them Member Check Pages that included their specific dyad summaries that can be found in Chapter IV. I also included on those pages the Summary of Findings from Chapter IV. My participants acknowledged at our last meeting that they had read these pages and concurred with my interpretations. I also asked outside evaluators to review my work, so that the themes that emerged from my data should represent my best effort to disregard any biases and preconceived notions (Creswell, 2003) and to address any important ethical considerations.

Ethics

There were several potential ethical dilemmas associated with this study especially because it dealt with the controversial topic of conflict and teachers' deciding to leave the profession. As mentioned earlier, I chose my words carefully when presenting my findings in order to avoid a deficit perspective not only for my participants but for other stakeholders at my research site. One ethical dilemma was breaching confidentiality that could result in someone developing negative perspectives that could affect job evaluations and could even end in someone losing a job. Another dilemma was personal for me in that I have had negative experiences with mentoring relationships in the past, and I could have been unaware of when those experiences might distort my views.

My research design addressed some of these dilemmas because I kept all information confidential by using pseudonyms, avoiding the use of any specific designations that might identify participants (e.g., grade and subject they taught), using generic terms rather than specific program titles, and disguising the location and name of the school involved in my study. I exerted the utmost caution in how I protected the identities of participants and did not attempt to deal directly with the conflicts they reported. I also used self-reflection to challenge my own thinking. For example, even though by paying close attention to my discourse and the ways I conducted this study, I did my best to match my theories of practice with the theories I applied to my work, I sought other perspectives to help me describe and analyze the data I gathered; therefore, the process of member checking and the consultative services of my faculty advisor and

other committee members to offer their perspectives, critiques, and advice were valuable in terms of the ethics of this study.

Summary of Methodology

To summarize my methods of data analysis, and interpretation considering the many possible ways to use narrative inquiry to analyze and interpret information gathered from my interviews, I relied heavily upon strategies proposed by narrative researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993) and qualitative researchers (Creswell, 2003; Wolcott, 1994). My understanding of these methods led me to take the following basic steps: I (a) interviewed novices and mentors by themselves once and with each other once; (b) transcribed my interviews; (c) read and reread the text of my transcribed interviews to search for stories that exemplified the propositions put forth at the beginning of this study based on my conceptual framework in order to try to answer my research questions, (d) used the text from the interviews to write the information as a story that had the basic elements of plot [e.g., a basic situation (including setting, characters, and actions), rising action, climax, and resolution] and a central conflict; (e) asked participants to read (member check) my constructed stories for accuracy of content, theme, and tone; (f) revised the stories to reflect participants' ideas; (g) reread all the co-created stories and attempted to match their relevance to my research questions, propositions, themes, and conceptual framework; (h) noted key factors and relationships among those factors in order to organize those factors to support propositions and themes within each story; (i) asked participants and consultants to member check and provide input regarding my analyses; and (j) interpreted my findings in terms of how key factors

and relationships among my research questions, theoretical propositions, and emerging sub-propositions, patterns, and themes helped me to address each of my research questions in a trustworthy and ethical fashion.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The participants in my study told stories that provided a wealth of data to help me address my research questions regarding the nature of mentor-novice dyads, how mentor-novice dyads dealt with conflict, and the relationship between how novices handled those conflicts and teacher retention. It is important to note that all the names, programs, and places discussed here are pseudonyms to protect the identities of my participants. As a way of introducing my findings, I provide an excerpt from a story one of my participants, Mrs. Truitt (M), told that exemplifies one of the worst things that could happen to a novice teacher.

[Mrs. Truitt] recalled one first year teacher who “wrote an email to the entire staff asking for help.” He asked for help, and no one was willing to help him. Mrs. Truitt believed that by sending out the email he had “laid all his cards out on the table” and “the minute” he did that he gave himself away. Mrs. Truitt felt sorry for the teacher but realized he should not have sent out a plea to the “entire staff.” “The feedback he got was so negative, that he did not make it through the ‘whole year’” (See Appendix C: “Mentor of the Year” by Mrs. Truitt).

This excerpt shows what can happen when a novice is left to his own resources without the guidance of a caring professional who understands the school culture and who is trustworthy.

In this study, I examined mentor-novice dyads’ stories from a complexity-based theoretical framework. I used this framework to construct propositions which I derived

from the research on complexity-based thinking (Davis & Sumara, 2006) and that I matched to my participants' stories (See Appendix C: Participants' Stories). Although naturally many overlapping factors describe the nature of a complex system and how it functions, in order to explain my findings, I have artificially separated complex systems (in this case the mentor-novice dyads) from other capacity-building responses to the conflicts they experienced. Therefore, to address my first research question about the nature of the mentor-novice dyad I addressed Propositions I. A-H, which is about the nature of complex systems (See Appendix D: Propositions from Theoretical Framework). To address my second research question, I addressed Propositions II. A-D, which is about ecologically-based sustainable capacity building, and Propositions III. A and B, which is about the conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution the dyad experienced. Finally to answer research question three, I addressed all of the propositions together as they applied to my conceptual framework.

Research Question 1

In order to address research question 1: What do mentor and novice stories reveal about the nature of the mentor-novice dyad? I identified subcategories within each proposition that arose from the analysis of my data (stories) to help me organize and explain the ways in which my research participants' stories matched the propositions from my theoretical lens about the nature of the mentor-novice dyads in this study (see Table 5). The following table provides an outline of the propositions, subcategories, and themes that emerged from the stories my research participants told. The themes are key points made by the participants in the stories they told, and the sub-propositions are

higher-order labels for these themes as they relate to propositions developed from the literature on complexity-based thinking.

Table 5

Propositions, Sub-propositions, and Themes: Question 1—I. Complex Systems

Propositions	Sub-propositions	Themes
A. Nested	Supportive Environmental Factors	(1) University-school connection, (2) Induction/mentoring services, (3) Learning community orientation, and (4) Student-focused
	Challenging Environmental Factors	(1) Hierarchical organization focused on testing, (2) Perceived Lack of Administrative Support, (3) School culture that afforded students too little accountability, (4) Multiple roles for mentors due to considerable turnover, and (5) Students with challenging needs
B. Self-Organized/Bottom Up Emergent	Dyad Formation	(1) Formal or Informal, (2) Space for Emergence, and (3) Personal perspectives
C. Short-Range	Evidence of short-ranged nature	(1) Proximity of teaching and office spaces, (2) Frequency of contact, (3) Quality of contact, (4) Classroom observations, (5) Professional community, and (6) Similarity in content and students
	Interfering with short-ranged nature	(1) Dual roles and lag time, (2) Different planning periods
D. Closed		(1) Dominant Descriptors, (2) Contrasting Relationships, and (3) Descriptors differentiating helpers in novice's network of support
E. Unstable		(1) Adjusting to each other, (2) Adapting to changes within organization, (3) Adapting to student behaviors, and (4) Adapting to district influences
F. Decentralized		(1) Decision-making and (2) defining mentor-novice relationships.
G. Structure Determined/Redundant and Diverse	Redundant	(1) Same content and students, (2) Shared philosophies and common goals, and (3) Special people.
	Diverse	(1) Different physical characteristics, (2) Filling the gaps for each other, (3) Mentors' superior knowledge of school culture, and (4) Skills differentiating novice from mentors.
H. Ambiguously Bounded		(1) Welcomed disturbances, and (2) Unwelcomed disturbances

Nested

To begin my analysis of participants' stories, I first addressed the fact that complex systems are nested in larger complex systems, or environments, in which the mentor-novice dyad organized itself and functioned. This complex organization which I called Lincoln High School is located in an urban southeastern city. In this school district, schools like Lincoln, which had a history of low student achievement and teacher turnover, received extra coaching staff and had increased accountability requirements. Although it is beyond the limits of this study to provide a thorough analysis of these and other complex systems in which the mentor-novice dyads were nested, it is important to have an understanding of some of the factors that supported the dyad and those that challenged it. Therefore, I include these in this chapter to show how the larger context played a role in shaping the mentor-novice dyad. In order to keep relationships clear, I will label participants' names as (M) for mentor and (N) for novice throughout this description of my analysis and findings.

Supportive environmental factors.

University-school connection. One of the most often presented supportive contextual factors at Lincoln was related to the school-university connection. Several participants (e.g., Hansen-N, Lawson-N, Stewart-N, and Truitt-M) mentioned that they had participated in a state-wide recruitment and retention program that required them to participate in "internships" which were school placements in addition to student teaching so that they were able to experience first-hand several different teaching environments. Participants (e.g., Herman-M and Truitt-M) also cited a specific local university

professor, Dr. Collins (pseudonym), who seemed especially skilled at finding teachers who seemed well-suited to teach at Lincoln. For example, according to Mrs. Herman's (M) story (See Appendix C: "The One Who Didn't Make It" by Mrs. Herman), "Dr. Collins . . . had 'always sent [her] student teachers who were passionate about what they were doing. . . . That was one of Dr. Collins' talents; pairing teachers and interns together' who then became 'student teachers.'" Recruiting teachers from their student-teaching placements seemed to be a common practice at Lincoln. Several of the participants who signed contracts to teach at Lincoln had either student-taught there, or they had significant familiarity with the school through other means (e.g., Baker-N, Captain-N, Cook-N, Hansen-N, Lawson-N, Truitt-M).

It was interesting that even though Mr. Cook (M) had been assigned another mentor, he continued to see Mrs. Herman (M) as his mentor mainly because he was her student teacher, and they had a head-start on learning to appreciate each other. Also Mrs. Captain (N) had been Mrs. Rankin's (M) student teacher and what started as a mutually satisfying partnership continued when Mrs. Captain (N) became Mrs. Rankin's (M) mentee. Also, although Mrs. Baker (N) had not student-taught with Mr. Manzetti (M), they had team taught the classes she took over when she first came to Lincoln. Mr. Manzetti (M) believed that one of the reasons he became her mentor was related to that previous relationship.

Induction/mentoring services. Another significant contextual aspect that supported the mentor-novice dyad was the fact that the school had an induction/mentoring program. This program included a mentor coordinator who seemed

to have thoughtfully paired mentors and novices within the constraints of staffing shortages related to teacher turnover. One particular induction event was especially important to the formation of the Hansen (N)-Truitt(M) dyad.

Mr. Hansen first met Mrs. Truitt, his mentor, “the week before class started. All of the Lincoln mentors and mentees came to the school for a meeting. They introduced themselves and went on a bus tour of the community . . . to see where the kids were coming from.” Mr. Hansen and Mrs. Truitt “sat together on the bus. She [gave him] a crash course in what [he] needed to know about what [he was] getting into.” (see Appendix C: “On the Bus” by Mr. Hansen)

Learning community orientation. Other factors supporting the mentor-novice dyad included the leadership’s commitment to the development of professional learning communities (PLCs). Although Mrs. Captain (N) saw her department’s PLC as a “gripe session” and Mr. Hansen (N) saw his as a “waste of time,” other participants saw that their involvement in a professional learning community lightened their workload. The community or team promoted sharing materials, constructing joint lesson plans, and exchanging ideas for strategies that improved pedagogy and improved relationships with students and with each other, including the mentor-novice dyad (e.g., Herman-M, Manzetti-M, Stewart-N, Truitt-M).

Student-focused. At least two participants (Herman-M, Manzetti-M) acknowledged that the school leaders seemed to have the best interest of students in mind when they made decisions. Interesting but not surprising, every study participant conveyed a deep sense of caring for the students at Lincoln.

In sum, four key environmental factors seemed to support the work of and provide the context in which these mentor-novice dyads operated: (a) the university-school

connection, (b) the availability of induction/mentoring services including a mentor-coordinator; (c) a professional learning community orientation; and (d) a school culture interested in doing what was best for the students. Unfortunately, there were also environmental factors that challenged the mentor-novice dyad.

Challenging Environmental Factors.

Hierarchical organization focused on testing. The overwhelming context at Lincoln that was challenging for mentor-novice dyads was testing accountability, which seemed to come not only from the school district and the state department of public instruction, but also from the national political environment in which schools function in the early 21st century. An excerpt from a story from Mrs. Rankin (M), who was Ms. Captain's (N) mentor, exemplified the degree to which teachers at Lincoln seemed to have bought into the importance of their "stats."

Mrs. Rankin (M) had been kind of reluctant to have a student teacher when she taught [her subject] for the first time because she wanted to know what she could "do in [her subject]." She wanted to know if she could "pull out the stats in [her subject]." In other words she wanted to know "if it was [her] teacher effects that caused these results." (See Appendix C: "Collaboration: A Partnership Approach" by Mrs. Rankin)

In addition, a story from Mrs. Truitt (M) showed that giving credit to teachers for their scores had a strong relationship with the kinds of students they taught. The general perception seemed to be that if a teacher taught honors students, the students (not the teacher) were responsible for their good scores; however, if a teacher taught traditional or struggling learners, their good scores were due to the teacher's skills (Truitt, M).

Scores seemed to be of the utmost importance at Lincoln and keeping students “on-point” (Stewart-N) so that the school might comply with the district’s expectations that every teacher should have at least 60% of the students pass their EOC (End of Course) tests. Those teachers who did not have that student pass-rate were placed in on a professional development plan, which meant they were supposed to get more “hand-holding” (Truitt-M) from the many “decision-makers” assigned to help them improve their practices. Mrs. Truitt (M) expressed her concerns about the leadership at Lincoln because there were too many people making decisions for their department as follows: (a) the department chair, (b) principal, (c) assistant principal in charge of their department, (d) a curriculum facilitator, (e) a part time content coach, and (f) an assistant principal over instruction (API). (Not to mention those coaches and other staff who were assigned from the district). All of these people had their own expectations and priorities and sometimes they were in conflict with each other.

At Lincoln the context was one in which compliance with district and state goals seemed unlikely. Mrs. Herman (M) provided a creative metaphor, “Making Chicken Salad” that described how she and her mentees could not meet the accountability standards set for traditional schools, but they made the best with what they had. What follows is an excerpt from this story:

Mrs. Herman (M) compared mandates from the school district to asking her school to prepare a “chicken dinner.” Unfortunately, making a “chicken dinner” at Lincoln seemed unlikely because of their student population. The majority of the Lincoln students were not adequate chickens for the dinner because most of them had to take care of themselves and be “their own bosses.” . . . Even though teachers like Mr. Cook (N) realized they could not present the district with a “chicken dinner” as expected, they made the best of the situation and instead

made “chicken salad.” (See Appendix C: “Making Chicken Salad” by Mrs. Herman)

Perceived lack of administrative support. Another major contextual issue at Lincoln that affected the manner in which mentor-novice dyads functioned was an underlying sense that it was not advisable to ask administrators for help, especially with classroom management. Administrators seemed to expect all teachers to keep their discipline issues “in-house” (Manzetti–M). The excerpt from Mrs. Truitt’s story “Mentor of the Year,” which served as an introduction to this chapter, showed what could happen to a teacher at Lincoln who asked for help in the wrong way. According to several stories, teachers who appeared to need too much classroom management support would not be retained at Lincoln (Baker-N, Captain-N, Herman-M, Lawson-N, Manzetti-M, Rankin-M, Stanley-M, Truitt-M). Mrs. Stewart’s story “Explosion” explained her feelings about the school context at Lincoln in which teachers were afraid of admitting they needed help.

The teachers did not “want to let administration know” they were struggling because then they had to struggle to keep their jobs. They could not say to someone, “I’m not doing well” and it “not be a reflection” on them.... people at her school were afraid to ask for help, and they were afraid of gossip. She was aware of a teacher who was struggling and doing her best, but that the impression was that she was not a good teacher. In this school students were allowed to be “in-process,” but teachers were not allowed to also be “in-process.” (See Appendix C: “Explosion” by Mrs. Stewart)

School culture that afforded students too little accountability. Another contextual issue that was challenging for the development of the mentor-novice dyad was a school culture that from some perspectives afforded students too little accountability

when it came to being responsible for keeping up with their work (Cook-N, Stanley-M), and when it came to behaving respectfully toward each other and toward the adults in the building (Baker-N). For example, Mrs. Herman (M) told a story of a teacher-intern who decided he could not put up with the students at Lincoln because he could not tolerate their disrespectful attitudes. Mrs. Baker also told a story of a student who treated her disrespectfully when she corrected him for breaking into the cafeteria line.

Dual roles for mentors due to considerable turnover. The teacher turnover at Lincoln was considerable and one of the effects of that turnover was the paucity of what one might consider to be “traditional” mentors (i.e., classroom teachers with several years of experience who took time to offer support and guidance that helped to bring a novice into the teaching profession). As a matter of fact, the majority of the mentors in my study (three out of five) also had other important roles in the school (besides teaching).

Another problem relating to turnover at Lincoln was that at times novice teachers did not complete the school year (Manzetti-M, Rankin-M, Stanley-M, Truitt-M); therefore, the school was faced with determining how to help the novices who replaced them finish the year. For example, although Mr. Manzetti (M) and Mrs. Baker (N) worked together when she took over a teacher’s position during second semester of the previous school year, Mrs. Baker (N) was not assigned a formal mentor until the following year. She cited this as an issue for her in terms of her comfort with learning the Lincoln culture and procedures.

Students with challenging needs. Another contextual issue that affected mentor-novice dyads was that Lincoln had one of the most challenging student populations in the

entire district. Mr. Hansen (N) explained in one of his stories that 60 % of their student population was Black and the rest were Hispanic and Asian students who had not lived in the community very long. Lincoln also had a large Exceptional Children (EC) group.

In sum, five major contextual factors were challenging for the mentor-novice dyad as follows: (1) hierarchical organization focused on accountability, (2) perceived lack of administrative support, (3) a school culture that from some perspectives afforded students too little accountability, (4) dual roles for mentors due to considerable turnover, and (5) students with challenging needs. In some ways the contextual challenges seemed to outweigh the supportive factors; however, in spite of factors that made it difficult for mentors and novices, mentor-novice dyads seemed to be able to organize themselves for their mutual benefit. Even though there were more categories of challenging factors than supportive factors (five vs. four), the number of actual examples from novices stories were nearly equal for supportive and challenging contextual factors:

Self-organized/Bottom-up Emergent

As a complex system, the mentor-novice dyad was self-organized/bottom-up emergent within the context of a hierarchical school organization that included affordances for the organization of the dyad and constraints that could limit its organization. Interestingly, but not surprising, no two dyads were exactly alike, but they shared some of these common traits.

Dyad formation.

Formal or Informal. A factor regarding the self-organization of the mentor-novice dyad was whether the dyad formed based on a formal process, an informal process

or both. Although mentors and novices had additional formal and informal mentor-like relationships, all participant dyads were formal except for the Cook (N)/Herman (M) dyad. Even though the majority of the mentor-novice dyads I interviewed were formed through a formal process of assignment, a pattern of similarity seemed to stop there. No two relationships were alike in terms of the added roles of the mentors or the addition of informal mentors and informal novices.

Space for emergence. As a self-organized/bottom-up emergent system within the context of Lincoln High School mentor-novice dyads organized in unique ways to create what Kalin et al. (2010) referred to as a “*space for emergence*” (p. 357). Within that space mentor-novice dyads generated results that mentors and novices may not have experienced had they functioned as individuals. These spaces appeared to enable novices to learn to adjust to the school culture. The consensus among all participants and in alignment with the nature of complex systems was that the connection between mentors and novices generated emergent results that were superior to what novices might have been able to accomplish on their own. A poignant example came from Mrs. Truitt’s (M) story of the individual who sent the email asking for help and who left the school because he seemed to have no connection with a mentor. Also Mrs. Herman (M), one of the most experienced mentors and long-term member of the faculty at Lincoln concluded that those who would not collaborate would not make it at their school. In addition, mentors and novices described their relationship as providing a safe, caring ear for novices to vent their frustrations (Manzetti-M, Rankin-M) and a place to have “heart to heart” conversations (Cook-N). Some novices retreated to the safe place created by the dyad for

protection (Baker-N, Hansen-N) and all sought connection with mentors for advice. Finally, Mrs. Herman (M) summed up the bottom-up emergent nature of the mentor-novice dyads by describing metaphorically how mentors were willing to “go into the trenches” with novices, but that novices had to discover for themselves what they needed to do.

Mrs. Herman compared the teachers at Lincoln to “soldiers in the military” who had to be “in the trenches” to succeed. She was adamant that no books or university settings could prepare teachers to make it in a school like Lincoln. Novices had to learn from the kids and from their own sense of what to do. And even “when the generals told the foot soldiers what they needed to do,” it was up to these foot soldiers to learn what to do, and they needed “to do it” ... She also acknowledged that what might work for her as an older, veteran, and African-American woman, may not work for a young, novice, and white male or female. In other words, she never assumed that she could provide a plan that any novices might universally apply, and she faced the inevitable that at some point she had to kick “fledglings,” like Mr. Cook, “out of the nest.” (See Appendix C: “in the Trenches” by Mrs. Herman)

Mrs. Stewart also had an interesting perspective about how she and Mrs. Herman worked together within a space for emergence.

... as a mentor, Mrs. Herman, did not ask “do you want to play for me? It [was] more like, do you want to play for the team that is your classroom?” Most importantly to Mrs. Stewart, regardless of her 30 years of experience, Mrs. Herman never “talked down” to her and always gave her the upmost respect and kindness. (See Appendix C: “I See a Teacher” by Mrs. Stewart)

Another important factor related to the manner in which the mentor-novice dyads self-organized included their individual personal systems; however, this level of the system was not a focus of this study; therefore, I mention only a few factors that stood out to me as affecting mentor-novice self-organization.

Individual personal perspectives. Individual personal perspectives generated important conflicts as mentors and novices attempted to self-organize. For example Mr. Manzetti (M) believed he could not help Mrs. Baker (N) with some of her disciplinary issues, and Mrs. Stanley (M) believed she was limited in how much she could help Mrs. Lawson (N) based on Mrs. Lawson's (N) personality and physical appearance. The mentor novice dyad was also in conflict about how to organize based on novices' personal goals. For example, two novices had goals for achieving an advanced degree (Lawson, N, Stewart, N) and one had a goal to live somewhere other than the United States when she was still young (Captain-N). These personal goals seemed to play an important role in novices' decisions about their commitment to Lincoln. The next section shows evidence of the short-ranged nature of the mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln, but it also shows instances when larger system issues may have interfered with the ability of the dyad to be short-ranged.

Short-range

Evidence of Short-ranged Nature.

Proximity of teaching and office spaces. In many cases the mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln had easy access to one another because of the proximity of their teaching and office spaces. For example Mrs. Rankin (M) and Mrs. Captain (N) were across the hall from one another. Mrs. Stanley's (M) office was near Mrs. Lawson's (N) classroom, which was also close to Mrs. Rankin (M) and Ms. Captain (N). Mrs. Herman's (M) office was almost next door to Mr. Cook's (N) classroom and Mr. Manzetti (M) and Mrs. Baker (N) were right down the hall from them. The only dyads that did not have close proximity

to their formal mentors were Hansen (N)/Truitt (M) and Stewart (N)/Herman (M). However, Mrs. Stewart (N) was in close proximity to her informal mentor, Mrs. Anderson. In addition lack of closeness did not seem to affect the short-ranged nature of the Hansen (N)/Truitt (M) dyad.

Being physically close to one another allowed the potential for being short-ranged, however, it did not guarantee it, and not being physically close did not negate the potential for being short-ranged. In the case of these participants the majority had close physical spaces, but their closeness physically did not seem to have much bearing on the level of closeness in their relationships. For example one of the healthiest mentor-dyads, Hansen (N)/Truitt (M), was the most distant in terms of physical space, but they both made efforts to be close otherwise.

Frequency of contact. Almost all of the mentor-novice dyads reported frequent interactions. For example, four out of the five novices reported having some kind of daily contact (e.g., face to face or email) with their mentors. Only Mrs. Lawson (N), who had a part time mentor, did not have contact with her mentor on a daily basis, and neither of them reported having frequent email or cell phone contact when Mrs. Stanley (M) was not in the building. In addition, Ms. Captain (N) had daily contact with Mrs. Rankin (M) when she was at school, but it seemed she was often not there due to family issues. Ms. Captain (N) valued frequency of contact with her mentor, and she was able to compensate for a lack of frequency when her mentor was not present at school; however, she also would have preferred that she not be the only one seeking contact. Although many studies of mentoring have focused on the frequency of contact between mentors

and novices, I was also concerned with the quality of those contacts which is more difficult to access.

Quality of contact. Even though I interviewed novices and mentors separately as well as together to observe directly how they interacted, I could only count on their reports to determine if they were having quality contact. It seemed from these reports that each of the dyads was satisfied with the quality of their contacts with each other. In an excerpt from Mrs. Truitt's (M) story "Mentor of the Year," she made an interesting observation about how one might judge the quality of the interactions between mentors and novices versus the frequency of their contact.

Mrs. Truitt (M) replied that the "number of contact hours were not important" as long as the mentees felt like they had "someone to go to when a problem" occurred, and they had "somebody" they could "trust." To Mrs. Truitt that was the "big issue with the mentor." It was not that she sat down with her mentee "for an hour every other Thursday." It was the fact that her mentee knew that if he needed anything, he knew he could "absolutely come to" her. The mentee could sit and talk to the mentor "for four hours and not make a difference, but if he [had] a problem" and the mentor went up to administration and addressed it; that was "more powerful" (See Appendix C: "Mentor of the Year" by Mrs. Truitt).

Classroom observations. All of the mentors had observed their novices teach. Ms. Captain (N) and Mr. Cook (N) had been observed by their mentors when they were student teachers. Mrs. Baker (N) had team taught with Mr. Manzetti (M). Mrs. Herman (M) had observed and team taught with Mrs. Stewart (N) as her mentor and as her content coach, and Mrs. Herman (M) had observed Mr. Manzetti (M) as both his mentor and his content coach. Mrs. Stanley (M) had observed Mrs. Lawson (N) as her mentor and content coach and Mrs. Truitt (M) had observed Mr. Hansen (N) as his mentor.

Conversely, only three novices were able to observe their mentors and three were unable to observe them.

In two dyads, novices had seen their mentors teach because they student taught with them (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M). In the case of Baker (N)/Manzetti (M), Mrs. Baker (N) had not observed Mr. Manzetti (M) teaching his class, but she had seen him teaching when he had been assigned to teach a class she took over during the second semester of her first year. He gradually turned the class over to her. In the case of the coaches, Mrs. Stanley (M) and Mrs. Herman (M), neither of them saw their role as modeling lessons. Mrs. Herman (M) would often come in as the coach and pitch-in where ever the teacher needed her, but she did not seem to model whole lessons for teachers. Mrs. Stanley (M) thought of herself as a guest in teachers' classrooms.

Professional learning community. One of the factors that enabled the short-ranged nature of the mentor-novice dyad was that, as mentioned earlier, the leadership at Lincoln had incorporated a professional learning community (PLC) model within each of its departments. The manner in which each department implemented this model and its apparent usefulness to novices ranged from completely useful and necessary to useless and interfering. On the positive side, becoming the member of a team of teachers who all taught the same curriculum made a tremendous difference to the Stewart (N)/Herman (M) dyad and the Stewart (N)/Mentor B (Mrs. Anderson) dyad.

On the other end of the spectrum, Ms. Captain (N) felt that her department's PLC had become a gripe session, and Mr. Hansen (N) felt that his was a waste of time that interfered with his ability to concentrate on planning lessons for the week. These

opposing perspectives show that the PLC in itself did not facilitate closeness between some novices and mentors, and it actually interfered with some, whereas for others it facilitated closeness that was critical to mentor-novice dyads.

Similarity in content and students. Another factor that affected the short-ranged nature of the mentor-novice dyad was the fact that in some cases (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M) mentors and novices taught the same or similar content and the same kinds of students. In other cases the mentor was a coach who had taught all of the content and the same kinds of students their novices taught (Cook-N/Herman-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). The only case where differences in content and student population were evident was within the Hansen (N)/Truitt (M) dyad. Mr. Hansen (N) and Mrs. Truitt (M) seemed pleased when he was assigned honors students so that he would prepare students for Mrs. Truitt's (M) upper-level courses, but they were still not aligned by content, which did not seem to be a problem for either one of them.

Interfering with the Short-ranged Nature. There were also system-based factors that seemed to interfere with the short-ranged nature of the mentor-novice dyad. These factors were (a) the dual roles of the mentor which also created lag time in the ability of the mentor and novice to get together, and (b) different planning periods.

Dual roles of mentor and lag time. The dual roles of some of the mentors (i.e., Stanley-M, Herman-M) and the lag time that occurred when mentors were not immediately able to begin working with their novices were closely related because the reason lag time existed in the cases of Mrs. Herman (M) and Mrs. Stanley (M) was

because they were both content coaches. The Stewart (N)/Herman (M) dyad and the Lawson (N)/Stanley (M) dyad were affected by these dual roles and lag time in similar ways. For example, in both cases, the novices sought help from outside the formally assigned mentor-novice dyad because their mentors were either too busy at the beginning of the year doing their coaching jobs and in the case of the Lawson (N)/Stanley (M) dyad, they were not assigned to each other until after Mrs. Lawson (N) had taught for approximately one month.

Different planning periods. Another factor that interfered with the short-ranged nature of the mentor-novice dyad occurred when novices and mentors had different planning periods. This issue only seemed important to the Captain (N)/Rankin (M) dyad because all of the other participants had the same planning periods or were coaches (i.e., Stanley-M, Herman-M) and had no classroom responsibilities. Ms. Captain (N) felt somewhat cheated by the fact that she had a different planning period from not only her mentor but from the entire department.

In sum, I found evidence that most mentor-novice dyads were short-ranged because mentors and novices had (a) physical proximity, (b) frequent contact, (c) quality contact, (d) classroom observations, (e) a professional learning community, and (f) similarity in content and students. Interfering factors, however, included: (a) dual roles of mentors and lag time, and (b) different planning periods.

Closed

Although mentor-novice dyads described their relationships as “different” from other relationships they had at their school, each dyad was unique so that determining

how they were different was a challenge. When I looked carefully at each story, I was able to find some descriptors that participants used to show the ways in which the mentor-novice dyad was “different” from other supportive relationships that made up novices’ networks of support.

Dominant descriptors. In order to capture the dominant descriptors of the mentor-novice dyad, I created a table (See Appendix E: Descriptors of Mentor-Novice Closed System by Dyads) that had one column for Mentor-Novice Dyad Descriptors and six other columns for each of the participating dyads. I read through each story in order to gather key phrases. I also inferred from some of these descriptors that they applied to all participants. For example, even though not always directly stated, all participants acknowledged that their mentors had superior knowledge of the school culture. I then noted agreement among participants in terms of the number of participants describing their relationship in similar terms. I collected a list of 13 descriptors that had between five and six matches. I then combined these descriptors in order to form a list of eight descriptors. The following eight conditions (not in any order of importance) emerged as dominant descriptors of the identity of mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln High School:

1. The mentors’ knowledge of the school culture was superior to novice’s knowledge of it.
2. The mentor had experience as a teacher of challenging students that was superior to that of novice’s.
3. Mentors were respected, empowered, and trusted by school leadership but they aligned with novices.

4. Mentors and novices admired each other's practices.
5. Mentoring was a one-on-one commitment.
6. The mentor and novice had daily contact.
7. Mentor-novice dyads collaborated and shared ideas and materials.
8. Mentors could not stop administrators from dismissing novices

I was able to determine that these conditions described the closed identity of mentor-novice dyads not only from a synthesis of novice's stories but also by contrasting the mentor-novice dyad identity with other relationships novices utilized at Lincoln High School; it seemed that if any one of these eight conditions was missing, I would not identify the relationship as actually being a mentor-novice dyad.

Contrasting relationships. From novices' stories, I discovered that they had a number of other people who were assigned to help them or who became helpful professional friends. In addition the school was organized to allow the support of PLCs and several of the novices also had supportive family members who were educators. In order to differentiate the mentor-novice dyad from these other helpful relationships, I compared and contrasted these other relationships with the eight descriptors novices and mentors identified as defining their relationship. The contrasting relationships were as follows: novices and content coaches, novices and professional friends, novices and family members who were educators, novices and PLCs, and novices and other designated helping professionals such as administrators, curriculum coaches, and district coaches.

Descriptors differentiating helpers in novice's network of support. Table 6 helps to differentiate the mentor-novice dyad from other relationships in a novice's network of support. From this table it seems clear that the mentor-novice dyad had all of the features listed in participants' stories whereas none of the other relationships had them all.

Table 6

Descriptors Differentiating Helpers in the Novice's Network of Support

Descriptors	M-N	C-N	F-N	Fa-N	A-N	Cn-N	P-N	O-N
1. Superior knowledge of the school culture	X	X			X	X	X	
2. Superior experience teaching challenging	X	X					X	
3. Respected, empowered, and trusted by school leadership but aligned with novice	X							
4. Admired each other's practices	X		X	X				
5. A one-on-one commitment	X							
6. Daily contact	X		X					
7. Collaborated and shared ideas and materials	X		X				X	X
8. Could not stop administrators from dismissing novices	X	X	X	X		X	X	X

Note. Mentor-Novice (M-N); Coach-Novice (C-N); Professional Friends-Novice (F-N); Family who were educators-Novice (Fa-N); Administrator-Novice (A-N); Counselor-Novice (Cn-N); Professional Learning Community-Novice (P-N); Other designated helping professionals such as district coaches (O-N)

As a closed system, I believe the mentor-novice dyad had an identity that differentiated it from all of the other helpful relationships within the mentor-novice network of support. Further, all of the dyads met the criteria as mentor-novice dyads except for Lawson (N)/Stanley (M). Although based on my analysis, they did not qualify

as a mentor-novice dyad, based on their formal assignments to each other, I continued to discuss them as a mentor-novice dyad.

Unstable

Although the mentor-novice dyad had a closed identity, it was able to learn and grow as a relationship because it was unstable (i.e., flexible), which meant it was constantly moving and adjusting to its surroundings and within itself. As a matter of fact, adjusting to each other was the most salient of the complex structures that helped mentor-novice dyads build capacity/learn.

Adjusting to each other. In order to adjust to one another, the mentor-novice dyad had to be flexible to accommodate the various designations of the mentors and novices, which included the following:

- Coach and mentor: Herman (M) and Stanley (M)
- Department chair and mentor: Truitt (M)
- Formally mentoring more than one novice: Herman (M) and Rankin (M)
- Informally mentoring more than one novice: Herman (M) and Truitt (M)
- Novices having more than one mentor: Cook (N) and Stewart(N)
- Novices having an informal mentor: Cook (N) and Stewart (N)
- Mentor having been novice's cooperating teacher: Cook (N)/Herman (M) and Captain (N)/Rankin (M).

Unfortunately, there were instances, as discussed previously, when dual roles created problems for novices and mentors. Another issue addressing the manner in which the

mentors and novices adjusted to one another was how they related to each other within the PLC for their department.

In the case of the Stewart (N)/Herman (M) dyad, Mrs. Herman's (M) relationship with Mrs. Stewart (N) within her PLC enabled the novice to determine a realistic work load for herself because her mentor actively helped to shape and then endorse the team plans. However, for the Lawson (N)/Stanley (M), Captain (N)/Rankin (M), and Hansen (N)/Truitt (M) dyads, the mentors were unable to adjust their relationship so that they were able to help novices avoid PLCs becoming irrelevant (Captain-N, Lawson-N) or an impediment (Hansen-N). Mentor-novice dyads were flexible in terms of allowing a non-hierarchical sharing of ideas, and even when students challenged the novice's expertise, the mentor defended it (Captain-N/Rankin-M). In some cases the mentor's various roles seemed to strengthen the relationship between mentor and novice (Cook-N/Herman-M, Hansen-N/Truitt-M, Stewart-N/Herman-M) but in another case it seemed to be associated with problems between the mentor and novice (Lawson-N/Stanley-M).

Adapting to changes within organization. Changes determined by the school leadership also required mentor-novice dyads to work together to adjust in order to build capacity and grow. The dominant adjustments to school leader decisions revolved around accountability and paperwork. Mentor-novice dyads responded to school leaders in some of the following ways:

- Presented novice's scores to show administrators how well the novice was performing (Lawson-N/Stanley-M),

- Attempted to change administrators' and colleagues' perceptions in terms of giving novice credit for honor students' scores (Hansen-N/Truitt-M),
- Convinced administrators to allow for a weekly rather than daily lesson plan (Stewart-N/Herman-M), and
- Helped the novice keep paperwork in perspective (Cook-N/Herman-M).

In addition to issues around accountability and paperwork, decisions from school leaders about a room assignment also provided examples of how mentor-novice dyads had to adjust to decisions from school leaders (Lawson-N, Truitt-M). In both cases the mentors negotiated directly with school leaders to help the novice. In the case of Hansen (N)/Truitt (M) the negotiation was effective, but in the case of Lawson (N)/Stanley (M) it was not.

Adapting to student behaviors. Mentors and novices were also constantly adapting and adjusting to students' behaviors. For example, mentor-novice dyads changed to meet the needs of the novices as they dealt with challenging classes (Baker-N, Stewart-N), and they had to adjust their relationship based on centralized curriculum that often did not seem to match the needs of their challenging students (Lawson-N, Hansen-N).

Adapting to district influences. Finally, mentor-novice dyads were unstable in order to adjust to pressure from the district. For instance, because Lincoln was designated as a struggling school, the faculty and staff were subjected to policies and input from various district level positions. One salient example, shown in the excerpt below, occurred when a mentor had to adjust her relationship with her mentee to include

evaluation in conjunction with a district level coach, Mrs. Gates. Mrs. Herman's (M) connection with the coach seemed to generate a negative response from Mrs. Stewart (N) and made it necessary for Mrs. Herman (M) and Mrs. Stewart (N) to adjust their relationship.

[Mrs. Herman] was concerned, however, with a specific incident that happened with Mrs. Stewart, her mentee. She felt that Mrs. Stewart had called in sick one day because she had experienced "a little melt down." The reason for the melt down revolved around some feedback Mrs. Herman and others had presented to her about her 2nd Block, which Mrs. Stewart called her "bears" . . . Mrs. Herman felt that Mrs. Stewart had "felt trampled upon." When they went over the feedback, the [district] Coach, Mrs. Gates, was there too and Mrs. Stewart may have felt "overwhelmed." Mrs. Herman believed Mrs. Stewart may have thought that Mrs. Gates was evaluating her and finding problems with her teaching. Mrs. Herman had said to Mrs. Gates, "Don't you dare bring one of those evaluation forms." (See Appendix C: "The Melt-Down" by Mrs. Herman)

In addition to input from others from the school and district, the district also put pressure on schools around testing accountability. Mentors had to help novices adjust to being placed on a special professional development plan by the district (Lawson-N, Truitt-M). The paperwork generated by the district also made it necessary for mentors to help novices understand how to complete it and make time in their schedules to do it (Captain-N, Cook-N).

Decentralized

The most striking evidence that mentor-novice dyads functioned as a decentralized complex system to build capacity and learn was that the mentor-novice dyad made decisions that helped novices deal with centralized decisions.

Decision-making. In the table that follows (Table 7), I show centralized mandates in the left column, and in the right column, I provide examples of how mentor-novice dyads made decentralized decisions in response to those mandates.

Table 7

Centralized and Decentralized Decisions

Centralized Decisions	Mentor-Novice Decision (Decentralized)
All teachers will have at least 60% of their students pass the EOC (e.g. Truitt)	Mentor-novice dyads learned to value improvement in students' test scores as a way of encouraging novices (Captain-N/Rankin-M, Lawson-N/Stanley-M)
All teachers will be able to complete all district paperwork in a timely manner.	Mentor-novice dyad found ways to adjust paperwork to make it less daunting and more useful for holding students accountable (Cook-N/Herman-M)
All teachers will submit individual daily lesson plans.	A mentor convinced administrators to allow novices on a curriculum team to submit collaborative weekly plans which helped them build capacity to accomplish all that was expected of them (Stewart-N/Herman-M)
Administrators formally assigned mentors to novices.	Mentors informally accepted additional mentees (Cook-N/Herman-M; Truitt-M/Novice B) and novices chose informal mentors (Stewart-N/Mentor B; Novice B/Truitt-M) who helped them build capacity as teachers.
District required adherence to curriculum standards and pacing guides.	Mentor-novice dyads adjusted district required curriculum standards and pacing guides to their student population (Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Cook-N/Herman-M).

Defining mentor-novice relationships. In addition to making their own decisions regardless of centralized ones, mentors and novices functioned within a system that attempted to facilitate and monitor as much as possible the manner in which students were taught (Truitt-M, Hansen-N). The system did not, however, provide strict guidance

about how the mentor-novice functioned and it also did not provide a job description for coaches (Stanley-M). The fact that neither of these helping relationships was defined was often useful especially in terms of novices being able to choose their own informal mentors as in the cases of Cook (N)/Herman (M) and Truitt (M)/Novice B. However, at times the lack of direction created problems for novices (Truitt-M/Hansen-M) when the content coach seemed to not only fail to help the novice, she seemed to interfere with the novice's ability to plan lessons.

The implementation of PLCs at Lincoln also played a role in decentralizing the mentor-novice dyads because in at least one example, a learning community structure supported by the mentor and administrators triggered a novice to build relational and content knowledge skills that addressed conflicts (Stewart-N). The following excerpt explains how her PLC transformed Mrs. Stewart's school experience.

One of the most important changes that made her work less stressful was her greater involvement with her fellow [PLC] teachers, Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Etheridge (pseudonyms). . . . Mrs. Herman took some of the credit for the fact that Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Anderson, and Mrs. Etheridge [the (PLC) colleagues] were sharing the burden of lesson planning. As their curriculum coach and as Mrs. Stewart's mentor, Mrs. Herman had reasoned with school administrators and district decision-makers to allow for weekly, rather than daily, lesson plans. By encouraging Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Anderson, and Mrs. Etheridge to write one lesson plan with "everybody's name at the top for the whole week," Mrs. Herman helped them form a [PLC]. By becoming a member of this community Mrs. Stewart was able to both decrease her lesson planning load, and she could make sure they "were all on the same page." This process allowed her to comply with pacing requirements and to "feel supported at the same time." (See Appendix C: "Finding Community, Finding Self" by Mrs. Stewart)

Structure Determined (Redundant and Diverse)

Complex systems are structure determined so that they structure themselves in order to adapt to maintain their “viability” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 6). In adapting, they capitalize on their similarities (redundancy) and their differences (diversity). It appears from the examples that follow, that mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln often utilized these two indicators of a complex system.

Redundant.

Same content and students. One of the major redundant factors that identified mentor novice dyads as capacity building complex systems was that mentors, novices and other teachers who taught the same content pooled their ideas in order to save time and energy and to maintain curriculum alignment (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). Also, mentors and novices taught or had the same content and similar student populations, which helped them plan useful lessons for that population (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). The leadership addressed potential conflicts between mentors and novices by making sure *all* novices had mentors who were skilled in their content, so even though mentor-novice dyads taught similar subjects but not identical ones their mutual understanding of curriculum issues helped them deal with conflicts with students and leadership (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M).

Shared philosophies and common goals. Other ways in which being a redundant complex system helped mentor-novice dyads build capacity was that they shared

philosophies and had common goals for their students. These shared philosophies, which I will explain more thoroughly when I explain “shared understandings” related to research question number two, revolved around wanting to create the best learning environment for students in order to help them succeed. The majority of mentors and novices were aligned in their view that high test scores were evidence of *students’ success* (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M); however they did not agree with the manner in which administrators put pressure on teachers to achieve at levels higher than their students seemed able to attain, and they saw students’ growth on tests as also important. The majority of mentors and novices were also aligned in their view that high test scores were *evidence of novices’ success* with students (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). In addition, mentor-novice dyads valued redundancy (i.e., their similarities) as a means of survival in their challenging school (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M).

Special people. Another redundancy that helped mentors and novices work together to build the capacity of their relationship at Lincoln included the fact that mentor-novice dyads recognized that it took a special kind of teacher to make it at their school (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M).

Interestingly, Mrs. Rankin (M) recognized in her novice, Ms. Captain (N), the fact that they had both been challenges for their own teachers and because both of them were

“knuckleheads” they were able to better relate to their own knucklehead students

(Captain-N). For example,

Mrs. Rankin believed that the students had “bonded” with Ms. Captain the same way they had bonded with her because both she and Mrs. Rankin had been “knuckleheads” when they were in school and the kids seemed to “gravitate” toward both of them as “kindred spirit[s].” Mrs. Rankin did not know “what kind of student” Ms. Captain was, but she had the “funny feeling [she] might have been a teacher’s nightmare.” (See Appendix C: “I Think I’m Really Good at It” by Ms. Captain)

Another place of redundancy was that there did not appear to be a recognized differential between novices and mentors in their level of content knowledge. In most cases it seemed that mentors recognized their novice’s content preparation for teaching at the high school level. For example, the majority of the mentors recognized that their novices had content knowledge at least equal to their own (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M). A balance to redundancy is diversity and mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln built capacity by being not only redundant but also diverse.

Diverse.

Different physical characteristics. The most common diversity among participants’ characteristics was their generational differences. This difference seems logical in terms of mentor-novice dyads because if a mentor is someone who has more experience, they would tend to be older than the novice. For example in the Cook-N/Herman-M dyad, Mr. Cook (N) believed he had students’ respect because he was young and engaged with popular culture, and he believed his mentor, Mrs. Herman (M) had a

different kind of respect which he called “the grandmother respect.” Another interesting physical characteristic difference between novice and mentor was in the Hansen (N)/Truitt (M) dyad. Mr. Hansen (N) was unusually tall and his mentor, Mrs. Truitt (M), was remarkably short. These height differences prompted Mrs. Truitt (M) to suggest to Mr. Hansen (N) that in order to develop good relationships with students he might adjust his height in order to get “face-to-face” with them.

Unlike Mrs. Truitt, who was rather petite, Mr. Hansen was quite tall, and he found it effective to physically “get down at [students’] level instead of talking to them standing up.” When he “made them look [him] in the eye” and when he talked to them face-to-face he could say firmly, “What you’re doing is not acceptable.” So he was being “stern” with them, but at the same time he was showing them “that love that they needed.” Mr. Hansen said the technique also allowed him to be “real” with students, and he even used it in basketball coaching. Mr. Hansen believed talking to kids face-to-face “helped a lot because” the kids seemed to respect him more when he was not “just talking *at* them,” but having a conversation *with* them. These conversations tended to encourage students “to take responsibility for what they [were] doing in class.” (See Appendix C: “Breakthroughs” by Mr. Hansen)

Mentor-novice dyads in this study seemed to capitalize on the diversity of their physical characteristics to help them create useful lesson plans and to help them develop relationships with their students.

Filling the gaps for each other. Another way diversity helped the mentor-novice dyad build capacity/learn was that they filled gaps for each other in terms of their knowledge and skills. For example, according to Mrs. Stewart (M), she and her informal mentor made a great “composite teacher” (Stewart-M) because “Mrs. Stewart was good at ‘thinking of things’ and Mrs. Anderson was ‘really good at making them concrete.’” In the Captain (N)/Rankin (M) dyad, the mentor, Mrs. Rankin (M), was older and more

experienced as a teacher, but the novice, Mrs. Captain (M) was more familiar with the content of the course because she had recently come out of a college program in which she studied that content, and she also had superior understanding of how to use technology (i.e., PowerPoint) instructionally. These mentor-novice dyads provided examples of how they built capacity by respecting diverse strengths and weaknesses within each other.

Mentors' superior knowledge of school culture. Mentors and novices were also diverse in terms of their knowledge of the school culture. In the majority of the dyads (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M) the novices were able to benefit from their mentors' superior abilities to interpret administrators' discourse, which contributed to the school's culture. In recognizing their mentor's superior abilities to interpret and translate administrative discourse, novices did not make assumptions that could have hurt their relationships with administrators. For example, Mr. Manzetti (M) recalled that when he was a novice, he heeded warnings from his mentor, Mrs. Herman (M) to "stay out of the office" (Manzetti -M). In this case, he recognized that his mentor had a superior understanding of school culture based on her years of experience. Another way novices gained from their mentor's superior knowledge of school culture was through the mentor's ability to help their novices to navigate through the system as shown in stories by Mr. Hansen (N) and Mrs. Truitt (M). A story by Mrs. Baker (N) told what happened to her before she had someone to help her navigate the system; for example, she had her "hands rapped a few

times” (Baker-N). By acknowledging the superior abilities of their mentors to interpret school culture for them, novices seemed to learn how to better deal with it.

Skills differentiating novices from mentors. Mentors also recognized that their novices had skills and abilities that distinguished them as valuable members of the faculty and made them equal to their mentors. For example in several dyads the mentors saw their novices having skills that differentiated as follows:

- Mr. Manzetti (M) said Mrs. Baker (N) was more creative than he in certain aspects of the curriculum (Manzetti-M).
- Mrs. Herman (M) said Mr. Cook (N) was truly skilled at connecting with students around curriculum issues. He often took her lessons and put his own creative spin on them so that Mrs. Herman (M) no longer recognized them (Herman-M).
- Mrs. Stanley (M) said Mrs. Lawson (N) had a superior ability to break things down for students (Stanley-M).
- Mrs. Rankin (M) said Ms. Captain (N) had superior knowledge of the content Mrs. Rankin (M) was teaching and how to use technology instructionally, (Rankin-M).
- Mrs. Truitt (M) saw Mr. Hansen’s (N) laid-back and quiet teaching style as being superior to her abrupt and aggressive style when it came to teaching honors students (Truitt-M).

Ambiguously Bounded

In order to survive and build capacity/learn as a complex system, the mentor-novice dyad depended on its ambiguously bounded structure to respond to many disturbances (i.e., triggers) from within the dyad and from outside it. Disturbances from within came from mentor-novice diversity (as already explained in the previous section), and other disturbances came mostly from role ambiguity (i.e. coaching versus mentoring roles). Outside disturbances came from teaching colleagues, students, family members, administrators, and district level decisions.

Welcomed disturbances. Mentor-novice dyads welcomed input or disturbances from other colleagues from outside the dyad. For example, according to Mrs. Herman (M) she and her mentees often stole ideas from others (even those in other departments) and were happy to share with each other and with others (even those in other departments) (Herman-M). Mentor-novice dyads were open to ideas from each other and from other teachers in their PLCs, from content coaches, administrators, and district personnel as shown in stories from all participants. They also learned from their students and from family members. The boundaries around mentor-novice dyads allowed input from these sources rather than blocking them or seeming to be threatened by them.

Unwelcomed disturbances. In addition to welcomed disturbances, mentor-novice dyads recognized that it took a special kind of teacher to adjust to the unwelcomed disturbances at their school (Herman-M, Stanley-M). For example, sometimes being a teacher, a mentor, and a department chair in a school with many leaders had the effect of overwhelming mentor-novice dyads (Truitt-M). Novices were disturbed by some policy

implementation and by a perceived lack of responsiveness that led to teacher-administrator conflict (Lawson-N, Manzetti-M). The boundaries around mentor-novice dyads were permeable to allow for disturbances from administrative decisions about what defined “the right thing” in terms of instruction (Herman-M).

Mentor-novice dyad boundaries also had to be flexible in order to adjust to district goals around accountability (Cook-N/Herman-M). For example, mentor-novice dyads were structured for constant acceptance of disturbances from the district in the form of additional paperwork (Cook-N, Captain-N). The following excerpt explains how Mr. Cook felt about the paperwork at Lincoln.

Mr. Cook believed that the hardest part of teaching at Lincoln was “the paperwork.” To him the students were great, even though sometimes they were “bad” and he just wished some of them had “stayed home.” The paperwork was the “most over-bearing part” of his job. Mr. Cook accepted that often his students would make him feel tired, but that was OK. He expected “students to be students, “but “the most stressful” part of teaching for him was “keeping up with all the paper work – the IEPs, and PEPs and ABCs.” There were “so many acronyms for everything!” Sometimes it felt like he had to spend more time on paperwork than on teaching. (See Appendix C: “Almost Quit” by Mr. Cook)

In addition, the mentor’s role had to accommodate the addition of a district coach who also had expectations that the mentor perform the functions of a coach that included evaluation and criticism of the mentee (Herman-M). Finally, all mentor-novice dyad boundaries were flexible in order to adjust to students’ needs.

Summary of Research Question 1

The mentor-novice participants in this study were nested in a school culture that had a strong university-school connection, a mentoring program, a learning community

orientation, and was student-focused. However, some mentors and novices viewed Lincoln as a hierarchical organization focused on testing and that administrators did not support them. In addition, some believed school culture afforded its challenging students too little accountability, and some were bothered by the dual roles for mentors. The mentor-novice dyad was self-organized/bottom-up emergent through formal and informal processes, the majority of which were formal; what mentor-novice dyads accomplished at Lincoln appeared to differ from what individual novices might accomplish; and some personal issues, such as a novice's capabilities and physical characteristics affected how they self-organized in some cases. The mentor-novice dyads were also self-organized to engage in capacity-building, which I will detail when I address my second research question. In addition, mentor-novice dyads were in many cases short-ranged due to easy access between mentor and novice, frequency of contact and availability, quality of contact, classroom observations, alignment of content and student populations, and the availability of PLCs. Dual roles of mentors, lag time for mentors and novices getting together, and mentor not checking on the novice interfered in some cases with the short-ranged nature of the mentor-novice dyad. Also, the mentor novice dyad described by participants was a closed system with eight specific descriptors that differentiated it from other helping roles within the novice's network of support and all dyads met the criteria except for the Lawson (N)/Stanley (M) relationship. Next, instability (i.e., flexibility) allowed the members of the dyad to adapt to each other, to changes within the organization, to student behaviors, and to district influences. Being decentralized allowed the dyad to make its own decisions and define its own relationships. The structure

determined nature of mentor-novice dyads was evident through their use of redundancy and diversity. Redundancy showed in the sharing of similar content and students, having similar and common goals, and believing it took a special kind of person to teach at Lincoln. Diversity was evident from the dyads' different physical characteristics (e.g., age and size), filling the gaps for each other, mentors' superior knowledge of school culture, and skills differentiating the novices from mentors. Finally, evidence that the dyad was ambiguously bounded came from examples of adjustments to welcomed and unwelcomed disturbances within the dyad and from outside it. In sum, the nature of the complex mentor-novice system seemed to allow or facilitate the growth of the mentors and novices within the dyad, and it seemed to have an identity distinct from other helping relationships available to novices.

Research Question 2

My second research question addressed the manner in which mentor-novice dyads addressed school conflicts, and my underlying assumption was that it was not the conflicts themselves that created problems for novice teachers, but it was the ways in which they handled them. My assumption was that mentor-novice dyads used sustainable capacity-building that helped novices at Lincoln address the major conflicts they experienced in the school setting. This kind of sustainable capacity building occurred when the emergent responses to the problem matched not only the needs of the problem-solver but they also matched the conflict to be resolved so that the problem-solver continued to use those responses over time.

Ecologically-based Sustainable Capacity-building

In the previous section, I explored the nature of mentor-novice dyad. In this section, I present examples of how the mentor-novice dyads used ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building to help novices deal with those major conflicts. I have limited my discussion to the following: collegial dynamics, collaborative cultures, shared understandings, and synchronicity (See Table 8). Next I will give examples from participants' stories of some of the major teacher conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution mentors-novice dyads confronted at Lincoln. Finally, I show how mentor-novice dyads used their complex nature and sustainable capacity building to address major conflicts and the barriers to conflict resolution. Examples in this section are presented in terms of the major conflicts with the following: (a) administrators, (b) students, and (c) other conflicts.

Table 8

Propositions and Themes from Propositions: II. Ecologically-based Sustainable Capacity-building

Propositions	Themes from Propositions
A-Collegial Dynamics	<i>Sponsorship and Protection:</i> (1) Administrators, (2) Students, and (3) Others; <i>Authentic Professional Dialogue:</i> <i>Acknowledgement:</i> (1) Administrators, (2) Students, and (3) Other; <i>Advocacy:</i> (1) Administrators, and (2) Students; <i>Inquiry:</i> (1) Administrators, (2) Students, and (3) Other; and <i>Invitation:</i> (1) Administrators, students, and (2) other
B-Collaborative Cultures	(1) Administrators, (2) Students, and (3) Other
C-Shared Understandings	(1) Administrators, (2) Students, and (3) Other
D-Synchronicity	(1) Students, and (2) Other

Collegial dynamics. Collegial dynamics describe a category of ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building mentors and novices used to move past an appearance of harmony (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009) in order to address the conflicts inherent in most schools. The two major categories that represent my notion of collegial dynamics are sponsorship and protection and authentic professional dialogue, which included acknowledgement, advocacy, inquiry, and invitation.

Sponsorship and Protection. Of all the collegial dynamics, ones that stood out were the processes in which mentors sponsored or protected novices from conflicts with administrators, students, and other conflicts. I added the terms *sponsorship* and *protection* (Kram, 1988) to my original propositions as I was analyzing my participants' stories so that I could better convey what they were describing. In order to help novices deal with administrators, mentors sponsored novices in the following most common ways:

Administrators. The most often mentioned example of mentors sponsoring novices to help them with administrators was when they went to “bat” for them (Rankin-M, Stanley-M, Herman-M, Truitt-M). An especially interesting example of sponsorship came from an excerpt from a story by Mrs. Stewart.

Not only was Mrs. Herman a valuable member of [the PLC], she was also a powerful advocate for them and for Mrs. Stewart personally. Some mentoring programs function under the assumption that mentors should keep utmost confidentiality regarding their work with their mentees; however, in the case of Mrs. Herman, Mrs. Stewart was glad that Mrs. Herman had talked about her to their principal. . . . One day after Dr. Thomas (pseudonym), the principal, observed her, he said, “What do you think about having Mrs. Herman as your mentor?”

Mrs. Stewart answered, “Oh, she’s great!”

And Dr. Thomas replied, “She said when she looks at you, she just *sees* a . . . teacher. She just *sees* one.” Mrs. Herman had never said that to Mrs. Stewart and

hearing this praise by way of Dr. Thomas meant more to her and was more powerful than telling her directly. It was more meaningful for her “to be putting *my* reputation out like that” because at Lincoln “rep matter[ed]” and “it [was] sink or swim as far as your reputation” Mrs. Stewart realized that when someone like Mrs. Herman who had 30 years of experience as a . . . teacher said she was “on point,” that carried a great deal of weight with the principal and with others in the school. (Appendix C: “I See a . . . Teacher” by Mrs. Stewart)

In addition to sponsoring them, most commonly novices mentioned that mentors also protected them by having their “backs” (Hansen-N, Manzetti-M, Stanley-M). For example, “It was important to Mr. Hansen that he knew Mrs. Truitt had ‘his back’ not just with his ‘classes but also with administration and everything else’” (See Appendix C: “On the Bus” by Mr. Hansen). Another example was when a mentor ran between all the “authority figures” to help her novice understand how to respond, made sure her novice was not “pushed around,” kept her novice from getting into bad situations, and protected him from the high level of stress put on teachers at their “low performing school” (Hansen-N/Truitt-M). The following example shows how a mentor also functioned as the first person his novice went to as her “first line of defense” (Baker-N/Manzetti-M).

[Mrs. Baker] felt that some administrators seemed to be “more approachable than others,” but sometimes she was forced to go to the “unapproachable” ones and they just put the problem back on her. Of all those who helped Mrs. Baker, she considered Mr. Manzetti to be her “first line of defense.” He was the “first person” she went to when she had a question or needed to know which person she needed to ask to handle something (See Appendix C: “Diapering, Powdering, and Taking Care” by Mrs. Baker).

Students. Mentors also sponsored and protected novices related to their work with their students. For example a mentor protected her novice from problems with students by checking on him, and she had a “presence in the building” as an effective

disciplinarian committed to having students behave (Truitt-M). A mentor also advocated her novice to her students to help improve classroom management; and when the novice had problems with her students not doing their work, this mentor took them over to her room and told them they had to do their work for the novice (Rankin-M).

Others. Mentors also protected novices from other decision-makers. For example, a mentor told school counselors to stop adding students to her novice's classes (Herman-M). Although mentors often sponsored and protected novices who were in conflict with administrators, students and others, in some cases it was clear that they could not sponsor or protect their novices.

Authentic professional dialogue—Acknowledgement. In addition to sponsoring and protecting, mentors and novices also participated in authentic professional dialogues in which they acknowledged each other's abilities to handle school conflicts (Cook-N - Herman-M; Stewart-N - Herman-M). I added this term, *acknowledgement*, when I discovered that the term I had been using, *affirmation*, which came from Mitchell and Sackney (2009), was not useful to describe my findings. Mitchell and Sackney mainly seemed to use the term *affirmation* as a way to describe how when in violent disagreement people can still affirm and respect others' opinions. My research methods did not provide a means through which I might view actual disagreements; therefore, I decided to avoid using their term, *affirmation*, in favor of *acknowledgement*, which from my perspective has a similar meaning and seemed capable of conveying what I was seeing. The following are examples of instances when mentors and novices used acknowledgement as a means of handling school conflicts.

Administrators. Research participants' stories showed evidence that dyads had participated in authentic professional dialogue in which they acknowledged each other regarding conflicts with administrators. For example, mentors acknowledged that novices were doing a good job even though it was not showing in their test data (Rankin-M, Stanley-M). In addition, a novice acknowledged that his mentor worked harder than anyone else in the school, and he said he believed that without his mentor he would have been lost in terms of how to use classroom materials (Cook-N). Also a mentor acknowledged that even though she had rough classes that were similar to those of her novice's classes, administrators did not seem alarmed when her classes misbehaved, but they did seem concerned when novices' classes misbehaved (Rankin-M).

Students. Participants' stories also provided evidence of authentic professional dialogue in which they acknowledged each other regarding issues with their students. For example, a mentor acknowledged the benefits of novice's soft-spoken and relaxed style with honors students. She also acknowledged him as one of the most "enthusiastic and ready to learn" new teachers and well-prepared to accept the students the way they were at Lincoln. Finally, the mentor acknowledged her novice for not writing too many office referrals, and she acknowledged her novice's provision of a safe environment for his students (Truitt-M). Another mentor acknowledged her novice's exceptional content knowledge and her special talent for breaking down complicated information so that fellow colleagues and low and high students could understand it. This acknowledgement was also made by a district coach. In addition, the mentor acknowledged her novice's tendency to be like a "momma" in the department because she shared materials, taught

others how to teach certain complicated topics, and took extra duties for the good of the department (Stanley-M). Other examples of acknowledgement occurred when a mentor evaluated her novice as being an especially confident and skilled teacher who had excellent classroom practices and the ability to develop relationships with students. This mentor also bragged on a lesson she used that her novice came up with “on the fly” (Rankin-M). Mentors also acknowledged their novices’ creativity, content knowledge, ability to connect with students, and classroom management skills (Manzetti-M, Rankin-M, Herman-M, Stanley-M).

In addition, novices acknowledged their mentors as they affected their work with students. For example, a novice acknowledged her mentor’s positive outlook (Captain-N). Another novice acknowledged that her mentor’s comments when she was in her room were like a “little pat on the back” (Stewart-N). And finally, a novice acknowledged her mentor for putting her more “at ease” and making her more confident in the classroom (Baker-N).

Other. Novices also acknowledged other colleagues for being tremendously supportive of them (Baker-N, Captain-N, Cook-N, Hansen-N, Lawson-N, Stewart-N).

Authentic professional dialogue—Advocacy. Not only did mentors and novices use authentic professional dialogue to acknowledge each other’s practices, mentors also used it to advocate certain practices to help novices handle school conflicts.

Administrators. Mentors and novices used authentic professional dialogue to advocate practices that addressed issues with administrators. For example a mentor advocated to his novice that she understand the “chain of command” if she needed

helping solving a problem and that she keep discipline issues in-house. This novice believed that even though her mentor, other colleagues, and administrators advocated that she not write referrals, she believed that teachers had to “play with what” they had and she believed the only way to get disruptive students out of the room was to write them up so she could teach the rest of her students (Baker-N/Manzetti-M). Another mentor gave her novice little bits of advice (like reminding him to get the correct papers signed) that helped him do exactly what he needed to do, and she guided him in the right direction when it came to dealing with certain authority figures at the school (Hansen-N/Truitt-M). Finally, a mentor advocated that her novice develop her own consequences for poor student behavior rather than relying on administrators and that she should fix whatever administrators said she needed to fix (Rankin-M).

Students. Mentor-novice dialogues also addressed advocacy regarding students. For example a mentor-novice dialogue included the mentor giving her novice feedback on what she saw in terms of classroom management and included the mentor advocating the following to novice: bend down in order to get eye to eye with students, handle your own classroom issues, give yourself time to establish a respectful climate with reasonable expectations for yourself, establish a reputation (which novices need to have time to develop), do not give students F's unless you can prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that they actually deserved that F, and give students every opportunity to pass the class because by failing them a teacher was “picking their future “ (Hansen-N/Truitt-M). Another example of advocacy was when a mentor advocated to her novice the importance of being honest about not having all the answers (Rankin-M). Also a mentor

believed that just because something worked for her, it did not mean it would also work for the novice, and she presented her ideas about improving a lesson but did not insist that her ideas were best for the mentee or for the class. They were just a suggestion not a mandate. This mentor strongly advocated connecting curriculum concepts with students' interests (Herman-M).

In addition, mentors advocated specific pedagogical strategies to help novices deal with a variety of conflicts related to students. For example, mentors challenged their novices to adjust their personal narratives to include becoming more assertive with classroom management practices (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M), and mentors advocated that novices avoid writing students up because it would seem that they could not handle them (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M).

Not only did mentors directly advocate certain practices through authentic professional dialogues, they also advocated through modeling. For example a novice observed her mentor and saw how she took care of students (Captain-N). In addition mentors and novices used a combination of observation and dialogue. For example, a mentor observed her novice and then through dialogue made suggestions to her about how she might improve the lesson. She did this as both a mentor and as a coach (Herman-M).

Other. In terms of teacher to teacher conflicts, mentors and novices advocated that teachers should not come together to complain. They should just accept what they had to do and do it (Herman-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M).

Authentic professional dialogue—Inquiry.

Administrators. Novices and one mentor used inquiry within authentic professional dialogues on two occasions. First, two novices asked their mentors how to navigate the system (Baker-N, Hansen-N). Second, a mentor asked (inquiry) her novice where he wanted his room to be and then talked with decision-makers to help him keep his room where he wanted it (Truitt-M).

Students. Mentor-novice dialogue included instances in which they used inquiry regarding students. For example a mentor asked her novice to decide which of her practices he might be able to use in his own classes and she did not assume he could use all of the strategies a more experienced teacher could use (Truitt-M). Also a mentor-dyad participated in dialogue that led to inquiry about how to solve curriculum problems among teachers who taught a specific curriculum (Stewart-N/Herman-M). And finally, mentor-novice dyads used questioning as a way to help each other with specific pedagogical issues related to their content area and to help with student discipline (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Herman-M; Stanley-M).

Other. Novices also used inquiry to address other conflict categories. For example, novices questioned their best friends in the department about how to handle curriculum content and discipline (Captain-N, Hansen-N, Lawson-N). And another novice constantly checked with her curriculum team colleagues about what they were doing with students and how they were handling school conflicts (Stewart-N).

Authentic professional dialogue—Invitation. Mentor-novice dyad dialogues also included evidence of invitation to resolve conflicts with administrators, students, and

other conflicts. For example, mentors invited novices to vent in a confidential setting their conflicts with administrators, students, and other conflicts (Herman-M, Manzetti-M, Rankin-M). Another mentor invited her novice to solve problems with over-extending herself by collaborating with fellow curriculum team members within their department (Herman-M) and an informal mentor invited her novice to teach materials she enjoyed (Stewart-N). All novices appeared to feel invited to approach their mentors for help.

Collegial dynamics played an important role in helping mentor-novice dyads develop sustainable ways to deal with school conflicts. All of the collegial strategies seemed to emerge organically from the dyads rather than from the larger system. It was obvious that sponsorship and protection strategies were most useful to address conflicts with administrators and that authentic professional dialogue focused on acknowledgement and advocacy were most often used to address conflicts with students. Inquiry and invitation seemed to be the least utilized strategies for conflict resolution. Students in general were most often the focus of collegial dynamics and other conflicts were least often the focus.

Collaborative culture. Although PLCs were enacted differently in different departments at Lincoln, for some they represented access to a collaborative culture. For example, Mrs. Truitt (M), Mr. Hansen (N) explained how collaboratively one department functioned in comparison to other departments. Interestingly, this department also had many other perks as compared to other departments, and they experienced relatively few instances of teacher turnover. In addition, several other stories (Baker -N, Cook-N, Hansen-N, Herman-M, Manzetti-M, Stewart-N) explained a high level of camaraderie

and collaboration among the members of another department, and one mentor had a longitudinal view that helped her recognize that teachers working as individuals did not fit well at Lincoln (Herman-M).

An excerpt from a story by Mrs. Stanley (M) provides an example of how her novice, Mrs. Lawson, demonstrated the spirit of collaborative culture.

Mrs. Stanley felt that the best thing about Mrs. Lawson as a teacher was her perseverance and her depth of knowledge. Mrs. Lawson also shared everything and she was “quite a momma...behind the scenes doing things that nobody” knew she was doing and giving out ideas. She had given out “packets” of materials and “actual lessons on how to do things.” Even though Mrs. Stanley was only around two days a week, she knew that Mrs. Lawson was “in the background doing” things for her colleagues. (See Appendix C: “You’ve Already Run a Good Teacher Out of Here” by Mrs. Stanley)

Administrators. Several participants explained how mentor-novice dyads addressed administrative concerns by collaborating with other team members to share materials and other resources (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M).

Students. Mentor-novice dyads also collaborated with other team members to share ideas and lesson plans that were interesting to students (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). Another mentor-novice dyad also collaborated on the development of a lab that was interesting to students (Captain-N/Rankin-M).

Other. And finally, mentor-novice dyads collaborated in order to address other conflicts. For example a mentor-novice dyad collaborated on developing the learning community to improve peer relationships, decrease job stress, and improve lesson

delivery (Stewart-N/Herman-M). A mentor-novice dyad functioned in a non-hierarchical partnership (Captain-N/Rankin-M), and some mentors saw themselves as collaborators rather than as advisors (Herman-M, Rankin-M). A mentor, who was also a coach, collaborated with another coach to help a mentee (Herman-M). And a mentor-novice dyad agreed that a novice received “quite a bit of help” from other members of their department and from the department coach who had generated a sense of camaraderie among the department (Baker-N/Manzetti-M).

In sum, among the participants in this study, the majority shared ideas and materials with their colleagues, and everyone seemed to believe that it was important to help one another rather than to be competitive; however, only two mentors, Mrs. Rankin (M) and Mrs. Herman (M), were clear that they saw themselves as collaborators with their mentees rather than advisors. It was apparent that when collaborative cultures arose organically from the needs of dyads they were sustainable to address all three of the major conflicts equally.

Shared understandings. Shared understandings were common beliefs between mentors and novices that helped to unite their efforts to deal with school conflicts. These shared understandings helped mentors and novices sustain their capacity to handle school conflicts. Two excerpts from stories by Mrs. Herman exemplify the overarching belief at Lincoln that it took a special kind of person to make it at their school.

Not only did principals come and go, teachers also left Lincoln at alarming rates. The revolving door of teachers and principals from Lincoln had been a big problem. Mrs. Herman believed it took people who had special skills and talents to make it at their school. All the intelligence, creativity, and “book” sense would not guarantee that a principal or teacher would make it. As a matter of fact, Mrs.

Herman had seen doctoral students fail to reach their “kids.” (See Appendix C: “The Right Thing” by Mrs. Herman)

And from another story,

The students at Lincoln needed “a lot of love” and care, but many of their teachers could not reach them or in some cases were “intimidated” by them because these students were often suspicious and cautious and “would fight a teacher” they thought was “not fair.” These kinds of teachers were not successful at Lincoln. (See Appendix C: “Making Chicken Salad” by Mrs. Herman)

Administrator. Mentor-novice dyads aligned with administrators in saying that it took a special kind of teacher to make it at their school. These teachers had inner authority, respect for all, and a capacity for genuine caring (Cook-N/Herman-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). In addition, mentor-novice dyads shared the belief that administrator and district expectations were too high for both teachers and students (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). Finally, other mentors and novices believed that sometimes administrators did not give inexperienced novices enough time to show that they could improve their practices (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M).

Students. Mentors and novices at Lincoln shared a special understanding of the student population (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M), and they realized that developing relationships with students and other teachers had to come before delivering course content (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). They also

shared the belief that decisions revolved around keeping the best interests of the students in mind (Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M), and that students would not work with teachers who could not make a connection with them (Cook-N/Herman-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). Interestingly, two mentors noted that teachers who were too academic (e.g., had doctorates in their content) were not a good fit for the school (Herman-M, Stanley-M). An excerpt from Mrs. Stewart's story shows an interesting perspective on what teachers at Lincoln needed to do to succeed with students. "Mrs. Stewart decided that to be successful with the students in her school, a teacher had to be 'consistently pursuing them' and that teachers who did not do well were 'not in pursuit of their students'" (See Appendix C: "Finding Community, Finding Self" by Mrs. Stewart).

Mentor-novice dyads agreed that discipline should be consistent and fair and that learning should be fun for the students and the teacher (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). Mrs. Truitt (M) and Mr. Hansen (N) shared the belief that teachers should be "real" with students and that teachers should talk WITH students rather than AT them. An excerpt from a story by Mr. Hansen explains his idea about breaking through to reach the kinds of students at Lincoln.

Mr. Hansen believed that teachers had to break these kinds of kids the "right way," which meant figuring out how to connect with them. He believed that sometimes in order to make that connection, teachers had to "break through their defenses;" however, he also believed that some kids "you can't break" and some kids you had to "break twice." Mr. Hansen learned "early on" who he "could break" and who he couldn't. (See Appendix C: "Breakthroughs" by Mr. Hansen)

Mrs. Truitt (M) and Mr. Hansen (N) also shared several additional beliefs about dealing with students including the following: (a) teachers should not be rigid about when students turned in work and that as long as they showed they had internalized the information from the lesson in “some form or fashion” that the teacher should give them some credit to help them feel successful, (b) there is a balance between being understanding and pushing students to do what they should do to improve their lives, (c) teachers should assess often especially to determine students’ knowledge of key vocabulary terms for their content area, (d) students at Lincoln needed structure and consistency because often their home lives did not afford those things, (e) if mentor and novice could teach successfully at Lincoln, they could teach anywhere, (f) disciplinary strategies needed to convey a sense of love rather than judgment and criticism, and (g) yelling at students was counterproductive (Hansen-N/Truitt-M). A mentor believed that teachers should not be shocked into working at Lincoln and that they should come in with confidence to work with these challenging students (Rankin-M). Finally, a novice shared a mentor’s belief about the importance of teachers endorsing each other and making friends with the most challenging students as a means of disciplining them (Cook-N/Herman-M).

Other. All mentor-novice dyads shared the belief that teachers should help each other as much as possible, as opposed to being competitive and withholding their effective ideas. Also, mentor-novice dyads understood limitations of parents to control students’ behavior and family factors that might create student-teacher conflict (Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). And a mentor-novice dyad also shared the

understanding that teaching suited their personalities because it never got boring (Captain-N/Rankin-M).

In sum, it was clear that most of the mentor-novice dyads shared understandings related to their conflicts with students, and that shared understandings regarding conflicts with administrators and other conflicts were addressed equally by mentor-novice dyads. Shared understandings emerged naturally from the needs of dyads as a sustainable way of resolving conflicts in all three categories.

Synchronicity. Synchronicity is something that seems to happen without cause and reason, but can be highly important (Jung, 1960; Jaworksi, 1996). At Lincoln mentors and novices showed evidence of synchronicity when addressing major conflicts with students and other.

Students. Some examples of synchronicity in addressing conflicts with students included the following: Some of the best examples of synchronicity are described in two of Mrs. Stewart's stories. In one called "The Bears," she and Mrs. Herman (M) co-created a metaphor about their "hormonal" students and in another, "I See a . . . Teacher," she said that

Mrs. Herman also helped Mrs. Stewart as far as her reputation at the district level. For example, when Mrs. Herman collaborated with the person from the central office who was in charge of over-seeing [a special curriculum] and together they told Mrs. Stewart that she was a "passionate teacher with charisma." This kind of positive acknowledgement of her abilities seemed to always come when Mrs. Stewart felt she was "swimming in the land of the lost," and it was ironic that this encouragement came when she felt she was "sinking" (See Appendix C: "I See a . . . Teacher" by Mrs. Stewart).

In addition to these examples, a mentor-novice dyad felt like kindred spirits when it came to relating to the students (i.e., two knuckleheads) (Captain-N/Rankin-M). A novice used the same term for students (“Johnny Appleseed”) that his mentor used to describe challenging students and mentor- novice dyad created lessons together that mentor did not recognize as coming from her because the novice had made them his own (Cook-N/Herman-M).

Other. The degree of resonance between another mentor and novice resulted in a novice nominating mentor for “Mentor of the Year” (Hansen-N/Truitt-M).

Although there are only a few examples of synchronicity between mentors and novices at Lincoln, the instances in which it occurred were highly important to their relationships and to sustain their ability to address school conflicts, which are the subject of the next section.

Teacher Conflicts

In the previous section, I explained some of the ways mentors and novices used ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building to handle school conflicts. This next section focuses on the specific conflicts novices and mentors reported that they experienced within the three major categories: administrators, students, and other. Table 9 outlines the kinds of teacher conflicts and the themes within them.

Major conflicts.

Administrators. The perception among the majority of participants was that administrators did not adequately support novices (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M) and that everyone at Lincoln,

including administrators, was overworked (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Cook-N/Herman-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M).

Table 9

Major Conflicts, Barriers, and Themes from Propositions: Question 2—III. Teacher Conflicts

A-Major Conflicts	Themes from Propositions
Administrators	(1) Classroom management/Pedagogy, (2) Student achievement, (3) Paperwork, (4) Scheduling and resources, and (5) Attitudes
Students	(1) Disruptive, (2) Unmotivated, (3) Academically challenged, (4) Highly aggressive, and (5) Hard to relate to
Personal	(1)Goals and (2) Personal styles
Other	(1) Mentor-Novice, (2) Teacher to District, (3) Teacher to Teacher, (4) Teacher to School Culture, (5) Teacher to Counselors, (6) Teacher to Content Coaches, and (7) Teacher to Students' Parents
B. Barriers	Subthemes
Triangulation	Six examples
Denial	(1) Administrators and (2) Others

A story excerpt from Mr. Manzetti provides an example of conflicts with administrators:

Mr. Manzetti was grateful that Mrs. Herman had warned him to “stay out of the office” and “stay out of the teachers’ lounge.” She had “literally barred” him from going down to complain about his disappointments with administration. He was so glad she did because he saw over the years how the office withheld its support for novices who had cried out too often for help or complained too much about administrative actions. Mrs. Herman functioned as Mr. Manzetti’s “interpreter” of office discourse. For instance, she taught Mr. Manzetti that words like “open door policy” did not mean teachers were welcome to come into an administrator’s office and air their concerns without showing how *they* planned to solve them. Mrs. Herman had seen far too many novices misinterpret messages from administrators and the result was disavowal and outright rejection. Mr.

Manzetti felt that Mrs. Herman had saved him from this kind of treatment from the office (See Appendix C: “The Office” by Mr. Manzetti)

Administrators were in conflict with dyads regarding (a) classroom management/pedagogy, (b) student achievement, (c) paperwork, (d) scheduling and resources, and (e) attitudes toward novices.

Classroom Management/Pedagogy. Mentor-novice dyads recognized that administrators often did not approve of teachers who wrote too many office referrals or needed too much office support (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M). One mentor was frustrated that she could not help novices when administrators required them to control students (Rankin-M). And a novice reported that when her mentor and assistant principals observed her, they did not give her any suggestions about how to deal with her talkative fourth block (Lawson-N).

Student achievement. Administrators and dyads were also often in conflict over student achievement. For example, all participants agreed that administrators appeared to judge novices based on their students’ test data. Also, several mentors were concerned that teachers were being judged unfairly for poor student achievement (Rankin-M, Herman-M, Stanley-M). Other less prevalent examples of conflicts regarding student achievement included the following: Mentor-novice dyads believed that the novices had not been recognized for the success they had had with students (Baker-B/Manzetti-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M). A mentor acknowledged that an emphasis on students’ scores had created a lot to learn; therefore, she had compiled an entire notebook of things she needed to know about district directives. In addition, this mentor had the perspective that

sometimes students did not succeed because they had a genetic deficiency; nevertheless, these students were expected to achieve at the same level as those who did not have that genetic deficiency (Herman-M).

Paperwork. Novices were also in conflict with administrators regarding their approach to paperwork. It was not necessarily that administrators created the forms that the district or state required, but from one novice's perspective, administrators approached paperwork requirements with the belief that teachers must complete it "or else" (Captain-N). Another novice resented the amount of paperwork he had to do to help pass the students who had not done their work during his class (Cook-N). Also a mentor believed the hardest thing for novices was learning how to navigate the system (e.g., getting papers signed and how to approach various assistant principals and curriculum coordinators), and she believed that the manner in which a novice approached some of the figures of authority at Lincoln might create problems for the novice (Truitt-M). Finally, a mentor believed that administrators were "dropping stuff" on teachers that they had not required in the past and that was upsetting both mentor and novice who felt there was nothing they could do about it (Stanley-M).

Scheduling and resources. Mentor-novice dyads were often in conflict with administrators regarding the manner in which they scheduled novices and the way they limited resources. For example, one mentor-novice dialogue was about the fact that requiring the novice to change rooms was an unnecessary added stress to a novice's already stressful experiences, and the novice had also experienced conflict with having his schedule tossed around a lot. The mentor was a little bit overwhelmed and taken

aback when administrators assigned her a mentee even though she was only in her 5th year of teaching, had no training, and had also been assigned to be the department chair (Truitt-M). Another example of conflict with administrators regarding scheduling and resources occurred when a mentor-novice dyad was frustrated because the novice had taken AP training over the summer with the hopes of being assigned to take the AP course, but administrators gave her an inclusion class instead. The mentor-novice dyad believed administrators were wasting the novice's talents (Lawson-N/Stanley-M). Also, mentor-novice dyads were aligned in their conflict with administrators over room changes (Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M), and novices were in conflict with administrators for decisions about making photocopies (Hansen-N, Lawson-N).

Attitudes. Negative attitudes also accounted for some mentor-novice conflicts with administrators and talking openly and freely about a novice's need for help did not appear to be a part of the school culture (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). While many of the mentors and novices perceived that novices were not getting enough chances to learn the profession (Baker-N; Captain-N, Lawson-N, Manzetti-M, Rankin-M, Stanley-M, Stewart-N), it was evident that district pressures may have played a role. For instance, with testing pressures constantly mounting, some administrators may have viewed the lack of experience of novices as a potential detriment, and for a select few, letting them know early encouraged them to seek out another profession.

Students. The student population at Lincoln was known district-wide as a challenging group, and two of the mentors had a special longitudinal view that allowed

them to see that students would run certain kinds of teachers off (Herman-M, Stanley-M).

An excerpt from Mrs. Stanley's story provides an example.

As far as the students at Lincoln, there were "so many personalities" and socio-economic factors. Some of their students did not have two parents, some did not get enough to eat, and some were "homeless" or did not speak English. At Lincoln 46 different languages (or something like that) were spoken. Mrs. Stanley believed they needed "interpreters." Sometimes it seemed to Mrs. Stanley that the students at Lincoln did not care about school (See Appendix C: "There's a Story behind Every Number" by Mrs. Stanley).

Regardless of these kinds of challenging students, novices and mentors seemed to have fewer conflicts with students than they had with administrators and other categories. Also novices had more conflicts with students in their first semester of teaching than they did in their second semester. Some of the most common conflicts are presented below.

Disruptive. All participants agreed that mentors and novices were in conflict with student misbehavior, which included getting out of seats, talking to each other, and sleeping.

Unmotivated. All mentors and novices believed that sometimes it seemed the students at Lincoln did not care about school. And two mentors stated that students did not participate in lessons that were not aligned with their interests (Herman-M, Stanley-M).

Academically challenged. Novices were in conflict with students for turning in work late or not turning it in at all (Baker-N, Cook-N, Hansen-N). In addition, two novices observed that students could not read on grade level and had difficulty grasping concepts (Lawson-N, Stewart-N), and that students did not have meaningful

conversations about what they were reading (Stewart-N). In another example a novice observed that students were in conflict with teachers who could not break down material for them so they could understand it (Lawson-N).

Highly aggressive. Two dyads observed that students fought with each other and threatened teachers (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M).

Disrespectful. All participants stated that students were disrespectful towards (and therefore in conflict with) teachers who did not set useful limits, show caring, and demonstrate respect for all. Three mentors observed that students were in conflict with teachers who appeared to lack confidence in their abilities (Manzetti-M, Stanley-M, Truitt-M). Finally, a mentor observed that honor students were in conflict with authoritative teachers (Truitt-M). One novice described that a student was disrespectful towards her when she corrected him for breaking in a cafeteria line (Baker-N).

Hard to relate to. All mentor-novice dyads understood that students were intolerant of teachers who did not build relationships with them. Additionally, a mentor and a novice made friends with the most challenging students in the school (Herman-M, Cook-N), and one novice said she had problems with students who were overly demanding and difficult to manage (Stewart-N).

Personal. Although my study focuses mainly on complex systems at the mentor-novice dyad level, I found that it was also important to briefly mention some personal conflicts of note.

Goals: Mentors' and novices' personal goals were in conflict with staying in the classroom at Lincoln (Captain-N, Lawson-N, Truitt-M). An excerpt from Ms. Captain's brief story exemplifies this personal conflict.

Although Ms. Captain seemed relatively happy at Lincoln, she did not plan to return the following year. She was planning to leave in June, and it was not "because of the school, it [was] not because of the job, it [was] because [she had] other plans for [her] life at this moment." She "just graduated college a year ago and [she felt] like [she was] too young to have a career right now....I love teaching! And that's what I plan on doing while I'm abroad. I'm going to teach. It's not the school. It's not the kids. It's not the job. I just need to live my life a little bit. It's time for a change." (See Appendix C: "Too Young to Commit" by Ms. Captain)

Two other novices' personal pedagogical goals were in conflict with what they were achieving at Lincoln (Lawson-N, Stewart-N).

Personal Styles: One novice was unable to be assertive at the beginning of the year and did not develop a reputation that would help her with student discipline (Baker-N). Another novice was in the process of developing a personal teaching style; therefore, not always confident of how he was doing (Hansen-N), and a different novice was unsure of how well she was performing so that she could develop reasonable expectations for herself, and she unsure of how to balance work with the rest of her life (Stewart-N). One mentor believed her novice's personality was in conflict with her ability to establish the requisite teacher presence (Stanley-M), and finally, one novice said she was in conflict with how to present curriculum so that all students could learn it (Stewart-N).

Other Conflicts. Other categories of conflict were similar to administrator conflicts in terms of the numbers of examples, which ranged from conflicts between

mentors and novices to conflicts at the level of the district or above. These conflicts were as follows:

Mentor-Novice. One novice did not follow mentor's advice about taking acting lessons, and the novice had some concerns that during first semester her mentor seemed more aligned with administrators than with her (Lawson-N - Stanley-M). Another novice did not seem able during first semester to follow her mentor's advice to keep things "in-house" (Baker-N/Manzetti-M). Also, a mentor and novice experienced conflict in their relationship when a district coach evaluated and critiqued her lesson (Stewart-N/Herman-M). Finally, another novice believed her mentor should have checked on her sometimes instead of always relying on the novice to instigate contact (Captain-N).

Teacher to district. Several mentor-novice dyads were in conflict with the fact that the district put pressure on schools and their teachers to make sure their students performed well on tests (Cook-N/Herman-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Manzetti-N/Herman-M). In addition, one novice was in conflict with district decision to cut teaching positions (Baker-N), and another novice was in conflict with the policy that allowed students to pass even when they did not do their work in a timely manner or at the level their fellow students did it (Cook-N).

Teacher to teacher. Three novices believed that their fellow teachers might gossip about them to administrators and others and thus could affect their reputations (Baker-N, Captain-N, Stewart-N), and another three novices were in conflict with the teachers in their PLCs (Captain-N, Hansen-N, Lawson-N). Other teacher to teacher conflicts included the following: Two mentor-novice dyads believed it was important that teachers

shared ideas and materials with each other, but some veteran teachers rejected ideas from novices and others (Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M). An excerpt from Mrs. Lawson's story shows her conflict with a veteran teacher.

Mrs. Davis (pseudonym) did not seem to realize that she had played a large role in the reason Mrs. Lawson had been unhappy at Lincoln. Mrs. Lawson said she also found it interesting that even though Mrs. Davis had never accepted anything from her, Mrs. Davis said, "If you stop trying to change and learning new things, it's time to go."

Mrs. Lawson found it ironic that "any time anyone in any meeting" would bring something about needing to change or some new idea they needed to try, Mrs. Davis would cross her arms and say, "I ain't gonna do it!" She did it as "kind of" a joke, but it was not funny to Mrs. Lawson. (See Appendix C: "The Veteran: Mrs. Davis)

Also, a mentor-novice dyad was often in conflict with the manner in which other teachers in their department and in their school handled discipline issues (Hansen-N/Truitt-M), and the mentor in that dyad was in conflict with teachers who failed students even when she believed those students did not have the opportunity to learn in those teachers' classes (Truitt-M).

Teacher to school culture. All participants agreed that asking for certain kinds of help was not condoned in the school culture. Other less common teacher to school culture conflicts included the following: Two mentor-novice dyads believed that Lincoln was not the best environment for teachers, which showed in their turnover rate (Captain-N/Rankin-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M). A novice and a mentor believed the school culture at Lincoln was "sink or swim," and even with all the many designated supportive staff (e.g. regional and local coaches, mentor, administrators, curriculum facilitators) novices still

had to decide if they were going to make it or not (Baker-N, Truitt-M), and even with the supportive dialogue with a mentor, a coach, and fellow colleagues, the novice felt she was “swimming upstream” (Baker-N). Finally, having so many authority figures (i.e., at least six) in a hierarchical system made it difficult for mentors and novices to determine how to respond to various expectations (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Hansen-N/Truitt-M).

Teacher to counselors. Mentors and novices had no input into student assignments, they believed that counselors could give novices a truly challenging mix of students, and they questioned the reasoning of counselors who assigned so many difficult students for novices’ fourth blocks (Baker-N/Manzetti-M; Captain-N/Rankin-M).

Teacher to content coaches. According to a mentor and a novice, it seemed that some content coaches approached novices from a deficit perspective and reported the novice’s deficiencies to administrators (Lawson-N, Manzetti-M). Also, one mentor-dyad was in conflict with their content coach because the mentor had to break down what the coach told the novice so he could understand it, the novice did not seem to take her seriously, and the coach did not seem to know that the mentor and novice were a dyad (Hansen-N/Truitt-M).

Teacher to students’ parents. Two mentors were in conflict with parents who they believed the system did not hold accountable for their teenager’s academic performance or behavior (Herman-M, Stanley-M).

Barriers to conflict resolution.

Triangulation

Six examples. Triangulation occurs when someone is in conflict with someone else or others and enlists someone else or others to take their side to help them deal with that conflict. I found only six obvious examples of triangulation as follows:

1. Administrators triangulated a mentor by telling her to fix her mentee, but administrators had not clearly defined what the mentor should do to help the novice (Rankin-M).
2. A mentor-novice dyad felt triangulated by administrators who were in conflict over where novice's classroom should be (Hansen-N/Truitt-M).
3. A mentor felt triangulated by actions and requirements determined by the district coach (Herman-M).
4. Two mentors felt that administrators sided with students rather than teachers over cell phone policy (Manzetti-M, Truitt-M).
5. A mentor-novice dyad felt triangulated by school policies that seemed to enable students to run the class (Baker-N/Manzetti-M).
6. One novice was extremely bothered because he felt triangulated by a district and school culture that required him to accept policies about which he was philosophically opposed (Cook-N). Here is an excerpt from his story:

Being a novice teacher, Mr. Cook considered himself to be at "the bottom." He also realized that there were things about teaching they did not "tell you." For instance he never had heard that "it was just get the kids out of high school." He had seen "hints of it" when he was a pre-service teacher, but when he became a

teacher, “it was like somebody cleaned the glass” (See Appendix C: “Somebody Cleaned the Glass” by Mr. Cook)

Interestingly, although there were only six obvious examples of triangulation reflected in participants’ stories, from the examples explained above, it is clear that all eleven of the participants experienced incidents of triangulation.

Denial. Denying the existence of conflict was also a barrier to resolving it. An excerpt from a story by Mrs. Stewart provides an example of the destructive nature of denial at Lincoln. “Teachers tried their best to avoid conflicts, but they were ‘there all the time’ and they taught ‘around them because’ they didn’t ‘know what to do with them’” (See Appendix C: “Explosion” by Mrs. Stewart).

The following are additional examples in which denial was a barrier to conflict resolution:

Administrators. Mentors and novices believed administrators were in denial about what teachers and students might reasonably accomplish in the school year (Baker-N, Captain-N, Herman-M, Lawson-N). Other examples included that administrators appeared to be in denial that: (a) a novice had the capacity to deal with certain kinds of challenging students (Baker-N/Manzetti-M); (b) the school may lose a talented novice (Lawson-N/Stanley-M); (c) administrative changes created stress for the mentor-novice dyad (Hansen-N/Truitt-M; Lawson-N/Stanley-M), (d) the imposed PLC structure in novices’ departments was perceived by some of them as a barrier rather than an asset (Captain-N, Hansen-N); (e) administrator indecisiveness caused novices a great deal of stress (Hansen-N/Truitt-M); (f) students with disabilities or ones who had gotten

significantly behind might be limited in what they might accomplish (Herman-M); (g) the volume of paperwork administrators asked novices to do was excessive (Cook-N, Captain-N); and (h) limiting the numbers of copies teachers could use created increased stress in novices (Lawson-N, Hansen-N).

Other. Examples of denial in terms of other conflicts included the following:

Mentor-novice dyads were in denial about the inability of the mentor to help the novice deal with the fact that she was afraid of some of her students (Baker-N/Manzetti-M), and they were also in denial about the confusion about motives that resulted when mentor's roles were blurred (Lawson-N/Stanley-M; Stewart-N/Herman-M). In addition, a novice acknowledged that covered-up and unresolved conflict within the school culture was a tremendous problem for her (Stewart-N), and the system seemed to be in denial about the effects of "letting go" of so many teachers (Rankin-M, Stanley-M). Just as with triangulation, there were not that many obvious examples of denial in participants' stories; nevertheless, all participants experienced it as a barrier to conflict resolution.

Summary of Research Question 2

As described in detail above and summarized in Appendix F, mentor-novice dyads used their complex nature and complex sustainable capacity building to address major school conflicts. The table in Appendix F helped me summarize my major findings related to my second question about the manner in which mentor-novice dyads addressed school conflicts with (a) administrators, (b) students, and (c) other conflicts.

Administrator conflicts included specific conflicts with administrator's views of classroom management/pedagogy, student achievement, paperwork, scheduling and

resources, and including their attitudes toward novices and mentors. In terms of administrator conflicts, it appeared that dyads used their closed and ambiguously bounded structures most often and their redundancy (similarities) least often. In terms of capacity-building, although they did not experience synchronicity in terms of these conflicts, they used invitation often, and they rarely used sponsorship.

Mentor-novice dyads experienced specific conflicts with students who were disruptive, unmotivated, academically challenged, highly aggressive, or hard to relate to. It is interesting to note that the dyad's closed identity and its ambiguously bounded structure were equally useful in addressing student conflicts, and redundancy and diversity least often provided resolution. Mentor-novice dyads seemed to use a wider variety of capacity-building responses to deal with student conflicts. Invitation was most often used and inquiry was least often used. It was interesting that mentor-novice dyads also often used advocacy and shared understandings to handle student conflicts and many experienced synchronicity regarding those conflicts.

Finally, dyads addressed the following other conflicts: mentor-novice, personal conflicts, teacher to district, teacher to teacher, teacher to school culture, teacher to counselors, and teacher to students' parents. The mentor-novice dyad's complex nature most often helping dyads deal with other conflicts was its unstable and ambiguously bounded structure, and the least helpful was its redundancy (similarities). Interestingly, no help was available most often when mentor-novice dyads were attempting to deal with other conflicts. In addition, the most applicable capacity-building response was invitation, sponsorship was not used at all, and other less often used responses were

synchronicity, protection, and collaborative culture. There seemed to be few ways to handle barriers to conflict resolution, which included triangulation and denial, and it was only through the flexibility (i.e., being unstable and ambiguously bounded) of the dyad and some instances of protection that the dyad had any ability to deal with these barriers to conflict resolution. This analysis of the manner in which mentor-novice dyads handled other conflicts substantiates the claim expressed by Mrs. Herman (M) and Mr. Manzeitt (M) that the key to learning to fit in at their school was flexibility.

In order to handle barriers to conflict resolution (i.e., triangulation and denial) mentor-novice dyads seldom used their nature or capacity-building. In terms of capacity-building, it appeared that the only useful response was protection and in terms of structure, being unstable and ambiguously bounded seemed most useful. Based on this finding, it appeared that barriers to conflict resolution could be highly destructive in this school.

Research Question 3

In order to address research question 3: What do mentor and novice stories reveal about how their interactions around conflicts related to teacher turnover? I applied my Conceptual Framework (See Chapter II, Figure 1: A Graphic of My Conceptual Framework) to data from each of the six mentor-novice dyads: Baker (N)/Manzetti (M); Captain (N)/Rankin (M); Cook (N)/Herman (M); Hansen (N)/Truitt (M); Lawson (N)/Stanley (M); and Stewart (N)/Herman (M).

In order to show the relationship between my conceptual framework and my data, I synthesized participants' ideas and showed how they fit into each part of my conceptual

framework, which included the following: (a) nature of the dyad, (b) conflicts, (c) triggers, (d) emergent responses, (e) direction of capacity to handle conflict, (f) result of the dyad, and (g) mentoring relationship to retention. During this process, I did not designate triggers as positive or negative because the trigger might have a negative or positive emergent result. For example with Mrs. Lawson (N), a trigger that affected her decision to leave Lincoln may be positive or negative depending on one's perspective. It could be positive that she was following her dream of a Ph.D. or it could be negative that she would have been a great teacher for challenging students if she had felt treated better or had a mentor.

It seemed to me that the mentor-novice dyad responded to certain triggers, such as conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution, and their responses seemed to move them toward a commitment to the school or profession or away from it. I explored my beliefs by applying the information from my analyses in research questions 1 and 2 to each major element of my “Conceptual Framework” by mentor-novice dyad. For example, I describe the perceived context in which each dyad functioned, the nature of that dyad, the conflicts they encountered, the capacity-building responses they used to handle those conflicts, and their movement toward commitment and retention or away from commitment and turnover. I discuss commitment in terms of the novice’s commitment to the profession, the school, and the classroom. I also discuss mentors’ commitments; however since my focus is on the relationship between mentoring and retention, I focus mostly on mentor-novice dyads’ relationship with the retention of novices.

Baker (N)/Manzetti (M)

Nature of the dyad. The Baker (N)/Manzetti (M) dyad was nested in a school culture they experienced as insisting that all teachers control their students and those who did not felt pressured by administrators. Although this dyad had been formally assigned, both mentor and novice decided how they would function together. This novice had struggled without a mentor in her first partial year of teaching. Baker (N) and Manzetti (M) were short-ranged in terms of proximity, frequency of contact, similar content, and similar students. They met the criteria to be identified as a mentor-novice dyad that adjusted to disturbances from disruptive students and a perceived lack of support from administrators. As a decentralized dyad, they worked together to try to help Mrs. Baker (N) adapt to the school. The mentor and novice were redundant in their emphasis on collaboration and their level of content knowledge. They were diverse in the fact they both acknowledged that the novice was more creative than the mentor, and the mentor was more experienced with school culture. The boundaries around the dyad were permeable to allow input from administrators, district personnel, other teachers, the content coach, and students.

Conflicts. This novice's conflicts with administrators began before she had an assigned mentor. These conflicts revolved around her issues with controlling her students. Her mentor believed that administrators may not have recognized her talents and that with time she may have adjusted to the school. Conflicts with students revolved around this novice having a particularly challenging mix of students during her fourth block and having to rely heavily on administrators to control them. Mrs. Baker (N)

concluded she may not have been authoritative enough at the beginning of the year. Other conflicts included a conflict with her mentor over keeping discipline issues in-house and with counselors who she believed scheduled too many disruptive students into her fourth block. Mrs. Baker (N) was in conflict with a school culture that she felt required her to sink or swim. Barriers to conflict resolution included an instance in which Mrs. Baker (N) was triangulated by a system that seemed to enable a challenging student to control her class. She also experienced the denial of administrators and her mentor that she had the capacity without help to control certain kinds of students.

Triggers. Triggers for this novice included: relationships with her mentor and other colleagues, content skills, creativity, love of teaching, the fact that Lincoln was far from her home, not having a mentor initially, relying on the office to help her with a challenging class, having a student arrested for threatening her, a district policy about cutting certain positions, and a decision by the principal to terminate her contract.

Emergent responses. This mentor-novice dyad was nested in a complex school system that according to the dyad was unresponsive to teachers who struggled with classroom management issues. This dyad implemented capacity-building in several ways. For example, the novice believed her mentor had her back and was her first line of defense. Her mentor also advocated to her that she develop a stronger sense of authority in her class, which she seemed to implement during second semester. Her mentor affirmed her content knowledge and creativity and they evidently had dialogues in which they attempted to deal with Mrs. Baker's (N) classroom management practices. The mentor and novice functioned within a collaborative department, and they shared many

understandings about how to teach; however they did not share an understanding of Mrs. Baker's capacity to deal with certain kinds of students.

Capacity to handle conflict toward commitment. The nature of the mentor-novice dyad allowed Mrs. Baker (N) to frequently benefit from interactions with her mentor. Even though she said she felt she was swimming upstream, she believed she was learning and growing, and in fact, second semester, according to novice and mentor, her practices had improved greatly when compared to first semester. Mrs. Baker wanted to keep her job at Lincoln and she wanted to keep building her capacity to teach the challenging student population there.

Capacity to handle conflict away from commitment. The mentor-novice dyad was nested in a school culture where administrators did not appear to be committed to allowing Mrs. Baker (N) to learn to teach at their school. A district decision, according to her principal, required him to cut her position. At the end of the study Mrs. Baker (N) was not rehired at Lincoln; however, she did hope to continue teaching somewhere. Although this novice was committed to the teaching profession and believed she was strengthening her skills as a teacher, she was practicing in a school that did not seem to agree with the manner in which she handled issues with classroom management. Although she saw her mentor as being a strong advocate and role model, neither she nor he believed he had any capacity to convince administrators to renew her contract, especially because the principal attributed her dismissal to a district decision.

Result of Baker (N)/Manzetti (M) dyad. At the end of the year, *novice turnover* and *mentor teaching* in Lincoln classroom next year.

Mentoring relationship with retention. The quality of mentoring appeared to have no connection with the novice's retention. If it had been her choice, she would have continued to work at Lincoln. She said the principal told her that her dismissal was blamed on budget cuts during tough economic times.

Captain (N)/Rankin (M)

Nature of the dyad. This mentor novice dyad began when the novice was her mentor's student teacher and they had been formally assigned to each other. In addition, Mrs. Rankin (M) had another mentee. Mentor and novice were self-organized in that they decided how they would function together. Captain (N) and Rankin (M) were short-ranged in terms of proximity, frequency of contact, similar content and students; however, this novice had a planning period that differed from not only her mentor, but her entire department. The mentor and novice met the criteria to be identified as a mentor-novice dyad that adjusted to disturbances from disruptive students and a perceived lack of support from administrators. As a decentralized dyad, they worked together as equal partners. The mentor and novice were redundant in their emphasis on collaboration and their level of content knowledge. They were diverse in the fact that novice had more current information about the content they both taught and how to use technology in instruction, but the mentor was more experienced with school culture and teaching challenging students. The boundaries around the dyad were permeable to allow input from administrators, district personnel, other teachers, the content coach, students, and the novice's aunt.

Conflicts. Ms. Captain's (N) major conflict was with the amount of paperwork she had to do, and she and her mentor were also concerned about the ways administrators presented concerns to the faculty about low test scores and poor classroom management. Ms. Captain (N) had not felt pressured by administrators, but she and Mrs. Rankin (M) were aware of other talented teachers in their department who had felt that way. They believed these conflicts hurt students and teachers. Ms. Captain (N) and Mrs. Rankin (M) reported that Ms. Captain had no significant conflicts with her students. Ms. Captain (N) was also in conflict with the department's PLC, and she did not trust other teachers not to use information against her. Her most significant conflict was a personal one. She wanted to travel while she was still young; therefore, her personal goal was in conflict with staying at Lincoln. Mrs. Rankin (M) felt triangulated when administrators told her to fix novices, and administrators were in denial about the fact that the PLC was not working for all teachers. The dyad also believed that administrators were in denial about the amount of paperwork and how much a teacher might accomplish with students in terms of testing.

Triggers. Triggers for this novice included love of teaching and feeling highly competent as a teacher, few complaints about students, good relationships with her mentor and other colleagues, too much paperwork, negative and aggressive tone of administrators, negative experience with one PLC, and feeling too young to settle down at Lincoln.

Emergent responses. This mentor did not have to protect this novice from administrators, but she had endorsed Ms. Captain (N) so that they hired her. If the novice

had problems with students, Mrs. Rankin (M) directly addressed them. Mrs. Rankin (M) had advocated to her novice the practice of acknowledging to students that she did not know something and she acknowledged her novice's superior knowledge of content and technology. The novice was impressed with her mentor's positive attitude and her mentor was impressed with her novice's ability to come up with lab ideas. Ms. Captain (N) learned the most from her mentor by watching how she handled things and neither of them liked to complain. Even though the novice did not enjoy the department's PLC she liked the one for her specific content area, and Mrs. Rankin (M) saw their department as a collaborative culture that shared understandings about what worked best for students and the importance of developing good relationships prior to teaching content. This mentor and novice reached a level of synchronicity in that they saw themselves as kindred spirits who were bored with routine and could identify with challenging students because they had challenged their own teachers when they were in school.

Capacity to handle conflict toward commitment. The novice-mentor relationship appeared to be important in terms of the novice's professional growth and her ability to handle school conflicts. The partnership that began when the novice student taught with her mentor continued when she was hired to teach at Lincoln. The mentor and novice acknowledged their ability to develop relationships with students and their teaching practices. The mentor believed the novice was especially confident and skilled as a teacher. The novice believed she was good at teaching and planned to stay in the profession.

Capacity to handle conflict away from commitment. Although the novice did not have any complaints about the students she taught and she planned to stay in the profession, she was not happy with the amount of paperwork she had to do and she did not appreciate the “or else” tone she heard from administrators when she was dealing with paperwork and accountability issues. She was also not pleased with the way her department implemented their PLCs. Her own personal goal of traveling and seeing the world while she was young was in conflict with her ability to continue to teach at Lincoln; therefore she had decided to resign. Even though the mentor and novice had a positive relationship and the novice was doing well at the school especially because she was able to control her classes, she was not entirely happy with the paperwork and with some of the other administrative practices; however, she was delighted with the teaching profession. It was her decision to continue in the profession, but just not at Lincoln.

Result of Captain (N)/Rankin (M) dyad. At the end of the year, *novice turnover and mentor teaching in the classroom* at Lincoln for the next year. Ms. Captain planned to leave for Europe in August, and Mrs. Rankin was in a great position having had all of her students pass the EOC (i.e., she got her stats).

Mentoring relationship with retention. The mentor-novice relationship appeared to have no connection with the novice’s future plans to teach in Europe.

Cook (N)/Herman (M)

Nature of the dyad. This dyad functioned in a school that Mr. Cook believed demanded a great deal of paperwork and that enabled students to make up work to pass the class. The mentor novice dyad began when the novice was his mentor’s student

teacher and they had decided to maintain an informal mentor-novice relationship. In addition, Mrs. Herman (M) had two other mentees and the novice had a formally assigned mentor. This mentor and novice were self-organized in that they decided how they would function together. Cook (N) and Herman (M) were short-ranged in terms of proximity, frequency of contact, and beliefs about how to connect with students in order to teach them. They met the criteria to be identified as a mentor-novice dyad and they adapted to disturbances from administrators and the district that created a large amount of paperwork. As a decentralized dyad, they decided how they would work together as mentor-mentee and coach-novice. Mentor and novice were redundant in their emphasis on developing relationships with students and teaching them by connecting with their interests. They were diverse in terms of gender and age and the novice acknowledged that although students respected both of them, they respected them in different ways. The boundaries around the dyad were permeable to allow input from administrators, district personnel, other teachers, the content coach, and students.

Conflicts. The novice's major conflict was with the amount of paperwork he had to do and the fact that he was required to allow students to make up work they would not do during class. The novice had problems disciplining students initially, but at the time of the interviews he had no reported conflicts with them. He was triangulated by a district policy that required him to complete paperwork about which he was philosophically opposed. Mr. Cook seemed to believe that administrators were in denial of the effects of the volume of paperwork they had asked novices to do.

Triggers. Triggers for the novice included paperwork, relationships with mentor and other colleagues, school policies, and learning to build relationships with students.

Emergent responses. The mentor did not have to sponsor or protect this novice from administrators, students, or other teachers because he seemed to have no problems with anyone. She did not advocate practices with the assumption that they would work for Mr. Cook (N) the way they worked for her. One of her most critical instances of advocacy was when she convinced Mr. Cook (N) not to resign when he got behind on his paperwork and had typed his resignation. Mrs. Herman (M) acknowledged Mr. Cook (N) as one of the best teachers she had ever seen, and he acknowledged her as the hardest worker at the school. The mentor-novice used dialogue to address tough classroom issues and to talk about curriculum. The department to which Mr. Cook (N) belonged was a strong collaborative culture that shared many understandings, especially the belief that it took a special person to make it at their school. The Cook (N)/Herman (M) dyad also experienced synchronicity when they created lessons together that the mentor did not recognize as coming from her because the novice had made them his own. Also Mr. Cook (N) used the same term for students (“Johnny Appleseed”) that Mrs. Herman (M) used to describe challenging students.

Capacity to handle conflict toward commitment. Mr. Cook had an especially good relationship with his informal mentor, Mrs. Herman (M). Their relationship began when he was her student teacher and he had the utmost respect for her and appreciation for what she had done for him. Mrs. Herman (M) believed Mr. Cook (N) was one of the most talented teachers with whom she had worked. Mr. Cook (N) was learning to handle

the paperwork that he said had almost driven him to quit teaching and he was adapting to some of the policies with which he did not philosophically agree. He planned to stay in the classroom at Lincoln for the near future.

Capacity to handle conflict away from commitment. This novice was energized by the students he taught, but he was diminished by some school and district policies that he felt negated his role as a teacher and did not acknowledge his hard work. Although he planned to stay in the classroom for the near future, he planned to leave the Lincoln classroom to pursue other roles as an educator. He hoped that when he was in these other roles he could change some of the policies that offended him as a classroom teacher.

Result of Cook (N)/Herman (M) dyad. At the end of the year, *novice retention* and *mentor planning to mentor and coach again* next year both at Lincoln.

Mentoring relationship with retention. Mr. Cook (N) had typed his resignation and planned to resign from teaching; however, he gave his mentor credit for convincing him to stay at the school and in the profession. He claimed that his relationship with his mentor played an important role in his retention.

Hansen (N)/Truitt (M)

Nature of the dyad. This dyad functioned in a school that did not always have one clear message from the leadership. The conflicts among these various messages put intense pressure on this novice. In addition because the school was under sanctions from the state, many outsiders were also sending messages to teachers that put pressure on them to have high test scores. The induction program appeared to have no major

requirements for how the mentor-novice dyad organized itself; however, this mentor-novice dyad began formally when they met each other during a special induction event. Of all the dyads, the Hansen/Truitt dyad was least short ranged in terms of proximity and similarity in content and students; however it was short ranged in terms mentor's availability to meet with novice and the quality of the meeting. The mentor and novice adjusted easily to the fact that the mentor was also the chairperson of novice's department, which enhanced rather than diminished her interactions with him. One adjustment that was difficult for the mentor-novice dyad was the inclusion of the PLC in novice's schedule. The dyad was decentralized as evidenced by the fact that Mrs. Truitt (M) took on another mentee and even though the district appeared to attempt to highly control what teachers taught, it was apparent that the novice developed many of his own ideas through collaborations with his mentor and other members of his department. The mentor and novice were redundant in their ideas about relating to students and teaching their curriculum and by second semester Mr. Hansen (N) had been assigned students who would eventually have Mrs. Truitt (M) as their teacher, so the dyad had a more similar student population to teach. The most interesting difference between mentor and novice was their heights; he was extremely tall and she was short. Through this difference, Mrs. Truitt helped Mr. Hansen understand that he should bend down in order to get "face to face" with students in order to connect with them. They also had different teaching styles: he was soft spoken and laid back and she talked louder and was more assertive. The boundaries around their relationship allowed for input from family, especially Mrs. Truitt's (M) father; professional friends, especially Mr. Hansen's (N) coaching friends

and other department friends, and fellow department members. The only inputs from outside the dyad that seemed to create conflicts came from the content coach and administrators.

Conflicts. Major conflicts from administrators revolved around novice's room and schedule changes and from the school's intense focus on accountability. During first semester, Mr. Hansen (N) experienced some conflicts with students; however, at second semester he was teaching honors students, who seemed to easier for him to manage and he had developed relationships with many of the other traditional and struggling students as well. Barriers that interfered with the mentor-novice dyad resolving conflicts occurred when administrators seemed to deny the stress Mr. Hansen (N) experienced as a result of their indecisiveness, and the fact that he felt triangulated by these administrators who were in conflict about where his classroom should be.

Triggers. The novice's triggers included relationships with his mentor and a large group of highly supportive professional friends and department members, room change triangulation, personal goals, coaching, learning to handle disruptive students, and finding his teaching style.

Emergent responses. The novice saw that his mentor sponsored and protected him especially during the room change incident, and during first semester she often checked on him to make sure he was doing all right in his classroom. The mentor advocated practices to her novice around building relationships with students and grading them fairly. She also encouraged him to handle student discipline himself. During the room change incident she inquired how he would like to solve the problem before she

helped him negotiate a solution. The mentor acknowledged her novice's soft spoken teaching style, his caring personality, and his willingness to learn. The novice acknowledged his mentor's knowledge of students and content by encouraging her to apply for the role of content coach at Lincoln. The mentor acknowledged that her novice had a large group of collaborators within his department and from other departments. They all shared understandings of their students, their curriculum, and the school culture. These shared beliefs and mutual affirmations that led to novice nominating his mentor for "Mentor of the Year" provided evidence of the synchronicity in this mentor-novice relationship.

Capacity to handle conflict toward commitment. The mentor and novice related extremely well to each other. The novice felt lucky to have the benefit of his mentor's experience teaching the students at Lincoln and navigating the school and district hierarchies. The mentor and novice mutually affirmed each other in terms of their pedagogical strategies and their willingness to meet the needs of their students. Not only did the novice have the benefits of his mentor's guidance, he also had built highly important relationships with professional friends and coaching colleagues. He was in an excellent position at Lincoln, and as a member of a family of mostly educators, he was strongly committed to the profession.

Capacity to handle conflict away from commitment. Through the room change conflict, Mrs. Truitt (M) helped Mr. Hansen (N) learn how to deal with being triangulated by administrators. She was also advocating for him as they dealt with their department's strong focus on accountability. Although Mr. Hansen (N) had not personally dealt with

the effects of having low test scores, he saw how administrators' responses to them affected his colleagues and he had some concerns about his own ability to maintain high test scores when he at last would have students taking EOC (End of Course) tests. Although he saw himself as a committed educator, he did not see himself in the classroom long term and as far as his commitment to Lincoln, he was open to other opportunities, especially around coaching. In addition, his mentor, who was in her fifth year of teaching, was already making her move to leave the classroom and she was a powerful role model for Mr. Hansen (N).

Result of Hansen (N)/Truitt (M) dyad. At the end of the year, *novice retention and mentor leaving for a leadership opportunity*. All but one of Mr. Hansen's students passed the EOC, and although her principal requested she stay, Mrs. Truitt was hoping to leave Lincoln to get experience with other student populations.

Mentoring relationship to retention. The quality of the mentoring relationship as presented by the dyad appeared to be exceptional and the novice planned to remain in the classroom at Lincoln for the coming year; however, his mentor was leaving the classroom to begin her pursuit of an administrative position. Like Mrs. Truitt (M), Mr. Hansen (N) wanted to eventually make a move toward an administrative position or to another school given the right coaching situation. The relationship between mentoring and retention is unclear especially for the long term.

Lawson (N)/Stanley (M)

Nature of the dyad. The dyad functioned in a school where novices often felt pressured by administrators based on reports that they had problems with classroom

management or low test scores. The mentor-novice dyad began formally about one month into novice's first year of teaching and continued into her second year. Of all the dyads, the Lawson-Stanley was the least short-ranged in terms of novice's access to her mentor mainly because her mentor was part time (two days per week) and because she was also the content coach for a department. The dyad did not meet the criteria for a mentor-dyad system especially due to the mentor's lack of availability and the blurring of her role as content coach. In addition, the instability of the dyad seemed to dominate so that there was no balance between being a closed, but also open relationship. As a matter of fact, during the first year that the novice taught at Lincoln she believed her mentor was more focused on the agenda of the administration than her best interests. At second semester that changed and Mrs. Stanley (M) appeared to become her advocate. The mentor and novice were decentralized in that as a coach Mrs. Stanley (M) had no job description and as a mentor she found herself opposing administrative decisions especially around the novice's classroom assignment (not AP), her room assignment, and the mentor's perception that administrators had not acknowledged how well the novice's students were performing on tests. Lawson (N) and Stanley (M) were redundant in their interest in sharing information, breaking ideas down for students, and attending to how their teaching affected students' scores. They were mainly diverse in that they were from different generations, which generated some conflicts because Mrs. Stanley (M) believed teachers in Mrs. Lawson's (N) generation had lowered standards and were impatient. The relationship was flexible to allow input from other department colleagues, administrators, and district personnel. During her first year and into the first semester of her second year,

Mrs. Lawson (N) appeared to rely on another teacher to mentor her when Mrs. Stanley was functioning more as a coach.

Conflicts. In her first year of teaching Mrs. Lawson (N) had been in conflict with administrators she felt pressured her due to classroom management issues. She had experienced some difficulties with the students in her fourth block in particular. One of her most significant conflicts was with a veteran colleague with whom Mrs. Lawson had many unpleasant interactions. Mrs. Lawson (N) was also especially concerned about an administrative decision regarding the amount of copies she could use. In addition, she was in conflict with the state curriculum which she believed did not allow her to teach the concepts she personally found most important and interesting in her content. Finally she had a personal goal that conflicted with her commitment to the public school classroom. Her goal was to get a Ph.D. and then to teach at a community college or higher level.

Triggers. Triggers for the novice included having a part time mentor-coach rather than a mentor-novice dyad, personal goals for getting an advanced degree, conflict with a specific veteran teacher, limited copying resources, curriculum that did not match her personal views, lack of support from administrators, administrators did not make use of her specific teaching skills, and administrators pressured her about classroom management.

Emergent responses. The novice believed Mrs. Stanley (M) had sponsored and protected her from administrators during her second year of teacher. As a coach, Mrs. Stanley (M) had visited the novice's room in order to show her some strategies, and during the PLC meetings, Mrs. Stanley had advocated many ideas that including keeping

standards high, not arguing with students, teaching to the core curriculum, and maintaining a teacher presence. Mrs. Stanley (M) had acknowledged her novice's deep understanding of the content and her willingness to help students and other teachers access that content by breaking it down for them. She also acknowledged her novice's ability to help students improve their performance on EOC tests. Mrs. Lawson (N) and Mrs. Stanley (M) believed in the importance of collaboration within their department; however, Mrs. Lawson (N) was concerned about the manner in which the most veteran teachers dealt with the less-experienced teachers. Mrs. Lawson (N) and Mrs. Stanley (M) shared the belief that it took a special kind of teacher to make it at Lincoln.

Capacity to handle conflict toward commitment. Mrs. Lawson (N) had learned a lot about teaching students at Lincoln, and she discovered she had a talent for breaking content information down for students and her colleagues. Mrs. Stanley (M) was especially complimentary of Mrs. Lawson's (N) teaching skills. Mrs. Lawson (N) realized she loved teaching and that she wanted to continue to be a teacher.

Capacity to handle conflict away from commitment. Mrs. Lawson (N) had not had the benefit of a full-time mentor, and she learned that she was not interested in continuing to work in a system that did not appear to acknowledge and make good use of her skills as a teacher. She also believed she was losing ground in terms of her own understanding of her content. Working as a high school teacher in her district was in conflict with her personal goal of being a lifelong learner and getting an advanced degree.

Result of Lawson (N)/Stanley (M) dyad. At the end of the year, *novice turnover* and *mentor turnover*. Mrs. Lawson was accepted into a Ph.D. program with a stipend, and Mrs. Stanley was going back into retirement.

Mentoring relationship to retention. Mrs. Lawson (N) did not have a full-time mentor; nevertheless, Mrs. Stanley (M), who was assigned as her mentor, encouraged her to leave Lincoln in order to pursue another type of teaching career. The relationship between this assigned mentor and novice did not meet the criteria as a mentor-novice dyad and it is unclear how their relationship interacted with Mrs. Lawson's decision to leave Lincoln.

Stewart (N)/Herman (M)

Nature of the dyad. This dyad functioned in a school that seemed ready to explode at times with conflicts among students, between students and teachers, and among the adults in the building. The mentor novice dyad began formally when novice and mentor met to participate in special training for teachers who would use a special curriculum model. The relationship was self-organized and decentralized in that mentor and novice seemed to be responsible for working out their relationship with Mrs. Herman's (M) dual roles as mentor and content coach. It was also short-ranged in that the mentor was in and out of novice's room constantly and they had both been trained to teach a special curriculum model. Even though Mrs. Herman (M) functioned as Mrs. Stewart's (N) coach as well as her mentor, she seemed to combine the roles so that the dyad addressed all of the criteria in order to be identified as a mentoring relationship. The mentor and novice were redundant in their philosophies around the learning process. As a

matter of fact, Mrs. Stewart (N) said she would have chosen Mrs. Herman (M) even if she had not been assigned to her as her mentor because she connected with her so closely in terms of theories and practices. Mrs. Stewart (N) relied on her mentor as a last resort if everything else she had tried failed. The relationship was ambiguously bounded to accommodate many other relationships. For example, Mrs. Herman (M) had another formal mentee and at least one informal one. In addition, she still functioned as a sounding board for Mr. Manzetti (M) and a kind of mentor for his mentoring. She was also the content coach for the entire department. Mrs. Stewart (N) also had an informal mentor, Mrs. Anderson, and she relied heavily on her PLC of teachers who taught the same curriculum model. The mentor and novice also accepted input from administrators, counselors, and a district coach.

Conflicts. The novice's major conflicts seemed to involve her struggles with how to best teach her students. She also put a great deal of pressure on herself to be exemplary. For example, she was used to excelling and had been valedictorian of her high school and involved in a number of extracurricular activities. She was constantly striving to keep her students "on point" and to keep up with all the demands placed on her by both the school and at the district level. Mrs. Stewart (N) was in conflict with other teachers who (a) seemed to have given up on pursuing their students and (b) those who might say things that would damage a teacher's reputation because Mrs. Stewart (N) believed that at Lincoln "rep" was everything. Mrs. Stewart (N) acknowledged that covered-up and unresolved conflict within the school culture were tremendous problems for her. It also seemed that her mentor was triangulated by a district coach when they

went together to observe Mrs. Stewart (N) and give her feedback about her lesson.

According to Mrs. Stewart's (N) mentor, this incident caused problems for Mrs. Stewart (N).

Triggers. Triggers for this novice included relationships with formal and informal mentor, a team collaborative community, problems with student misbehavior and motivation, and an incident in which she received feedback from her mentor and district coach, and a sense that the school was ready to explode with unresolved conflicts.

Emergent responses. Mrs. Stewart's (N) access to Mrs. Herman (M) had greatly helped her build the capacity to handle conflict within her classroom. In addition, Mrs. Herman (M) spoke highly of Mrs. Stewart (N) to the principal and others. She also protected Mrs. Stewart (N) when counselors were placing too many students in her room. Mrs. Herman (M) acknowledged the fact that Mrs. Stewart's (N) students had begun to accept her and were no longer pushing back when she disciplined them. Another helpful response with which Mrs. Herman (M) was involved was the close collaboration of the team of teachers who were teaching a curriculum model. Mrs. Herman (M) had negotiated with administrators to allow them to turn in a team plan every week rather than daily. Except for that one occasion when her mentor was triangulated by a district coach, when Mrs. Herman (M) visited Mrs. Stewart's (N) room, Mrs. Stewart (N) felt a non-judgmental and encouraging presence. When I interviewed them together they seemed to function in a state of synchronicity because they co-constructed a story about their hormone-ridden students. Also, Mrs. Stewart (N) mentioned that often Mrs. Herman (M) showed up just at the moment when she needed her most.

Capacity to handle conflict toward commitment. Mrs. Stewart (N) began at Lincoln with a strong commitment to her profession and her mentor seemed to match her well so that together they helped to build the sustained capacity to handle classroom conflicts. Mrs. Stewart (N) did not seem to be experiencing any conflicts with administrators or others, and she seemed to have found ways, with the help of her assigned mentor and her informal mentor, to make her job enjoyable and to feel some sense of success with her students.

Capacity to handle conflict away from commitment. Mrs. Stewart (N) acknowledged the high levels of unresolved conflicts she experienced as a teacher at Lincoln. According to Mrs. Herman (N) she was especially disturbed by the feedback she received when Mrs. Herman (N) and the district coach observed her lesson. Her personal goal of being exemplary seemed to conflict with their feedback, which pointed out some areas for improvement. Mrs. Herman (M) believed Mrs. Stewart (N) felt extremely upset by the event. Mrs. Stewart's (N) response to this feedback raised questions about her capacity to resolve her conflicts related to being a teacher at Lincoln.

Result of Stewart (N)/Herman (M) dyad. At the end of the year *novice turnover and mentor planned to mentor and coach at Lincoln again next year*. Mrs. Stewart applied and was accepted for graduate school.

Mentoring relationship to retention. There was no doubt that Mrs. Stewart (N) loved teaching and planned to continue in the profession. Although she and her mentor reported an excellent relationship, it is inconclusive how that relationship played a role in Mrs. Stewart's (N) decision to leave the school.

Summary of the Relationship between Mentoring and Retention

Table 10 provides a visual summary of mentor-novice dyad relationships to teacher retention. Because three of the six relationships between mentors and novices were unclear and the other three were split with two having no connection and one having a connection, it appears that the relationship between mentoring and new teacher retention is inconclusive.

Table 10

Summary of Relationship between Mentoring and Retention

Dyads	Relationship between Mentoring and Retention		
	Yes	No	Unclear
Baker (N)/Manzetti (M)		X	
Captain (N)/Rankin (M)		X	
Cook (N)/Herman (M)	X		
Hanson(N)/Truitt (M)			X
Lawson (N)/Stanley (M)			X
Stewart (N)/Herman (M)			X

Future Plans

Looking at the emergent responses from the mentor-novice relationship and stories from all participants, I discovered certain patterns in their *reported* future plans. Note that in the cases of Mrs. Herman (M) and Mrs. Stanley (M), they had already demonstrated a long-term commitment to the classroom; however, this table is about their future plans and I did not know Mrs. Stanley's (M) future plans because even though I

found out she was leaving Lincoln to become retired again, I did not know if she planned to take another kind of position as an educator. Table 11 shows the types of commitments mentors and novices made to the school and to the profession.

Table 11

Types of Commitments

Commitments	Novices						Mentors				
	B	C	Co	Ha	L	St	H	M	R	S	T
To an educational profession	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
To teaching in a 9- 12 classroom (long term)	X	X				X			X		
To Lincoln (long term)									X		
To Lincoln next year			X	X			X	X	X		
To a 9-12 teaching job somewhere else	X	X									
To a professional position outside the 9-12 classroom (long term)			X	X	X		X	X			X
To a professional position outside the 9-12 classroom (next year)							X				X

Key: **Novices:** Baker (B); Captain (C); Cook (Co); Hansen (Ha); Lawson (L); Stewart (St)

Mentors: Herman (H); Manzetti (M); Rankin (R); Stanley (S); Truitt (T)

This table makes it clear that although all of the participants made a commitment to an educational profession, only three of the novice participants expressed a commitment to teaching in a 9-12 classroom and only one person, Mrs. Rankin (N), seemed to make a commitment to Lincoln High School for the long term. A minority of all the participants (five) planned to remain at Lincoln for the next school year. Of that five who planned to return, three were mentors and two were novices. Of the mentors,

one planned to be in a position outside of the 9-12 classrooms in the near future, and two planned to remain in the classroom at Lincoln for the next year. Interestingly, the majority of the participants planned to be in professional positions outside the 9-12 classrooms long-term and the relationship between participants' future plans and the quality of their mentoring was inconclusive.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, I showed how my findings based on participants' stories addressed my research questions about the nature of the mentor-novice dyad, the manner in which the dyad used its nature and ecologically-based sustainable capacity building to handle school conflicts, and how the manner in which the dyad addressed school conflicts related to the retention of novice teachers. I found that mentor-novice dyads experienced their school context in both redundant (similar) and diverse ways. My interpretation of participants' stories regarding my first research question led me to understand that mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln High School functioned as complex systems with eight indicators.

Each dyad experienced the school context as having some kind of university connection, some kind of induction/mentoring service, a learning community orientation (e.g., PLCs), and a student-focus. They also experienced a context that was hierarchical and focused on testing, led by administrators who made it difficult for novices to ask for help, and composed of challenging students who experienced too little accountability. Each dyad was self-organized in a unique way, and as self-organized systems they created spaces for learning and adapting to take place. As closed systems with a specific

identity, they worked together as no other relationships in the larger system. They were also short-ranged so that they had physical access to each other to address school conflicts. They were unstable (i.e., flexible) in that they constantly adjusted to each other, changes within the organization, student behaviors, and district influences. Also, even though the administrative system at Lincoln was hierarchical and tried to facilitate and monitor student learning, mentor-novice dyads made decisions that were close to the conflicts they experienced so that the dyad was decentralized.

Dyads were structure determined with similarities (were redundant) and differences (diverse). They were similar in that they had the same kinds of students, shared many of the same philosophies and goals, and in general realized it took a special kind of individual to teach at Lincoln. Mentor-novice differences helped them fill the gaps for each other, utilize the mentor's superior knowledge of school culture, and utilize the unique skills of each person. Finally, the dyad was ambiguously bounded (allowing input from others) to allow both welcomed and unwelcomed input from the school culture so that mentors and novices were flexible to deal with the conflicts they encountered.

To answer my second research question, I determined the ways dyads used ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building, the conflicts they experienced, and the barriers to conflict resolution that were unique to each of them; however, I also discovered some common responses to conflict, common conflicts, and common barriers to conflict resolution among all participants. In order to deal with conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution with administrators, students and other conflicts, mentor-novice dyads

used (a) collegial dynamics, which included sponsorship, protection, and authentic professional dialogue (including acknowledgement, advocacy, inquiry, and invitation); (b) collaborative cultures; (c) shared understandings, and (d) synchronicity.

Next I used ideas from participants' stories to determine common conflicts mentor-novice dyads experienced. I found that among the major conflicts with administrators, most dyads experienced conflicts related to classroom management and pedagogy, student achievement, paperwork, scheduling and resources, and negative attitudes. Also, most commonly dyads were in conflict with students who were disruptive, unmotivated, academically challenged, highly aggressive, and hard to relate to. Other conflicts included the following: mentor to novice, personal conflicts, teacher to district, teacher to teacher, teacher to school culture, teacher to counselor, teacher to content coaches, and teacher to students' parents.

Finally, summarizing participants' stories enabled me to connect the nature of the dyad and its use of ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building to help novices deal with school conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution. Key findings included the following: (a) dyads most often used their flexible structures to resolve their conflicts with administrators, students, and other conflicts; (b) they did not experience synchronicity when addressing conflicts with administrators, but they often experienced it in terms of their interactions with students; (c) dyads often used invitation to address conflicts with administrators, but they rarely used sponsorship; (d) dyads used a wide variety of responses to student conflicts; and (e) often there was "no help" for certain conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution.

Regarding my third question about the manner in which the mentor-novice dyad's handling of school conflicts related to teacher retention. I organized findings from participants' stories by using my conceptual framework to summarize how each dyad did or did not appear to influence their decisions to remain at Lincoln, which included the following parts: (a) nature of the dyad, (b) conflicts, (c) triggers, (d) emergent responses, (e) direction of capacity to handle conflict, (f) results from each dyad in terms of novice retention, and (g) mentoring relationship to retention. My assumption was that the mentor-novice dyads responded to certain triggers, such as conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution, and emergent responses from novices seemed to move toward a commitment to the school or profession or away from it.

My significant findings regarding my third research question were as follows:

1. In general, the relationships among conflict, mentoring, and mentor-novice dyads' future plans were inconclusive. Of note, however, is that Mr. Cook attributed the mentor-novice relationship to his decision to remain in the profession, and the relationship between mentoring and Mrs. Lawson's decision to leave Lincoln was complicated by the fact that she did not actually have a mentor.
2. Interestingly, I also found that only one of my participants seemed to have made a long term commitment to the school and to the classroom; however the majority of the participants planned to stay in the field of education long term.

3. Four out of the six novices planned to leave the school and at least two mentors were planning to leave. Of the novices leaving, Mrs. Baker was terminated by administrators even though she wanted to continue at the school; Ms. Captain was planning to continue to teach, but she wanted to travel while she was still young; Mrs. Lawson left for various stated reasons including not liking the way administrators had treated her, feeling disappointed in her subject's curriculum, and not having a mentor in combination with the fact that she wanted to realize a dream of getting a Ph.D.; and Mrs. Stewart's stated reason was that she wanted to pursue her dream of becoming a writer and wanted to get an advanced degree. In my next chapter, I will interpret these findings as they related to my three research questions and the current research literature about mentoring.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In early summer I visited my research participants one last time and found out how they planned to move forward from their year at Lincoln. I discovered what happened to those novices who began their careers eager to teach. I found out that of the six novices involved in my study, only two of them had would continue teaching at Lincoln. Of those who were leaving, one was going to Europe to teach, two were going back to school to work on advanced degrees, and one lost her job. Regardless of their future plans, I could tell from the participants' stories that having had a committed and caring mentor to "dance" with them was important to help them learn to adjust to the rhythms at Lincoln, but I found out that those mentors could not do much to help retain novices, especially if they had conflicting personal goals or did not seem to be a good fit for the school. Interestingly, one formally assigned mentor-novice relationship did not seem to match the identity of a mentor-novice dyad established by my research participants.

In this chapter, I interpret the findings related to my research questions regarding the nature of the mentor-novice dyad, the ways the dyad handled school conflicts, and how the mentor-novice dyad responses to conflict seemed to relate to teacher retention, or not. For each question, I address how my findings from relevant propositions, which were based on my review of the literature and my conceptual framework, helped to answer

these three questions. Before answering specific questions, I explain the general nature of the evidence I collected, which I call *complexity-based evidence*.

Complexity-based Evidence (Limitations)

Complexity-based evidence differs from more traditional forms of evidence that rely on scale statistics in quantitative studies and on determining significant patterns in qualitative studies. Complexity-based evidence is descriptive and interpretive, but it does not attempt to be predictive nor does it suggest that one complex system's actions can prescribe how one might "plan" programs or implement programs based on the findings about that system. This kind of evidence admits that we cannot know the absolute truth about complex systems and our understanding of them is always "approximate" (Bateson, 1979, p. 66); therefore, planning as if we *do* understand them might result in more harm than good. However, by acknowledging the limitations of complexity-based evidence, decision-makers, practitioners, and researchers might *plan for complexity*, which I will discuss in the implications section of this chapter.

Collecting complexity-based evidence was an interesting process because first of all I had to artificially pause the moving and changing complex mentor-novice dyads in order to listen to them and write about them. In pausing these systems, I immediately lost a great deal of accuracy in describing them. For example, I arrived to collect data at various points during the school year and in participants' lives; therefore, whatever they told me was only reflective of what was going on at that time. Second, I lost accuracy because I also had to limit the scope of the complex mentor-dyad system so that I could logistically collect data about it. For example, I decided to limit my study to the

perspectives of five mentors and six novices in one high school. In limiting my participants and their settings, I had no idea of the perspectives of other stakeholders or the influences of other school settings. A third challenge in collecting complexity-based evidence was that when I injected myself as a researcher into the system, I became a participant. Therefore, my questions, my verbal reactions, and my body language helped to shape what my participants told me, which corrupted the natural system and again decreased accuracy.

These three limitations: pausing the naturally moving system, limiting the kinds of participants and settings, and injecting myself into the system show that the word *accuracy* seems irrelevant when one is describing, analyzing, and interpreting complexity-based evidence. Nevertheless, the results of this study represent useful knowledge because they acknowledge the complexity of the mentor-novice system, and they raise some important considerations regarding mentoring as a relationship distinct from other helping relationships, which is the subject of my next section.

Research Question 1

In this section I address my first research question: What do mentor and novice stories reveal about the nature of the mentor-novice dyad? In Chapter I, I defined the mentor-novice dyad as a two-person relationship (Simmel, 1950) between a mentor and a novice that functions as a social system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). I assumed that the mentor-novice dyad was a complex system with eight indicators as follows: (a) nested in context, (b) self-organized/bottom-up emergent, (c) short-ranged, (d) closed, (e) unstable, (f) decentralized/scale-free, (g) structure determined (redundant and diverse); and (h)

ambiguously bounded (Davis & Sumara, 2006). In answering research question 1 (RQ1) based on my assumptions about the complex nature of the mentor-novice dyad, I was aware of the wealth of literature on the mentoring process however, I was also concerned that although this topic had been studied in depth, few researchers have explored the mentor-novice dyad from a complexity-based perspective (Kalin et al., 2010; Garvey & Alred, 2001). In addition, researchers (Johnson, 2003; Mertz, 2004; Semeniuk & Worrall, 2000) have claimed that in spite of all the information on mentoring, decision-makers, practitioners and researchers still do not seem to have a useful understanding of the nature of the mentoring process and what distinguishes that process from other forms of helping processes that novices may receive as they enter the teaching workforce. For example, although studies have explored school cultures and working conditions (Blair-Larson, 1998; Ingersoll, 2002b; Stockard & Lehman, 2004), no studies have explored how these kinds of contexts have shaped the mentor-novice dyad.

Even though researchers have not explored the ways in which the school context shapes the mentor-novice dyad, it has addressed “facilitative administrative structures” (Waterman & He, 2011, p. 3) that supported or challenged the functioning of mentors and novices, and although the context of the mentor-novice dyad was not the focus of my study, I found it necessary to briefly explore the role it seemed to play in shaping the nature of the six mentor-novice dyads at my research site.

Context

Several studies of the effects of mentoring have addressed contextual factors that have contributed to teacher turnover. For example, studies have shown that teachers leave

schools dominated by the most challenging students (Bartell, 2005), low-achieving, minority, and low income students (Hanushek, et al., 2003), poor working conditions (Stockard & Lehman, 2004), and difficult school cultures (Ingersoll, 2002b). These studies aligned in some ways with my findings about the context at Lincoln, but in other ways I found results that differed from these studies.

First of all, I noted supportive and challenging contextual factors related to the development of mentor-novice dyads in my study. Supportive contextual factors included a strong connection with the university, an induction program, PLCs, and a focus on students. Regarding the connection with a university, although the majority of the dyads felt a strong connection with the university, some felt less enthusiastic about the connection and believed their university experience did not adequately prepare them for teaching at Lincoln. Also, while most dyads made some use of the induction practices that included a mentor coordinator, their responses to those practices varied widely from being delighted to meet each other at a special program designed for mentors and novices to having to wait a month before getting a mentor who was also a part-time employee and a content coach. And the same variety of experience occurred related to the views of the professional learning community (PLC). For some it was a life-saver and an essential element of the mentor-novice relationship and for others it presented a conflict.

Challenging contextual factors also varied in the manner in which they shaped dyads. For example, some dyads perceived administrators as unsupportive. They also felt that in some cases administrators pressured novices who seemed to require help with classroom management; however, other dyads seemed unaffected by administrators.

Also, although only two of the dyads were unaffected by the dual roles of their mentors (i.e., being both mentor and content coach), those affected dyads experienced the dual roles in different ways. For example dual roles enhanced three dyads, but I believe they also disqualified one mentor-novice relationship from aligning with participants' definition of a mentor-novice dyad. The challenging student population that was often enabled to use the system to avoid traditional consequences (e.g., failing a course if you did not do the work as it was assigned) and the intense focus on testing shaped mentor-novice dyads; however, dyads also responded to these challenging contextual factors in unique ways. Concerns about students ranged from emphasizing that students should have every opportunity to succeed to expressing frustration that these opportunities undermined the integrity of the teachers' classroom instruction. Emphasis on testing ranged from buying into measuring oneself by "the stats" to concern that the focus on testing was creating morale problems.

According to some participants in this study, contexts similar to those found in the research (e.g. Hanushek, et al., 2003; Ingersoll, 2002b; Stockard & Lehman, 2004) existed at Lincoln; nevertheless, in terms of the manner in which context shaped mentor-novice dyads, even though participants' stories revealed some consensus about whether a contextual factor was supportive or challenging, it seemed that each dyad experienced its own version of the school. The only truly common contextual factor that seemed to shape the mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln was a shared devotion to students, which was certainly a positive.

Self-organized/Bottom-up Emergent

The next important feature of a complex system was that it is self-organized and bottom-up emergent. Because of its designation as a struggling school, decision-makers from the building, district and state levels attempted to place strict controls over teaching and learning at Lincoln; however, other than formally assigning each novice a mentor, they seemed to leave mentor-novice dyads to their own resources. At Lincoln the role of coach was undefined; however, according to some of my participants, all content coaches except one seemed more aligned with administrators than teachers. Mentors' roles seemed undefined also and decision-makers did not interfere if novices chose their own mentors or mentors chose their own novices in addition to their formally assigned ones. In one case a novice did not seem to feel entitled to get help from a mentor until one was assigned to her and in other cases if novices did not get what they needed from their formally assigned mentors, they chose a mentor informally. The research literature often discussed formal versus informal mentoring roles (Arends & Regazio-DiGilio 2000; Humphrey, et al., 2000; Johannessen & McCann, 2004), and according to them, informal mentors were superior to formal ones. The consensus in the research appeared to be that relationships formed naturally were superior to those that were forced. These findings did not align with mine, which showed that in a limited number of research participants both formal and informal assignments worked in some cases and did not work in others.

As self-organized dyads, mentors and novices appeared to create at Lincoln what Kalin et al. (2010) referred to as a "space for emergence" (p. 357). My inference from mentor-novice dyads' stories was that the mentors and novices working together as dyads

generated emergent responses they may not have generated had they been left to resolve conflicts on their own. This notion of space for emergence also addressed the issue of quality contacts raised by one mentor who said that frequent contact was not as important as quality contact because in quality contact, mentor-novice dyads resolved school conflicts whereas mentors and novices could meet for hours and not resolve conflicts. Creation of these kinds of generative spaces has been discussed in other research traditions as being important for authentic learning (i.e., Holland, et al., 1998; Gutierrez, et al., 1999). Also, these spaces allowed mentors and novices to engage in “authentic professional dialogue” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009, p. 74), an important collegial dynamic useful for resolving school conflicts.

Although the personal level of the mentor-novice dyad was not a focus of this study, it is important to note that in two cases certain personal factors affected the manner in which mentor-novice dyads organized. In one situation, the novice and mentor had difficulty organizing because their personal attitudes about discipline did not match well. For another one, the novice and mentor were in conflict because the mentor believed the novice’s physical features and demeanor interfered with her ability to establish a firm teacher presence in her classrooms.

According to Kalin et al. (2010), when mentors and novices organize their relationship, if mentors try to control novices too much, they impede the emergence of learning. The mentors at Lincoln did not seem guilty of this kind of control, and it was obvious to me that they highly respected novices as co-creators of solutions to school conflicts. No research specifically focused on the manner in which mentor-novice dyads

self-organized in order to create space for emergent responses to conflict; however they did focus on whether the mentor was trained (Huling & Resta, 2007; Perez & Ciriza, 2005). Mentor training in my study was only mentioned in the stories of one mentor-novice dyad. In these stories the mentor had *not* been trained, but her novice thought enough of her mentoring skills to nominate her for “Mentor of the Year.” Because this dyad was able to satisfactorily organize their relationship without the benefit of mentor training, one might question the need for mentor training. For example it could be that the quality of the person, as was the case with the mentor in my study, rather than the quality of the training is most relevant to the success of mentor-novice dyads. With or without training, all of the mentor-novice dyads seemed to have organized the manner in which they functioned and all of them who had established mentor-novice dyads seemed convinced they were better off having had that relationship.

Short-range

The majority of mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln were short-ranged due to the proximity of their teaching and office spaces, frequent contact, quality contact, classroom observations, access to a professional community, teaching similar content, and teaching similar students. The only apparent barriers to being short-ranged included dual roles for some mentors, which created lag time for getting together initially, and in one case, a novice acknowledged that it was somewhat bothersome that she had a different planning period from her mentor and her entire department. Emergent results from mentor-novice dyads being short-ranged at Lincoln agreed with researchers who found that similar factors (e.g., frequent contact, access to a professional community) increased support to

novices (Angelle, 2002; Brown & Wynn, 2009; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wynn, et al., 2007); however, as mentioned earlier, it could be that the quality of the contact to help novices solve problems is even more important than frequency, so what mentor-novice dyads did together was more important than just being together.

Although frequency of contact between novices and mentors was the topic of several research studies, findings have been mixed, and in the case of Parker, et al., (2007) they seemed counterintuitive. For example Parker, et al. (2007) found that those novices who saw their mentors frequently had significantly lower retention rates than those who rarely met with them. My study showed that frequency of contact for the dyads at Lincoln meant daily, and it seemed helpful when novices and mentors taught the same kinds of students, but it was not necessary.

Closed

Stories from mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln revealed that the relationships between mentors and novices were closed. In other words the dyads had a specific identity that included eight descriptors (not to be confused with the eight indicators of complex systems) as follows: (a) Mentors had superior knowledge of the school culture; (b) mentors had superior experience teaching challenging students; (c) mentors were respected, empowered, and trusted by school leadership but aligned with novices; (d) mentors and novices admired each other's practices; (e) mentors and novices had a one-on-one commitment to each other; (f) mentors and novices had daily contact; (g) mentors and novices collaborated with each other and shared ideas and materials; and (h) mentors could not stop administrators from dismissing novices.

My analysis determined that the mentor-novice relationship differed from all of the other helping relationships available to novices (i.e., content coaches, professional friends, family members, administrators, counselors, professional learning communities, and other designated helping professionals, such as district coaches). All of the helpers except administrators shared the descriptor that they could not stop administrators from dismissing novices, which substantiated that helpers were powerless when it came to teacher retention. Also, two descriptors that *none* of the other helping relationships had in common with the mentor-novice dyad was that it was a one-on-one commitment and that mentors were respected, empowered and trusted by administrators but aligned with novices. This finding seemed to be important because in the face of school conflicts, it demonstrated that the mentor was the one professional on whom the novice could count as a first or last resort. Also of interest was that although content coaching and mentoring were often used interchangeably in some cases, in other cases, content coaches were aligned with administrators and were often instrumental in helping administrators identify novices who were a potential detriment to the school.

By looking at each of the six mentor-novice dyads in light of the eight descriptors, it became clear that only one formally assigned mentor-novice relationship did not qualify as a mentor-novice dyad, and that the relationship, based on the mentor's assessment, was more like a coaching relationship. Also according to that mentor, if she had really been a mentor, she would have been much more available to her novice than she was.

Historically, the first mentor's identity was explained as "a story of a relationship" between Telemachus and Mentor, his advisor and guide (Davis, Little, & Thornton, 1997, p. 62) and in a similar fashion my participants' descriptors of mentoring emerged through story. Their descriptors matched the definition of mentors, which I explained in my first chapter as veteran teachers who collaborate with novice teachers to help them both grow in the profession (Semeinuk & Worrall, 2000), but they differed from the more traditional concept of technical mentoring which focused on the skills of a veteran and the knowledge a novice gained from the relationship (Mullen, 2005, 2009). They mainly differed because the mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln acknowledged that although mentors had superior knowledge of how to deal with the school culture and superior knowledge of how to teach challenging students, they shared that expertise collaboratively and dyads did not conclude that mentors had superior knowledge of all aspects of teaching or that learning always went one-way from mentor to novice. My participants also clarified the limitations of the mentor-novice dyad to prevent a novice from being dismissed, which raises questions about the relationship between mentoring and retention.

Descriptors of mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln High School also aligned with studies of mentoring concluding that trust and commitment are important aspects of a mentor-novice relationship (Johnson, 2003; Kram, 1985). Trust and commitment were reflected by my participants' descriptors which stated that mentors were aligned with novices rather than administrators, that they admired each other's practices, and that they

saw their relationship as a one-on-one commitment. Trust and commitment were also demonstrated by descriptions of frequent contact, collaboration, and sharing materials.

It is beyond the scope of this research to provide details about how my findings regarding the identity of the mentor-novice dyad aligned or did not align with prior research on the various roles of mentors (Fletcher & Barrett, 2004; Little, 1990) and the skills mentors should have (Carver & Katz, 2004): however, I will say that my findings did not align with Carver and Katz (2004) whose assumption appeared to be that mentors should be proactive in helping novices improve their practices. The majority of the mentors at Lincoln did not appear to assume that their role was evaluative in terms of determining teaching deficiencies (i.e., a deficit perspective, Gold, 1996) rather it was more responsive to the *mutually identified concerns about teaching*.

Relating to Kram's (1988) description of mentors as sponsors and protectors of novices, the dyads at Lincoln recognized that mentors, who were highly regarded and trusted by administrators, might sponsor and protect novices, but they were limited in helping novices keep their jobs. The majority of the dyads acknowledged that some novices at Lincoln felt pressured by administrators and that as one novice said, students were allowed to be "in process," but novices were not. In alignment with this finding, researchers have noted that providing a sheltered status for novices and adjusting expectations that they should be able to perform at the level of master teachers might improve their induction into the profession (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). Also in alignment with the research literature (Gilles & Wilson, 2004; Johnson, 2003; Zuckerman, 2001), it seemed that mentors and novices both benefitted from their relationship.

Unstable

As complex systems, the mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln were unstable (i.e., flexible) in order to constantly adjust to each other, to changes within the organization, to student behaviors, and to other influences. Many of these adjustments were necessary to help novices handle conflicts with administrators, with their students, and with other categories of conflict. Mentor-novice dyad instability appeared to accommodate multiple roles of mentors, various decisions from school leaders who were under a great deal of pressure to achieve certain accountability goals, challenging behaviors from needy students, and a constantly shifting sets of requirements because the school had been identified as a struggling school. This instability within the dyad resonates with Vygotsky's (1986) "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky, 1986, p. 187), which described how learners are in a constant state of being ready to learn new information and skills. The mentor-novice stories referred to many adjustments they made especially during their first semester, and it was obvious that by second semester the majority of novices had adjusted in sustainable ways to school leaders, their students, and district policies. For example, one mentor reported that her novice was more respected by administrators due to her good test scores, another mentor stated that her novice was no longer getting "push-back" from students, and another novice had developed his own contract with students so that he could avoid getting overwhelmed by last minute and time-consuming paperwork. There was, however, little evidence that mentors and novices had the ability to deal with conflict within the dyad itself. For example, mentors and novices reported issues in personal interviews that they did not address during joint

interviews including the report from one mentor that the novice was not doing enough to comply with administrators' and colleagues' advice that she should keep her discipline issues "in-house."

Decentralized

When it came to making decisions and defining the mentor-novice relationship, the mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln exemplified a decentralized system within a school culture and district that attempted to control much of what happened in the school and classroom. Studies showed that shared decision-making improved school cultures (Berry, Noblit, & Hare, 1985; Ingersoll, 2001) and it appeared even though the school and district established requirements about testing, paperwork, lesson plans, and mentor-novice assignments, and curriculum, mentor-novice dyads made many of their own decisions. Most importantly, being decentralized allowed mentor-novice dyads to define their own relationships. Sometimes mentor-novice dyads were able to make decisions at the level of their specific challenges related to, for example paperwork, so that those requirements had less of an impact.

Structure Determined (Redundant and Diverse)

In addition to being decentralized, mentors and novices were structured determined so they were able to learn. One of the ways they learned was that they balanced their redundancies (similarities) with their diversity (differences). Some of their redundancies were that they matched each other in terms of content and they taught the same kinds of students. They also shared similar philosophies about how students learned, and they had common goals. Mentors and novices were diverse in order to fill

gaps in skills and abilities for each other, they acknowledged the superior knowledge mentors had regarding school culture and they recognized and valued their different skills and abilities. These findings aligned with Kalin et al. (2009), who demonstrated the importance of the functions of redundancy and diversity in building trust and mutuality in “complexity thinking mentorship” (p. 353).

Ambiguously Bounded

Mentor-novice dyads were also ambiguously bounded so that the boundaries around them allowed positive and negative disturbances (input) from a variety of sources. My findings align with Capra (2002) who concluded that complex systems cannot be controlled or managed; they might only be disturbed. Welcomed disturbances for mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln included the input of ideas, materials, and resources between and among teachers and departments. For example participants were always stealing ideas from other teachers, which is a common practice for teachers. Unwelcomed disturbances included constant and ever changing mandates and requirements from school leaders. Fitting in at Lincoln required a receptive stance toward welcomed and unwelcomed disturbances and it seemed evident that participants who adjusted in sustainable ways to both positive and negative disturbances seemed to have moved toward commitment to their profession or to the school. Also as much as leaders tried to facilitate and monitor how dyads responded to their mandates, they could not assure how those mandates would be received or implemented. For example, several stories reflected how novices and mentors responded to mandates in their own ways.

Conclusions: Research Question 1

The mentor-novice dyad is a complex system with eight specific indicators. The mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln enacted those eight indicators based on their unique circumstances. Notably if a mentor and novice were individual teachers assigned to work together, but they did not become a dyad, these indicators were irrelevant. All mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln were nested in larger complex systems that influenced them in similar and unique ways (e.g., ways that were scale free, which means useful information about them cannot be described using scale statistics). No matter how many requirements school leaders might have placed on the organization of the dyad, they were all self-organized to allow for the process of emergent responses to the conflicts they encountered in their schools. Mentor-novice dyads were close to each other and close to those attitudes and actions that affected them. They had a specific identity as defined by their context and the people within that context. Dyads were different from other helping relationships especially because they represented a one-on-one commitment that no other helping relationship offered and mentors were aligned with novices as opposed to being aligned with administrators as were most content coaches in the building. Even though they had specific features that identified them as mentor-novice dyads, they were unstable (i.e., flexible) so that they could adjust to their surroundings in order to build capacity/learn. Even though they were nested in a hierarchical system, their actions were decentralized so that they constantly made decisions about how they would deal with their context and with their relationships. They were structure determined so that they learned through a balance of redundancy (similarities) and diversity (differences) that

allowed them to form relationships of mutuality based on the acknowledgement of the value of those similarities and differences. Finally, all mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln were ambiguously bounded so that they received and responded to disturbances (input) from the larger system and within the dyad in unique rather than pre-determined ways. Stories from the mentor-novice dyads at Lincoln High School provided examples of the complex nature of mentor-novice dyads. These stories showed the unique ways mentor-novice dyads functioned at Lincoln to deal with, for example, school conflicts, which are the subjects of my next research question.

Research Question 2

In this next section I address my second research question: What do mentor and novice stories reveal about the manner in which mentor-novice dyads address school conflicts? When answering this research question, I used, in addition to the capacity-building model described by Mitchell and Sackney (2009), the developmental concepts, sponsorship and protection (Kram, 1988), and the structural-functional concepts: acknowledgement (an adaptation of “affirmation” from Mitchell & Sackney, 2001), advocacy, inquiry, and invitation from Mitchell and Sackney (2001). These terms seemed to fit within what Mitchell and Sackney (2009) referred to as collegial dynamics. These dynamics helped me describe the manner in which mentor-novice dyads used ecologically-based sustainable capacity building to address school conflicts.

Ecologically-based Sustainable Capacity-building

Ecologically-based sustainable capacity building included collegial dynamics, collaborative culture, shared understandings and synchronicity. I found that collegial

dynamics, which included sponsorship, protection, and authentic professional dialogue, were at work at Lincoln. Mentors and novices provided many examples of instances when mentors sponsored and protected novices from conflicts with administrators, students, and other conflicts. In terms of authentic professional dialogue, they used acknowledgement and advocacy most often and they rarely used inquiry to address school conflicts. I did not conclude that mentors did not often use inquiry with novices; however, I assumed that accessing that kind of strategy was difficult through the kinds of interviews I did. As a matter of fact, some mentors provided examples of using questioning to help novices, and one mentor provided especially detailed examples of how she used questioning to help novices see their roles in their conflicts with students. I found it interesting that mentor-novice dyads most often used collegial dynamics to resolve conflicts with students. This finding told me that dealing with students using these collegial dynamics might be easier to do than using them to resolve other conflicts

In terms of collaborative culture, it appeared that although the school seemed structured to allow for collaborative cultures, and every department had one or more PLCs, three out of the six novices in my study were most often disappointed with them. This response to PLCs did not align with the research which concluded the importance of providing for professional learning communities for teachers (Black et al., 2008; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Wynn et al., 2007). My data showed that merely having a PLC structure did not guarantee a collaborative culture for all novices, while for some it was critical to problem solving. Another interesting finding about collaboration was while most mentors saw themselves as collaborators with novices, in at least one case the

relationship felt one-sided to the novice because the mentor never approached her to see how she was doing. One mentor, who was both a formal and an informal mentor to several novices, and also served in the dual role of mentor and coach, seemed to be an exceptionally collaborative mentor, and several stories (even from research participants outside her department) acknowledged that she was known throughout the school as someone who built camaraderie among teachers.

Mitchell and Sackney (2009) concluded that school organizations in which colleagues shared understandings about teaching and learning would stand a better chance of building sustainable capacity/learning. The mentors and novices at Lincoln shared many ideas about administrators, students, and other categories, and it appeared that regardless of intelligence and training, it took a special kind of person to make it at the school. Teachers who made it at Lincoln were able to sustain the ability to get the students, and therefore the administrators, on their side regardless of all the conflicts they experienced. Those teachers who did not share major understandings emerging from the school culture at Lincoln did not tend to remain in the school. The best example of this finding came from the only novice who lost her job, and whose philosophical stance on student discipline differed from those shared by the other participants. It was clear from this example that it was important that novices at Lincoln allowed their mentors to transfer shared understandings that could play a role in protecting them from losing their positions. Shared understandings, which emerged naturally from dyads, seemed in contrast to understandings operationalized in the form of policy mandates that came from outside of the dyads and from outside of the school. These mandates did not appear to be

sustainable because they appeared to be constantly changing and often they did not match the shared understandings of the school cultures into which they were mandated.

The final sustainable response from mentor-novice dyads that emerged to resolve conflicts was synchronicity, which was a kind of happenstance that showed alignment of mentor and novice purposes and demonstrated an important and useful connection between them. Although I did not find a large number of examples of synchronicity in the stories my participants told, I found examples from the majority of dyads. Synchronicity went well with the structure of the dyad to create space for the emergence of solutions to conflicts, and I agree with Jaworski (1996) that it reflected the mentor-novice capacity to join together to address those conflicts. Dyads whose stories presented examples of synchronicity seemed to represent the strongest dyads because there seemed to be no major conflicts between them and they seemed to speak a similar language. Next I discuss the teacher conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution.

Teacher Conflicts

Research literature identified conflicts with administrators as among the major reasons teachers gave for leaving the profession (Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Eggen, 2002; Ingersoll, 2002a, 2002b; Kersaint et al., 2007; Weiss, 1999). Administrator conflicts that surfaced from my participants' stories included conflicts between teachers and administrators regarding classroom management/pedagogy, student achievement, paperwork, scheduling and resources, and negative attitudes. Based on findings from the literature (Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Brill & McCartney, 2008; Eggen, 2002; Ingersoll, 2002a, 2002b; Kersaint et al., 2007; Weiss, 1999), these

conflicts with administrators seemed typical of the kinds of conflicts found in this school and in other schools.

The literature also identified conflicts with students as reasons teachers gave for teacher turnover (Friedman, 1995; Hirsch, 2005; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Kapadia et al., 2007; McCoy, 2003; Stockard & Lehman, 2004; Weiss, 1999; Wynn et al., 2007). Participants in my study identified specific conflicts with students who were disruptive, unmotivated, academically challenged, highly aggressive, or hard to relate to. Unlike the studies that showed how conflicts with students contributed to teacher turnover, mentor- dyads in my study did not specifically attribute conflicts with students as weakening their commitment to the profession or the school; nevertheless, in the case of one novice, administrators' perceptions that she was in conflict with students may have played an important role in the fact that she lost her position.

According to Certo and Fox (2002), in the past, most studies of teacher attrition focused on the effects of teachers' personal traits. Although my study did not focus on personal traits, and I had initially included personal conflicts in my "other" category, based on my findings, I added personal concerns to major conflicts. The most salient included the conflict between novices' personal goals and the school's goal of keeping them at the school.

Other conflicts were as follows: mentor to novice, teacher to district, teacher to teacher, teacher to school culture, teacher to counselors, and teacher to students' parents. Research literature agreed with my participants regarding conflicts with school culture (Ingersoll, 2002b) and overwhelming work, such as the paperwork generated by the

district (Smethen, 2007), and conflicts with students' parents (Attanucci, 2004; Grumet, 1988; Johnson, 2004; Kutcy & Schultz, 2006; Lasky, 2000; Lawson, 2003; McCoy, 2003). My participants' stories did not reflect findings from the research literature that addressed the effects of poor monetary compensation (Guarino et al., 2006) or conflicts about novices wanting to be with their families (Kersaint et al., 2007). The major conflicts the dyads at Lincoln identified in their stories in many ways aligned with the research literature, but their stories also addressed new topics that were rarely discussed in the literature: barriers to conflict resolution.

Barriers to Conflict Resolution

One of the barriers to conflict resolution at Lincoln was triangulation, which is the process in which a person who is conflict with another person goes to a third person to help resolve that conflict (Bowen, 1978). Although they did not call it triangulation, researchers (Ingersoll, 2003; Martin et al., 1999; McCoy, 2002; Worthy, 2005) have acknowledged that some school policies generate triangles because they require teachers to bring in a third person to deal with a conflict they have with a student. At Lincoln, even though there were only six examples of triangulation, these examples affected all of the study participants who seemed particularly bothered by being forced into these kinds of situations. One of the most poignant examples came from a novice who loved his job, but felt he was forced to comply with policies that undermined his role as a teacher and that he felt also hurt his students.

The other barrier to conflict resolution, denial, was often exemplified in mentor-novice dyads' stories; however, interestingly, instances of denial affected mentor-novice

relationships with administrators and other conflicts, but not with students.

Unfortunately, as with triangulation, there were few ways for dyads to handle denial, which often interfered with teaching and with novices' commitment to the school. Just as with triangulation, there were not that many obvious examples of denial in participants' stories; nevertheless, all participants experienced it as a barrier to conflict resolution.

Conclusions: Research Question 2

Mentor-novice dyads' stories explained the many conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution novices experienced at Lincoln and how mentor-novice dyads used their nature and ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building to address them. Although it was obvious based on their reports that especially by second semester, novices, in collaboration with their mentors, were able to learn sustainable ways to handle school conflicts and resolve some of the barriers to conflict resolution, it was also clear that for many conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution, novices experienced no help. Interestingly, mentors were much more capable of helping novices learn sustainable ways to handle conflicts with students than they were with helping them deal with conflicts with administrators, and those teachers who managed to learn to get along with students rarely found themselves in trouble with administrators. One of the major findings from this study was that mentors were limited in how much help they could provide if administrators identified a novice as having problems with students. Nevertheless, even with a limited capacity to help novices resolve all of the conflicts they experienced in schools, *the manner in which mentor-novice dyads addressed school conflicts seemed*

preferable to no help at all even if that help did not translate into a clear relationship with teacher retention, which is the subject of the next research question.

Research Question 3

In this next section, I address my third research question: What do mentor and novice stories reveal about how their interactions around conflicts related to teacher turnover? In order to answer this question, I used my conceptual framework to determine that mentor-novice dyads demonstrated emergent responses to various triggers and that those responses showed movement toward or away from commitment to the school or profession. I did not categorize the triggers as positive or negative because, based on my theoretical perspective, they did not in themselves control the emergent responses from mentors and novices; however, I observed novices' emergent behaviors that seemed to move in a direction toward or away from commitment to the school or profession. By noting movement rather than only looking at the results of that movement, I was able to show the difficulty in clarifying the relationships among mentoring, conflicts, and retention. For example, the emergent responses toward commitment and away from it seemed to be balanced so that they did not show a clear direction toward retention or away from it. To show this process, I created a composite of the six dyads as they matched my conceptual framework.

Mentor-novice Dyads

Nature of the dyads. Dyads experienced the larger system in which they were nested in similar and unique ways. Similar ways included both positive and negative views of administrators, students, and other categories and unique ways addressed the

specific responses novices and mentors had in terms of administrators, students, and other categories. The majority of dyads were formally assigned by a hierarchical school organization, but they decided how they would work together to create spaces for the use of ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building including collegial dynamics, collaborative culture, shared understandings, and synchronicity. Dyads were short-ranged in terms of proximity, frequency and quality of contact, similar academic content, and similar students; all but one mentor-novice relationship could be clearly identified as a mentor-novice dyad based on a consensus of descriptors from participants' stories. Dyads were unstable (i.e., flexible) so that they could adjust to constant and persistent changes in their environment, they were decentralized so that they could make decisions close to the conflicts they faced, and they capitalized on their redundancy (similarities) and diversity (differences) to resolve conflicts through mutuality and trust. Finally boundaries around the dyad were permeable to allow input from a variety of sources including administrators, district personnel, other teachers, content coaches, and students.

Conflicts. The consensus among dyads was that the school culture did not adequately support novices and that everyone at Lincoln was overworked. For some novices, conflicts revolved around their ability to control students and for others there were no problems in this area. For some novices, administrative concerns, such as paperwork, were at the top of their list of conflicts, while for others who were struggling with pressures from administrators, these conflicts were minimal. Although novices experienced to varying degrees conflicts with disruptive and unmotivated students, the majority of novices by second semester had found sustainable ways to resolve all of those

conflicts through relationship building. In terms of other conflicts, novices rarely mentioned conflicts with students' parents and often mentioned conflicts with school culture, district pressures, and other teachers. They also had some problems related to making decisions that addressed their personal needs that were in conflict with school needs, and some experienced conflicts within the dyad. Most dyads were affected by triangulation and by denial related specifically to administrators and other areas, such as school culture.

Triggers. Each dyad experienced common and unique triggers. Some of the common triggers included having a mentor who did the following: (a) functioned to sponsor and protect them, (b) acknowledged the ways in which they were successful, (c) advocated ways of resolving conflicts, (d) inquired how they wanted to resolve conflicts, and (e) invited them to vent frustrations or share ideas. Other triggers included (f) collaborative cultures structured for PLCs, and (g) shared understandings about how to build relationships in order to teach the challenging student population. Triggers also included (h) a perceived lack of responsiveness from administrators, (i) the common belief that teachers who needed too much help with students or who were too academically inclined were not a good fit for the school, (j) a curriculum that stifled personal growth, (k) overwhelming student needs, (l) lack of materials and resources, (m) over-crowded fourth blocks with a concentration of challenging students, (n) an intense focus on the stats, (o) too many decision-makers with conflicting expectations for novices, (p) a school culture affected by teacher turnover and a history of poor student

achievement, and (q) policies that enabled students to pass a class regardless of the efforts they had made in comparison to other students.

Emergent responses. Emergent responses to triggers varied among dyads but the majority seemed to utilize the expertise of their mentors as much as possible. The consensus regarding the mentor-novice relationship was that although they had special relationships with other professionals in their school and some novices even had support from family members who were career educators, novices identified the special nature of the mentor-novice relationship. Emergent responses to administrators were generally negative in terms of their treatment of teachers, but some participants acknowledged that administrators' focus on student achievement had been necessary for administrators to keep their positions and had brought the school some recognition for improvement. Emergent responses regarding students were that although there were some first semester adjustments, all novices, even the ones who were leaving, seemed to have developed the ability to teach their "kids" by conveying a deep sense of caring for them. Emergent responses to other conflicts included some acknowledgement of some conflicts between mentors and novices with no obvious ways to resolve them; instances of choosing personal goals over school goals; general acceptance of the limitations of parents to do much to support the school; several negative responses to district pressures and school culture; and unresolved conflicts with other teachers at the school, especially "the veterans," who seemed to be perceived by some dyads as behaving in ways that discouraged novices and in other cases were not considered to be good role models for them.

Direction of capacity to handle conflict toward commitment. All participants who qualified as mentor-novice dyads seemed to benefit from their mentor-novice interactions, and for some, from a collaborative community of teachers. Every novice and every mentor in my study appeared to care deeply for their students and to love their profession. Through their experiences at Lincoln most of them discovered they had teaching talent and several mentioned that if they could teach at Lincoln, they could teach anywhere. Interestingly, the majority of my participants expressed commitment to challenging student populations.

Direction of capacity to handle conflict away from commitment. Even though in most cases novices were afforded the benefit of mentoring, coaching, supervision, and district input, many of the participants, including novices and mentors, believed that novices were in a sink or swim environment that did not give them the opportunity to grow into the profession. Personal goals for advanced degrees or leadership positions also moved novices and mentors away from their commitment to Lincoln and classroom positions. In alignment with teacher “trajectories” (Smethen, 2007, p. 469), the majority of my participants were “career teachers,” whose intentions were to take leadership roles; only three of my participants might be labeled “classroom teachers” because they expressed a desire to stay in classroom teaching environments. None of my participants fit the description of “portfolio teachers,” because none of them saw teaching as a temporary step toward another kind of career.

Conclusions: Research Question 3

Results of dyads. At the end of the year of my research, five of my participants (two novices and three mentors) planned to be at Lincoln next year. Three would continue teaching and one would continue as a mentor and content coach. Many (six) of my participants (four novices and two mentors) planned to leave Lincoln. Mentoring that helped novices learn to deal with school conflicts did not seem to provide answers for how the school could stop the constant exiting of teachers. Admittedly, Lincoln did manage to keep some of the excellent teachers in my study, but it lost even more of them.

Mentoring relationship with retention. The majority of the novices (four out of six) left Lincoln, and two of them *appeared* to have left for reasons unrelated to the fact that they had mentors. For example, although one wanted to stay, her contract was not renewed; and the other one appeared to love her job but she said she wanted to travel while she was young. Also of those who stayed, only one suggested the importance of his mentor in his decision. In the other three situations, the relationship was unclear. For example, one novice obviously had an excellent experience with his mentor, but his decision to stay at the school given the fact that his mentor was leaving the classroom and possibly the school, was hard to determine. For another novice who did not actually have the benefit of a committed full-time mentor, it was impossible to determine how she might have behaved had she been mentored. Finally, for another novice who appeared strongly engaged with her mentor, there were many other factors that seemed to be related to her decision to leave. From these findings I *made the complexity-based and*

pragmatic claim that the relationship of the mentor-novice dyad to retention was inconclusive.

I make this claim because my conceptual framework clarified for me the complexity involved in any person's decision-making process, and it helped me dispute my tendency to try to ascribe reasons for complex decisions. Although it is deeply embedded in our culture to look for the reasons something happened, complexity thinking challenges that thinking. Complexity thinking assumes the challenges related to trying to understand why someone made a certain decision. It recognizes that when a person reports why they did something, they themselves may not have been aware of all the factors involved. By noting emergent responses toward and away from commitment, I was better able to recognize those factors and see their dialectic nature. In addition, for each of the novices and mentors who left or stayed at the school, there could have been innumerable factors that may have contributed to their decisions, so that it was impossible to conclude that factors like having a mentor or resolving conflicts made a significant difference.

Although I could not conclude that novices and mentors remained committed to the profession or the school because they had a mentor who sponsored and protected them and helped them learn to resolve school conflicts, I believe my study did show that mentoring is *important* and that it was not the conflicts themselves, but it was the manner in which the mentor-novice dyads handled those conflicts that was important. I concluded, therefore, that even though I did not show a positive or negative relationship between mentoring and retention, my complexity-based and pragmatic theoretical

framework allowed me to claim the *importance* of mentoring to help the novices at Lincoln handle conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution.

Interestingly, although we approached the topic from different research lenses, my findings matched those of other researchers who reviewed the literature examining the relationship between mentoring and retention and determined that findings were inconclusive (e.g. Guarino et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2008). My study provided some insights regarding my research questions, but it also highlighted the limitations of any study to provide “the answer” to preventing teachers from leaving schools and the profession.

Limitations

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned three major limitations regarding the collection of complexity-based evidence. In addition to these limitations (artificially pausing systems that were naturally in motion, only talking to mentors and novices, and corrupting the system by becoming a part of it), I add other limitations. First, complexity-based evidence does not claim to be an accurate reflection of the nature of *all* mentor-novice dyads or of how *all* mentor-novice dyads might handle the conflicts they experience in their schools. Additionally, my study is small relative to the total number of schools and the total number of mentors and novices. It shares with other qualitative studies the affordances of describing, analyzing, and interpreting a limited number of research participants’ experiences, but it does not draw conclusions that might provide specific directions for how to plan a mentoring program or make decisions about implementing or improving a mentoring program. It certainly shows no scale statistical

findings about the connection between mentoring and retention as do the studies that Ingersoll and Strong, (2011) cited in their study of the effects of induction programs on mentoring. Therefore this study does not claim to be useful to reflect a specific relationship between mentoring and retention or specific solutions to conflicts that would match all high school settings for all mentor-novice relationships. In addition for the most part, although I requested to see two of the novices, the induction coordinator chose the dyads for me; therefore, she may have chosen research participants who she believed might reflect the school and the profession in a certain light. From my perspective, although some may view this factor as a significant limitation, I believe that since accuracy is not relevant when one is trying to understand complex systems, this limitation joins the many others that make it impossible to be positive and certain about any complex system. In other words, I acknowledge that researchers might only reach approximate understandings of complex systems.

Another limitation of my study was inherent in both qualitative studies and particularly in the narrative methodology I used. For example, even though I was not present when the events in participants' stories took place, I definitely had a large influence on the manner in which the story was told as it was (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993); therefore, some audiences may not believe that what I created was reflective of the participants and the research site. Even though I shared the stories with my participants for member-checking, some audiences may not feel confident that by creating stories from interviews I was capturing everything novices and mentors wanted to convey regarding the topic of mentoring and retention. As a relative newcomer

in the research arena, some audiences may not accept my stories as useful data, although there is precedent in the research literature (Hirsch Korn, 2009; Scherff, 2008; Semeniuk & Worrall, 2000).

Finally, my study intended to delve deeply into the lived and storied worlds of a small group of participants who functioned in a mentor-novice relationship, but what I gained in depth, I sacrificed in breadth. The most important result was that administrators, students, and other stakeholders who were mentioned in participants' stories had no voice. My assumption was that administrators, students, and other stakeholders were involved in other complex dyads or larger groups and that their ways of enacting the eight indicators of complex systems would also be unique. However, it could be interesting to think about how, for example, administrators functioned in relationship to the mentor-novice dancing couples. Would administrators act as band leaders or choreographers? Or would they become dancers with other administrators and be subjected to the same music and the same choreography experienced by the mentor-novice dyads?

The most regrettable result of not including other stakeholders was that my participants made negative remarks about some groups, especially administrators, and these groups had no ability to respond to those remarks with their own perspectives. In addition to this limitation and others related to a qualitative study of the lived worlds and storied worlds of participants, I also had some personal biases to admit.

Researcher Biases

My biases include the fact that I am generally in favor of schools providing mentors for novices; however, as a first year classroom teacher, my first mentor, who was also my department chair, betrayed me and hurt me deeply. Subsequent mentors were more helpful; however, based on my first mentor, I do not assume that just because a person is called a mentor that they actually serve that purpose. Based on my own experiences as teacher and trained mentor, I saw many conflicts that made the teaching profession particularly unpleasant for people like me. I always appreciated those veteran teachers in my early years of teaching who helped me understand and attempt to adjust to the school culture. I have also participated in expensive teacher support programs (i.e., academic facilitator and literacy coaching) that had mixed results. To me it makes sense to have a more experienced person help a less experienced one; however, I do not believe schools have to spend large amounts of money on training programs and full-time mentors. For me the more important consideration is that schools create learning environments for students and also for the adults who care for them. In this study, I tried to guard against being too sympathetic or too critical of people or incidents that I found in common with my experiences or biases by using a process of self-reflection, member checking, and outside evaluation. Using these processes helped me stay close to the data provided by my participants and to choose my words carefully when describing them.

Implications

This study has implications for various audiences including all levels of decision-making regarding mentoring and teacher retention. It also has implications for

practitioners, including mentors and novices, and it has implications for researchers studying mentoring. In looking at my findings through a pragmatic theoretical perspective, I have concluded that the most valuable information for all potential audiences for my research is the notion that they might use complexity-based evidence to *plan for complexity*.

Planning for complexity resonates with ideas from organizational theorist Ralph Stacy (1992) who applied the hard complexity science notion of dissipative structures (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984) to the dilemma many organizations confront in terms of attempting to know the unknowable. Stacy (1992) proposed thinking in terms of “both-and” rather than being bound by an “either-or” mentality (Stacy, 1992, p. 19). He also pointed out that healthy organizations tend to accept the paradox that formal structures and stable behaviors within the organization need to co-exist with informal structures and unstable types of management that are required if the organization is to effectively “cope with the unknowable” (Stacy, 1992, p. 8). Stacy also proposed that this uncertainty creates a great deal of tension, which the organization might learn to capture as a positive source for continuous improvement. Understanding how Stacy (1992) applied the dynamic of “both-and” helped me develop the concept of planning for complexity which seems to combine a formal or stable structural-functional concept (i.e., planning) with an informal or unstable complex one (i.e., complexity), which represents “both-and” to me.

What follows are my explanations of the implications of my study as they relate to three major audiences: decision-makers, practitioners, and researchers. In this explanation, I cite some relevant theoretical perspectives from the literature and

suggestions for how various audiences might implement those perspectives in ways that represent the notion of planning for complexity. Of note is that in many cases planning for complexity might be implemented through changes in attitudes about certainty and control rather than through specific actions. Also my suggestions do not assume universal applicability; therefore, in many cases I base my suggestions on what seemed to work or not work at my research site and what seemed to be pragmatic applications of my theoretical perspectives.

Implications for Decision-makers

My findings resonate with ideas from organizational researchers who have encouraged decision-makers to learn to become comfortable with the paradoxes and counterintuitive aspects inherent in complex systems. What follows are implications and suggestions regarding six important areas of concern for educators who are decision-makers: (1) comfort with uncertainty, (2) sustainable capacity-building, (3) complex structures, (4) space for emergence, (5) useful disturbances, and (6) importance of mentors.

Comfort with uncertainty. School decision-makers may need to become more accustomed to managing the unmanageable or unknowable (Stacy, 1992). According to organizational theorists who have applied complexity thinking to decision-making (Stacy, 1992, Wheatley, 2006), and according to my findings, the most flexible decision-makers instead of stating that they are *going* to do something say instead that they *plan* to do something. By saying that they *plan* to do something rather than assuming that what they have planned is going to happen, they leave themselves open to the probability that other

people and other forces may also have plans that could have an impact on *their* plans. Taking this kind of stance could increase their acceptance of uncertainty (Stacy, 1992), which might allow them to accept responses from others that are even better than they could have imagined (Wheatley, 2006).

Suggestion 1. Educators who plan for complexity as they address mentoring policies and programs might evaluate their attitudes about control and certainty. For example, they may notice or ask an outside evaluator to help them determine if they have invited sufficient decision-making participation from those who are most affected by a mentoring program or policy. By inviting participation, they may avoid making unilateral decisions. They also accept that sometimes the results generated by a group of stakeholders could be what they expected, better than they expected, or unfortunately worse than expected; nevertheless, accepting these possibilities could actually inspire more useful plans.

Sustainable capacity building. In addition to developing the ability to be open to emergence and comfortable with uncertainty, my study aligns with Mitchell and Sackney (2009) who also validated the importance of sustainable capacity-building. For example, from their perspective, sustainable capacity-building practices that improved schools appeared to be decentralized and emergent from participation in collegial dynamics, collaborative cultures, and shared understandings. The issue of sustainable capacity-building, therefore, is also an important aspect of planning for complexity.

Suggestion 2. Educators who are interested in planning sustainable school improvement that recognizes complexity might develop plans that provide support for the

implementation of ecologically-based capacity-building concepts such as the following:

(a) collegial dynamics in which, for example, decision makers demonstrate clearly that they welcome dissenting ideas from mentors and novice. They might demonstrate this stance by endorsing a school culture that includes time and space for dyads to participate in authentic professional dialogues. These dialogues might include mentors and novices acknowledging the importance of each other's practices, advocating ideas to each other, inquiring about each other's practices, and inviting participation from diverse groups of people including administrators, parents, and students. (b) Collaborative cultures in which decision-makers schedule time and make space for mentors and novices to share resources, ideas, and skills with each other and with other school stakeholders in a spirit of mutuality. And (c) shared understandings in which decision-makers create opportunities during the school day or within special allotted times for teachers and other stakeholders to discover and acknowledge their mutual beliefs about learning.

Suggestion 3. Decision-makers could also evaluate any proposed mentoring program or strategy that might appear useful by its capacity to be sustained in the setting or settings in which it might be implemented. For example, they might determine if a mentoring initiative was useful in the setting in which it was implemented. If not, they might work with stakeholders to create an alternative mentoring program for that setting that better captures the intent of the program and the intentions of those implementing it in their setting.

Complex Structures. Educators who accept complexity theory acknowledge that from the individual to the largest systems imaginable, eight indicators as proposed by

Davis and Sumara (2006) are useful in describing the nature of complex systems. Understanding the coexistence of a specific structure with unique implementation is critical to planning for complexity.

Suggestion 4. Educators who plan for complexity might develop general guidelines for a mentoring program that could be useful to all schools, but they might encourage these guidelines to be operationalized so that they are responsive to and reflective of the specific needs of each mentor and novice. For example, decision-makers might require schools to assign an accessible mentor to each novice in the school and they could also require proof that school leaders have provided opportunities for mentors and novices to meet. However, they could allow novices and mentors to develop other mentoring or coaching relationships that might be more responsive to their needs, and they could resist telling mentors what to discuss when they meet.

Space for Emergence. An aspect of complex systems is their ability to self-organize for emergence so that they build capacity/learn (Davis & Sumara, 2006). Decision-makers who implement this theory may learn to resist the need to tightly control the efficiency of their employees so that by releasing that control, their employees might respond efficiently and even creatively to the conflicts they encounter (Wheatley, 2006). Organizational theorists have applied this theory by recognizing the importance of decision makers structuring unstructured spaces that allow the emergence of creative responses to conflicts (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Waterman, 1987; Weick, 1976).

Suggestion 5. Educators who recognize that mentor-novice dyads are complex systems that self-organize in order to create solutions to conflict, might plan structures

such as the following: (a) formal mentor-novice assignments, (b) accessibility between mentors and novices, (c) some kind of proof that mentors and novices are actually working together, and (d) a safe place for resolving mentor-novice conflicts. Within these structures, both mentors and novices might be afforded the opportunity to look for what is emerging from their relationship and if they experience conflicts they feel they need to address, they might have opportunities to use invitation and inquiry within authentic professional dialogues to better understand what is occurring as a problem for those involved.

Useful Disturbances. Finally, decision makers may challenge the idea that they can motivate employees' growth and development. Therefore, instead of thinking in terms of what they might do to motivate those employees; they might focus on how they might create triggers that disturb them. In creating these triggers, they should also acknowledge that their employees will decide how they will respond and understand that their responses may be unpredictable (Capra, 2002). For example, employees may not welcome the decisions made by school leaders. If decision-makers become defensive when they learn that a decision they made or implemented is unwelcome, they could shut down the kinds of authentic professional dialogues that have the potential to resolve the conflict that might emerge from an unwelcome disturbance (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009).

Suggestion 6. Educators who understand that they cannot motivate their employees but can only disturb them, might avoid defensiveness or denial when the disturbance they plan, for example, a training day on complexity thinking, is unwelcomed by their employees. They might also create welcome triggers, such as a free day to plan

with team members, by understanding the nature of complex systems and by using collegial dynamics, collaborative cultures, and shared understandings to better understand the kinds of disturbances that their employees might welcome and that might inspire them. They might also realize that although disturbances may not be welcomed by everyone, they may be what the school needed to help it improve.

Importance of mentors. Decision makers may find it useful that in terms of the relationship between mentoring and retention, my findings matched other research showing that the connection between mentoring and retention was inconclusive (Guarino et al., 2006; Waterman & He, 2011). Decision makers might consider that connecting mentoring and retention may not be possible because of the complex nature of the social systems involved in both mentoring and retention. For example, in another research language one might say that it could be impossible to control enough of the variables to make the findings from studies of mentoring and retention valid and generalizable.

Although in my findings it appeared that the relationship between mentoring and retention was inconclusive, the story of Mr. Cook demonstrates the power of *one* example to show the importance of a mentor. Mr. Cook was, according to his mentor, one of the most talented and valuable novices she had encountered in her career. He was personable, flexible, creative, intelligent, and caring, His results with his students showed that he was a perfect person to teach at a school like Lincoln. Unfortunately, when he got behind in his paperwork, Mr. Cook typed his resignation and was planning to quit the school *and* the teaching profession. Mr. Cook claimed that had it not been for the direct intervention of his mentor, he may have delivered his resignation that day. Mr. Cook

eventually figured out how to deal with the paperwork, but without his mentor, he may not have stuck around to find out what to do, and it would have been a significant loss for the school had he left.

Mr. Cook's story makes the point that regardless of the inability to draw conclusive evidence that mentoring works to retain all or even the majority of novices in a specific school setting, sometimes mentors can play an important role in keeping some of them. Similar to the story about the starfish on the beach; although all of the starfish could not be saved, it mattered to the ones that were (Eisely, 1969). Mentors also provided other services not related to retention that might encourage decision-makers to continue providing them for novices. For example, mentors helped administrators at Lincoln cultivate valuable novices and helped to translate the school culture to them, and some of them developed strong connections to the goals of the school.

Suggestion 7. Educators who plan for complexity realize that it may not be possible to find a conclusive connection between mentoring and retention; nevertheless, they should consider the importance of mentors, and they might form a closer bond with those mentors who they believe understand the school culture and whom they trust to convey the values of that culture to novices. Through this bond, decision makers might learn more about how they might plan to keep valuable novices, how to plan to support those who are struggling but who might eventually become successful faculty members, and how to plan to counsel those who seem misplaced to possibly seek another school setting or leave the profession all together.

Implications for Practitioners

My study also has implications for practitioners who might plan for complexity. Based on the theoretical perspectives explained in the previous section and combining those with findings from my study, I make some suggestions for both mentors and novices regarding the following: (a) mentor identity, (b) flexibility, (c) redundancy and diversity, (d) decentralized decisions, and (e) sustainable capacity-building.

Mentor identity. The research and practitioner literature provides many descriptions of the mentoring role and how to become an excellent mentor (e.g., Clutterbuck, 1998); however my study recognized that mentor-novice dyads create their own unique identities and functions based on larger and smaller local complex systems (e.g., school culture and personal systems).

Suggestion 8. Mentors and novices who plan for complexity understand the special nature of their relationship and that the interactions of their personal systems with the larger systems are shaped by and help to shape that relationship. They might evaluate their unique mentor-novice relationship based on its ability to meet their personal needs. If they realize the assigned person with whom they are working is not matching their understanding of the mentor-novice relationship, they might find their own mentor-novice relationship.

Flexibility. Although all complex systems are closed and have a specific identity, they are also open, unstable, and ambiguously bounded so that they stay flexible and adaptive to the variety of disturbances they might experience in their unique context or within their system (Davis & Sumara, 2006). My participants reported many instances

when their unstable and ambiguously bounded natures helped them deal with conflicts novices encountered in their schools.

Suggestion 9. Mentors and novices who plan for complexity understand that as an open system they must be constantly adapting and changing and receiving internal and external disturbances that are welcomed and unwelcomed. In other words, they maintain a high level of flexibility or they do not exist as a complex dyad. Therefore, when mentor-novice dyads cease to be flexible, mentors and/or novices might look for someone else who will be flexible in order to adapt to internal and external challenges.

Redundancy and diversity. Kalin et al. (2010) highlighted the importance of redundancy and diversity in the development of the kind of mutuality they claimed was important for the development of useful mentor-novice relationships. My findings validated their claim.

Suggestion 10. Mentors and novices might make opportunities to cultivate the ability to capitalize on the benefits of their redundancy and diversity, which could help them avoid a hierarchical relationships in favor of those based in mutuality. For example, mentors and novices could learn that although they may have differences, they both have equally valuable assets to bring to their relationship. Believing that they have equally valuable knowledge and skills could help them to better do their jobs.

Decentralized decisions. According to Davis and Sumara (2006), the decentralized nature of complex systems is one of their most salient features. My findings demonstrated that even though my participants demonstrated some level of compliance with centrally generated policies, they adjusted their compliance based on a shared

understanding of what worked best for them as individuals, and what worked best in their unique school setting. Although mentors and novices in my study realized they could lose their jobs if they failed to comply with mandates imposed from a central location, they also realized that at times centrally determined policies were incompatible with local systems.

Suggestion 11. Mentors and novices might learn how to use authentic professional dialogue to resolve conflicts that might arise from centrally generated policies and programs. Through these dialogues they might learn to avoid frustrating themselves by responding to central decisions by doing their best in the spirit of the policy, but by also acknowledging how their unique setting may limit that implementation. They might also respectfully provide information about the challenges they faced regarding centralized policies if they believe decision-makers might be open to hearing from them.

Sustainable capacity-building. As with administrators, mentors and novices should also practice collegial dynamics, collaborative cultures and shared understandings if they want to improve their school in sustainable ways (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009). Of importance and imbedded in the ideas from Mitchell & Sackney (2009) are the beliefs that all of the stakeholders are doing the best they can with what they have, so that it is important that mentors and novices avoid approaching a situation from a deficit perspective (Gold, 1996) or questioning another's competence (Semenuk & Worrall, 2000).

Suggestion 12. Mentors and novices might personally evaluate their responses to conflict based on their abilities to implement collegial dynamics, collaborative cultures, and shared understandings. For example, they might determine if they are personally committed to doing what they need to do to address the tough issues at their school. They might assess their willingness to collaborate with others including their mentor or novice. And they might carefully assess how well their own beliefs align with the major beliefs of their mentor or novice and those beliefs that are dominant at the school. Finally, they might determine if they can honestly say they do not question the competence of their mentor or novice. If they cannot honestly say this, they should find someone else whose competence they do not question.

Implications for Researchers

My study may also offer ideas for researchers studying mentoring and retention. Based on the theoretical perspectives and findings from my study, I provide some insights about how my study may provide examples of the following: (1) an alternative to quantitative studies, (2) an application Deweyan pragmatism in alignment with narrative inquiry, and (4) an application of complexity thinking.

Alternative to quantitative studies. In this study, I have shown how researchers can generate useful knowledge about mentoring and retention without conducting experiments or comparison studies with large numbers of participants. For example, literature reviews of large quantitative studies addressing the effects of mentoring on retention have shown that the connection is inconclusive (Wang et al., 2008). Interestingly, findings from my small study qualitative matched those of much larger

quantitative ones (Kapadia et al., 2007; Rockoff, 2008). For example, Kapadia et al. (2007) found that even though mentoring predicted novices' intentions to stay in the profession, it showed no effect in the larger context of the school's induction program. Rockoff (2008) also found a weak connection between mentoring and retention and cautioned decision makers against relying on comparison studies of novices who had mentors and those who did not. He made this claim primarily because he concluded that it was unlikely that researchers could gather useful data about the motivations teachers might have for working with a mentor or not.

Researchers might also view my study as an alternative to quantitative studies because it shows how researchers might use power statistics (Davis & Sumara, 2006) as an alternative to scale statistics to explore a complex system. For example, the story about how Mr. Cook's mentor helped him decide not to resign from Lincoln is an example of the power of one incident to appear to make a large difference in the lives of the mentor-novice dyad and the lives of the many students and colleagues with whom they interacted. This one event may have disappeared had it occurred in a study that only found relevant those data that showed comparisons, commonalities, or correlation; however in a study that acknowledges the power of narrative, Mr. Cook's story may offer useful information for decision makers (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Suggestion 13. Recognizing that focusing on understanding the connection between mentoring and retention through quantitative methodologies may not be useful; therefore, researchers might turn their attentions toward alternative ways to better understand qualitative effects of mentoring.

Deweyan pragmatism in alignment with narrative inquiry. I have also shown how researchers might use Deweyan pragmatism, which aligns with narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), in order to legitimize the storied experiences of a small sample of mentors and novices. Using narrative methodology allowed me to amplify the voices of mentors and novices at a high school struggling with teacher turnover. Through crafting stories from their interviews, I was able to describe a typical complex urban school setting that also had its own unique situations. Throughout this process I was mindful that the purpose of understanding the mentor-novice dyad was necessary in order to provide information that could be useful to educators. My study joined only three other narrative studies that addressed both teacher retention and mentoring; therefore, it is obvious that this methodology is rarely used to explore mentoring and retention.

Suggestion 14. Based the various rationales provided for using narrative inquiry in this study and my extensive exploration of the legitimacy of narrative as a useful methodology for understanding complex systems like mentoring and its relationship with retention, I recommend that more researchers use narrative to understand mentoring *and* retention.

Application of complexity thinking. Planning for complexity in terms of designing a study of mentoring and retention included finding participants at a specific research site and applying information from their stories to the eight indicators of complex systems (Davis & Sumara, 2006). It also included allowing categories to emerge from my participants' stories which aligned with some of my pre-conceived notions of conflict but also went beyond those notions. Planning for complexity as a researcher also

helped me understand the nature of mentor-novice dyads and how they used ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building (Mitchell & Sackney, 2009). Most importantly, my conceptual framework provided a useful vehicle for discussing school conflicts and mentor-novice emergent responses related to novice retention. Because I did not categorize triggers as positive or negative, and because I only noted the movement of novices toward or away from commitment, I was able to avoid indicating causality. In other words, by showing direction instead of assuming the cause of an end result, I was able to show how emergent responses to conflict made it unclear how a novice might decide to stay in or leave a school or the profession. Finally, planning for complexity allowed me to feel comfortable with establishing importance without needing to establish effects. In other words, I was not concerned with counting how often events occurred in order to establish patterns, and I recognized that a single event, like Mrs. Stewart's observation by her mentor and a district coach, could have important consequences, like Mrs. Stewart's "melt down."

Suggestion 15. Researchers who study complex systems might also use ideas from Davis and Sumara (2006) and Mitchell and Sackney (2009) to help them better describe, analyze, and interpret complex systems like mentoring.

Ideas for Further Study

Ideas for further study include widening the scope of the study in order to gather stories from other stakeholders (e.g., administrators and students) about how mentors and novices function in their schools. By doing this I could discover different perspectives about the conflicts mentor-novice dyads experience and how they handled them. In

addition, it might be helpful to widen the scope even more to include the context beyond the school or beyond the district in which mentor novice dyads are nested.

Another idea is to conduct a similar study across different types of high schools or in middle or elementary schools to observe how mentor-novice dyads enact the eight indicators of complex systems and ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building to deal with their specific school conflicts and barriers to conflict resolution. It was interesting to me that the teachers in my study rarely complained about conflicts with parents, and I would be curious to find if this occurs in other types of schools.

Finally, it might also be useful to examine the stories my participants told through another research lens to discover what might emerge. For example, I would be interested to see what other qualitative lenses, like ethnography or case study, might conclude from these stories, and I would be interested if these stories might be used to develop quantitative or mixed methods studies that recognize complexity. It might also be interesting to use the data from my interviews without creating stories from them to determine if similar conclusions would emerge.

Conclusions

This study provided an example of educational research that applied complexity thinking, ecologically-based sustainable capacity building, narrative inquiry, and pragmatism to questions about mentoring, conflict, and retention. Although it provided some increased understanding regarding the nature of the mentor-novice dyad and some ideas about how dyads used ecologically-based sustainable capacity-building, it also demonstrated the importance of resisting the deeply embedded desire to be able to

understand everything in order to control it. My study showed that regardless of all the layers of control imposed upon an urban high school with a history of teacher turnover, there was little ability to control the constant flow of teachers out of the school simply by providing mentors for novice teachers. Despite the leaderships' best efforts to choose teachers who seemed to fit the needs of the school and despite their provision of mentors, coaches, district support, and comprehensive guidelines for how to convey the state curriculum to students, novice teachers continued to leave. My study offers alternatives to the idea that school leaders can get the results they seek through increasing hierarchy and control and that it may be time to apply some new thinking to the problem of teacher turnover by taking a complexity-based perspective.

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APPENDIX A

8 INDICATORS OF COMPLEX SYSTEMS

Indicator 1: Complex systems are “nested structures” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5), meaning they can include or be included in other complex unities. From the manner in which they relate, new structures and actions can emerge. For example, the mentor-novice dancing couple is a complex unity within a network of other dancers and musicians who are also complex unities. They are separate unities, but because they are nested they maintain their identities as individuals within the couple, and they maintain their identities as a dancing couple within the dance party even though they are inseparable parts of those systems and are constantly exchanging information with them. The manner in which they interact may create new patterns and behaviors for the mentor and novice dancing couple and for the entire dance party. Figure 1 shows a nested (interactive) network that demonstrates the nature of complex systems ranging from the individual levels (including biochemical and brain functioning) to the biosphere which includes the planets and the universe.

Indicator 2: Complex systems are “self-organized” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5), which means they come about in a spontaneous manner from the actions of autonomous entities that become linked with each other and co-depend on each other. The scientific explanation for this process is called *autopoiesis*. Using the idea of the mentor-novice dancing couple is the best way to conceptualize “*autopoiesis*,” which describes the interdependence of the parts of a complex system (Maturana & Varela, 1987, p. 11).

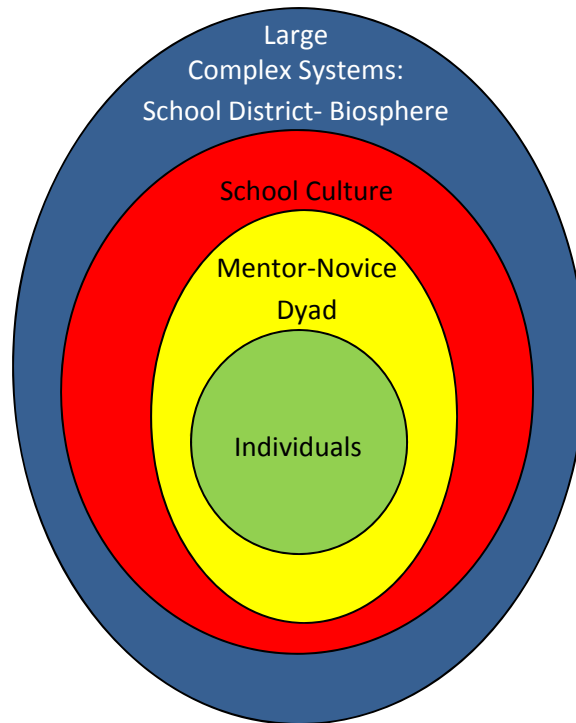


Figure 1. *Nested Complex Systems*

Autopoiesis assumes that someone or something might disturb the interacting parts of a complex system, but no one or nothing can direct the manner in which those interacting parts will respond to that disturbance. For example, mentors and novices function interdependently or co-dependently as they respond to disturbances within their dyad and from the context in which they are working. Therefore, even though decision makers cannot direct how the mentor-novice dyad functions, they might disturb it, but they cannot determine how that dyad will react to the disturbance. They are also “bottom up emergent,” which means that the properties they “manifest” through uniting are greater than the summation of their individual capacities, and they do not depend upon an overarching or centralized organizer (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5). For example, the dance created by the mentor and novice exceeds what the dancers might accomplish

individually and their dance does not depend on a centralized control system. Figure 2 shows self-organized and bottom-up emergent mentor and novice dyad that become something different from what might occur at the level of the individual and could exceed what might be accomplished individually.

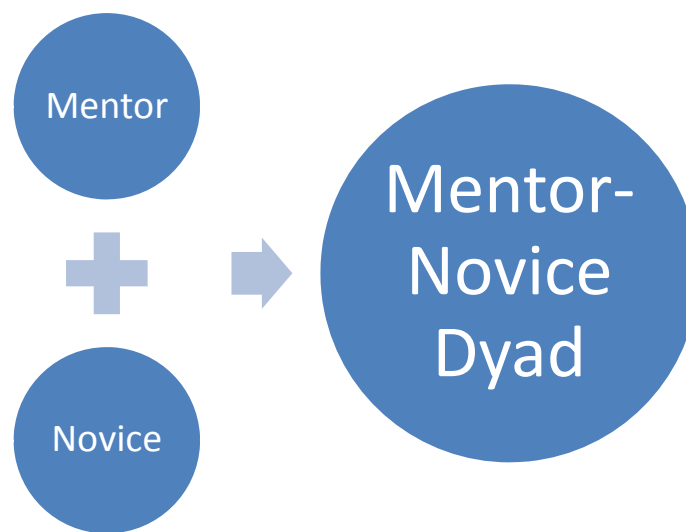


Figure 2. *Self-Organized/Bottom-up Emergent Mentor-Novice Dyad*

Indicator 3: Complex systems exchange information through “short-range relationships” because they communicate mostly with aspects of the system that are nearby (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5). This means that the system’s coherence is with the parts to which it is closest rather than to a centralized hierarchy. For example, the dancers represent a short range relationship because they are close together and are immediately interdependent. They can exchange information about the structure of their dance and how their movements cohere with it without depending on information from someone like the person who is directing the music to which they are dancing. This ability to exchange information without dependence on a centralized structure makes their dance more

“efficient and robust” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5). Figure 3 shows mentors and novices are close and can exchange information without depending on direction from school leadership. Short-range relationships look like this: Notice the interacting arrows between the mentor and novice are short and the arrows between the school culture/leadership are longer and communicate primarily with the dyad rather than with individuals because regardless of school culture/leadership the dyad will make its own decisions about how to and solve its own problems.

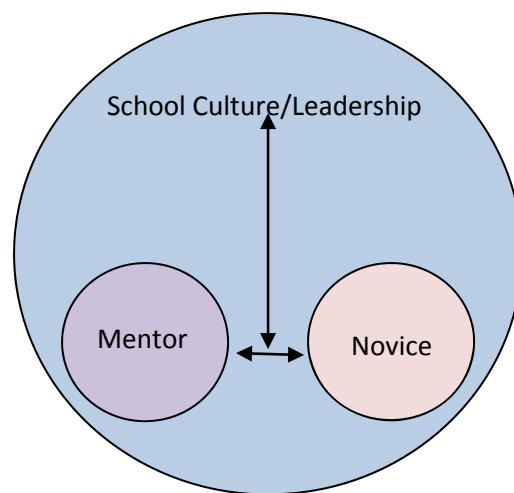


Figure 3. *Short-Range Relationships*

Indicator 4: Complex systems are “organizationally closed” because they are “inherently stable” regardless of exchanges of matter and energy with their surroundings (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5). For example, the mentor-novice dancers maintain their identity as a mentor-novice couple even if they are affected by their surroundings. And if for some reason they decide together or one of them decides to stop their dancing, they would no longer exist as a mentor-novice dancing complex unity (see Figure 6).

Indicator 5 Complex systems are “unstable” and “exist far from equilibrium,” which means they do not “operate in balance,” and they are in constant motion or they will die (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 6). For example, if the mentor-novice dancing couple stops dancing, they no longer exist as a mentor-novice dancing couple, they become something else—two separate people who may be standing together but functioning separately.

Figure 4 shows the movement toward capacity for complex systems that are decentralized, redundant, and diverse, and shows how the system is continually moving (far from equilibrium) or it ceases to exist. It also is organizationally closed in order to maintain its identity.

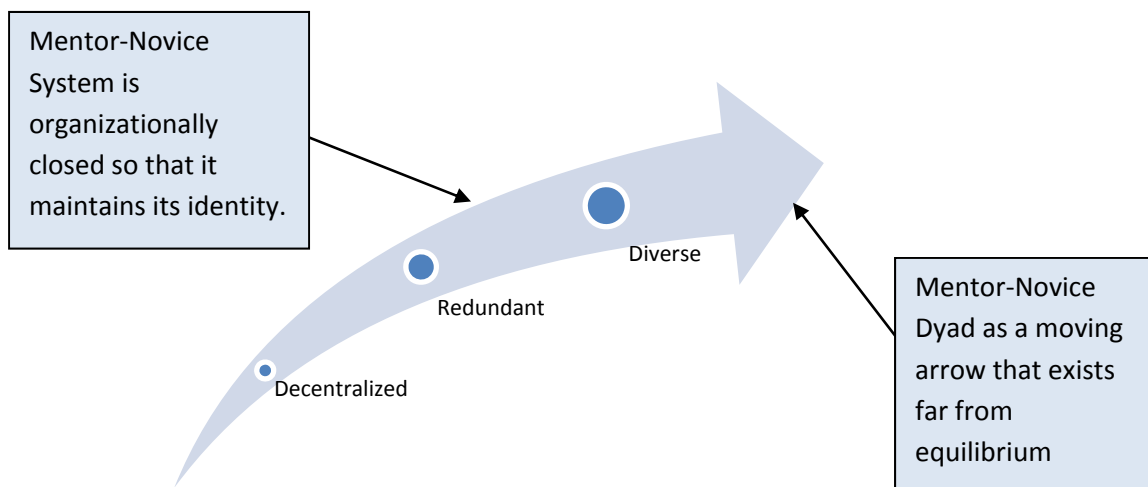


Figure 4. *Unstable*

Indicator 6: Complex systems structure themselves and are “decentralized” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 48) or “scale free” networks (Davis & Sumara, p. 5), which means they may change their own structures as they adapt to thrive and survive in their surroundings. Scale-free means that they are based on power law of distribution rather than the bell-

curve expression of normal distribution. Being scale free means that it can be more useful to pay attention to salience and powerful events than collecting and averaging the frequency of those events. Complex systems can evolve, become flexible, learn, and build capacity. The most robust and efficient structures are decentralized. The three most common methods of structuring systems or networks are centralized, decentralized, and distributed. The centralized network is highly efficient, but lacks robustness because the parts (or nodes) of the structure rely on the center as the decision maker and source of important knowledge, so that the whole system shuts down if something happens to that center. Distributed control can be highly robust because decision-making and knowledge occur throughout the structure, but the system is less efficient because multiple nodes within the network must agree in order to move forward. Because the dancing couple is scale-free, noting a major change in the dancing could be more useful to note than the number of times the dancers move a certain way. It also shows that these nested systems are scale-free in terms of the meaningfulness of the manner in which data is phenomena are distributed. Understanding and generating knowledge about complex systems engages the power law distribution, which means that there are higher numbers of less important events and a smaller number of more important ones (Davis & Sumara). Figure 5 shows a nested, decentralized or scale free networks in which the distribution of phenomena does not rely on the magnitude of events to control significance. Scale free networks recognize the power of numerous small events and infrequent large events and do not suggest the salience of one over the other. These networks function in time scales that range from seconds to eons of time, and they are constantly in motion.

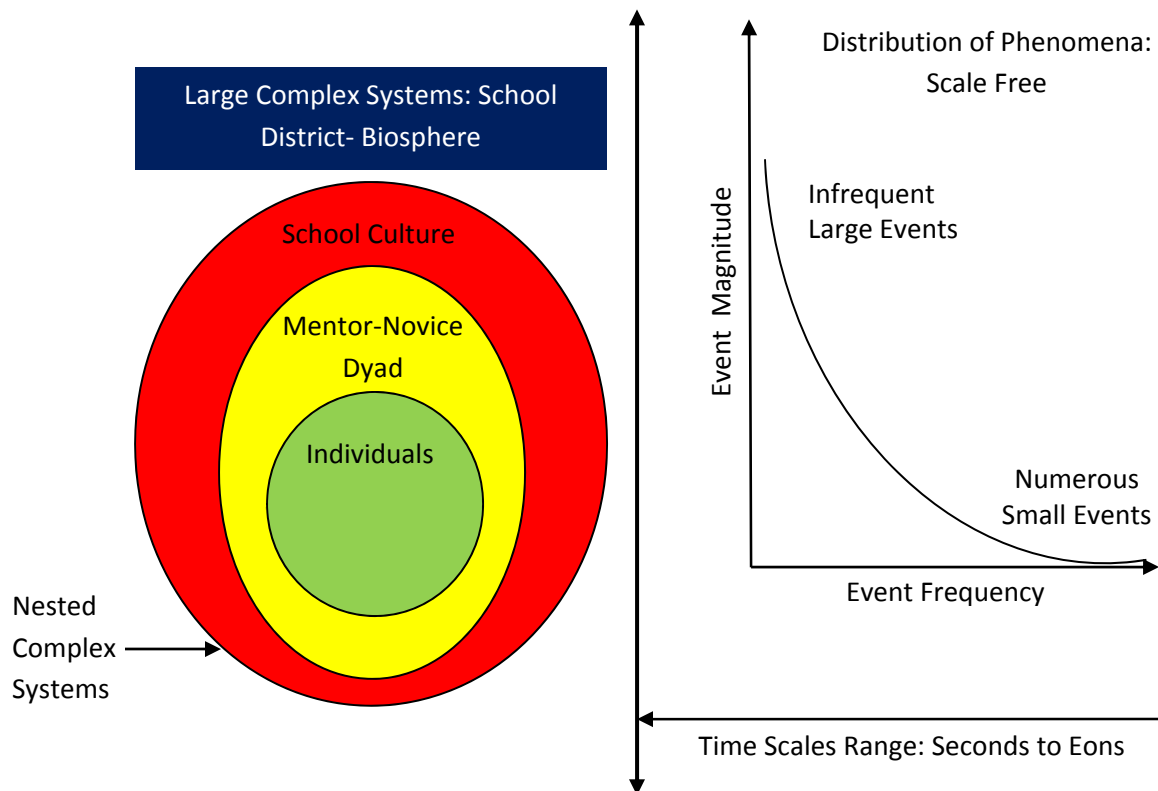


Figure 5. *Decentralized or Scale Free Networks*

Indicator 7: Complex systems are “structure determined” (Davis & Sumara, p. 6), which means they can change their own structure in order to learn. Within this structure, they employ a balance of redundancy and diversity. Redundancy is the ways in which parts of the system are the same; and diversity is the ways they differ in order to build capacity and to survive (Davis & Sumara, 2006). For example, robust and efficient mentor-novice dancers decide for themselves how to adjust the way they dance together, and they can build on what they have learned though dancing together in their surroundings. In my study, I will focus heavily on this feature because it provides the rationale for describing how the mentor-novice relationship might evolve, become flexible, learn, and build capacity to deal with school conflicts or how it does not do those things (see Figure 6).

Indicator 8: Complex unities are “ambiguously bounded” because their edges are open to constant exchanges of “matter and energy with their surroundings” (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 5). These exchanges, which we might also call disturbances, can trigger responses from the complex unity. The scientific explanation for this indicator is called “*dissipative structures*” (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984, p. 12) that are closed and stable, but also open and unstable at the same time. These structures are under constant pressure to change and various shifts in energy can trigger the structure of the system to branch in new directions to form new ways of being. Within the mentor-novice dyad, a conflict can occur that triggers the relationship to branch toward greater intimacy or away from it. For example, the mentor-novice dancing couple continuously responds to each other and to the surroundings in the ballroom, such as other dancers and the music to which they are dancing. Figure 6 shows ambiguously bounded mentor-novice system nested within the surrounding complex systems and encompassing the personal complex system. The boundaries around the mentor-novice dyad are represented by the blue arrows that represent movement, are permeable, and allow welcomed and unwelcomed disturbances from all of the complex systems surrounding the dyad and within it. The inner circle, which also has permeable boundaries that move, represents the personal systems of the mentor and novice which can also disturb each other. These systems, represented by matter and energy, enter through the permeable edges of all of the complex systems and can trigger responses from them. Notice that disturbance can go both ways from each of the nested complex systems. Unlike the notion of cause and effect, the system decides its

response rather than a cause determining a certain effect, and thus makes the response unpredictable.

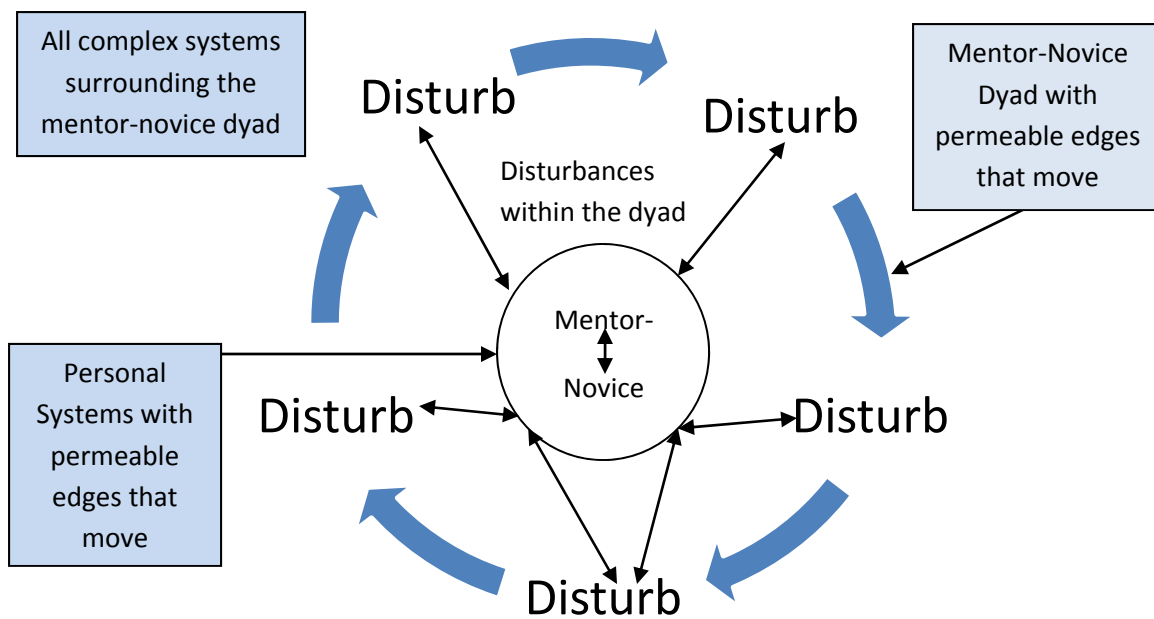


Figure 6. *Ambiguously Bounded but Organizationally Closed System*

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Interview #1 Protocol: Focused Life History (Mentor—Individual)

Name

Date

School

Tell me the story of how you became a teacher.

Tell me the story of how you decided to become a mentor.

What are some examples of what it is like to be a mentor in this school system?

What are some examples of how you helped your novice teacher deal with school conflicts?

How do you think your novice might describe the ways in which you helped him or her with school conflicts?

Interview #2 Protocol: Details of the Experience (Dyad)

Name

Date

School

(To the dyad) Tell me the story of how you met each other.

(To the novice) What do you think _____ (the mentor) would say are the most significant conflicts you addressed as a new teacher? Please give specific examples.

(To the mentor) What do you think _____ (the novice) would say are the most important ways you helped him/her address conflicts?

(To the mentor) Tell me the story of one of the most challenging conflicts you have seen _____ (the novice) handle? Other conflicts?

(To the novice) Tell me the story of how _____ (the mentor) has helped you with conflicts you have experienced? Others?

(To the dyad) Tell me the story of how you worked together to address conflicts and challenges.

Interview #1 Protocol: Focused Life History (Novice—Individual)

Name

Date

School

Tell me the story of how you decided to become a teacher.

What are some examples of what is it like to be a new teacher in this school system?

What are some examples of the ways your mentor helped you deal with school conflicts?

How do you think your mentor might describe the ways in which he or she helped you with school conflicts?

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

Although I wrote stories from all of my interviews with participants, I have only included in this Appendix the stories I referenced.

“Mentor of the Year,” by Mrs. Truitt

Mr. Hansen had nominated Mrs. Truitt “for mentor of the year” and both of them had been busy writing essays about her role as a mentor and what she had meant to Mr. Hansen as a new teacher. Mrs. Truitt was “impressed” that Mr. Hansen had taken the time and effort to nominate her; however she did not feel that she met with him as much as she should have.

The prompt for the essay she had to write asked if “time constraints” had been “an issue,” and if so how they overcame them. Mrs. Truitt replied that the “number of contact hours were not important “as long as the mentees felt like they had “someone to go to when a problem” occurred, and they had “somebody” they could “trust.” To Mrs. Truitt that was the “big issue with the mentor.” It was not that she sat down with her mentee “for an hour every other Thursday.” It was the fact that her mentee knew that if he needed anything, he knew he could “absolutely come to” her. The mentee could sit and talk to the mentor “for four hours and not make a difference, but if he [had] a problem” and the mentor went up to administration and addressed it, that was “more powerful.”

Completing the application for “Mentor of the Year” prompted Mrs. Truitt go back to “examine and reassess” the year, which for her had been “big.” She realized she

felt “bad” for their “first year teachers if they did not come into teaching with “enough confidence” to make it. She recalled one first year teacher who “wrote an email to the entire staff asking for help.” He asked for help, and no one was willing to help him. Mrs. Truitt believed that by sending out the email he had “laid all his cards out on the table” and “the minute” he did that he gave himself away. Mrs. Truitt felt sorry for the teacher but realized he should not have sent out a plea to the “entire staff.” “The feedback he got was so negative, that he did not make it through the “whole year.”

If Mrs. Truitt had an issue or a really bad day, she knew who to go to. She would not have “send an email to the whole staff.” She would go to Mr. Randall (pseudonym) or Mrs. Price (pseudonym) “around the corner,” or she would go to “someone” she could “talk to and trust.” At Lincoln if you showed “all your cards,” you showed all your weaknesses and because “test scores were so highly” important, when it came to test scores, new teachers had “to be able to sink or swim.” They had to pick for the following: I’m going to sink or I’m going to swim. I’m going to be here next year or I’m not.” Even though new teachers had a large number of local and regional support staff including a mentor, coaches, curriculum facilitators, and assistant principals; Mrs. Truitt believed that there was “a level of support” that their first year teachers were not getting, and she wished that they did.

Mr. Hansen had been fortunate to get a level of support that had helped him make it through his first year and he had acknowledged the importance of that support by nominating Mrs. Truitt as “Mentor of the Year.”

“The One Who Didn’t Make It,” by Mrs. Herman

Mrs. Herman had not had many mentees who “hadn’t made it” because Dr. Collins (pseudonym), a professor at a college that often placed student teachers at Lincoln, had “always sent [her] student teachers who were “passionate about what they were doing” That was one of Dr. Collins’ “talents; pairing teachers and interns together” who then became “student teachers.” Most of Mrs. Herman’s student teachers were still at Lincoln, and two had moved to other counties, but one did not make it.

When Mr. Cain was an intern, he worked “*diligently*” with Mrs. Herman. He was a “very personable young man” who was willing to help the students. He would do whatever Mrs. Herman “asked him to do,” but one day, he came to Mrs. Herman and said, “I stepped back and I looked at other teachers’ classes. And [no] they’re not going to treat me like that.” Mr. Cain said if students treated him like they treated other teachers, the police might have to lock him up.

Mrs. Herman told Mr. Cain, “You have to be willing to develop a rapport with the students.”

Mr. Cain said, “I don’t like them that way. I don’t want rapport.”

Mrs. Herman said, “Well you know yourself and how much you’re willing to take.”

Mr. Cain said, “My tolerance is not there. I don’t like teaching like that. I don’t have the personality for it. I’m not going to devote this kind of time to it so I’m going to switch my [college] plan. . . . Whatever money they have given me, I’ll just pay it back. I would rather do that because I am *not* going to [become a teacher.]”

Mr. Cain back home and got a “very well paying job” with “corporate America.” “At least he realized early” that he did not want to continue studying to become a teacher.

Mrs. Herman saw “a value in . . . internship that allowed [college] students to see the real world of teaching that” they could not get in a college classroom. She believed, “That is something you cannot teach—the teacher how to teach. A teacher has to have the desire, number one and be willing to put in the effort to develop that. It’s not really a talent, but you have to have chemistry with the kids. You have to already possess the chemistry to be a people person.”

Mrs. Herman thought Mr. Cain made a wise decision, but he was “the only one” of her interns who “did not make it to the student teaching part. Those that made it to student teaching” made Mrs. Herman “the happiest little fish in the pond.” She loved their enthusiasm and “creativity.” This school year, Mrs. Herman was formally assigned as the mentor for two first year teachers: Mrs. Stewart (pseudonym) and Mrs. Etheridge (pseudonym); she mentored Mr. Cook (pseudonym) informally. Mr. Cook’s official mentor was Ms. Boone (pseudonym) because they taught the same grade level, but when he needed support and ideas, he came to Mrs. Herman. He was her student teacher and she was also a content coach for her department. Mrs. Herman admired Mr. Cook and he admired her. Mrs. Herman was hoping for the kids’ sake that Mr. Cook would make it as a teacher, but she understood that sometimes despite all the positive indicators, some novices, like Mr. Cain, ended up *not* choosing the teaching profession.

“On the Bus,” by Mr. Hansen

Mr. Hansen first met Mrs. Truitt (pseudonym), his mentor, “the week before class started. All of the Lincoln mentors and mentees came to the school for a meeting. They introduced themselves and went on a bus tour of the community . . . to see where the kids were coming from.” Mr. Hansen and Mrs. Truitt “sat together on the bus. She [gave him] a crash course in what [he] needed to know about what [he was] getting into.”

Mr. Hansen liked college, but he said, “You don’t learn anything at school . . . until you get in here and really experience it.” Mr. Hansen had gone to a “predominantly white” college in a small community. His high school had a racial mix of 60-40. 60 % white and 40% black, and he did not consider it to be “that diverse.” He believed that education programs could not give pre-service teachers experiences that were enough like real teaching to help them learn how to “deal with” all kinds issues; it was just “impossible.” Mr. Hansen believed “a lot of the situations” presented in college classes were “a lot different from” the situation at Lincoln. Other schools in the county were “predominantly white country schools,” which were not at all like Lincoln.

Before Mr. Hansen came to work at Lincoln, he had some experience with its students because he played basketball in the same basketball conference. He knew what the kids were like and their reputation did not scare him. His own experiences and being on the bus with Mrs. Truitt helped him know what he was getting into, but that did not mean he was prepared for what he had to learn his first semester. Mr. Hansen considered himself lucky that he had “the right person, [Mrs. Truitt] in his ear telling” him what he need[ed] to do and what to expect.”

According to Mr. Hansen, he and Mrs. Truitt had what was “probably . . . the best relationship out of any of the mentor-mentees.” Throughout first semester she had first period planning, and she would “stop by and check on [Mr. Hansen to] make sure everything was OK.” Presently he was seeing her “even more . . . because [Mr. Hansen had] a whole new schedule and [he had been] kind of tossed around a lot, [which was] an understatement.”

Mrs. Truitt had been “pretty much there advocating for [Mr. Hansen]. She was “making sure that [he] wasn’t getting put into bad situations [he] didn’t need to be put in. [He knew] that personally she was looking out for [his] best interests as a teacher, especially a first year teacher.” Mr. Hansen would often talk to Mrs. Truitt “at least once a day.” They also communicated “through email” or he would “just go by” or he would “see her in the hallway.” They would “always just talk about what [was] going on because” Mr. Hansen was teaching a course for the first time, and he had a lot on his “plate.” This course was one that had a state-required assessment associated with it and teachers were held accountable for their students’ scores.

Mrs. Truitt had “done a lot to make sure” Mr. Hansen was “comfortable” and to make sure he had his “book” and his “materials.” Mrs. Truitt went “out of her way to make sure” things were ordered and everything was done to help Mr. Hansen prepare for the class. From talking to other people who [had] a mentor,” Mr. Hansen believed that he had “lucked up.” He felt like he was in “a good situation.” Mrs. Truitt had helped him out “tremendously!”

It helped Mr. Hansen to know that if he called Mrs. Truitt she might not be able to help him immediately, but she would eventually come up to his classroom and “take over [his] class for a second, but it never got to that point.” It was important to Mr. Hansen that he knew Mrs. Truitt had “his back” not just with his “classes but also with administration and everything else.”

Mr. Hansen and Mrs. Truitt also had in common that they were both “teaching fellow[s]” and therefore, they had experienced the same special college program. Mr. Hansen was also glad that Mrs. Truitt would give him little bits of “advice” like reminding him to “get ... papers signed” and she knew exactly what he needed to do. She had helped make Mr. Hansen’s “transition” from student teaching to teaching “so much easier.” For example, if he ever had a question he knew he could “go to her” and even if she did not have the answer, she would find out the answer for him.

Mr. Hansen had not been able to observe Mrs. Truitt’s class yet, but he planned to “in the near future.” He believed that by observing her class he could “get some strategies” he could use. Mrs. Truitt would eventually teach the same students Mr. Hansen taught, and he wanted to make sure they were prepared. Mr. Hansen believed he would probably be “completely lost” at this point in the school year without her help. She had helped him with “AP (Advanced Placement) training” among many other things. Mr. Hansen also felt “comfortable going to [Mrs. Truitt]” because he knew that whatever he said to her she would keep it “completely confidential.” He knew she would not “tell anybody.” Mrs. Truitt had even helped him with his “paperwork.”

Not only did Mrs. Truitt help Mr. Hansen, she helped all the “first year teachers.” For example, even though Mr. Neal (pseudonym), who was also a first year teacher, had a mentor, Mrs. Truitt kind of unofficially acted as his mentor too. Mr. Hansen felt that help from Mrs. Truitt was especially important because all the first year teachers had to teach “some form of the EOC (End of Course) test,” and the Lincoln situation was “rough” because they had so many students who were “low performing,” which made their level of stress higher “than most other schools.” That stress was “a lot for a first year teacher.” But Mr. Hansen had made it through first semester, and he was glad he had been “on the bus” with Mrs. Truitt from the beginning.

“Collaboration: A Partnership Approach,” by Mrs. Rankin

Mrs. Rankin had a special relationship with her mentee, Ms. Captain, because not only did they worked together during Ms. Captain’s first year as a teacher; they had also worked together during Ms. Captain’s student teaching. Mrs. Rankin chose to work with Ms. Captain as a way to fulfill her promise to pay Mrs. Sutton (pseudonym) back for taking a chance on her so many years ago.

During the fall of Ms. Captain’s internship year, “she had a car accident.” She was injured was “going to be out” for an unknown amount of time. Dr. Morgan (pseudonym), who is the mentor coordinator and administrators “were questioning whether or not she would return.” “They asked if anyone wanted to host her knowing she was going to be out.” This situation “took [Mrs. Rankin] back to when [she] was pregnant and needed to be out and someone took” her in, so she said, “I’ll take her and I’ll work with her when she comes back in January.”

Mrs. Rankin enjoyed “watching [Ms. Captain] grow” from the intern, to the student teacher, and gradually “taking over [Mrs. Rankin’s] class.” During Ms. Captain’s student teaching year, “it was the first year that [she] had an EOC, and so [she] was reluctant to let go of [her] class and let [a student teacher] take full reign. But [Ms. Captain] was so knowledgeable in the content area that [Mrs. Rankin] felt comfortable doing that” and they “did kind of a partnership approach.”

Mrs. Rankin and Ms. Captain “did some team teaching where [Ms. Captain] was never really completely in [the classroom] alone. She kind of used [Mrs. Rankin] as an assistant, and if there was something she wasn’t comfortable covering, [Mrs. Rankin] would introduce it and she would kind of piggy back on that. [They] kind of fed off each other.”

One of the reasons they team taught so much was that Mrs. Rankin “wasn’t as strong in the content [because] it was her first year teaching [the course].” Mrs. Rankin said, “I really leaned on her heavily because she was still in school taking content level courses so she knew this course like the back of her hand...She kind of backed me up, and I ended up with the best scores in the school in biology.”

Mrs. Rankin gave Ms. Captain a lot of credit for helping her achieve such excellent EOC scores. She helped Mrs. Rankin “figure out how to break things down for the kids,” and she helped her determine “a simpler way” to “present’ the information to the students. Ms. Captain would say, “You can do it *this* way.”

And Mrs. Rankin would say, “‘OK’ and [she would] just follow her lead.”

Mrs. Rankin was especially impressed with the PowerPoint presentations Ms. Captain “came up with” because Mrs. Rankin had never used that kind of presentation “in [her] instruction before.” Ms. Captain “introduced *different* kinds of technologies into” the class. For Mrs. Rankin it was wonderful, “having this young person that [was] in school and having access to all those things” that an older teacher did not tend to “look back” at. It was great to have Ms. Captain “coming in on a daily basis” with “a fresh set of ideas.”

Not only did Ms. Captain have great ideas, she was also “a really strong disciplinarian.” She was “fair, consistent, [and] confident” which Mrs. Rankin did not often see in “new teachers coming in.” Mrs. Rankin felt completely comfortable if she needed “to step out.” Ms. Captain always said, “I’ve got it.” And she did.

“Together” Mrs. Rankin and Ms. Captain “pulled out some amazing stats.”

“When the [science] position came available,” [Mrs. Rankin] naturally said, “Well, you need to take a strong look at [Ms. Captain].”

During her first year as a teacher, Ms. Captain still asked Mrs. Rankin for “classroom management strategies.” Occasionally, Ms. Captain would come by Mrs. Rankin’s room to talk about “an isolated incident” in which the kids were misbehaving in class, and she would ask Mrs. Rankin how she could “handle it.” Also, she was teaching a new curriculum area [second] semester” which Mrs. Rankin had “taught for a number of years. Therefore, Mrs. Rankin helped Ms. Captain “with lesson plans and ideas for labs” and “that kind of thing.”

Ms. Captain came “by and almost daily [and they had] some kind of dialogue.” Their rooms were directly across from each other, and Mrs. Rankin felt that this closeness was useful because when they were “standing out in the hall way” doing hall duty and waiting for their classes to begin, they could “run things by each other.” Mrs. Rankin was “still teaching [the course]” for second semester;” therefore, she had “questions” she needed to ask Ms. Captain. Mrs. Rankin was pleased that she and Ms. Captain continued to “feed off of each other.”

Mrs. Rankin believed she and Ms. Captain needed “each other for different things and [they] both [had] recognized and acknowledged it.” In addition, Mrs. Rankin believed that ‘coming into” the “teaching environment” at Lincoln “a lot of teachers [did not] feel confident” that they had “something to contribute especially when they [were] dealing with a veteran teacher. They [tended to] think [the veteran] obviously knows it all.” But Mrs. Rankin disagreed that veteran teachers know it all because “each set of kids . . . is a different scenario every year. [Teachers] never really master anything because there is always a new set of faces and a new dilemma.”

Regardless of the age and experience differential, Mrs. Rankin believed Ms. Captain “was confident in what she [knew],” and when she realized Mrs. Rankin “had a deficit” and “needed her . . . it made it easier for her to ask for things she needed.” “It wasn’t like” Ms. Captain was always going to Mrs. Rankin having “nothing to contribute. She had a lot to contribute and she had a lot of questions too so it kind of balanced out.”

Mrs. Rankin had been “kind of reluctant to have a student teacher when she taught the course for the first time because she wanted to know what she could “do in

[the course].” She wanted to know if she could “pull out the stats in [the course].” In other words she wanted to know “if it was [her] teacher effects that caused these results.” Ms. Captain said she would “do whatever” Mrs. Rankin needed her “to do” so that she could “feel confident that it [was her] instruction that was getting [the] scores and not [Ms. Captain’s]. Therefore, “if there were things Mrs. Rankin “didn’t understand fully” she said, “I want to teach this.” Mrs. Rankin would then ask Ms. Captain to observe her to see if she taught it correctly. The students “picked up on” this and said, “Why do you always ask her if you presented something right?”

Mrs. Rankin replied, “Because she’s the expert.”

The students then asked, “Why’s she the expert?”

And Mrs. Rankin responded, “Because she’s the student teacher and . . . she knows this curriculum.”

Mrs. Rankin was the kind of teacher who did not feel she had to “know all the answers.” She told the students she had not “had [the course] since high school and [administration] kind of threw [her] into this curriculum.” She intended “to make the best of it;” therefore, she was going to let Ms. Captain help her out. By taking this stance, the students “approached” the learning experience “differently.” When they asked Mrs. Rankin something, she “would be honest” and tell them, “I don’t know, but while you’re working on this, I’ll look it up for you.” And she’d “hit the Internet” and she’d “Google” and find out the information and take it back to the students. The students were well aware that Mrs. Rankin did not have all the answers and they joined her in the process of

learning together so it “was total buy-in from everyone and it was real, real unique.” This class ended up with a “98% pass rate, which [was] unheard of.”

Even though she was not a first year teacher, she had never taught [this course] before, and Mrs. Rankin credited Ms. Captain “with a lot of” her success. She told Ms. Captain, “You carried me though that course because I did not know that curriculum.” Mrs. Rankin continued to “go back and re-read [her] notes on things” Ms. Captain taught her, and she looked over the PowerPoints Ms. Captain gave her before she presented them. She was still asking Ms. Captain questions about them. This exchange of information kept them going in a non-competitive “spirit” in which they carried each other “as far as” they “need to be carried.” The first time Ms. Captain heard Mrs. Rankin say, “I don’t know,” she said “You tell [the students] you don’t know?”

Mrs. Rankin replied, “I do, but I know people that will make up stuff but it’s not accurate. I don’t want to tell the kids something and someone else has to undo the damage that I’ve done at some later course. I read this [information] two night ago and I’m presenting it today. So I can’t go real in-depth.” Mrs. Rankin was “more prepared to go in-depth” during second semester and she did not have to “lean” on Ms. Captain as much. She said Ms. Captain was “her rock last year” and she was not sure Ms. Captain realized how much she helped her. She believed Ms. Captain would say, “[Mrs. Rankin] carried me!” She would not realize how much she had helped Mrs. Rankin “along the way.” Mrs. Rankin believed that new teachers do not “get the respect they deserve.”

“Making Chicken Salad,” by Mrs. Herman

Mrs. Herman compared mandates from the school district to asking her school to prepare a “chicken dinner.” Unfortunately, making a “chicken dinner” at Lincoln seemed unlikely because of their student population. The majority of the Lincoln students were not adequate chickens for the dinner because most of them had to take care of themselves and be “their own bosses.” Their parents who were “only a few days older” than their kids often had to work “5 or 6 jobs” or had no job at all, so they were “otherwise raising themselves!” The privileged graduates who came over from the local university armed with remarkable content ideas often had no idea how to connect with or manage this kind of “animal.”

The students at Lincoln needed “a lot of love” and care, but many of their teachers could not reach them or in some cases were “intimated” by them because these students were often suspicious and cautious and “would fight a teacher” they thought was “not fair.” These kinds of teachers were not successful at Lincoln.

Mrs. Herman’s mentee, Mr. Cook (pseudonym) knew how to work with these kids, and Mrs. Herman had encouraged administration to hire him following his internship at Lincoln. Although Mrs. Herman had to caution Mr. Cook to be careful with his popularity, especially when it came to being alone and secluded with a female student, they mostly collaborated as equal colleagues. They shared lesson plans and ideas, and often Mr. Cook’s creative input made Mrs. Herman’s lesson plans unrecognizable to her. Even though teachers like Mr. Cook realized they could not

present the district with a “chicken dinner” as expected, they made the best of the situation and instead made “chicken salad.”

Teachers, like Mr. Cook and Mr. Manzetti, “had the mayonnaise and everything else,” such as amazing creativity and flexibility. They knew how to gain the students’ trust and to connect with them through creative innovations with curriculum and management. These devoted teachers had an understanding of their students’ culture and could engage with them through discussions of films and music. Remarkably, they were able to get things from these kids that others could not, and they could say things to them that would show love by setting firm limits. These amazing teachers had “the chemistry to work with” the Lincoln students, and although they could not yet create a “chicken dinner” because there was often only “one chicken in the coop,” they did know how to make “chicken salad.” The district seemed to recognize the “chicken salad” as progress in the right direction because they had formally recognized Lincoln in the district; however, there was no guarantee the district and state would continue to accept “chicken salad” as a legitimate replacement for a “chicken dinner.”

“Explosion,” by Mrs. Stewart

Mrs. Stewart said that conflict was common in their school where students would go off “in class at either each other or a teacher or an administrator” but that when it happened they “just [buried it].” She and the counselors had put a few students in her “mentor program” because they had “anger problems,” and in this program, they could “talk about their feelings.”

Unfortunately, a mentor program for students did not solve the problems because the school “environment [was] one giant conflict.” The students didn’t want to work with their teachers, they didn’t want to be at school, they didn’t want “to work with each other,” they didn’t want “to get to know each other,” they didn’t want “to change their minds,” and the teachers didn’t want to go “above and beyond” because they didn’t “want to feel used” or “vulnerable to the students.” “Everyone was resisting all the time.”

The teachers did not “want to let administration know” they were struggling because then they had to struggle to keep their jobs. They could not say to someone, “I’m not doing well” and it “not be a reflection” on them. Teachers tried their best to avoid conflicts, but they were “there all the time” and they taught “around them because” they didn’t “know what to do with them.”

The kids at this school did not know how to talk about how they felt about things. They did want to talk about their feelings “because then there [was] the persona that they [were] weak.” If teachers addressed all these conflicts, they might be able to “change the way these kids function[ed] in society, but if they expressed their true feelings, “the repercussions would be too bad . . . and might show that they were incapable.” For example, Mrs. Stewart said that people at her school were afraid to ask for help, and they were afraid of gossip. She was aware of a teacher who was struggling and doing her best, but that the impression was that she was not a good teacher. In this school students were allowed to be “in-process,” but teachers were not allowed to also be “in-process.”

Mrs. Stewart concluded that if Lincoln “really took conflict head on . . . student to student or student to teacher . . . it would be an explosion . . . and the whole roof would come off.” She was coming to realize how much she missed “good people.” “People that [were] out for the good of others [and] out for the success of others.” She wondered what it would be like if “we lived our lives with the ultimate desire to see other people be the best ‘them’ they [could] be.” But “we don’t do it that way.” Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Herman *did* believe in seeing the best in others and helping them do their best; it was just that sometimes it was difficult to be that way in an environment that did otherwise.

“In the Trenches,” by Mrs. Herman

Mrs. Herman compared the teachers at Lincoln to “soldiers in the military” who had to be “in the trenches” to succeed. She was adamant that no books or university settings could prepare teachers to make it in a school like Lincoln. Novices had to learn from the kids and from their own sense of what to do. And even “when the generals told the foot soldiers what they needed to do,” it was up to these foot soldiers to learn what to do, and they needed “to do it.” Some who tried to teach at Lincoln, including doctoral students, ran away in a “huff;” they did not seem to have what it took to fight the battles as ordinary soldiers, and they needed a different “scenario.”

As a mentor, Mrs. Herman was willing to go “into the trenches” with her novices; however, she could not fight their battles for them. She could interpret, caution, share ideas, and care about them, but she could not fight their battles. With Mr. Cook, was careful to ask him how he might handle a situation before explaining how she might deal with it. She armed the novices in her care with knowledge about the leadership, about the

school culture, which included students, parents, and district personnel; and about resources that supported the curriculum. She backed them up as far as she could, but when it came to going into combat, which was possible in the administrative, school culture, and curriculum arenas, they had to advance, retreat, or leave the battlefield on their own. She also acknowledged that what might work for her as an older, veteran, and African-American woman, may not work for a young, novice, and white male or female. In other words, she never assumed that she could provide a plan that any novices might universally apply, and she faced the inevitable that at some point she had to kick “fledglings,” like Mr. Cook, “out of the nest.”

Even though she noted that her age and race differed significantly from many of her mentees, she had never seen age, race, or gender differences as an issue. She felt she had gained from the younger, non-African American, and male or female perspectives, and her mentees felt they had gained from her older, African American, and female perspective. She and Mr. Manzetti talked together as comfortable and respectful colleagues. They often finished each other’s thoughts and consulted each other to validate shared perspectives. They seemed to be in the trenches together especially when it came to curriculum issues that seemed to have both of them up in arms.

Mrs. Herman did not seem to be able to save the casualties of personal battles—the slightly wounded or the mortally wounded. She acknowledged that although she did not agree with the practice of withdrawing support from novices and sending them into conflicts with little or no support and protection, she had no specific weapons at her disposal to defend against this abandonment. Her best weapons were being “familiar with

the trench” so that she might provide interpretations and warnings to novices. Unfortunately, she could not keep them from acting on their own misinterpretations nor could she keep them out of the teachers’ lounge where things had “a way of trickling down . . . to administration.” She tried to help novices understand to choose their battles carefully with administration and to stay within the safety of “their own classrooms” and “their own community.” Mrs. Herman understood, as the novice could not, how easy it was to engage in the wrong battles or with others’ battles even when they might be minding their “own business” at “the copy machine.”

“The Melt Down,” by Mrs. Herman

As the curriculum coach Mrs. Herman realized it was sometimes difficult to call a teacher’s attention to areas for their improvement. Mrs. Herman did not “want to lose a teacher.” She wanted to “save the teachers” and to “help them feel good about what” they were doing. Her attitude had helped to create a “department [that was] so collaborative.” She felt like as a department they were literally “trying to save lives”—students and teachers lives. Her department had experienced a huge bail out when the previous content coach, Mrs. Jacobs (pseudonym) was in the position and Mrs. Herman did not want that to happen again.

She was concerned, however, with a specific incident that happened with Mrs. Stewart, her mentee. She felt that Mrs. Stewart had called in sick one day because she had experienced “a little melt down.” The reason for the melt down revolved around some feedback Mrs. Herman and others had presented to her about her 2nd Block, which Mrs. Stewart called her “bears.”

This class had about 31 students. There were three kids who were supposed to be going to a special program for challenging students and 12 students with EC labels. Although Mrs. Harper (pseudonym), an inclusion teacher, was in the classroom too, Mrs. Stewart was having trouble reaching “those kids.” She was “discovering ways to” teach them, but she just had too many challenging students. Mrs. Herman went to that room “just about every day.” Mrs. Herman was concerned about the effects on a new teacher like Mrs. Stewart when the counselors had put “so many types” of difficult kids in one class.

In the counselors’ defense, Mrs. Herman said that it was difficult *not* to give teachers a large number of EC students because Lincoln had the largest population of EC students in the district, and they also had a large group of ESL (English as a Second Language) students. Lincoln had 20 EC teachers, but only two 12th grade content teachers, and they only had about two to three 11th and 10th grade content teachers. With so many exceptional learners, it was difficult for counselors to spread them out equally among all the content teachers.

Mrs. Herman had experienced a class like Mrs. Stewart’s 2nd block during her 1st block last school year. She had been able to reach those students by using graphic organizers and making literary concepts relevant to their interests and abilities. She understood how difficult it could be to teach so many challenging learners. Even for a master teacher it was not easy to get these kinds of kids to learn.

Mrs. Herman believed that in order for these kinds of kids to “manipulate skills” teachers could not be “up in the classroom talking the whole time” because these kids

would “shut down” in ten to fifteen minutes. They may only have the attention span to read part of a story rather than the whole story, but teachers could use parts of selections to help students understand concepts such a “the narrator’s intent.”

Lincoln was one of the low performing schools included in a special district program. On the day of Mrs. Stewart’s melt down, Mrs. Herman had invited the district coach, Mrs. Gates (pseudonym), to come see what the content team of teachers was doing. Mrs. Stewart’s 2nd block was the first classroom they visited.

Mrs. Herman was afraid that she had not “explained to [Mrs. Stewart] well enough [their] intentions.” They did not come to “slap her arm.” Mrs. Herman had asked Mrs. Gates to help her convey to the teachers a way to “work smarter not harder and let the kids do a lot of the teaching each other,” and how to “use these little 5 minute assessment strategies.” A “great bulk” of their students were “reading 5th grade level and under.”

Mrs. Herman believed that Mrs. Stewart may have had the “wrong idea” that Mrs. Herman and Mrs. Gates were “judging her.” Mrs. Herman told Mrs. Stewart they “were coming to see if [they] could structure her class.” Unfortunately, “a lot of things went wrong.” Mrs. Herman had asked Mrs. Gates to observe and take notes on what happened to the students when Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Harper, and Mrs. Herman were not interacting with them.

Mrs. Herman and Mrs. Gates wrote some feedback for Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Harper that included suggestions. Some of these suggestions included being more clear about directions to students prior to their visit to the media center to use a computer

program. Another suggestion included splitting the students into two groups and letting Mrs. Harper take half the class for the first part of the period and the second half of class during the second half of the period. While she was taking students to the media center, Mrs. Stewart could teach a mini-lesson to those left in the classroom. Another suggestion was that instead of assigning students to “just read,” Mrs. Stewart should determine a purpose for that reading. All of these suggestions were “possible” ideas because Mrs. Herman did not assume they would work or that she had better ideas than Mrs. Stewart. Mrs. Herman planned to do the same thing with Mrs. Etheridge (pseudonym), Mrs. Anderson (pseudonym), and others, so she was not singling Mrs. Stewart out in any way.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Herman felt that Mrs. Stewart had “felt trampled upon.” When they went over the feedback, the district coach, Mrs. Gates, was there too and Mrs. Stewart may have felt “overwhelmed.” Mrs. Herman believed Mrs. Stewart may have thought that Mrs. Gates was evaluating her and finding problems with her teaching. Mrs. Herman had said to Mrs. Gates, “Don’t you dare bring one of those evaluation forms.” However, because Mrs. Herman had told Mrs. Gates not to interact with students, but to just observe, Mrs. Stewart may have assumed that Mrs. Gates was evaluating rather than looking for ways to help. Although the lesson she observed in Mrs. Stewart’s 2nd block may have needed some work, Mrs. Herman was proud of the results Mrs. Stewart had produced in testing. She had taken students reading at 5th grade level and below and helped some of her students score as high as 90% on their standardized tests. She was sorry Mrs. Stewart had felt “trampled on” because Mrs. Herman felt she was doing a great job.

“Finding Community, Finding Self,” by Mrs. Stewart

Since she took her job for school year 2010-11, Mrs. Stewart had lived and breathed school, and even though she insisted that she was nowhere near breaking down, as of day seven, she was feeling under a great deal of stress. At 5:30 a.m. Monday through Friday, Mrs. Stewart got up to get ready for school. She arrived at her classroom around 6:30 a.m. so she could “get things done” by 7:00 or 7:15 a.m. Students typically entered the building at 8:30 a.m. and Mrs. Stewart’s first block began at 8:40 a.m. and ended at 10:10 a.m. She taught her second block, which was her inclusion class, from 10:15 a.m. until 11:45 a.m.; and her third block, where William and Jonah (pseudonyms) were students, lasted from 11:50-2:00 p.m. and included lunch (1st lunch), which was from 11:45 a.m. until 12:15 p.m. She had her planning period from 2:05 p.m. until 3:35 p.m.; therefore, she supervised and taught challenging high school students with minimal breaks from 8:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., five and one half hours.

Almost every day after school, Mrs. Stewart had a meeting and other responsibilities which meant that she was usually in the building until 6:00 p.m. Her time *on the job* lasted half an hour short of a 12-hour day, but her work was not finished when she left the building. She got home in time to have supper with her husband, who she married this summer, and to take a short break because around 8:00 p.m. she began her work again, grading papers and planning lessons “until sometimes midnight or 1:00 a.m.” This additional work meant that on average she spent about 17 hours a day in work-related activities. That left only about seven hours for sleeping, eating, and having a relationship with her husband.

Mrs. Stewart's work was "never ending." For example if she got one "stack of papers done, there [was] another stack of papers to be done, and if [she got] these day books graded, there [were] these day books, and if [she called] these parents, then there [were] these parents . . ." Every Friday, she had to submit for district approval detailed lesson plans that closely followed the objectives dictated by the special program for which she was responsible.

Mrs. Stewart agreed to take a position teaching this special program to high school students who were reading on or about the 4th and 5th grade levels. The program has specific vocabulary and grammar components as well as a reading component, and Mrs. Stewart began implementing it after having had one day of training a few days before school began. She knew that at some point she would have more training on how to differentiate the scripted lessons because she realized the extremely wide variety of abilities and learning styles in her classrooms. She attended the training with her mentor, Mrs. Herman, who checked on her daily to help with curriculum resources.

Beyond curriculum requirements, Mrs. Stewart's engagement with her students was all consuming. For example, even when she was not physically with them or planning lessons for them and grading their work, she said, "my kids [are] never out of my brain and I can't stop thinking about them." She had some concerns about the sheer volume of time she was committing to her job and its effects on her new marriage. One day, as she was carrying a large stack of her students' day books out of the school building, Mr. Johnson (pseudonym), a well-respected and award-winning veteran teacher, stopped to talk to her. He said, "You know, my mentor told me that I may want

to start grading all my work at school so that my wife won't leave me." Mrs. Stewart included Mr. Johnson in her network of support because he often took time to ask her how she was doing and how her lessons were going. She could feel his sincerity and concern for her because she saw him as a "very good guy, a good man" who seemed to have an interest in her well-being even though it was not his job to do so.

Mrs. Stewart was somewhat reticent to admit how much time she was spending on her job, and she also admitted that beyond the requirements of her position, she had self-imposed high standards for herself and her students. For instance she said, "[the job] would be easier if I wasn't so driven to be successful and to see [my students] be successful more so." She concluded that although her position was a "high pressure" one because people were always coming in her room and checking on how she and her students were doing, no one was "breathing down [her] throat;" however, *she* wanted the people who came in her room to see that she was "on point" and that mainly her kids were "on point." Mrs. Stewart wanted to be an exceptional teacher and she pushed herself harder than anyone else pushed her. She realized that her desire to be exceptional presented an internal conflict because she also wanted to have a personal life outside of school. As the year began, she did not think her mentor would be able to help her with this internal conflict.

Mrs. Stewart assumed that teaching would get easier as she learned how to be more efficient, and she thought she would eventually be more able to deal with the mounds of paper work because she would be able to use some of the resources and lessons she created her first hectic year. She was hopeful that next year she could be more

relaxed and have more personal time. She believed her first year had to be intense, but that after the initiation period, the job would become easier. At the beginning of the year, there seemed to be *few ways* Mrs. Stewart could make her job any less time-consuming and less stressful; however, one thing seemed to help her.

At the end of each school day, Mrs. Stewart got together with her colleague, Mrs. Anderson (pseudonym), who was a 9-year veteran, but new to the school and also new to teaching the special curriculum. Mrs. Stewart said that with Mrs. Anderson she could relax and share her “emotional vomit” from the day’s events. Mrs. Stewart did not engage her mentor, Mrs. Herman, in this process.

By beginning of second quarter, Mrs. Stewart had taken back her life. She got to “go home to [her] husband . . . be with [her] friends, go have coffee, go to a concert . . .” Feeling like she was “still a human and not a teaching machine” made her feel that she had something to offer her students, and she was delighted to discover that because she could be herself, the quality of her instruction had gone up. One particularly helpful piece of information came from one of her colleagues, Mrs. Anderson, who suggested Mrs. Stewart stop teaching the books and stories from her curriculum that she did not enjoy reading herself. Mrs. Anderson told Mrs. Stewart that she could “make the best lesson, but if you think the content is garbage, [the students’] are going to know,” so Mrs. Stewart started teaching things she liked and things she thought could be more meaningful to her students, such as stories from her college magazine and the newspaper. She also discovered that sometimes her students did not immediately appreciate materials

Mrs. Stewart had chosen, but after about ten minutes, they often became engaged through her stimulating questions and her own interest in those materials.

Mrs. Stewart realized that during her first weeks of teaching her life had gotten out of balance. She came to understand that being a teacher was not the extent of who she was; it was only a part. She was also someone who enjoyed relationships with “international friends,” who was a college graduate, a wife, a daughter, and who dreamed of someday going to graduate school and becoming a writer. Teacher only described a part of her. She also realized that it was important to be able to be herself; however, in some classes and on some days, that was not always easy. Nevertheless, she was learning to take some of the self-imposed pressure off herself by listening to her peers who encouraged her to teach what she liked and from her mentor who endorsed the idea of co-writing lesson plans in order to share that load. By mid-October Mrs. Stewart felt she had routines established and more importantly she had developed a less stressful attitude about her life as a teacher.

Mrs. Stewart was learning to accept that some days she failed and some days she succeeded. For example she might feel successful for 30 minutes, and then for the next 30 minutes, she would feel like she was failing. She acknowledged that she was an “overachiever” who graduated in the top 1% of her class, but that in this setting “it [was] ok to fail.” If writing office referrals was any indication of failure, Mrs. Stewart, objectively speaking, had been mostly successful, especially with classroom discipline, because at the end of 1st quarter she had only written five of them.

One of the most important changes that made her work less stressful was her greater involvement with her fellow teachers, Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Etheridge. Mrs. Stewart was especially appreciative of Mrs. Anderson, who according to Mrs. Stewart operated in a similar fashion to her. They made a great composite teacher because Mrs. Stewart was good at “thinking of things” and Mrs. Anderson was “really good at making them concrete.” It was reassuring to Mrs. Stewart to know that what would fly in her class would fly in Mrs. Anderson’s class and what would sink in her class would also sink in Mrs. Anderson’s.

Mrs. Herman took some of the credit for the fact that Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Anderson, and Mrs. Etheridge were sharing the burden of lesson planning. As their content coach and as Mrs. Stewart’s mentor, Mrs. Herman had reasoned with school administrators and district decision makers to allow for weekly, rather than daily, lesson plans. By encouraging Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Anderson, and Mrs. Etheridge to write one lesson plan with “everybody’s name at the top for the whole week,” Mrs. Herman helped them form a professional learning community (PLC). By becoming a member of this community Mrs. Stewart was able to both decrease her lesson planning load, and she could make sure they “were all on the same page.” This process allowed her to comply with pacing requirements and to “feel supported at the same time.”

Not only did her PLC help her with lesson planning, they also helped her with student behaviors. Mrs. Stewart did not go a “single day” without going into the rooms of her PLC colleagues or that they did not go into hers, and she always knew that they were struggling just as she was, and that was comforting to her. For example, she might tell her

colleagues that her student was “off the chain,” and when she explained how she addressed the student’s behavior, they would tell her she was doing everything she was supposed to do. Mrs. Stewart said that working as a community with Mrs. Anderson and Mrs. Etheridge was validating, and it made her work 100% easier.

Mrs. Stewart had never thought of quitting teaching because she had always “wanted for [her] whole life” to become a teacher, but she *had* thought of “giving up.” For example, she had thought of just “biding [her] time” or possibly leaving for a while to go to graduate school. She said she sees her colleagues doing their “prescribed jobs” that included doing “just enough until they have to go home again.” It had “crossed [her] mind” that she did not have to put up with the disrespect, she did not have to take students into the hallway and “work out a relationship,” and she did not have to “put up with their crap” because she could do like her colleagues and “ship them to ISS (In School Suspension) and not have them in her room.” But she realized if she decided to bide her time, no one would know but her kids, and “that [was] what [kept her] going” that they would “know if [she] gave up.”

Mrs. Stewart concluded that to be a successful teacher, the students had to see that you were “going to take their stuff and you [were] going to make it better over and over and over again,” and they appreciated that they could come into her room and say “smartelecky” things, and she “[did] not curse them out or hit them,” instead she took them into the hallway. Mrs. Stewart decided that to be successful with the students in her school, a teacher had to be “consistently pursuing them” and that teachers who did not do well were “not in pursuit of their students.” As of the beginning of second quarter, Mrs.

Stewart was still in pursuit of her students, but she had also reached a better balance between pursuing those students and pursuing her own growth as a person rather than being a teaching machine. Mrs. Stewart's astounding personal insights about teaching, the development of her PLC, which was supportive and nurturing; and the advocacy of her mentor helped her develop a better balance among all the parts of her "self."

"I Think I'm Really Good at It," by Ms. Captain

Ms. Captain had always been "a swim coach," but she "actually went to college to major in nursing." However, when she got there she "really missed coaching," and "decided to go into . . . teaching." To her surprise she found that she was "really good at it." In addition to really liking her content, she found that she was also "a great teacher." Ms. Captain believed that teaching was what she was "meant to do and [she] really enjoy[ed] it;" she thought "it [was] a lot of fun." She saw teaching as a "dynamic job with different kids every day," and even though "some days it [was] difficult," it was much better than sitting "at a computer all day."

As far as teaching role models, even though Ms. Captain's mother was also "a swim" coach, there were no teachers in her immediate family. "Both [her] brother and sister are engineers, . . . [her] dad is a computer guy" and her mom works "in pharmaceuticals." But she did enjoy "talking to her" aunt who is a teacher. In high school, Ms. Captain recalled that "a lot of times [she would] sit at [her] desk in high school and" and think, "I would be a lot better teacher. I'm actually *going* to be a better teacher than you."

Ms. Captain was inspired not by excellent teachers, but by poor ones. Ms. Captain's high school and college experiences were in diverse urban communities in a southern state; therefore, she was able to experience a wide variety of fellow high school and college students. As a matter of fact, the college she attended was "right down the street from" Lincoln. She did an internship and her "student teaching" there, and was hired to work there. She felt very comfortable at Lincoln and with her mentor, Mrs. Rankin (pseudonym).

Mrs. Rankin thought Ms. Captain was an exceptional teacher especially because she was "passionate about serving the kids that [were] in [their] population." She was also "open to new ideas" and would "ask questions when she [didn't] know something or understand something." Ms. Captain was creative and knowledgeable, and she came up with "good ideas for activities," and "labs." One time "she came up with a lab for her . . . class" and Mrs. Rankin asked her "Where did you get it?"

Ms. Captain replied, "I just made it up on the fly."

And Mrs. Rankin said, "I have to steal that from you?"

Other important traits Mrs. Rankin complimented Ms. Captain for having were that she was "consistent and fair with her discipline, and she [didn't] . . . distinguish between kids in any way." Her "rules and expectations [were] the same for everyone" regardless of whether they were a kid "struggling academically" and the "bar was always set high." She did not "lower" her standards because a kid had "a deficit."

Mrs. Rankin believed that the students had "bonded" with Ms. Captain the same way they had bonded with her because both she and Mrs. Rankin had been

“knuckleheads” when they were in school and the kids seemed to “gravitate” toward both of them as “kindred spirit[s].” Mrs. Rankin did not know “what kind of student” Ms. Captain was, but she had the “funny feeling [she] might have been a teacher’s nightmare.”

Ms. Captain admitted she had not been “the greatest student throughout [her] entire childhood,” and Mrs. Rankin said that the kids identified with her and did not give her a hard time because they connected with her in their shared difficulty with school, whether she told them about her own difficulties or not. Mrs. Rankin believed that she and Ms. Captain had a great deal in common. For example, they both got bored easily and were both “constantly looking for new ways to change and tweak things.” They had to teach “the same curriculum over and over again and in order to keep it exciting for kids” it needed to be exciting for them too. Ms. Captain liked being a teacher because it was “different every day.” She would “get bored really easily if [she] had to do the same thing every day.” She would “tear all [her] hair out.” “Having something different every day even if there [were] some not so good days” was better to her than handling a “static” job.

Mrs. Rankin did not believe she had to “sell” Ms. Captain on the idea of teaching at Lincoln. She asked her, “Now that you’ve been here and you see the kind of kids we have here, would you like to work here?”

Ms. Captain said, “Yeah, I’d love to be here.”

Ms. Captain had come from a school that “had similar demographics to” Lincoln, and Mrs. Rankin knew they needed teachers who were “familiar with the kind of kids

[they served] coming into the door.” She believed that teachers should not “need to get shocked into working with [Lincoln] kids” and that they should “be comfortable when [they] stepped in the door.” Ms. Captain was that kind of teacher.

“Breakthroughs,” by Mr. Hansen

Mr. Hansen planned to be at Lincoln next year, but he admitted that working there kind of “wore” on him. He really enjoyed the kids, but he had “some rough classes [first] semester.” He was “in the trenches” but got through. He knew if he could make it at Lincoln, he teach anywhere, but he did not see himself transferring to another school that had a less challenging student population.

Mr. Hansen liked the kids at Lincoln a lot more than other kinds of students because the Lincoln kids didn’t “really have anything,” and they were trying to “learn to be successful.” Mr. Hansen believed there was “no better feeling than when you [could] help them out.” For example, when they came and asked him to “write a reference for a job, . . . it [was] a good feeling.” Mr. Hansen realized kids in other areas of town needed help too, but the kids they had at Lincoln were “less likely to have as many positive influences as some of those other places.”

Mr. Hansen coached basketball and so he had “real close relationships with a lot of” the kids at Lincoln. For example, in the mornings, the “basketball players” would come in his room and just sit and talk with him. Even the kids he had “last semester that drove [him] crazy,” and that he thought “hated [his] guts” would not leave his classroom. They would come in his room and ask, “Can we stay in here?”

Mr. Hansen said, “Ya’ll gave me so much crap last semester and now you don’t want to leave!” Even the kids that drove him crazy came by to say “hello” to him. The relationships he built with kids meant a lot to him. Mr. Hansen knew 150 students by name even though he only taught about half of them. He thought it would “be cool” if he was at Lincoln for at least four years so he could be there when they graduated. Eventually, however, as a “long-term” goal, Mr. Hansen planned to get “into administration.”

By second semester, Mr. Hansen had developed ways to form relationships with the students at Lincoln. But first semester was a different situation. His students gave him a fit! To help him deal with these students, Mrs. Truitt, advised him to “stand up” and not to be “afraid to be mean.” She told him not to “put up with their junk.” In order to be supportive, Mrs. Truitt would come by his 3rd block, which was his “roughest class.” She would pretend she was dropping off a “package of papers” as an excuse for coming by to check on how the students were behaving and how Mr. Hansen was doing. She would “check up on” him “to see how everything was going just to survey [his] classroom and give [him] feedback on what she was seeing.”

Mrs. Truitt said, “I just wanted to make sure he wasn’t being hung from the ceiling or paper wasn’t being thrown at him. [But] it was never that bad.”

Mrs. Truitt would give Mr. Hansen “ideas about . . . how to deal with particular students.” For example, Mr. Hansen had one kid who slept all the time. Mrs. Truitt gave Mr. Hansen the idea that if [he] had a kid who liked to “sleep all the time,” it was “probably better” he let her sleep because when she was not sleeping, “she was a

disruption to the class.” Mrs. Truitt also gave Mr. Hansen an idea for one girl who was misbehaving and not turning in her work. She suggested Mr. Hansen should “get to know the student” better by having a “face-to-face conversation.” Mr. Hansen admitted that getting to know that girl “took work.”

Unlike Mrs. Truitt, who was rather petite, Mr. Hansen was quite tall, and he found it effective to physically “get down at [students’] level instead of talking to them standing up.” When he “made them look [him] in the eye” and when he talked to them face-to-face he could say firmly, “What you’re doing is not acceptable.” So he was being “stern” with them, but at the same time he was showing them “that love that they needed.” Mr. Hansen said the technique also allowed him to be “real” with students, and he even used it in basketball coaching. Mr. Hansen believed talking to kids face-to-face “helped a lot because” the kids seemed to respect him more when he was not “just talking *at* them,” but having a conversation *with* them. These conversations tended to encourage students “to take responsibility for what they [were] doing in class.”

Mr. Hansen believed his height could be an “intimidating factor,” and he had to learn what he could and could not do with it. With “some kids” he had to be “as mean as a snake” because that was what they responded to. But for other kids who seemed tough and who acted “all hard,” Mr. Hansen felt that breaking them might be a bad idea because he felt he would not be able to “get them back.” Mr. Hansen believed that teachers had to break these kinds of kids the “right way,” which meant figuring out how to connect with them. He believed that sometimes in order to make that connection, teachers had to “break through their defenses;” however, he also believed that some kids “you can’t

break” and some kids you had to “break twice.” Mr. Hansen learned “early on” who he “could break” and who he couldn’t.

“Almost Quit,” by Mr. Cook

Mr. Cook believed that the hardest part of teaching at Lincoln was “the paperwork.” To him the students were great, even though sometimes they were “bad” and he just wished some of them had “stayed home.” The paperwork was the “most overbearing part” of his job. Mr. Cook accepted that often his students would make him feel tired, but that was OK. He expected “students to be students, “but “the most stressful” part of teaching for him was “keeping up with all the paperwork—the IEPs, and PEPs and ABCs.” There were “so many acronyms for everything!” Sometimes it felt like he had to spend more time on paperwork than on teaching.

During first semester, Mr. Cook “got behind in [his] paperwork.” He did not have his “PEPs finished” and he “was falling behind in grading [his] work.” Mr. Cook also worked a second job so that was part of the issue. He just could not “manage” it all. It was “too much stress.” He decided to quit teaching.

Mr. Cook typed his “letter of resignation,” and he was ready to go turn it in, but Mrs. Herman, his mentor, helped him get the job, so he decided it would not be respectful of him to “just walk out.” He decided to tell her what he planned to do. He said to Mrs. Herman, “I’m quitting.”

Mrs. Herman said, “You’re going to do what?”

Mr. Cook, said, “I’m quitting. I’m leaving. I’m not coming back. I’ll work my notice. I need to give my 30 day notice and will not come back.”

Mrs. Herman said, "Shut up!"

Mr. Cook said, "No, I don't want to. I can't do this!"

Mrs. Herman and Mr. Cook had a "heart to heart for maybe thirty minutes." That talk was on a Thursday. He came back on Friday and he "took the weekend to think it over." Mr. Cook decided, "I'm going to give it one more shot." This incident happened right before "the end of first semester, so [he] let first semester ride out and then [he] started second semester, and it [seemed] so much easier now." Mr. Cook had figured out a way to "stay on top" of the paper work "from the beginning." He had to realize that his "bad management" of his paperwork had created part of the problem; however, no one helped him figure out a new management strategy; he figured it out on his own.

Mr. Cook realized he was grading papers in a timely manner but he was not recording the grades on a "paper grade book." For some reason he did not realize he should keep a hard copy of grades in a grade book. He would grade papers, hand them out to the students and then put them in his "little drawer." When it "came time for progress reports and report cards," he would "sit there all night punching in grades." While Mr. Cook was punching in grades, he would realize some students were missing work. "Not keeping a paper grade book was the biggest mistake [Mr. Cook] made." No one told him he needed to have one, and they were not required. Mr. Cook decided to record grades in his paper grade book so when he had to punch in grades, he could "go down a column and just type their numbers instead of going through papers and digging through the piles." Mr. Cook said that the paperwork had gotten much better.

Mr. Cook had also figured out a way to do some of his paper work while students were busy doing something. For example after they read *Beowulf*, he allowed them to watch the movie in order to compare it to what they read. While they were watching, he did some of his work. This strategy worked out well because the students who had behaved well got a reward and so did Mr. Cook.

Although Mr. Cook did not plan to resign from teaching at Lincoln in the near future, he was not “shutting out other options.” “Eventually” he planned to get his “masters” and possibly teach “at a Community College.” For the “next five years,” however, he planned to stay in the public school system,” which was better than the six month goal” he had previously.

When Mr. Cook thought about quitting, it was not because of the kids; it was because of “the paperwork, the stress, school administration, school environment, but not the kids.” His kids actually made him “feel better by the end of the day.”

“Diapering, Powdering and Taking Care,” by Mrs. Baker

Before Mrs. Baker (pseudonym) became a teacher she worked for “many, many years in the corporate sector,” and she “stayed home with [her] children for some of that time. She had “always had a thing for reading” which began when her son was young and continued when her daughter was born. Teaching reading became “a passion” as she taught her daughter to read. She did “a lot of substituting” at the high school in her county and saw “an incredible need.” She found that the students in the classes she covered did not know “how to read” or “how to write” so she thought, “Well I taught my own daughter how to read” when “she was three and she picked it up pretty well.” She

thought maybe she could help others and she talked to her “kid and his friends,” and they said, “Yeah, we could really use you.”

Mrs. Baker’s jobs in the corporate world usually revolved around managing people, and her latest job, which was in Human Resources, aligned well with parenting because to her managing people was a lot like “diapering, powering, [and] taking care of children.” “In a lot of ways it’s about taking care of people meeting their needs, evaluating them for their positions.” Even though she was in an important corporate position that required her to take care of and evaluate adults, she believed that nothing “could have prepared [her] for the classroom except for a classroom.” She was happy she chose to become a teacher, but sometimes “the teacher evaluation process” was a problem. She wished she had “known *everything* while” she was taking teacher education courses at her college, and even though she admired her college as an institution, it did “not prepare [her] for the classroom.” She felt that while in college she could “do exercises and activities and write papers on the ideal classroom, but you won’t find it.”

She joined the faculty at Lincoln as a “lateral entry” teacher to fill a vacancy of a teacher who had left mid-year, and they had hired her for the next full year. She had worked on her “last semester” in college during her second semester of teaching, and she had participated in the internship program under Dr. Collins (pseudonym). She graduated as an undergraduate about one year before she began teaching full time, and she just needed three courses to get her “full licensure,” which she would complete during her second semester of teaching. Mrs. Baker admitted that even though she attended “orientation,” and had the help of a mentor and others, when she began working at

Lincoln there were things she just did not have “a clue” about how to handle. They expected her to know how to fill out certain forms without giving her any instruction. She often felt she was just “thrown into” situations.

Although she and many others had a “tough first semester,” Mrs. Baker credited Mr. Manzetti, her mentor, with being her “go to person” who helped her “with everything from classroom management problems, to personnel problems, to any kind of issue” She believed Mr. Manzetti knew what he was “talking about” because they had “a lot of things in common,” but more importantly she knew she could say what she had to say and trust he would not repeat things that would get her in trouble. Mr. Manzetti realized that “certain individuals” might share Mrs. Baker’s issues with an administrator, but he had her best interest in mind and would never do anything to jeopardize her position. He believed that “things should stay in-house.” Mr. Manzetti believed that “content-wise” Mrs. Baker had “everything” she needed, so it was “just a matter of working out everything else” and that second semester had “definitely started out much more smoothly.”

Mrs. Baker believed that class-size accounted for the improvement, and Mr. Manzetti agreed that his classes were smaller too; however, he made sure to “commend” Mrs. Baker for having not yet “pulled-out” any students to send to the office. He felt by not sending students to the office unless there was a strong reason, like a “fight,” that Mrs. Baker was showing she could manage her classroom on her own and that she could keep things “in-house.”

In addition to help from Mr. Manzetti, Mrs. Baker received “quite a bit” of help from “some of the other teachers” in her department. For example, Mr. Cook (pseudonym) shared a lot of the things that worked for him and others shared worksheets or an activity they had done that worked well. Mrs. Herman (pseudonym), Mr. Manzetti’s former mentor and the current content coach, had also shared information with her. And the teachers in her department, in general, were “pretty open to helping each other out.” Mr. Manzetti credited Mrs. Herman with closing the divide between grade levels and for promoting “camaraderie” among members of the department.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Baker could not say the “the office” had been as helpful. From her perspective she had received “a lot of mixed messages coming out of the office.” She did not “know who to go to, [or] who to trust,” depending on the situation. “Sometimes there was a lot of talking out of both sides” and she was told “not to” and she was told “to do.” She knew the stated policies, but she often wondered, “Do we stick to policy or let it slide today. I just don’t know,” Mrs. Baker got “a lot of uneasy feelings about what to do and what to enforce:” therefore, she sent students to the office based on her understanding of the policies, and administrators sent them back. As far as she was concerned, if they weren’t going to enforce the policy why did they have it? She felt that some administrators seemed to be “more approachable than others,” but sometimes she was forced to go to the “unapproachable” ones and they just put the problem back on her. Of all those who helped Mrs. Baker, she considered Mr. Manzetti to be her “first line of defense.” He was the “first person” she went to when she had a question or needed to know which person she needed to ask to handle something. Mr. Manzetti would tell her

to go to the other teachers in her department, Mrs. Boone (pseudonym), or to Mrs. Herman, and then to Mrs. Morgan (pseudonym), who was the mentor coordinator, and finally as a last resort an administrator. He tried to make sure she understood the “chain of command” and who would “help” and who would “hinder.” Lincoln chose her and she planned to do her best and to learn all she could in order to do a good job, but she did not feel well-prepared for what she had to do as a teacher at this school. Mrs. Baker’s jobs in corporate America that included nurturing and taking care of employees matched her job as a parent, but her job as a teacher did not seem to be as good a match, at least during first semester.

“You’ve Already Run a Good Teacher out of Here,” by Mrs. Stanley

Mrs. Stanley had been a coach and mentor in one of the departments at Lincoln for going on three years and in those years she had seen many new teachers try to make it there, but none of their stories was as sad as that of Mrs. Lawson’s best friend in the department, Mr. Jennings (pseudonym). Mr. Jennings, who died toward the end of first semester, was Mrs. Lawson’s closest colleague and she still cried when she talked about him. He had helped her a lot because he had experienced many of the same challenges that Mrs. Lawson had dealt with.

During Mr. Jennings’ first year as a teacher, around Christmas time, “he hit rock bottom.” Administrators were “all over him, ready to fire him,” and Mrs. Stanley said to them, “Don’t do it. Don’t do it. He’s got potential. He’s going to turn this around.” Mrs. Stanley was right; he did turn it around. As a matter of fact, he was elected “new teacher of the year.”

When Mr. Jennings got sick, which was between Thanksgiving and Christmas, administration was bringing in “sub after sub” and his class was an EOC (End of Course) class. Mrs. Stanley suggested that they get a sub for Mr. Todd’s (pseudonym) class, which was a non-EOC class and move Mr. Todd into that position before Christmas. Mrs. Stanley believed regardless of the fact that Mr. Todd had been having trouble with his 4th block, he was a certified teacher, and he could at least teach the content rather than relying on substitute teachers. Administrators said “No, no, no, he’s too bad.” So they “hired a substitute” and made Mr. Kent (pseudonym) “do double duty.” They had him “providing lessons and even jumping in teaching.” They thought they just needed someone in there until Mr. Jennings came back, but Mr. Jennings never came back. He died in early December.

“When [Mr. Todd] did take over [Mr. Jennings’] position at the beginning of second semester, with all this big turnaround and the first common assessment came out, [Lincoln] led the county” and Mr. Todd’s “students had the highest scores, and he did exactly what [Mrs. Stanley] told him to do.” Mrs. Stanley told Mr. Todd, “Stay right here [forming a V with her hands to show the middle] in the Standard Course of Study. This is your bible and this is what you’re teaching.” She and others “kept feeding him, and he did *exactly* what he was told to do, and now he was the golden boy, and that [was] how things” changed around Lincoln. When they were talking about the difference Mr. Jennings’ scores had made in the “overall composite,” Mrs. Stanley said, “If you remember, I told you to put [Mr. Todd] over there, but you would not listen to it.” Mrs.

Stanley thought, “That’ll teach them!” Mrs. Stanley had a good relationship with administrators and sometimes they listened to her and sometimes they did not.

In Mr. Jennings’s second year of teaching he befriended Mrs. Lawson, who was in her first year and during her second year, his third, he died suddenly of pneumonia. His death was most difficult for Mrs. Lawson because not only did she lose her closest colleague, she also had to move into “a dungeon room” so that the new teacher, Mr. Kent, could have her room. The room they gave Mrs. Lawson was old and difficult to deal with as a teaching space. It was so outdated it had the same layout it had when Mrs. Stanley taught in it in 1974.

Mrs. Stanley had tried to get the principals to allow Mrs. Stanley to move into a better room. She went to Mr. Simmons (pseudonym), an administrator, and “told him” that Mrs. Lawson would like to exchange rooms with another teacher, but Mr. Simmons said, “They’re set now. We’ve already done the scheduling.”

Mrs. Stanley said, “All we need to do is put a sign on the board of the room and say go to room such and such.” “But they wouldn’t do it” because they “didn’t want to mess anything up.”

Mr. Simmons said, “She’s already moved.”

Mrs. Stanley said, “Well, she’d happy to move back. She’d come over on a Saturday. She’d be happy to move back.” But “they wouldn’t have any of that.”

As a coach, Mrs. Stanley wondered how it worked. She would tell administrators what needed “to be done” and “some things” would “get done and some things would not get done.” One thing Mrs. Stanley had been adamant about was that Mrs. Lawson should

be assigned to teach honors/AP during her second year, but that did not happen. Instead they gave Mrs. Lawson “two inclusion classes” during first semester and two during second semester. In other words, they gave her, according to Mrs. Stanley, “the lowest of the low.” What was especially frustrating was that Mrs. Lawson had taken her own personal time to take the AP training and the teachers who had been assigned to teach the AP classes had never had any one pass the AP tests so nobody was “getting AP credit.”

Mrs. Stanley had taken some data showing how Mrs. Lawson’s students’ scores had improved while they were in Mrs. Lawson’s class. She “literally shoved it in the principal’s face and made him listen to [her] and then his attitude changed a little bit. But it was getting to the point that no one understood what she was working with and that [the school decision-makers] were wasting her talents.” Mrs. Stanley told Mrs. Lawson she should look at teaching in a community college because she would be “perfect over there.”

Mrs. Stanley felt that the best thing about Mrs. Lawson as a teacher was her perseverance and her depth of knowledge. Mrs. Lawson also shared everything and she was “quite a momma...behind the scenes doing things that nobody” knew she was doing and giving out ideas. She had given out “packets” of materials and “actual lessons on how to do things.” Even though Mrs. Stanley was only around two days a week, she knew that Mrs. Lawson was “in the background doing” things for her colleagues.

One of Mrs. Lawson’s most significant talents, according to Mrs. Stanley, was her ability to “break” information down so teachers and students could understand it and learn it. This opinion was shared by Mrs. Cathy (pseudonym), the coach from the state

office who worked with “low performing schools.” Mrs. Cathy had told administrators at Lincoln that Mrs. Lawson had a “real knack” with the Lincoln kids. Mrs. Cathy and Mrs. Stanley both “pulled data” to show administrators why they thought Mrs. Lawson had a “real knack with [their] kids.” Mrs. Cathy went to the principal, Dr. Thomas (pseudonym), and said that Mrs. Lawson was strong with both low performing and high performing students. Dr. Thomas was under “such pressure with the numbers” and they needed to put their “strongest teachers with the lowest kids” because they had to “pull up the bottom.” According to Mrs. Stanley it took “ten good scores to pull up a flunk.”

Mrs. Stanley had proposed to Dr. Thomas that he assign one of their most experienced teachers, Mrs. Davis, to teach the lowest kids, but instead she continued to teach the AP classes and the students in those classes continued to fail to pass the AP test in order to get AP credit. And administrators continued to fail to recognize that Mrs. Lawson was “moving kids;” and they had even put her on a “management plan” based on the fact that her class averages on the EOC were below 60%. This seemed unfair because Mrs. Lawson had “beat the state average by several points and beat out other EC (Exceptional Children) classes taught by more a “experienced teacher.”

When Mrs. Stanley found out about the “management plan,” she said to Dr. Thomas, “Are you crazy? You saw the data! You saw how she’s moving these people and you’re going to punish her for this?” Administrators had told Mrs. Stanley and Mrs. Lawson that perhaps she could teach AP during her third year, but Mrs. Stanley told them, “You’re too late! You’ve already run a good teacher out of here.”

Mrs. Stanley worked with another teacher, Mr. Kent (pseudonym), who also seemed to be “misplaced.” She believed he belonged at the “middle college.” She would have loved to keep him, but “for his own strengths” the school should not “keep him around” so they were “probably going to lose him too.” Mrs. Captain’s friend, Mr. Todd (pseudonym) had also had problems initially, and administrators were ready to get rid of him. Mrs. Stanley believed “this school jumped” instead of giving teachers time to work out their challenges, which often meant that they had something like “25-30 teachers turn over every year.”

“The Right Thing,” by Mrs. Herman

Mrs. Herman had already been teaching for “twenty some years” when she came to Lincoln in 2000, and she had already seen at least three principals come and go as of school year 2010-11. In 2000, they had a very young principal, Mr. Townsend (pseudonym), who many of the faculty felt had been “set up to fail.” Mr. Townsend had “only taught two and a half years,” and he did like many principals do according to Mrs. Herman, “they throw things up and then let them trickle down.” That did not work at Lincoln, so they got another principal, but he did the same thing; he would just throw things up to see where they fell. This constant upheaval was confusing and “the people” wondered “What do you want us to do?”

Historically, at Lincoln things changed “too quickly,” and administrators would “come in on day one” and start making changes “without observing.” Most principals

made the mistake of “listening to what people” said rather than “seeing what they” were doing, which may have contributed to their lack of success.

Not only did principals come and go, teachers also left Lincoln at alarming rates. The revolving door of teachers and principals from Lincoln had been a big problem. Mrs. Herman believed it took people who had special skills and talents to make it at their school. All the intelligence, creativity, and “book” sense would not guarantee that a principal or teacher would make it. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Herman had seen doctoral students fail to reach their “kids.” She also felt that those who made it had an understanding of what the principal wanted from them, and she could help them by being his interpreter.

Mrs. Herman felt that by interpreting for novices what principals really meant, she helped them avoid making disastrous mistakes. She told her mentees, “Don’t go [to the principal] with your jawjack; you go with a written list of things and concerns about that one little battle you want [him] to modify, change, get rid of, etc., and be willing to serve on the committee that addresses that particular issue.” As an interpreter of principals, Mrs. Herman, was able to help several of her mentees understand them, and *she* was able to understand them herself because not only did she have the benefit of years of experience working with a wide variety of leadership styles, she also had an insider’s view of how principals functioned because her father was one. Understanding the life of a principal, she said, “Never on this side of Hell would I ever want to be one.”

Also, the fact that Mrs. Herman had been at Lincoln longer than most principals made her an expert on the school culture regardless of who was leading. This knowledge

made her better able to interpret the students, their parents, and other veteran teachers for those who were new in the school. Her wisdom from years of experience as a teacher, her knowledge of the culture at Lincoln, and her flexible and caring personality made her a valuable asset.

When Dr. Thomas (pseudonym), their current principal, arrived at midyear in 2006, according to Mrs. Herman, he was one of “those dynamic” people that if it “hits” his “brain, it comes out” of his “mouth,” but the “students” knew he had their “best interest at heart.” Those teachers who kept their positions were able to get past his “gruff exterior,” and even though they did not always agree with his philosophy and actions, they agreed with his intentions regarding the students. Some of them had figured out what they needed to do, and teacher turnover had decreased as of the beginning of school year 2010-11.

Mrs. Herman’s assessment of Dr. Thomas was that the faculty knew he would support them if they were doing “the right thing,” but it was another story if he believed a teacher was *not* doing what he thought was “the right thing.” As a mentor, Mrs. Herman was “not sure” she agreed with that idea; however, she had often helped her mentees understand what Dr. Thomas’ defined as “the right thing.” Mrs. Herman acknowledged that Dr. Thomas’ leadership had seemed to work for him and for Lincoln because after he had been there for three and one half years, the district had designated it as one of the most improved schools of its kind for 2009-2010.

“The Bears: A Monster Class,” by Mrs. Stewart

Mrs. Stewart’s second class which she alternately called “the bears” and “the monster class” had 32 students, 22 of whom are boys and 10 of whom had learning disabilities for which they had “Individualized Educational Plans” (IEPs). This class had an inclusion teacher, Mrs. Harper (pseudonym), whose major role was to collaborate with Mrs. Stewart to provide direct support for her special education students in her regular classroom during the last 45 minutes of class. Mrs. Harper suggested that Mrs. Stewart needed to institute a means of providing positive reinforcement for challenging students. Mrs. Stewart decided to provide candy rewards she purchased with her personal money. She placed five Starburst candies at a time on students’ desks and developed various procedures and contracts with students about their ability to keep this candy. Her plan was to decrease the candy gradually and to begin substituting other rewards such as homework passes and extra points. As of day seven of teaching, she planned to totally wean her students from needing special rewards for behaving well.

Mrs. Herman had been peeking in on this class every now and then to offer non-judgmental and helpful advice. Mrs. Stewart admitted that when some people came into her room, she felt vulnerable. Mrs. Herman’s presence did not disturb her, though, because she knew she was there to encourage and support her rather than to criticize how and what she was teaching. For instance, Mrs. Herman’s attitude about students and teachers assured Mrs. Stewart and validated the way she handled “the bears.”

Mrs. Herman assured Mrs. Stewart that everyone had this kind of class from time to time, but that even though her 2nd block was filled with students who appeared to come

from the “depths of Hell,” Mrs. Herman assured her she would survive. Mrs. Herman believed that teachers are expected to be able to work miracles with students, for instance, to make “the blind, see; the deaf, hear; the mute, talk, and the lame, walk.” She also believed that a person could not consider herself to be “a real teacher” until she had experienced “that kind of class.” This kind of reasoning helped Mrs. Stewart accept the times when she failed to reach “the bears.”

Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Herman agreed that the students in this mostly male class had not had experiences in their homes that prepared them for a conversation-based approach to learning. For instance, not only were these students reading well-below grade level, they also seemed unable “to talk about things that [had] any type of depth.” These students also did not seem to understand or be able to execute basic behaviors like taking turns. Mrs. Stewart was frustrated that it still took “10 minutes of every class” to review procedures. Another problem was absenteeism, which occurred because these students were often in In-School Suspension (ISS), having been sent there by other teachers. Finally, even if these bears could do much better, they did not seem motivated to try.

Mrs. Herman, who seemed to be highly familiar with many of Lincoln’s students from the lower end of the socioeconomic scale, said that they often had single mothers and multiple half siblings from different fathers so that their main concern was getting respect. Mrs. Herman, helped Mrs. Stewart understand that being white *and* female in this kind of environment was a “double whammy,” and these kids, who already had “image problems” had a hard time accepting “a female hired to be the authority in the room.” She knew from experience and from being an African American female that these

students, who already felt “walked on,” had often responded to her with, “Heck no, my momma don’t say that to me!”

And she felt comfortable responding to them with, “Well, I guess that’s why I need to slap you cross your mouth, but aren’t you glad I’m *not* your mamma.” She said with the younger students she might be able to be more physical, but that with the high school students, she said, “once they get up to that age, you can’t be beating up on the guys cause they’ll slap you back and then you got to call the police officer.”

Mrs. Stewart realized she had to form relationships with her “bears” including going to see them play sports and finding ways to show she was “proud of them.” She also realized that they were not going to consistently work hard in class because they may not be “in the mood.” This inconsistency was one of the hardest things for Mrs. Stewart to accept, but she was able to feel less frustrated with students and less personally defeated when she realized the reason they behaved this way was that as 14 year olds “they [were] not consistent with who [they were] yet” and that most often it was not her they were reacting too, but something within themselves, outside of her class, or even outside of the school.

Both Mrs. Herman and Mrs. Stewart accepted the fact that the “bears” like younger high school students were a “little hormonal, a little angry, a little everything” and that the boys were “feeling testosterone levels up and down” and “the girls” were just “estrogen ridden.” They agreed that these “hormone ridden” students were at a “horrible” life stage where they were struggling with being “children and adults at the same time.”

Mrs. Herman and Mrs. Stewart co-created a metaphor describing these students. Mrs. Herman began the metaphor by saying, “[These students are phoenix] fledglings trying to”

Mrs. Stewart: “burst forth into the world.”

Mrs. Herman: “like fledglings they’re”

Mrs. Stewart: “and they’re still not use to their wings, and we’re teaching them how to stretch them out”

Mrs. Herman: “And then they get out there and they’re flapping and they say OHH”

Mrs. Stewart: “And they flop down”

Mrs. Herman: “And then we have to”

Mrs. Stewart: “That’s exactly what it feels like”

Mrs. Herman: “oops, I gotcha, and they’re so happy and many of them we have to take them outside the door”

Mrs. Stewart: “Everyday” [laughter]

Mrs. Herman: “and you have to address them, and then you have to undress them, and then you have to redress them. Then you have to bury them deep and you set them inside the little fiery furnace and in the ashes, and then they *rise* from them. She *loves me!* And I never figured out why I have to take my left foot and put it in the old anal canal and get them a new one. *But they won’t love you until you do that.*”

When Mrs. Stewart compared herself with other teachers, she recalled that one of her “bears” said to her, “You think we’re crazy in here, you should see us in first block”

and one boy told her that they were “angels in here compared to our other block.” She was pleased that often she was able to get “45 minutes of . . . quiet work out of an hour and a half” class, and from what she had heard “from other teachers and from other people, they [couldn’t] even get them to function.” Mrs. Herman agreed that the students responded to Mrs. Stewart beautifully and that she did not get that “pull back anymore, so [students had] bought into her whatever.” She recalled that one of the most famous “bears” had declared that Mrs. Stewart was his “favorite teacher.”

“I See a . . . Teacher,” by Mrs. Stewart

Mrs. Stewart was delighted to be part of the PLC, and one of the major contributors to that community was her mentor, Mrs. Herman. Not only was Mrs. Herman a valuable member of that community, she was also a powerful advocate for them and for Mrs. Stewart personally. Some mentoring programs function under the assumption that mentors should keep upmost confidentiality regarding their work with their mentees; however, in the case of Mrs. Herman, Mrs. Stewart was glad that Mrs. Herman had talked about her to their principal.

To Mrs. Stewart, her mentor was unlike others who had helped her during her first year of teaching. For example, she loved the fact that her peers, who were right next to her, had “their sleeves rolled up” and knew how she felt “every minute of every day.” And she believed that administrators were pleased that when she asked for their help, it was a sign that she wanted to be able to do her job well. But with Mrs. Herman, she had “a different relationship.” She went to Mrs. Herman when nothing else worked, and when she had “exhausted other resources.”

One of the reasons Mrs. Stewart went to Mrs. Herman when all else failed was that she knew Mrs. Herman had “gone through every step [of teaching] 1,000’s of times with 1,000’s of kids [and had experienced] . . . every step of the parent phone call, the moving the kid, putting the kid in a different classroom, sending the kid to ISS, and then it still doesn’t work,” you “just keep going.” Mrs. Stewart said she would have chosen Mrs. Herman, even if administration had not paired them because she and Mrs. Herman both learned “through positivity, not negativity.” From the first time she met Mrs. Herman, Mrs. Stewart knew they could work well together because of their shared philosophies.

Mrs. Stewart said that Mrs. Herman would often come into her room and say things that functioned as a “little pat on the back,” but she did not often praise her work directly. One day after Dr. Thomas (pseudonym), the principal, observed her, he said, “What do you think about having Mrs. Herman as your mentor?”

Mrs. Stewart answered, “Oh, she’s great!”

And Dr. Thomas replied, “She said when she looks at you, she just *sees* a . . . teacher. She just *sees* one.” Mrs. Herman had never said that to Mrs. Stewart and hearing this praise by way of Dr. Thomas meant more to her and was more powerful than telling her directly. It was more meaningful for her “to be putting *my* reputation out like that” because at Lincoln “rep matter[ed]” and “it [was] sink or swim as far as your reputation.” Mrs. Stewart realized that when someone like Mrs. Herman who had 30 years of experience as a . . . teacher said she was “on point,” that carried a great deal of weight with the principal and with others in the school.

Mrs. Herman also helped Mrs. Stewart as far as her reputation at the district level. For example, when Mrs. Herman collaborated with the person from the central office who was in charge of over-seeing a special curriculum, and together they told Mrs. Stewart that she was a “passionate teacher with charisma.” This kind of positive acknowledgement of her abilities seemed to always come when Mrs. Stewart felt she was “swimming in the land of the lost,” and it was ironic that this encouragement came when she felt she was “sinking.” Another way Mrs. Herman’s help differed from the help others gave her was that Mrs. Herman was able to “go in [to administration] and say how” Mrs. Stewart had a class with 32 kids and that “this [was not] right” and “*enough* . . . no more kids are going in there.”

Mrs. Stewart also had a “minor in coaching” and she saw teaching like coaching in that it was about team building. She determined, however, that as a mentor, Mrs. Herman, did not ask “do you want to play for me? It [was] more like, do you want to play for the team that is your classroom?” Most importantly to Mrs. Stewart, regardless of her 30 years of experience, Mrs. Herman never “talked down” to her and always gave her the upmost respect and kindness. She never tried to get others to “buy into” her “theory of teaching.” Mrs. Herman concluded that it was only those who “roll[ed] up [their] own sleeves and [got] in with the teachers” who could help them figure out how to solve classroom issues and could serve as advocates. She said that administrators could say what they wanted to see, but unless they were working beside the teacher in the classroom, their requirements were questionable because she wondered if they could execute the teaching methods they suggested.

Mrs. Stewart, Mrs. Herman, and Mr. Manzetti agreed that the role of the mentor was distinguishable from other helping relationships and that on some days, the voice of the mentor made a great difference to novice teachers.

“The Office,” by Mr. Manzetti

Although Mr. Manzetti did “not always agree with what the administration” wanted to do, he knew they had “the best interest of the kids in mind” and he felt they had done several things to improve student and teacher morale, so that teacher turnover had not been as high as when he first started teaching at the school three years ago. In his years at the school he had *rarely* relied on “the office” to take care of his discipline issues; however, he was disappointed on two specific occasions when it was unresponsive to his needs.

One incident occurred when Mr. Manzetti was conducting a review lesson in his second block class. One of the girls in the class misinterpreted a look from another girl and they began yelling at each other. The second time he needed the front office it was not even his 4th block, it was another class in which a student “was in the midst of having his second seizure in two days,” and while Mr. Manzetti was “trying to hold the kid up,” he asked a student to call the office for him. However, the office did not believe the student; therefore, Mr. Manzetti had to call himself to get someone to come down to his room and help him. He was appalled that “despite the fact that [he did not] call the office often, and the kid was having an emergency, [he] still had questions asked.” Both Mrs. Herman and Mr. Manzetti acknowledged that the office did not respond to teachers in their school who constantly asked for their assistance. Mrs. Herman recalled that

whenever she called for help, the office sent the police and the janitor even came because they knew it must be something bad. Mr. Manzetti believed that because he rarely asked for help, the office should have been more responsive to him too.

Mr. Manzetti was also disappointed with the manner in which the office handled the school-wide policy on the possession of cell phones. The school policy on cell phone possession was that if a teacher confiscated a cell phone, he or she was supposed to take it to the front office and it was “supposed to be there for ten days.” This was “an official rule”; however, when Mr. Manzetti confiscated cell phones from his students three times, each of those times as soon as he brought the cell phone up to the office, the students were already there with their parents, and they got their cell phones back by the end of the day. He was concerned that not only did he see the blatant disregard of the “official rule,” but that the students also saw “right through it.”

Mr. Manzetti was grateful that Mrs. Herman had warned him to “stay out of the office” and “stay out of the teachers’ lounge.” She had “literally barred” him from going down to complain about his disappointments with administration. He was so glad she did because he saw over the years how the office withheld its support for novices who had cried out too often for help or complained too much about administrative actions. Mrs. Herman functioned as Mr. Manzetti’s “interpreter” of office discourse. For instance, she taught Mr. Manzetti that words like “open door policy” did not mean teachers were welcome to come into an administrator’s office and air their concerns without showing how *they* planned to solve them. Mrs. Herman had seen far too many novices misinterpret messages from administrators and the result was disavowal and outright rejection. Mr.

Manzetti felt that Mrs. Herman had saved him from this kind of treatment from the office.

Nevertheless, Mr. Manzetti still could not accept the apparent lack of “consistency as far as rules” were concerned, and he and Mrs. Herman were both dissatisfied with curriculum issues that included strict pacing guides and heavy-handed attempts to control their teaching. These conflicts with administration made their jobs less enjoyable, but they both knew how to cope.

“There’s a Story behind Every Number,” by Mrs. Stanley

Mrs. Stanley believed that Mrs. Lawson was a good teacher and that she could teach low-performing students and those who were capable of taking AP courses. Mrs. Lawson had especially “shown herself” and shined through with the lower performing students. Teachers and principals at Lincoln had access to what was called “EVOS data,” which provided a statistical prediction of students’ capacity to pass EOC (End of Course) tests. According to Mrs. Stanley, Mrs. Lawson had gotten some kids with a .1 chance of ever passing the EOC “up to a Level 2,” which was not a passing score, but was better than a Level 1 and was often within a standard deviation of being a Level 3.

Mrs. Stanley saw Mrs. Lawson’s ability to move students toward higher achievement in science as “major,” but she did not think Mrs. Lawson had been recognized for doing that, nor did school leaders appreciate how stressful it could be to teach “the lowest of the low” and to move them. Mrs. Stanley felt it was her job to recognize that effort and to let administrators know what was “going on” because “all they look[ed] at was numbers, and they did not think teachers were doing anything.” Mrs.

Stanley helped the teachers in her department to realize there was “a story behind every number.” Mrs. Stanley saw one of her major roles as helping teachers during their PLC meetings to look at those stories. In the PLC meeting they would look at a kid and say, “That kid is really low. What is his story? What’s with this one?” And they would explore some ideas about why that low score. Unfortunately, according to Mrs. Stanley, in “the national environment today” most often people “blame[d] the teacher” and wanted to “get rid of the teacher.” There was no accountability for the students.

As far as the students at Lincoln, there were “so many personalities” and socio-economic factors. Some of their students did not have two parents, some did not get enough to eat, and some were “homeless” or did not speak English. At Lincoln 46 different languages (or something like that) were spoken. Mrs. Stanley believed they needed “interpreters.” Sometimes it seemed to Mrs. Stanley that the students at Lincoln did not care about school.

On one occasion Mrs. Stanley asked Mrs. Rankin, “Why don’t they care? How can we make this one kid care?”

Mrs. Rankin replied. “They don’t even feel like they have a future, so they don’t care. There’s nothing out there for them.”

Mrs. Stanley was talking to Mrs. Fontaine (pseudonym) about this problem and Mrs. Stanley said, “all these special district initiatives coming down on us and all this data they want us to collect,” why not put your energy into a “community center and start talking to these students and their parents. Do something to turn that attitude around” and stop “blaming it all” on the school.

Mrs. Stanley recalled a study that was done “in a very poor rural area like the white cockney area, and when they compared it to rural poor in America with the same socio-economic background” they had the “very same problems” they had a Lincoln. “It wasn’t a race thing, it was socio-economic.”

Mrs. Stanley believed that she could advise administrators about the best use of faculty because she had “the data to back it up.” She also believed she could help teachers improve their scores by helping follow “the plan,” which included staying focused on the core curriculum. Mrs. Stanley gave the example of Mrs. Rankin, who did not have a degree in her subject area, but because she had followed “the plan,” she was “leading the district and the county” in terms of EOC scores. Mrs. Stanley had told her what to “do, and she did it.” Mrs. Stanley felt that when administrators looked “at the results [she] got a little more respect there.” Because Mrs. Stanley had taught “every single . . . course” in her content area, she had “the big picture” and she could “walk into anyone’s classroom and take over at any point.” Mrs. Stanley had also written questions for the EOC so even though she could never disclose those specific questions; she could tell teachers where the questions came from. Mrs. Stanley could tell when teachers were covering material not tested, and she could remind them to prioritize tested areas, which came from the “center section” of the Standard Course of Study. The center section broke “down into little things” students needed to know. Mrs. Stanley encouraged teachers to create lesson plans that addressed that center section.

One time she went into Mr. Jennings' (pseudonym) class while he was teaching something. Mrs. Stanley said, "This is great! It's not going to be on the EOC, but this is great! If you have time do it."

Mr. Jennings replied, "Well, I'm really kind of pushed for time. How do you know it's not on the EOC?"

Mrs. Stanley pulled out the Standard Course of Study. She said, "Do you see it on this Standard Course of Study?"

Mr. Jennings said, "No."

Mrs. Stanley said, "It's not tested."

Mr. Jennings said, "Oh."

First semester when his scores came in his "passing rate" was 13%. Second semester it was 58% because Mrs. Stanley and others had finally gotten him "to stop jumping around." They "finally got him focused" and he "got his discipline in line." Mr. Jennings came to Mrs. Stanley about his most recent scores and said, "Is that all right?"

Mrs. Stanley said, "13 to 58. What do you think?"

"Too Young to Commit," by Ms. Captain

Although Ms. Captain seemed relatively happy at Lincoln, she did not plan to return the following year. She was planning to leave in June, and it was not "because of the school, it [was] not because of the job, it [was] because [she had] other plans for [her] life at this moment." She "just graduated college a year ago and [she felt] like [she was] too young to have a career right now." Ms. Captain planned to leave "the country because [she wanted] to live abroad for probably about ten years in different parts of the

world” she had not seen. She was “the kind of person” who loved “traveling” and she wanted to “do it now” when she did not “have any kids.” Even though she was planning to travel, she also planned to continue teaching. She said, “I love teaching! And that’s what I plan on doing while I’m abroad. I’m going to teach. It’s not the school. It’s not the kids. It’s not the job. I just need to live my life a little bit. It’s time for a change.”

“The Veteran: Mrs. Davis,” by Mrs. Lawson

One of the hardest things Mrs. Lawson had dealt with as a new teacher was her conflict with a veteran teacher, Mrs. Davis. The problem with Mrs. Davis went “back to before [Mrs. Lawson] started teaching.” When Mrs. Lawson was taking a “Methods” course before she “student taught, one of the interns” in the class student taught with Mrs. Davis. Mrs. Davis made a mistake when she used “the system to rate how” her intern had performed for the semester. This system did not use names, it used numbers, and Mrs. Davis “clicked” Mrs. Lawson’s number by accident. By clicking on Mrs. Lawson’s number, Mrs. Davis made it impossible for Mrs. Lawson’s cooperating teacher to evaluate her, so she had an incomplete for the course. Unfortunately, Mrs. Davis “wouldn’t go back and uncheck the box” in order to correct her mistake. It took Mrs. Lawson a least “a month into the next semester to get it straightened out.”

Because Mrs. Davis would not go and “uncheck a box,” Mrs. Lawson worried that she would not get the financial aid she had been receiving and it “really bugged” her that even though she knew she had made an A in the course, it was not showing up. Although she knew there had been a mistake, she did not know “how it would work if it got cleared up later.” Even though Mrs. Davis recognized her mistake, she did not “take

the time to go uncheck the box,” and Mrs. Lawson’s “cooperating teacher was getting married in December so she wasn’t at school after December 18 or something so there was no way to get her to” correct the error. “It was just a mess.”

Another thing that Mrs. Davis did that bothered Mrs. Lawson had to do with Mrs. Davis’s unwillingness to show an interest in ideas and materials Mrs. Lawson shared with the PLC. Mrs. Stanley and other teachers were impressed with Mrs. Lawson’s commitment to sharing as much as she could with other teachers. Mrs. Lawson shared with others because she believed she would not “have been successful in [her] first year of teaching if [she] hadn’t had the help of all the people” she “interned with and student taught with.” One teacher at another high school in the area had given Mrs. Lawson “a pile of stuff” every time Mrs. Lawson went there. She also had received materials at Teaching Fellows’ conferences. Fellow teachers would give her all the documents they had saved from their courses. Also her cooperating teacher, Mrs. Carmichael had allowed Mrs. Lawson to copy “pretty much everything she wanted from her files” before she left. It took them three days to get it all.

Mrs. Lawson had left her student teaching assignment with “a mound of stuff and a mound of resources” that she could “pull from.” If she had not had those materials to “start with,” there was no way she could have succeeded. She believed she would have been “doing boring lecture notes,” had she not gotten “good graphic organizers” to help make her course content simple and focused so that students could understand it.

Mrs. Lawson’s philosophy was that if other teachers had not shared with her and if she was not sharing materials and ideas with others, she could not be successful.

Therefore, “for the first couple of months” she copied something she was “really proud of and [she] brought it to the PLC.” She said, “Here you go [imitating giving out materials].” All of the other teachers were glad to get the materials.

However, Mrs. Davis’ said, “Oh, no thanks. I’ve got what I want.”

“She wouldn’t even take the paper.” Mrs. Lawson had often “gotten a lot of things that” she did not really want or that she did not “see a use for,” but she would put it in her files because sometimes there was “a good graphic” on it or there was something she could use if she tweaked it to make “a good lab” or “something like that.” So if somebody gave her something, she took it no matter what it was and then later she would “evaluate whether it was good or not,” but Mrs. Davis would not “even take the papers.” When she did take some of Mrs. Lawson’s papers, she made “snide comments” about what she did instead, and she did not think she could use Mrs. Lawson’s activity because it was “this, that, or the other.” Mrs. Lawson “just stopped sending stuff to her.”

Another incident occurred when Mrs. Lawson tried to help other teachers by providing them information about test scores. Teachers in Mrs. Lawson’s district had “to keep portfolios on each student who failed the subject area EOC, [which] was one of those big five” students had “to pass.” If students did not pass the EOC, teachers had to create a portfolio of their work; however, if students’ scores were within the “standard deviation” teachers did not “have to go through the portfolio process.” While Mrs. Lawson was in the middle of the “stress about portfolios” during her first year of teaching, she “found out what the standard deviation was” so she “sent an email” to the other teachers in her department telling them she had found out the standard deviation.

The teachers “had done the first round of testing by this point” and Mrs. Lawson had found out that the standard deviation was “145 or whatever it was.” She told her colleagues that if students scored above “145 on the first test” and they took the retest, administrators would not be calling for portfolios. Creating portfolios was “a lot of work so” Mrs. Lawson “wanted to share that little helpful hint.” She just sent the information to the teachers in her department and told them to contact her if they had any questions.

Mrs. Davis found out about the fact that Mrs. Lawson had sent the email about standard deviation to teachers in her department, and she “went straight up to [the] curriculum facilitator who [was] very stern.” Mrs. Davis said, “Mrs. Lawson said, ‘Blah, blah, blah, blah. Is that true?’” The “curriculum facilitator got mad that” Mrs. Lawson had sent “information about portfolios that should only come from her.” She sent Mrs. Lawson “this nasty, nasty email” that was “long and ugly.” Mrs. Lawson got in trouble with the curriculum facilitator because Mrs. Davis “had gone and used names and asked if the information was true.”

Issues with Mrs. Davis had been going on for the past two years, and Mrs. Lawson did not know why. She wondered if Mrs. Davis did not like the fact that Mrs. Lawson was always offering to help other teachers with graphic organizers or with content information, and that maybe Mrs. Davis felt that Mrs. Lawson was invading her “territory.” Also, Mrs. Lawson thought that Mrs. Davis believed that if a teacher needed help they were not competent; therefore, Mrs. Lawson did not feel comfortable going to Mrs. Davis for help.

Another issue happened when Mrs. Lawson was “stuck with planning the field trip” for all the content area “classes.” The field trip occurred a week after Mr. Jennings (pseudonym) died, and Mrs. Lawson was “planning for everybody’s students and coordinating all by [herself].” On the morning of the field trip, Mrs. Lawson was “trying to figure out the buses.” She had decided to split students up alphabetically, so she stayed up to midnight to make a roster and signs to put in the buses. They were leaving at 10 o’clock, and she went to Mrs. Davis “that morning and handed her a list.”

Mrs. Lawson said, “Can you just, when you go to the bus, put this sign in the window and then check off names as they come in to the bus?”

Mrs. Davis “flipped out” and said, “It would have been nice to have gotten this a couple of days ago. Why do expect me to do this?”

Mrs. Lawson wondered why Mrs. Davis needed “a list two days before” a field trip. Those kinds of lists were easy to forget and easy to lose, and it was not “a hard task.” Mrs. Lawson pointed these things out, and Mrs. Davis “grudgingly agreed” to help.

Also, Mrs. Lawson “was leaving sub-plans for everyone” and she asked Mrs. Davis “to print out a roster so [Mrs. Lawson] could leave” the sub-plans. Mrs. Davis made Mrs. Lawson “take a paper copy of her role and go upstairs and make a copy of it and bring it back to her.” This demand seemed unreasonable to Mrs. Lawson because Mrs. David could have printed off her roster from the computer.

Finally, Mrs. Lawson “divided everyone up in groups and [she] had gone and asked” Mrs. Davis, “Do you want to be with the ESL class or do you want [Mr. Wilson

(pseudonym)] with the class?” Mrs. Lawson knew that Mrs. Davis had been having some problems with this class and that Mr. Wilson was planning to go on the trip to chaperone.

Mrs. Davis said, “I’ll take the class.”

When Mrs. Lawson handed her the “folder with all the students’ information and lists and everything,” Mrs. Davis said, “Oh, I wanted Mr. Wilson to have the ESL class.”

Mrs. Lawson thought this “wasn’t a big deal, but” she had “just asked her that same question, and she said something else.” She had misunderstood Mrs. Lawson’s question, but “it was pretty simple.” Mrs. Lawson just “crossed her name out and put” Mr. Wilson’s on one folder and “crossed his name out and wrote [Mrs. Davis] and switched the folders.” It was irritating because when Mrs. Lawson had asked her which group she wanted, she had made “a big deal out of it the day of” the field trip.

The most recent incident with Mrs. Davis bothered Mrs. Lawson because she was so tired of the way Mrs. Davis treated her. They were in a meeting and “talking about corrective instruction” and whether teachers should correct misconceptions as they occurred. Mrs. Lawson made “the comment” that sometimes she found that it was a good idea to “pause and give” students “a break” because they might become “over saturated with information.” Mrs. Lawson, herself, when she learned a lot of information, sometimes felt overwhelmed at the time, but when she went back later, she found that the information would “start to make sense.” For example, Mrs. Lawson realized her students had not understood the meaning of the term, “*a-sexual*,” on the first day she taught it, but the next day they tried “to work out the information” and they eventually

understood it. Mrs. Lawson was not saying if somebody had a misconception that she would not try to correct it right then, but Mrs. Davis said, "I disagree with that."

Mrs. Lawson had "just made the comment" that sometimes "students needed a little space" when they were trying to learn new concepts.

Mrs. Davis "went on and on and on about" fixing misconceptions.

Mrs. Lawson was trying to "say after that [did not] work sometimes" teachers needed to give students a break.

Mrs. Davis said, "Let me finish please!"

Mrs. Lawson could not handle the conversation any longer. She found it interesting that Mrs. Davis made "a comment about a problem" at Lincoln with "the revolving door" of "new teachers leaving and leaving and leaving."

Mrs. Davis said, "I'll do anything I can do to make sure that doesn't happen; that we're all happy."

Mrs. Davis did not seem to realize that she had played a large role in the reason Mrs. Lawson had been unhappy at Lincoln. Mrs. Lawson said she also found it interesting that even though Mrs. Davis had never accepted anything from her, Mrs. Davis said, "If you stop trying to change and learning new things, it's time to go."

Mrs. Lawson found it ironic that "any time anyone in any meeting" would bring something about needing to change or some new idea they needed to try, Mrs. Davis would "cross her arms" and say, "I ain't gonna do it!" She did it as "kind of a joke," but it was not funny to Mrs. Lawson.

Mrs. Davis was hanging on to the AP and upper level courses. She was one of the most experienced of the teachers having been at Lincoln for “13 or 15 years.” The amount of teacher turnover at Lincoln was so constant that to qualify as a veteran, a teacher had to have taught there about 5 years. Mrs. Davis and Mr. Anderson (pseudonym) had been at Lincoln the longest, and they controlled all the department’s supplies and equipment. When teachers wanted to use some of those supplies and equipment, they had to “go in [Mrs. Davis’ or Mr. Anderson’s] rooms and check it out.” They had to return it “asap” and “spick and span.” These veteran teachers got everything they wanted and administration loved them. Unfortunately, they might have been good teachers, but they would not change anything, they would not try new things, and they did not do anything extra at all. Mrs. Lawson could not figure out why those kinds of behaviors were “rewarded and valued” at Lincoln.

Both Mrs. Davis and Mr. Anderson taught the AP science courses at Lincoln and “neither one of them [had] a passing score in at least the past three years.” Although the students these two teachers taught in AP classes did not pass the AP tests, these same students passed AP tests in other subject areas; therefore, they had shown they had the aptitude to pass.

Mrs. Lawson said she might have stayed at Lincoln if administrators had given her the AP class during her second year, but she had been “through the mill” and even if she had been assigned to teach AP, she believed that what was going on in her school district was a “mess.” Part of Mrs. Lawson’s personal mess was her relationship with Mrs. Davis, and Mrs. Davis was not going anywhere, at least not until she retired.

“Somebody Cleaned the Glass,” by Mr. Cook

A department at Lincoln “communicated very well among itself,” but “a lot of times there” was “a breakdown of communication from the top to the bottom.” Being a novice teacher, Mr. Cook considered himself to be at “the bottom.” He also realized that there were things about teaching they did not “tell you.” For instance he never had heard that “it was just get the kids out of high school.” He had seen “hints of it” when he was a pre-service teacher, but when he became a teacher, “it was like somebody cleaned the glass.”

Mr. Cook recalled that when he was doing his student teaching, he realized students were given lots of opportunities to pass, but he personally did not have to “call all the parents” or “fill out all the PEPs.” He did not “go in the grade book and see what the grades looked like.” He did not even remember the school’s 10-day policy. He “always knew there was some kind of way...that Johnny Appleseed never came to school, but then Johnny Appleseed [passed] the class.” He did not know “how the heck this kid managed to pass, but then it [was] like you did not see the process. They passed because [teachers] took a student and fed them everything they missed.” And because it was impossible for these students to do everything they had missed in ten days, teachers had to make everything they did into one “little thing,” like a “concentrate.” Unfortunately, some teachers just gave students a passing grade in order to avoid doing all the work it took to participate in the process.

Mr. Cook had always seen “the grading and the fun it.” For example when he decided to become a teacher, he was “excited” about having his own “grade book,” his

own classroom, his own books, his own students. However he found out he had to “throw the grade book out the window because it really [did not] matter. Also the classroom did not matter because students did not have to actually be in it to get a grade.” They could be “at home every day and then stay after school for 25 minutes per day to make up work, and then [they did not] have to do anything when [they did] come to school because [they got] ten days after the semester.” So Mr. Cook concluded that he did not “matter,” his “grade book” did not matter, and his classroom did not matter, which meant his “lesson plans’ did not matter either.

For Mr. Cook, “the hard thing about being a teacher” was that he did not feel appreciated or recognized for his efforts. To Mr. Cook school policies often also “took away” that recognition and appreciation for the efforts his students made. Somehow with some students he had managed to hold them to a higher standard and they appreciated that. Some came back and said “thank you.”

One student he had in 4th block, Kyra (pseudonym), during first semester became his “classroom assistant” during second semester. But she was not always eager to work for Mr. Cook. During first semester, “she did not want to do anything,” but Mr. Cook “*made* her” do it. When he failed her for plagiarizing an important eight-page research paper, she threatened to get him in trouble. Mr. Cook told her, “You can call whoever. You can call mom, and then your mom can talk to the principal, and they can talk to the principal’s principal, and they can talk to the school nurse, but I made an announcement [about plagiarizing]. I made you sign a paper [saying you understood what plagiarizing meant and the consequences]. I am not passing you on that paper if you plagiarized.”

Kyra “rewrote that entire eight-page paper, and she did her entire PowerPoint on her own. And it was great,” and Mr. Cook “was happy.” During second semester Kyra came back to help Mr. Cook with students who needed some extra help. Mr. Cook felt that he facilitated Kyra’s success because he did *not* give her the kinds of second chances the system seemed to give students. He believed if a student failed an assignment, they failed it. By failing students, Mr. Cook believed he was showing them they had to do better the next time, and by doing so, they could bring up their grade. He did not agree with allowing students to correct a failed assignment. His system seemed to work because out of his 70 students only ten failed or plagiarized the eight-page paper assignment.

Mr. Cook believed in helping students learn how to be accountable, but the current processes in the school system often worked against him. He believed that on the one hand everyone said they wanted students to succeed, but then they were “never giving them the skills to do so.” He believed that if a student tried all semester and still had a 69 average that it would be fair to give that student an assignment that he could do to bring that average to passing, but if a student only came to school “2 days out of the week every week” and did not try to do his work, that was another situation. Mr. Cook understood that students had some tough issues that might affect their attendance and ability to do their work; however, he knew that if students were motivated, they would overcome those issues.

Mr. Cook gave the example of a student, Annette (pseudonym), who had a son whose doctor’s appointments made her miss lots of days at school, but Annette “made up every assignment” she missed. One day she came to Mr. Cook and said, “I’m not going

to be here tomorrow. My son has an appointment to have surgery to get tubes put in his ears.”

Mr. Cook said, “I already know that and I told you I understand you’re not going to be in class, and we’re going to be in the lab, but you need to make sure that the eight-page paper is submitted to me by midnight on Friday. You can submit it online. Just make sure I get my paper. If you’re not going to be able to work on it on Friday, finish it on Thursday. Make sure I have it.”

Annette knew Mr. Cook would hold her accountable regardless of her son’s surgery and she did her work and turned it in on time. Mr. Cook believed that if a student like Annette, who had a complicated life, could still manage to get her work done, then *all* students could do their work. He realized that there were many students who had “no child and no job” and had “nothing in the world to do except come to school and go home,” but they still did not come to school or do their work. These kinds of students “physically drained [Mr. Cook’s] energy.” He believed that to “watch somebody just sit” made him and most teachers “tired.” To Mr. Cook his biggest conflict with students was not their disruptive behavior, but it was their lack of motivation. And his conflict with administration came from their policies that seemed to be “*creating* unmotivated children.”

Mr. Cook assumed that the policies “started out to be effective.” For example, if you had 30 students in a class and three of them were not passing, it made sense to give those three “some kind of way” to pass the class. In other words the idea was to “help them as much as you [could] because you [could not] just leave them behind. Maybe they

[would] get motivated after they [got] out of high school, which [was] a possibility. But then those three students who the system helped would tell the students behind them, ‘I didn’t do crap in 12th grade, [and] they let me graduate, so you don’t have to do crap in 12th grade.’” At that point, according to Mr. Cook, the policy was “working against itself” and “it [was] *making* unmotivated students because they” knew they did not “have to work.” The solution was “making the problem as opposed to fixing it.”

The policies that enabled students to avoid accountability made Mr. Cook tired; nevertheless, he planned to stay in teaching at least for the near future. He had colleagues like his unofficial mentor, Mrs. Herman, who shared many of his philosophies and had taught him a lot about coping. However, Mr. Cook had found his own ways, in spite of the system, to hold many of his own students accountable. He had seen for himself the positive results. He hoped to someday be in a position to perhaps challenge some of the policies he believed worked against students and their teachers. Now that the glass was clean, he could see lots of room for improvement.

“No Child Left Behind,” by Mrs. Herman

Mrs. Herman believed that at Lincoln there were “some of the *best teachers*” she had ever seen, and from someone who was “64 years old and [had] been in teaching all [her] life” that was quite a claim. She had also been around educators all her life. Mrs. Herman’s whole family was “nothing but teachers.” Her “father was a principal, uncle a principal, brother, sister, everybody teachers.” So she knew the profession and she said, “These teachers *are* beautiful!”

Unfortunately, these beautiful teachers were being judged based on the fact that the “*kids*” were “not achieving like they should.” School leaders seemed to fail to take “into consideration that kids who were reading under the 5th grade reading level” may not be able to come up to grade level in one year. Mrs. Herman believed that in many cases students’ lack of attaining grade level was “not the teachers’ fault, [but] it could be the parent’s fault.” It could be parents’ fault, perhaps because they may have passed on “a little defective gene.”

Mrs. Herman believed that “God did not give things out equally, and you can’t take a child who is in a resource room and because the Resource Teachers [were] not highly qualified in EC (Exceptional Children), put them in a regular classroom and think [the students were] going to function” on grade level. Some of these students were reading at the “1st grade and 2nd grade reading level, but they were “tested with the 9th grade test.” Now that generates “stress!”

The teachers at Lincoln were getting medium to high scores in most of her department’s classrooms, but in EC classrooms where they had kids who as Mrs. Herman said, “God didn’t give them all His gifts,” the scores were quite low. Mrs. Herman said the expectations were unreasonable that a teacher could take a student reading on a 2nd grade level to be able to pass the 9th grade reading test, but she knew that her department’s teachers at Lincoln were doing the best they could, and they were the best teachers she had ever seen.

The goal was that every child would “be on grade level by 2014.” To Mrs. Herman that was “the biggest lie” she had ever heard. Personal experience had taught her

that all not all children could be expected to accomplish that goal. Mrs. Herman “had a brother who was retarded . . . [and who] died at 5.” The reason he was retarded was that Mrs. Herman’s mother had German measles when she was pregnant with him.

When Mrs. Herman saw that goal, she knew her brother would “be the exception.” Her mother said it would never be possible for her brother to read on grade level because when he died at 5 years old, he was still functioning like “someone under one year old.”

Mrs. Herman’s mother said “That ‘No Child Left Behind’ is a bunch of crap!”

Mrs. Herman’s sister, Mrs. Clarkson (pseudonym), who was an EC teacher and taught the educable mentally retarded and the LD (Learning Disabled) kids believed that “some of the LD’s may [achieve] grade level,” but even those who were “on the borderline” of mental retardation could move “a little bit,” she did not see how any teacher could move them to grade level.

Mrs. Herman believed that the expectations placed on teachers were “above the normal” and that teachers were “expected to achieve the impossible.” Teachers were “expected to treat [exceptional children] as normal kids, but [they were also] expected to accommodate their exceptionalities.” Often accommodating exceptionalities interfered with what teachers wanted to do in the regular classroom. For instance, teachers could not implement all the testing accommodations, such as requiring extended time and allowing a separate setting for a student to take a test. If they gave an EC student extended time, they had to give it to all of the students, and they did not have at their disposal a separate setting for giving a classroom test

Mrs. Herman encouraged the teachers to “figure out other means of assessing kids’ ability . . .” and to try “to work a little smarter than harder.” She told the special curriculum PLC, “You’re going to have to get a handle on this. You’re going to have to assess students as they are learning.”

Mrs. Herman was helping teachers deal with the “powers that be” that seemed to be “slapping” them “upside” their heads with paperwork like the PEPs (Personal Education Plans). With this plan Mrs. Herman said teachers would not “have to do a minute by minute assessment. If the kid [was] following [the teacher’s] directions and the kids [was] on task.” She believed that if students had done half or a fourth of the work, the teacher could give them a “60 or 65.” That was still an F, but teachers could allow kids to take the work home to complete it in order to bring up. This plan would not work with all students, but it could possibly “cut down on a lot of the teachers’ frustrations.” Mrs. Herman believed kids would respond well if teachers gave them credit, even if it was a “35%” if they had “done something.” This strategy, she believed, would keep kids from shutting down and help to relieve some of teachers’ frustrations.

For every student who was failing, teachers had to write a “recovery pass and change grades.” This was driving the teachers “crazy.” One teacher, Mrs. Baker (pseudonym), Mr. Manzetti’s mentee, had failed three fourths of her first semester 4th block class.

Mrs. Herman asked Mrs. Baker about these students. She said, “What did you do? Were they at school?”

Mrs. Baker, “Yes.”

Mrs. Herman, “Well, what did you do? How did they get all those Fs.”

Mrs. Baker, “Well, they didn’t do the work.”

Mrs. Herman, “Did they do something?”

Mrs. Baker, “Yes, they did.”

Mrs. Herman, “Well, let me see the [grade] book. [Mrs. Herman saw] 20s and 15s. . . . So this means they did *something* in your class. Your kids shut down on you, and you got mean and ugly on them didn’t you?”

Mrs. Baker, “Yes.”

Mrs. Herman, “That’s what happened. Baby doll, this semester can you *please*, whatever the assignment, explain it, give directions” and gradually “release responsibility.” “Do the modeling, explain it. You do it yourself. [Explain] what you want done and have them help you do it. Then put them in groups or pairs and let them do it . . . [this process] should be built into your lesson plans. And if they follow a fourth of your directions, half of your directions, don’t give those kids a [failing] grade.”

Mrs. Herman believed Mrs. Baker was “doing better this semester because she [had] a better crop of students and she [had] a better handle on what she [needed] to do.” Mrs. Herman believed that at first Mrs. Baker “didn’t get it.” She did not seem to understand that “when a whole class fails, it’s on [the teacher].” With the kids at Lincoln, teachers had to get creative with grading and they needed to “assess and re-assess and re-assess.” Mrs. Herman suggested to the teachers that they use “5 minute assessments,” which could allow teachers to check 31 kids for understanding by having “the kids sign their name on that little card and hand it in . . .” Or teachers could use it as a warm up

connecting what they were doing in the current class with what they did in a previous class. They could give lots of grades that way. More kids might feel successful and fewer might be left behind.

APPENDIX D

CATEGORIES AND PROPOSITIONS GENERATED FROM THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- I. Complex Systems
 - A. Nested/Scale Free
 - B. Self-Organized
 - C. Short-Ranged
 - D. Closed
 - E. Unstable
 - F. Decentralized
 - G. Redundant and Diverse
 - H. Ambiguously bounded
- II. Ecologically-Based Sustainable Capacity-Building
 - A. Collegial dynamics
 - a. Sponsorship and Protection
 - b. Authentic Professional Dialogue
 - i. Acknowledgement
 - ii. Advocacy
 - iii. Inquiry
 - iv. Invitation
 - B. Collaborative cultures
 - C. Shared understandings

D. Synchronicity

III. Teacher Conflicts

A. Major Teacher Conflicts:

- a. Administrators
- b. Students
- c. Other teacher conflicts

B. Barriers

- a. Triangulation
- b. Denial

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTORS OF MENTOR-NOVICE CLOSED SYSTEM BY DYAD

Descriptors of Mentor or Mentor-Novice Dyad	BM	CR	CoH	HaT	LS	SH
Mentor felt a mothering instinct with novice (Stanley, p. 5)					X	
Novice trusted mentor to not repeat things that would get her in trouble (Captain, p. 5; Baker, p. 2) Mentor had novice's best interest in mind (Baker, p. 2) Mentor provided a safe, caring ear for novice for venting frustrations (Manzetti, p. 2, 9; Rankin, p. 11) Mentor had novice's back (Hansen, p. 3; Stanley, p. 4)	X	X	X	X	X	
*Mentor and novice admired one another (Herman, p. 8; Rankin, p. 7)		X	X	X		X
Mentor and novice were equal partners because they needed each other for different things (Captain, p. 4; Rankin, p. 7)		X				
Mentor believed she should be novice's "buffer up front" (Stanley, p. 4)					X	
*Mentor "advocating" for novice and looking out for his interests (Hansen, p. 3) went "to bat" for novice (Hansen p. 3; Lawson, p. 8, 16; Rankin, p. 16; Stanley, p. 26) told administrators to stop giving novices a hard time (Rankin, p. 22) Mentor a powerful advocate for novice and the team (Stewart, p. 16)		X		X	X	X
Mentor was novice's "go to" person for everything from classroom management problems to personnel problems (Baker, p. 2) Mentor helped novice navigate the system (Truitt, p. 4) Mentor believed novices should feel comfortable coming to her (Truitt, p. 14)	X			X	X	
Mentor knew more about curriculum than novice (Hansen, p. 4; Stanley,)				X	X	
*Mentor had more experience as a teacher than novice (Captain, p. 3; Stewart, p. 17; Truitt, p. 4) Inferred all.	X	X	X	X	X	X
*Mentor admired novice's content knowledge (Captain, p. 2; Herman, p. 4; Rankin, p. 5; Stanley, p. 8) saw her as "the expert" (Rankin, p. 8)		X	X		X	

Descriptors of Mentor or Mentor-Novice Dyad	BM	CR	CoH	HaT	LS	SH
*Mentor admired novice's approach to discipline (Captain, p. 2; Herman, p. 4; Rankin, p. 10 ; Truitt, p. 8)		X	X	X		
*Mentor admired novice's ability to develop relationships with students (Captain, p. 2; Herman, p. 4; Rankin, p. 10; Truitt, p. 9)		X	X	X		
Mentor endorsed novice to administrators (Rankin, p. 6; Stanley, p. 8; Stewart, p. 18)		X			X	X
Mentor believed administrators held her responsible for novice's conduct (Rankin, p. 22)		X				
*Mentor knew more about school culture than novice (Hansen, p. 4; Herman, p. 2) All inferred.	X	X	X	X	X	X
*Mentor knew more about teaching challenging students than novice (Hansen, p. 4; Herman, p. 2, 17; Rankin, p. 6; Stanley, p. 28) Inferred all.	X	X	X	X	X	X
*Mentor knew more about developing relationships with Lincoln students (Hansen, p. 4, 25; Herman, p. 2; Stewart, p. 14) Inferred all.	X	X	X	X	X	X
*Mentor respected by school leadership (Cook, p. 5; Manzetti, p. 9; Rankin, p. 12; Stanley, p. 15) Inferred all.	X	X	X	X	X	X
*Mentor empowered and trusted by leadership (Manzetti, p. 10; Stanley, p. 15) Herman Inferred	X		X		X	X
Mentor was "reliable" (Manzetti, p. 9)	X					
*Mentor had respect from everyone at the school (Hansen, p. 24, 25)			X	X		X
Mentor had a flexible and caring personality (Herman, p. 2)			X			X
*Novice's had to have special abilities to relate to students in order to make it at Lincoln; advanced degrees did not matter (Herman, p. 4; Stanley, p. 28)			X		X	X
Novice eager to learn (Captain, p. 2; Truitt, p. 2)		X		X		
*Mentor commended novice's practices (Captain, p., 2; Herman, p. 8; Manzetti, p. 11; Stanley, p. 28; Truitt, p. 9, 27) Inferred all.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mentor had "Grandmother respect" from students (Cook, p. 3) and respect from mentor		X				

Descriptors of Mentor or Mentor-Novice Dyad	BM	CR	CoH	HaT	LS	SH
(p, 12)						
Mentor “put in” more work than anybody as school (Cook, p. 5)			X			
Mentor novice had “Heart to heart” conversation (Cook, p. 12)			X			
Mentor was “right person” (Hansen, p. 2) novice “lucked up” (Hansen, p. 3)				X		
*Mentor-novice had daily contact (Hansen, p. 3; Manzetti, p. 2; Rankin, p. 6; Stewart, p. 3) Mentor believed true mentor had daily contact with novice (Stanley, p. 3)	X	X		X		X
*Mentor gave novice little bits of “advice” (Hansen, p. 3) Mentor advised novice to pick her battles (Manzetti, p. 12) and keep things “in-house” (Baker, p. 14) Mentor advised novice to find another job (Lawson, p. 7; Stanley, p. 5) Mentor gave novice “little tips” (Stanley, p. 29) Mentor gave novice advice (Truitt, p. 27) Mentor offered non-judgmental and helpful advice. Mentor there to support not criticize (Stewart, p. 13)	X			X	X	X
Mentor advised novice about a specific lesson (Herman, p.26)						X
Mentor made the transition from student teaching much easier (Hansen, p. 4)				X		
Mentor checked up on novice often (Hansen, p. 6)				X		
Mentor advised novice about giving student’s credit for work (Hansen, p. 5)				X		
Mentor helped novice find his teaching style, which differed from hers (Hansen, p. 10)				X		
Mentor was liaison between novice and administrators (Hansen, p. 13)				X		
*Mentor was “interpreter” of office discourse (Herman, p. 2; Manzetti, p. 4)	X		X			X
Mentor motivated to help by “kindness of her heart” (Hansen, p. 13)				X		
Mentor had no formal training (Hansen, p. 14; Truitt, p. 3)				X		
Mentor was not a tenured teacher (Manzetti, p. 9)	X					
Mentor was young (Hansen, p. 25) Manzetti inferred	X			X		
Mentor was motivated (Hansen, p. 25)				X		

Descriptors of Mentor or Mentor-Novice Dyad	BM	CR	CoH	HaT	LS	SH
Mentor knew what was going on in novice's class (Stewart, p. 18; Hansen, p. 25)				X		X
Mentor kept novice "sane" by helping novice "de-stress" at the end of the day (Manzetti, p. 2)						
Mentor offered encouragement to novice to change some problematic practices (Herman, p. Manzetti, p. 10)	X					X
Mentor suggested a change in novice's problematic practices (Herman, p. 26; Manzetti, p. 12; Stanley, p. 25)	X				X	X
Mentor-novice had "a lot in common" (Baker, p.2) Mentor-novice had a lot in common philosophically (Stewart, p. 17) Mentor-novice had a lot in common, both knuckleheads (Captain, p. 2)	X	X				X
Mentor was the first person novice went to for help; her first line of defense (Baker, p. 3)	X					
Mentor was last person novice went to for help (Stewart, p. 17) Novice went to mentor when nothing else worked (Stewart, p. 17)						X
Novice believed her mentor could not prevent her from losing her position (Baker, p. 10) Novice admitted there was just so much her mentor could do begin part time (Lawson, p. 11)	X				X	
*Mentor believed she could not stop administrators from trying to get rid of teachers before they had a chance to learn to teach (Herman, p. 3; Rankin, p. 14; Stanley, p. 31)	X	X			X	X
Mentor believed she could not fight battles for novices (Herman, p. 5)						X
When mentor not assigned novice left to her own resources and did not know anything until she got her hands rapped (Baker, p. 12)	X					
Mentor willing to "go into the trenches" with novices (Herman, p. 5)						X
Mentor and novice finished each other's thoughts (Herman, p. 6; Stewart, p. 15)						X
Mentor believed that having chemistry with kids and having the desire to reach them was not about talent and it was something no one could teach (Herman, p. 7)			X			X

Descriptors of Mentor or Mentor-Novice Dyad	BM	CR	CoH	HaT	LS	SH
*Mentor believed in collaboration (Captain, p. 6; Hansen, p. 20; Herman, p. 9)		X	X	X		X
*Mentor-novice believed in sharing ideas and materials (Herman, p. 10; Lawson, p. 17)			X		X	X
Mentor believed novices who did not collaborate would not make it a Lincoln (Herman, p. 10)			X			X
Mentor believed her role was to listen to novices not solve all their problems (Herman, p. 15)			X			X
*Mentor saw herself as a nurturer and to help novice feel better about what they were doing (Herman, p. 18) keep “spirits up (Stanley, p. 4)			X		X	X
Mentor saw her role as saving the life (i.e., teacher life) of the novice (Herman, p. 23)			X			X
*Mentor helped novice focus on the positive (Rankin, p. 14) Mentor did not like negative people (Herman, p. 18)		X	X			X
Mentor role and coach role blurred together and it was more like coaching (Stanley, p. 1)					X	
*Mentor saw mentoring as a one-on-one commitment (Stanley, p. 1) Inferred all	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mentor saw her role as “pushing” novice toward a better position for herself (Stanley, p. 6)					X	
Mentor believed her role was to let administrators know what was going on (Stanley, p. 8) and to advise them (Stanley, p. 9; Stewart, pp. 11, 18)					X	X
Mentor believed administrators chose mentors who had time to commit to helping novices (Truitt, p. 3)				X		
Mentor ran between all the “authority figures” to help novice understand how to respond (Truitt, p. 5)				X		
Mentor-novice personality different (she was loud, he was quiet) (Truitt, p. 11)				X		
Mentor corrected perceptions about novice (Truitt, p. 27)				X		
Mentor did not play a role in novice’s class assignment (Truitt, p. 30)				X		
Mentor broke things down for novice that coach had presented (Truitt, p. 37)				X		

Descriptors of Mentor or Mentor-Novice Dyad	BM	CR	CoH	HaT	LS	SH
Novice believed mentor should be a teacher not a coach (Lawson, p. 9)					X	
Mentor helped novice directly with her students (Captain, p. 4; Stewart, p. 13)		X				X

Key: Baker-Manzetti (BM); Captain-Rankin (CR); Cook-Herman (CoH); Hansen-Truitt (HaT); Lawson-Stanley (LS); Manzetti-Herman (MH); Stewart-Herman (SH).

APPENDIX F

TEACHER CONFLICTS: COMPLEX NATURE OF THE DYAD AND ECOLOGICALLY-BASED SUSTAINABLE CAPACITY-BUILDING

Administrator Conflicts	Nature of Dyad	Capacity-Building
1. Classroom Management/Pedagogy	Closed, Decentralized, Redundant, Diverse, Ambiguously Bounded	Advocated, Acknowledged, Other Collegial Dynamics, Shared Understanding, Invited, No Help
2. Student Achievement	Self-Organized/Emergent, Closed, Unstable, Decentralized, Redundant, Ambiguously Bounded	Sponsored, Protected, Acknowledged, Advocated, Invited, Shared Understanding
3. Paper Work	Closed, Short-Range, Unstable, Decentralized, Ambiguously Bounded	Protected, Advocated, Collaborative Culture, Invited, No Help
4. Scheduling and Resources	Self-Organized/Emergent, Short-Range, Closed, Unstable, Diverse, Ambiguously Bounded	Protected, Advocated, Collaborative Culture, Invited, Other Collegial Dynamics, No Help
5. Attitudes	Short-Range, Decentralized, Diverse, Ambiguously Bounded	Sponsored, Protected, Acknowledged, Shared Understanding, Invited, Other Collegial Dynamics, No Help
Student Conflicts	Nature of Dyad	Capacity-Building
1. Disruptive	Self-Organized/Emergent, Closed, Unstable, Ambiguously Bounded	Protected, Advocated, Shared Understandings, Invited, Synchronicity
2. Unmotivated	Self-Organized/Emergent, Closed, Ambiguously Bounded	Protected, Acknowledged, Invited, Shared Understandings, Synchronicity
3. Academically Challenged	Self-Organized/Emergent, Closed, Short Range, Redundant, Ambiguously Bounded	Acknowledged. Inquired, Invited, Advocated, Shared Understandings, Synchronicity
4. Highly aggressive	Closed, Ambiguously Bounded	Advocated, Invited, No Help
5. Hard to relate to	Self-Organized/Emergent, Closed, Unstable, Diverse, Ambiguously Bounded	Advocated, Acknowledged, Invited, Shared Understandings, Synchronicity, No Help

Other Conflicts	Nature of Dyad	Capacity-Building
1. Mentor-Novice	Unstable, Decentralized, Diverse	No Help
2. Personal Conflicts	Self-Organized/Emergent, Short-Range, Decentralized, Redundant, Diverse,	Acknowledged, Invited, Shared Understanding, Synchronicity
3. Teacher to District	Short-Range, Unstable, Ambiguously Bounded	Protected, Invited, No Help
4. Teacher to Teacher	Self-Organized/Emergent, Unstable. Decentralized, Ambiguously Bounded	Acknowledged, Collaborative Culture, Invited, Other Collegial Dynamics, No Help
5. Teacher to School Culture	Self-Organized/Emergent, Closed, Short-Range, Unstable, Decentralized, Redundant, Diverse,	Acknowledged, Advocated, Invited, Inquiry, Other Collegial Dynamics, No Help
6. Teacher to Counselors	Ambiguously bounded	Protected, Invited, No Help
8. Teacher to Content Coaches	Unstable, Ambiguously Bounded	Advocated, Invited, No Help
9. Teacher to Students' Parents	Ambiguously Bounded	Other Collegial Dynamics, Shared Understanding, Invited, No Help
Barriers	Nature of Dyad	Emergent Responses
Triangulation	Short-Range, Unstable, Ambiguously Bounded	Protected, No Help
Denial	Closed, Unstable, Ambiguously Bounded	Protected, No Help