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Mentor Coaching: Insights into Mentoring Practice in Independent Schools

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Master of Arts in Liberal Studies

by Conor Patrick O'Meara

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Abstract

Mentorship Coaching: Insights into Mentoring Practice in Independent Schools is a qualitative study that identifies and analyzes effective mentoring practices in the context of independent schools. This study addresses a current gap in mentoring literature, providing insight into how mentors can create effective opportunities for mentee development by using researched-based models, strategies, and methods based on coaching pedagogy. Incorporating evidence from a qualitative survey across eight institutions, one-to-one interviews, thesis literature, and participant narratives, this study demonstrates coaching pedagogy supports mentors in their ability to form authentic partnerships that prioritize mentee learning.

To provide a complete and illustrative picture of effective mentoring practice, the study looks at the cycle of mentoring relationships giving a descriptive narrative of the experiences of the mentor and mentee. The study also highlights mentor coaching curricula used to instruct mentors. The starting point of the research utilized a qualitative survey and one-to-one interviews, which led to the initial discovery that effective mentors used researched-based models, strategies, and methods based on coaching pedagogy. After this initial discovery, the project focused on highlighting effective mentoring techniques by exploring how mentors use coaching practices to encourage two specific competencies; growth mindset and emotional intelligence. Study participant interviews were used to construct mentoring narratives to illustrate how mentors encourage the enduring practice of a growth mindset and foster emotional resilience in mentees. This study concludes that mentoring relationships and mentee development are most effective when supported by coaching principles.

Acknowledgments

The completion of *Mentor Coaching: Insights into Mentoring Practice in Independent Schools* would not have been possible without the guidance and support of my thesis advisors. Words cannot express my gratitude to Professor Ken Sharpe, my first reader, for his invaluable patience and feedback. Professor Sharpe's wisdom not only pushed my thinking forward but also served as a guiding principle for what mentorship and its virtues can be. I will always be grateful for his practical wisdom course and how it inspired this work. I would like to thank my second reader Professor Anna Minardi. Professor Minardi deftly teaches her students that words matter and that choice is among the most critical competencies a writer can exercise. I would also like to thank my third reader Dr. Nicole Furlonge. Dr. Furlonge's field knowledge and expertise were critical in advising how my work could inform mentor practice in independent schools. Her contributions to the field of teaching and learning are what inspired my passion for coaching. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge and thank my wife, Chrissy, for her support in allowing me the time and space I needed to pursue this project.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Stating the Purpose

Independent schools have a wealth of resources, most notably experienced and skillful educators with knowledge and expertise that make their respective schools better places to teach and learn. Particularly independent school educators face specific challenges because they are called to assume many different roles throughout the day and academic year. Beyond teaching in the classroom, independent school educators take on the responsibilities of guidance counselors and athletic coaches. In boarding school contexts, educators live in residence with students and are called to provide a level of care in the place of a parent or guardian. Experienced and skillful educators provide consistent and effective care to the students in their charge while maintaining an intricate balance between these roles. Whether in the classroom, athletic fields, or dormitory, these educators have developed habits and behaviors that allow them to navigate the different demands of these roles. These educators have also adopted a mindset that pushes them to improve their ability to fulfill these various responsibilities continually. Independent schools should look to mobilize this group of educators and equip them with the tools to share their knowledge and expertise effectively. This study argues that this mobilization could be achieved through mentor relationships.

Independent school educators have long formed collegial relationships sharing knowledge and habits that support the development of educators of all experience levels. Mentoring is a historical and critical vehicle that has long been used to onboard new employees and support the work of professional development. Mentoring can also give career teaching faculty leadership opportunities to impact their respective institutions' growth and development. Though many educators have a great deal of knowledge and expertise to share, not all of them possess the specific knowledge and competencies necessary to mentor colleagues effectively. Effective mentoring can be learned through the practiced application of adult learning theory and instructional coaching strategies and methods. This study asserts that applying appropriate theory and research-based practices will better equip educators to mentor their colleagues. Empowering educators to become effective mentors is critical in ensuring the continued growth and development of teaching and learning in independent schools.

Study Research & Stating the Research Questions

The central focus of this study is to identify effective, educative models, strategies, and methods independent school educators can use to mentor colleagues effectively. For this study, “effective” models, strategies, and methods are educational tools that lead to mentee development by satisfying mentee goals or encouraging mentees to develop long-term changes in teaching and learning behavior. To best identify effective mentoring tools, this thesis project focused on studying and externalizing the mentoring process at three levels; (1) the experience of the mentee, (2) the experience and pedagogy of the mentor, and (3) the experience and pedagogy of mentor coaches. To sharpen the focus of this project, I explored two pre-selected competencies mentors can encourage in their mentees; growth mindset and emotional resilience. The culmination of this project was three products that can be used to improve mentorship in independent schools. These products include mentoring narratives that identify and illustrate how mentors can encourage two specific competencies; a growth mindset and emotional resilience. Each mentoring narrative is coupled with a section that explains the curriculum used by professional learning organizations that teach mentors how to encourage these competencies. The final product of this project is recommendations for a mentoring practicum that independent schools can use to develop their mentoring programs.

To create these products, thesis research was conducted in two main phases. The first phase was a conceptual exploration of the field of mentorship. The second phase was forging the conceptual knowledge from phase one into focused research questions to discover effective mentoring practices. During the first research phase, I focused on two exploratory questions to understand mentorship at independent schools:

1. What is mentorship? How is it different from similar roles like coaching?
2. What are the models, methods, and strategies that make for effective mentoring?

These exploratory questions were developed during an extensive reading of mentoring literature during a previous independent study. I surveyed and interviewed independent school educators from eight different institutions to discover potential answers to these exploratory questions. These eight institutions included two independent day schools and six boarding schools. I conducted an initial set of twenty interviews with independent school educators and consulted with three professional learning organizations. During the first phase of research, many professionals who had explicit opinions on the effectiveness of mentoring practice identified

coaching strategies and methods as helpful tools for mentorship. During my initial research, I was aware that mentoring and coaching occupy similar professional spaces but had not considered the idea that one could benefit from the other. The consideration that coaching pedagogy could benefit mentoring practice led me to pursue four research questions.

1. Can mentors benefit from learning and applying pedagogy from different coaching models?
2. What types of interventions are most effective in mentoring relationships?
3. Do mentoring relationships require mentor interventions that balance directive and facilitative forms of intervention?
4. How do mentors encourage specific competencies like a growth mindset and emotional resilience?

To uncover potential answers to these research questions, I conducted fifteen follow-up interviews with survey participants who had met three criteria (1) they had been previously mentored, (2) they had mentoring experience or were currently mentoring someone, (3) they had received formal training in mentoring or coaching. I also continued consulting with professional learning organizations to explore mentoring and coaching curricula. From a synthesis of knowledge gained from follow-up interviews, thesis literature, and consultation with professional learning organizations, I created three thesis products (mentoring narratives, mentor and coaching curricula, and mentor practicum recommendations) that help support the pursuit of effective mentorship. The mentoring narratives and mentor and coaching curricula are featured in Chapters 4 and 5. The mentoring practicum recommendations are featured in the final chapter of the study, Chapter 7.

Mentoring Practice at Independent Schools

I have included this short section to give context and acknowledge that I am not proposing mentorship as a panacea for all the challenges independent school faculty face. When making a vocational commitment to teaching, you are also pledging yourself to the lifelong endeavor of learning. When your stock and trade involve adolescents entering the throngs of self-discovery, you have little choice but to be agile. However, this thesis project argues that implementing more structure and support around mentoring practice in independent schools would allow educators to better understand and learn from experience. New and veteran teachers could benefit from programming that would give them models and strategies to provide practical

guidance and feedback to their peers. Especially in school settings where faculty are asked to be sports coaches, teachers, and counselors to their students, it would be helpful for each educator to have some training to help their colleagues grow in underdeveloped areas. These exchanges are crucial in the day-to-day development of faculty. Faculty trained in instructional coaching competencies such as dialogue, inquiry framing, and reflective practice tools would be extensively equipped to mentor colleagues effectively.

Defining Mentoring Practice

Traditional definitions like those drawn from literature or history (calling to mind the relationships of Mentor/Telemachus and Socrates/Plato) propose mentoring is simply the exchange of knowledge between a wise, experienced practitioner to an inexperienced student. This type of exchange, categorized as “directive” in professional literature, can often be the case in many mentoring relationships. Still, mentoring is a far more expansive model than this limited and traditional definition would suggest. To understand how mentoring can be effective, it is necessary to offer a definition of mentoring that exists outside its traditional boundaries. The traditional boundaries of mentoring would contend that mentoring must (1) exist in a hierarchical structure where one member is subordinate to the other and (2) the personal expertise of the mentor is the foundation of learning. These traditional boundaries of mentoring have their practical uses but greatly limit the potential development and learning that can happen in mentoring relationships. Disciplines such as instructional coaching offer conceptual models and strategies that expand the definition of mentorship. Unlike its traditional definition, mentorship can then be defined as a form of collegial support that (1) prioritizes an equal partnership and (2) utilizes personal expertise as a fundamental but not foundational element of learning. This definition suggests that mentors can use their expertise to advocate for specific strategies to support mentee learning while maintaining an authentic partnership using coaching principles. This definition also maintains that mentorship can use coaching principles to activate ongoing learning that is already happening inside the mentee, meaning that an educator can be mentored by a peer that lacks expert knowledge.

The use of coaching principles to structure the mentoring relationship emphasizes using mentoring goals to guide and evaluate mentee learning. A goal-orientated relationship allows the mentor to be seen as a partner instead of a teacher, meaning mentoring relationships can be an effective model for learning between peers. Mentorship as a partnership and a goal-orientated

relationship will be further discussed in Chapter 2 Literature Review using the work of Elena Aguilar and Jim Knight. Elena Aguilar (founder and president of Bright Morning Consulting, an international education, coaching, and consulting firm) and Jim Knight (President of the Instructional Coaching Group and research associate at the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning), two of the most established and influential voices in instructional coaching, offer terminology from the instructional coaching field that carves out a space for a more intentional and compelling definition of mentoring than its traditional understanding.

The first of these terms is what Aguilar calls directive coaching, also called instructive coaching. Directive coaching focuses primarily on changing behaviors. In *The Art of Coaching*, Aguilar uses an example; “a coach suggests that a teacher circulates around the classroom while students are responding to a discussion prompt” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 20). This example of directive coaching is not too dissimilar to advice giving in mentoring practice. Sometimes this exchange is necessary when intervention requires timely action but will not necessarily change the behaviors of the mentee over a more extended period. To truly change a behavior, it is crucial to have your mentee explain the beliefs behind their behaviors. Aguilar makes a comparative example to the instructional coach advising a teacher circulating the classroom. “A coach asks a teacher to explain her decision-making behind the delivery of a lesson” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 20). This type of instructional coaching is what is known as facilitative coaching. “Facilitative coaching can build on changes in behavior to support someone in developing ways of being, or it can explore beliefs in order to change behaviors” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 20). Facilitative coaching is more effective in creating opportunities for enduring learning where the learner can challenge unhelpful belief systems and support beneficial changes in behavior to improve practice. Facilitative coaching can also provide a practical framework that can be used in mentoring practice. If we want our mentees to develop, we must offer a range of actions that balance facilitative strategies like acting as a sounding board or directive methods such as advice-giving. Both facilitative and directive actions are valuable in mentoring relationships, but the most effective practice will involve congruence. In the work of Jim Knight and his seminal book *Instructional Coaching: A Partnership Approach to Improving Instruction* and its recent rewrite, *The Impact Cycle*, he asserts that the partnership approach is vital to the success of a coaching relationship. The purpose of this approach is to destabilize the traditional hierarchy of mentorship. Destabilizing the conventional mentorship hierarchy allows experienced practitioners and inexperienced novices to establish a relationship of trust and allow those being coached to be valued as equal professionals. The partnership approach utilizes the following principles to achieve an ideal working relationship equality,

choice, voice, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. In Chapter 2, Literature Review, I will go into more detail about what different professional fields have to offer in illuminating the work of effective mentorship. The research and practice used to educate instructional coaching is certainly one such professional field. Instructional coaching literature and its educative models can and should inform mentoring practice. During the literature review, I offer other similar disciplines that can also be used to inform mentoring practice. Even though I have used “coaching” practices to help identify ways to formalize and improve “mentoring” practice, I do so with great caution. Mentoring and coaching are not synonyms, nor would I try to suggest that applications of all coaching models and strategies will make for effective mentoring. Aguilar argues that “while there are critical distinguishing factors between a mentor and a coach, the sensibility and outcome are the same: the learner is met and accepted wherever she is in her learning trajectory, she is encouraged and supported, she may be pushed, and in the end, she’s a competent practitioner” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 6). From here I would like to highlight some of these “critical distinguishing factors” and suggest some of the significant areas that instructional coaching and other disciplines that could help support mentoring relationships.

According to research (figure 1.1) conducted by Kent State University’s Center for Corporate and Professional Development, several factors distinguish coaching and mentoring. These factors include time frame, focus, structure, expertise, agenda, questioning, and outcome.

| <i>Topic</i> | <i>Coaching</i> | <i>Mentoring</i> |
|------------------|--|---|
| <i>Timeframe</i> | <i>Relationship is more likely to be short-term (up to 6 months or 1 year) with a specific outcome in mind. However, some coaching relationships can last longer, depending on goals achieved.</i> | <i>Relationship tends to be more long-term, lasting a year or two, and even longer.</i> |
| <i>Focus</i> | <i>Coaching is more performance driven, designed to improve the professional’s on-the-job performance.</i> | <i>Mentoring is more development driven, looking not just at the professional’s current job function but beyond, taking a more holistic approach to career development.</i> |
| <i>Structure</i> | <i>Traditionally more structured, with regularly scheduled meetings, like weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.</i> | <i>Generally meetings tend to be more informal, on an as need basis required by the mentee.</i> |

| | | |
|--------------------|--|---|
| <i>Expertise</i> | <i>Coaches are hired for their expertise in a given area, one in which the coachee desires improvement. Examples: Presentation skills, leadership, interpersonal communication, sales.</i> | <i>Within organization mentoring programs, mentors have more seniority and expertise in a specific area than mentees. The mentee learns from and is inspired by the mentor's experience.</i> |
| <i>Agenda</i> | <i>The coaching agenda is co-created by the coach and the coachee in order to meet the specific needs of the coachee.</i> | <i>The mentoring agenda is set by the mentee. The mentor supports that agenda.</i> |
| <i>Questioning</i> | <i>Asking thought-provoking questions is a top tool of the coach, which helps the coachee make important decisions, recognize behavioral changes and take action.</i> | <i>In the mentoring relationship, the mentee is more likely to ask more questions, tapping into the mentor's expertise.</i> |
| <i>Outcome</i> | <i>Outcome from a coaching agreement is specific and measurable, showing signs of improvement or positive change in the desired performance area.</i> | <i>Outcome from a mentoring relationship can shift and change over time. There is less interest in specific, measurable results or changed behavior and more interest in the overall development of the mentee.</i> |

Figure 1.1 Know The Difference Between Coaching And Mentoring Table Center for Corporate and Professional Development Kent State University July 5, 2017

Many of these distinguishing differences seem to be common sense. However, in my findings, I will contend that in terms of inquiry and outcome(s), effective mentoring and coaching are far more in line than suggested in the table above. Throughout this study, it will become evident that many effective mentors utilize inquiry-focused strategies, a staple of instructional coaching, to help frame solutions with their mentees. In terms of outcome(s), instructional coaches are indeed orientated to measuring improvement due to the formal realities of their profession. However, mentors are no less tied to the specific achievements of their mentees in the same way that instructional coaches are hopeful their intervention will contribute to the overall development of their clients. Mentoring and coaching are fundamentally different relationships but do share similar virtues. I will go into much greater detail on the difference between the two terms in Chapter 2, Literature Review. Here I will continue identifying areas where mentoring practice could borrow from other disciplines, such as instructional coaching.

In *The Art of Coaching*, Elena Aguilar states that coaching requires “intention”, “a plan”, “a lot of practice”, “knowledge of adult learning theory”, and “understanding of systems and communication”. Many mentoring relationships offer intention, careful planning, and ample practice (Aguilar 2013). I argue that the most effective mentoring relationships will also utilize knowledge of adult learning theory and a greater understanding of systems and communication.

Both adult learning theory and systems thinking can be better utilized to help facilitate better mentoring practice. This study will detail the experiences of mentor coaches, mentors, and mentees but will also look to pull back the curtain on an underexplored area of professional development. Many independent school professionals are adept communicators, well-educated in adult learning theory, and have a grasp of systems that affect their work. It is also the case that not all educators apply these key competencies when mentoring colleagues. Mentor coaching is a way forward to bridge the gap between a consummate professional and an effective mentor. Chapters 4 and 5 will feature curricula highlighting how mentor coaches instruct mentors on encouraging two vital competencies: growth mindset and emotional resilience. While those stories will detail a great deal of mentor coaches' work, I will offer a coaching model from Aguilar's *The Art of Coaching* that will frame our dialogue on mentor coaching.

Mentor coaching differs from mentoring as it looks to instruct with greater scope. For this study, "mentor coaches" are defined as educators with expert knowledge in adult learning and coaching methodology that work within or outside the school and contribute to the learning of mentoring practice. Though many of the participants of this study do not officially hold this title, their function within and outside their learning organization can be easily categorized by this umbrella term. The difference between mentoring and mentor coaching can be seen in how they would use a specific coaching model or strategy. Mentors use coaching models and strategies solely to support the learning of the mentee. Mentor coaches use coaching models and strategies as pedagogical frameworks to inform the curriculum they would use to instruct mentors on how to mentor.

Aguilar's transformational coaching is one such framework that can be used to inform mentoring coaching curricula. Aguilar explains that "transformational coaching incorporates strategies from directive and facilitative coaching, as well as cognitive and ontological coaching..." (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). "...What makes it [transformational coaching] distinct is the scope that it attempts to affect and the processes used" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). Aguilar says that transformational coaching is directed at and should affect the following domains; (1) the individual client [mentee] and their behaviors, beliefs, and being (2) the institutions and systems (departments, teams, and schools) in which the client works--and the people who work within those systems (students, parents, instructional faculty, operational employees and other administrators) (3) the broader educational and social systems in which we live. Transformational coaching utilizes four key dimensions of coaching strategy; directive, facilitative, cognitive, and ontological. Directive and facilitative coaching have already been defined above; therefore, I will

offer Aguilar's definitions for the cognitive and ontological dimensions of coaching. According to Aguilar, the cognitive dimension of coaching is a coaching strategy that "addresses our ways of thinking and aims to build metacognition" through "exploring and changing the way we think, in order to change the way we behave" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 24). The cognitive dimension also uses reflective practices and encourages self-directed learning to encourage these habits in clients (Aguilar, 2013, p. 24). The ontological dimension "focuses on how our way of being manifests in language, body, and emotions" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 24). When using ontological strategies, coaches focus on exploring the perceptions and attitudes that inform our behavior and communication (Aguilar, 2013, p. 24-25). In Chapters 4 and 5, I will share narratives highlighting the use of all four dimensions of transformational coaching; directive, facilitative, cognitive, and ontological. In Chapters 6 and 7, I will discuss practical approaches to implementing the transformational coaching model and its facilitative strategies. Now that the incorporated coaching models have been defined, it will be important to define and explain how the three domains of transformational coaching work in concert with one another.

Aguilar asserts that transformational coaching is able "...to surface the connections between these three domains..."; (1) the individual and their behaviors, beliefs, and being (2) the institutions and systems they work in and the people who work within those systems and (3) broader society (Aguilar, 2013). The central aim of transformational coaching is "...to leverage change between them, and to intentionally direct our efforts so that the impact we have on an individual will reverberate on other levels" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). This principle of transformational coaching uses systems thinking, a field associated with the work of systems scientist Peter Senge. Aguilar uses systems thinking to provide the largest possible scope for defining a problem which inevitably defines the proposed solutions. Since the aim of this coaching model is transformational, Aguilar highlights that using systems thinking "helps us identify the structures that underlie complex situations and discern high and low leverage changes" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). When systems thinking is applied to the four domains of transformational coaching, it becomes clear how a mentor coach would use this coaching model to construct a curriculum. It allows mentor coaches to instruct mentors on the complexity of problems/solutions and work holistically with mentees between the different domains to pursue high-leverage change to create opportunities for transformation. Transformational coaching is by no means an exhaustive framework to be used to support mentor coaching curricula. Still, its appreciation for scope and flexibility to strategic processes for high leverage change makes it an adaptable model appropriate for the job.

What Next? Mentor Coaching

In such a short career, I have already had many fulfilling experiences with mentors. In my roles as a classroom instructor and advisor, I have formed supportive, collegial bonds with other educators, making me a better teacher and learner. These mentoring experiences have motivated me to dig deep into the mentoring experiences of others to explore what makes for effective mentoring. Throughout this thesis, I will detail the fulfilling relationships between mentor and mentee and investigate a third tier of the mentoring cycle: how do mentors learn to mentor? Of course, a wealth of knowledge and experience gained over a long career can be a prerequisite for a good mentor, but there must be other ways of learning this vital skill set beyond modeling former mentors.

After detailing a comprehensive exchange of the relationships between mentor and mentee and mentor coaches, I will share study findings and mentoring recommendations. The short answer is that mentor coaching, similar to mentoring, exists naturally in established structures within independent schools and is also a significant aspect of professional development groups outside schools. Later in Chapters 4 and 5, I will look to explain how mentor coaching is essential to mentoring practice and how it plays a more prominent role in on-campus programming. I will discuss the implications of my overall findings on mentor coaching in Chapter 6, Study Findings Introduction & Discussion. In Chapter 7, Conclusion: Reflection, Recommendations For Practicum, & Suggestions For Further Studies, I will also detail practicum suggestions for future implementation of mentor coaching and mentoring practice. One initial recommendation is mobilizing the veteran tier of career classroom teachers to enter formal mentoring programs at independent schools.

Research-Based Practices in Educational Research

Throughout the study, I will use the term “research-based practices” to emphasize practices that are supported by experienced peer-reviewed research and best practices in cognitive neuroscience. The term “research-based practices” is a more common descriptor that acts as a placeholder for learning strategies that are grounded in cognitive neuroscience. In terms of the application of neuroscience to educational research, many scholars argue that we must proceed with caution when mixing educational theory and brain science. Dr. Bert De Smedt, Program Director of the Department of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the University of Leuven,

lays out the appropriate usage of such an interdisciplinary model in his recent article “Applications of Cognitive Neuroscience in Educational Research”. De Smedt argues that “from a methodological point of view, (cognitive) neuroscience offers a toolbox of methods that can be applied to educational research” (De Smedt, 2018). He continues to state that this is only the case when “one aims to understand very basic cognitive processes” and with a focus on trying to “understand learning at the biological level” (De Smedt, 2018). This study will remain inside these parameters and does not look to uncover groundbreaking connections between educational research and cognitive neuroscience. However, this study recognizes the importance of effective practice rooted in scientific research with a proven track record in adult learning theory.

What is a Growth Mindset?

This brief section will define a growth mindset based on the work of American Psychologist Dr. Carol S. Dweck. The definition of growth mindset, as defined in this opening chapter, will be used throughout the study and, most particularly, in the Chapter 4 narratives that assert a growth mindset is vital to the work of teaching and learning. Dweck’s definition of a growth mindset is made clear by contrasting the terms’ growth mindset and fixed mindset. According to Dweck, a growth mindset “is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things that you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others” (Dweck, 2006, p. 7). “Although people may differ in every which way--in their initial talents and aptitudes, interested, or temperaments--everyone can change and grow through application and experience” (Dweck, 2006, p. 7). In contrast, a fixed mindset asserts that characteristics, personality traits, and competencies are fixed, and there is nothing that we can do to change this reality. A fixed mindset supports the belief that a person has a fixed amount of capacity to grow in any given area of skill or moral character trait. Dweck argues that people with a fixed mindset see outcomes as “a direct measure of their competence and worth” (Dweck, 2006, p. 8). We can immediately see how harmful a fixed mindset is to teaching and learning practices. Developing a growth mindset requires the learner to acknowledge where their mindset may be “fixed” and set goals and specific objectives for adopting new beliefs and behaviors that support change. A growth mindset is also an active mindset that requires learners to reflect on their experience and make adjustments if they incorrectly apply the principles of a growth mindset. In this study, I share two narratives illustrating how mentors can create change by encouraging mentees to apply growth mindset principles to their teaching and learning practice. The first mentoring narrative can be found at the

end of this chapter in a section titled The Mentoring Relationship That Planted The Seed. The second narrative is featured in Chapter 4 in a section titled Mentorship: Encouraging A Growth Mindset. Both narratives illustrate how a mentor can use dialogue and goal setting as reflective coaching strategies to develop and maintain a growth mindset.

What is Emotional Resilience?

Similar to the section entitled “What is a Growth Mindset?”, this section on emotional resilience will look to provide a clear definition of emotional resilience and explain its usage in this study. Emotional resilience is a key competency for mentoring practice because it addresses a real and current problem; the stressful and complex nature of teaching and learning in schools leads to “burnout” and in some cases encourages educators to leave the profession altogether (Aguilar, 2018, p. 4). If mentors can help mentees engage in specific habits that foster resilient dispositions to deal with the stressors of working in schools, then the overall health of teachers and students alike will increase (Aguilar, 2018, p. 3). Much of this definition and its application come from author and instructional coach Elena Aguilar's book *Onward Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*. There will also be some explicit examples of encouraging emotional resilience in action in Chapter 5. Aguilar begins her definition of emotional resilience by offering a simple idea “between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom” (Aguilar, 2018, p. 1). With this as a basis for our understanding of emotional resilience, Aguilar offers three fundamental underpinnings that affect our ability to grow in emotional resilience; (1) “we have tremendous power in how we interpret” (2) “the opportunity for resilience originates in how we make sense of the things that happen because interpretation dictates actions” (3) “a substantial amount of our ability to be resilient is fostered in our daily habits” (Aguilar, 2018, pp. 2-3). In Chapter 5, I will further discuss and illustrate the application of emotional resilience in mentoring relationships. The Chapter 5 mentoring narrative on emotional resilience will catalog Cindy and her work with mentee Kyle on adopting resilient dispositions to address societal stressors that negatively affect his teaching and learning practice.

A Brief History of My Mentoring Experience

In appreciation that this study addresses the cycle of mentoring experiences (mentee experience, mentor experience, mentor coaches), I end this introduction with four stories from my

own mentoring experience. These mentoring narratives offer small vignettes of critical points of my teaching and learning career that pushed me to pursue studying the field of mentorship.

The First Day

A staple for growth in many industries, especially in education, is a cycle of observation, cataloging data, reflection, and implementing new practices. The most significant growth often comes when reflecting on quantitative and qualitative data from an extensive data set of observed practices. Under the guidance of a mentor, this data can be adequately harvested, neatly packaged for delivery using researched-based practices, and utilized by a mentee to change their actions effectively. Effective mentoring relationships take time to foster, relying on vulnerability and trust to set the bonds of a newly formed partnership. On September 12, 2015, there was no extensive data set of practice to reflect on, and my colleagues were still knowledgeable and kind strangers. Nothing stood between me and eleven eager sophomores waiting for my first word on the first day of school on the first day of my career.

Initially hired as an English teacher, I found myself transformed into a history teacher a month before the start of school. This adaptation was not a major concern since I had taken equivalent coursework in History, Literature, and Theology in college. Still, it hastened my lesson planning for the upcoming start date. I remember the afternoon I moved into my new apartment at school, August 16, 2015. I knew little about boarding school but was warmly welcomed to campus by my boss and a few other colleagues. I was surprised and relieved that they readily volunteered to help me take boxes into my new home on such a humid summer day. After they helped me settle in and pointed me toward somewhere to eat, they went their separate ways. I then realized how empty a boarding school campus was in the middle of August. I planned to use these few weeks in isolation to make a full-proof plan for all my courses.

I spent those few weeks building curriculum, drafting syllabi, reading primary texts, and trying to invent engaging lesson plans. My current toolbox featured remnants from advanced placement high school history courses, recent handouts and textbooks from my college coursework, the internet, and a tattered copy of *The Elements of Style* by Strunk and White. After utilizing these tools for a week, I felt I had the spine of a decent Western Civilization curriculum to teach for the semester. There was no textbook for the course, so I modeled homework assignments and assessments based on saved artifacts from a Western Civilization course I took in college. I read several high school textbooks to ensure the curriculum was age appropriate and

made adjustments accordingly. In earnest to compile content knowledge I wanted to share with my students, I had yet to figure out my instructional style. I was reasonably confident that my primary and secondary sources would lead my students to sound historical interpretations of Greece and Rome but I was unsure how to structure and manage a classroom. I reflected on my days as a high school student, thinking about my favorite history teacher Mr. Kelly. Each day with Mr. Kelly had the same sequence; a quiz to review the previous night's reading, a funny hook that involved the essential question of the day, a student-focused activity or class discussion, and a few minutes to ask him questions at the end of class. I used the last week of preparation before school to apply the Mr. Kelly teaching model to my curriculum. In the last few days before school, I walked to my classroom thinking about how I would stand and pace around the room. Despite all the preparation, nothing prepared me for that first day on September 12.

I woke up early that morning and walked to the red schoolhouse where I would hold my first class. There was not a soul in the building. I went into room 5 and wrote my name on the board in marker as they do in the movies. I neatly arranged the desks and placed a student questionnaire and a World Religions syllabus at each desk. An hour later, the students shuffled in with nervous energy. I looked at my watch; it was already 8:30 am, and my oxford blue shirt was now closer to navy. My perspiration increased as I struggled to find my first words. It took about a minute to rehearse the first sentence in my head to start class. The first half-hour of the lesson went without a hitch. The students were politely engaged and earnest, fulfilling their first-day social contracts of being kind to strangers. I took another look at my watch and sipped from my coffee mug.

With five minutes left, it was time to move to the last item on the agenda. I don't recall the specific question I asked, but I remember it was reflecting on our first lesson together and thinking about how we would use key terms to frame future class discussions. I could hear the shuffling of feet in the classroom next door and dogs barking near the baseball backstop, but not a single word from my students. I looked down at my lesson plan schedule. There was nothing on the sheet for *in case of silence*. After a few terrifying moments, I interjected, giving the students the answer to my question. I then took the last few minutes of class to explain the homework and sent the students on their way. Stunned, I was unsure what had gone wrong in those moments and even more clueless about the learning opportunity I had just stripped from my students. With no one to help me process what I had just experienced, I feared the worst what if more of the questions I had labored to create led to silence? Fortunately, my fears would be answered in the next few months as I worked with my first mentor, Mark.

The Sound of Silence

In my first year of teaching, I was lucky to be paired with a master English teacher named Mark. That academic year we were piloting a new iteration of a ninth-grade course titled Humanities. The obvious benefit of this course was that it partnered new and veteran teachers from the English and History departments to co-teach a course. Mark had taught in boarding schools for over 25 years, and I was eager to be a sponge. One lesson in particular in that first week of school cemented that I could learn from Mark. In class, we discussed the obligations of being a citizen of a Grecian city-state. The specific question we were debating was, *Did one's civil duty first oblige the laws of the state (society) or one's conscience (the individual)?* For the English portion of the class, the students read Homer's *Odyssey*. As part of the history curriculum, I provided the students with primary sources from Herodotus and Thucydides. During this period, Mark and I co-led class discussions, using previously discussed follow-up questions to stimulate dialogue. Mark had given an example of how Telemachus was obliged to act in the stead of his father, Odysseus. Mark further questioned the students about what other obligations Telemachus had to Ithaca and himself. Now many factors could be given to provide context for what happened next.

Perhaps it was because we were in the longest period of the day that met just before lunch. Perhaps many students were confused by last night's readings. Maybe even some of the students had neglected to read at all. Mark was met with the same unforgiving silence that had paralyzed me a few days before during my first class. I scanned the room, praying for someone to say something. I was unsure how to help my colleague and was afraid to speak up. I looked over at Mark, and he simply smiled. Mark had allowed the class to remain silent for an eternity, more approximately two minutes. The silence was eventually broken by one of our best students, Alyssa. She offered a compelling answer drawing evidence from Homer's *Odyssey* and Thucydides's account of Pericles' Funeral Oration. Alyssa argued that Telemachus had a greater obligation to himself than the state, arguing that Telemachus' situation was not obliged to the same civil responsibility defined in Pericles' Funeral Oration. Before any more discussion could be had, the clock struck 12:15 pm, and the room emptied as the students hurried to lunch.

Mark and I walked to lunch together as we often did debriefing on the day's lesson. I hesitantly asked Mark why he allowed such a long silence between his questions. Mark explained that students need an appropriate balance between comfort and discomfort to grow. If students are

bailed out by the teacher every time they encounter adversity in classroom dialogue, they will never become comfortable with silence. If students can understand that it is appropriate for them to take a moment to think before they speak and to wrestle with difficult questions, then that is a powerful lesson learned. Shocked with this new knowledge, I began to apply Mark's method to class discussions in my other history courses. Each time I met with my students, I knew there would be difficult historical questions they may be unable to answer. However, instead of filling in the silence when my students were stumped, I elected to remain silent like Mark. In the following weeks, I noticed my students began to take more time to think about their answers and wrestle with the sources to formulate a response. The responses were more thoughtful, and the students felt more comfortable sharing developing answers. Many students did not have complete answers to the questions, but I became more aware of the critical elements they understood and where they needed my support.

After being at school for a month, the Dean of Faculty asked new employees to select mentors. I asked Mark, and he obliged, serving as an excellent mentor poised in a position to observe me in each class and offer a wealth of experience. We would often grab breakfast together on Tuesdays to debrief lessons and discuss more personal aspects of working in boarding school. To this day, he still serves as a mentor and is a close friend.

My First Mentee

Onboarding at boarding schools can often be a dizzying experience. While much of the interviewing process and initial training is heavily focused on the instructional side of things, educators in independent schools fulfill many roles and responsibilities outside the classroom. A school may hire you to teach Chemistry, American Literature, or Spanish, but on the same day, you are also a soccer coach, dorm parent of twenty-three students, and a guidance counselor. The job requires you to perform multiple roles simultaneously, each requiring a different set of tools. Many independent school veterans have been working in independent schools for so long that the complexities of the academic calendar become lost in their wake as they hydroplane through parent-teacher conferences, grades and comments, and temporary guardianship of twenty or so adolescents. Although it may seem like they are just skimming over the difficulties of the job, the truth is that they have developed competencies and strategies to cope with the consistent uncertainty. After my fifth year of working at boarding schools, I was by no means in this class of

veterans, but I had stumbled enough and taken note of my pitfalls to be helpful to a new incoming teacher.

My first mentee Mike was a career academic coming off a long stint of teaching at universities abroad. He possessed mastery in content knowledge in a wide array of historical subjects, is bilingual, and has a strong background in historiography. These traits, coupled with his sense of endeavor and humor, made him a well-suited candidate to be part of the academic program at our school. Mike's biggest challenge would be taking on roles unfamiliar and incongruent with his previous experiences. For the first time in his career, he would live in residence with 23 teenage boys and coach two sports teams.

Mike's academic background allowed him to start with a solid foundation in his first year. He was not worried about lesson planning, assembling content, or creating assessments for his courses. The real challenge for Mike would be working with teenagers for the first time and navigating the "newness" of each day of boarding school. The word "newness" here takes on a specific contextual meaning. Of course, in any field, the job day can be unique, but this is exceedingly true in independent schools. Even though your official title is "instructional faculty," the most important thing you may be doing in a given day is making sure everyone is properly belted for the 2-hour drive to an away game or taking your student advisee to the emergency room for stitches or facilitating a courageous conversation about race with your dorm residents. Each day has twists and turns, leading to quick burnout for new teaching faculty. For Mike, I knew I could serve as a guide to help him through these different "twists and turns" as they arose during his first academic year. I was starting my fifth year at the school the year we met. I was by no means a veteran, but I had started to cobble together systems and strategies of my own to deal with the different roles and responsibilities of the job.

Our mentoring relationship began as neighbors. In Mike's first year, he moved into the dorm attached to mine. It quickly became obvious that we shared much more in common than an external door that connected our apartments. Like myself, he was an avid watcher of the English Premiership. Our relationship grew beginning by discussing match days and eventually exchanging more about our workday and personal lives. Our initial discussions about work focused on the daily functions of the job, such as how you deal with a misbehaving student or how to create a productive study environment in the dorm at night. Mike would simply ask me about specific things happening to him each day, and I began to see the pattern of events I experienced during year one. After the first two weeks of Mike asking questions, I began structuring our conversations beforehand. Instead of waiting for Mike to ask questions about the

job's particulars, I started looking ahead in the academic calendar, thinking about potential pitfalls or lulls in the year that can shake a first-year teacher. Our discussions continued to be organic since we started a friendship, but I often asked Mike what he thought about upcoming events or how his management style worked in the classroom or the dorm.

Since that first year, we have had many conversations about managing different aspects of the job, but the most pressing has always been how to form positive relationships with students. In providing context to my mentoring story, I feel the first few weeks of our relationship were formative. The first series of conversations Mike and I had about working in boarding school dealt with managing the ups and downs of teenagers. I am not a trained psychologist or a parent, so instead of offering Mike advice, I would mostly try to listen and act as a sounding board. I occasionally offered something I had stumbled upon as effective based on experience. Mostly, I was interested in allowing Mike to recount the events as he saw them. Mike told me that he was having difficulties managing classroom dialogue in his youngest language class because the students were overly social. A veteran mentor using research-based practices probably would have asked to observe the behavior, but at this point in my career, I was unaware of the benefits of observation. Since my mentorship of Mike, I have learned that observation in effective mentoring is key. Observation allows for the opportunity to understand the visual and audial interactions of the people involved in complex situations like classrooms. Later in Chapter 4, mentoring narrative, I illustrate how mentors use observation as a critical strategy. Instead of using observation, I used reporting, simply allowing someone to recount events in their own words. Reporting can be helpful, but it is a far less effective strategy since you rely on the mentee's narration and the mentor's ability to interpret the mentee's narrative outside its visual and audial context.

Mike reported that he could not find an effective management style to maintain a disciplined classroom environment. Mike highlighted two major issues. He felt it took much effort to quiet the students to start class. He also felt that students had difficulty transitioning between activities without socializing with one another. Having similar experiences in my teaching career, I asked Mike what methods he had tried and what results he had seen. Mike said he had instituted punitive measures for speaking out of turn and dismissed a few of the worst offenders from class. I thought this was not a bad initial practice to ensure the students understood the severity of the situation, but this was not the long-term solution to Mike's problem. I started to think about what strengths or tools Mike already had to address his problem. Even in our early days of working together, I observed two things about Mike. He told funny jokes and made witty

remarks responding to a question or statement. He was a great listener and always maintained eye contact and a smile. After a conversation with Mike, you felt he valued you and your time. With these strengths in mind, I asked Mike two questions; *what do you think the students like about you*, and *why do you think they are so social in your classroom?*

Without much prompting, Mike was able to list several helpful facts. *What do you think the students like about you?* Mike said the students enjoyed speaking with him before and after class. They also enjoy it when he tells light-hearted jokes. *Why do you think they are so social in your classroom?* Mike told me many students were good friends and the class block often met before lunch. After hearing what Mike had to say, I suggested that he maintain the humor with the students (maybe introduce some signals when it was time to act more formally) but perhaps try to have an honest conversation with them about his expectations and his understanding that 1) the students enjoyed each others company and 2) the time of day that they met was not best suited for their learning, but it was a reality of the schedule. In this way, Mike could develop his own authentic classroom management style. Mike was not a disciplinarian but won the respect and attention of students through his humor and by making it evident to all his students that he greatly cared about their learning. It is also important to point out that through this experience, I learned that applying one contextual learning experience to another is ill-advised. My suggestion to Mike was the same suggestion I received from my mentor and from other leadership literature I had read. The advice, in theory, is well-founded that one should maintain their unique qualities in the leadership roles they take and not adopt the leadership mold of another individual. However, before offering this suggestion to Mike, I should have asked him to observe the classroom behavior and not attempt to apply truisms to solve contextual and nuanced problems. My suggestion, in the end, suited Mike well. He used character traits he already possessed to develop a more effective classroom management style. Still, in future interactions, I have tried to avoid using theory to inform context and let the context of the situation inform the theory.

The Mentoring Relationship That Planted The Seed

To close out this brief history of mentoring experiences, I would like to share a short mentoring story that planted the seeds of this study. This mentoring relationship encouraged me to ask powerful questions and forever challenged how I approached solving complex problems. In my third year of teaching, my mentor Bridget introduced me to inquiry framing, a process that

focuses on using inquiry-based dialogue to understand complex contexts and uncover potential solutions.

Bridget's mentoring intervention came in a time of great need. In a teacher's career, there are moments when it feels like you are moving through quicksand. You feel as if you are not fulfilling one particular role or responsibility to the level you are capable of, and you start to fixate on how it could be better. Sometimes you don't have the knowledge or right understanding to fix the problem on your own. Inertia sets in, and you feel stuck in place. These teaching ruts sometimes seem insurmountable, but it is a matter of framing the problem, asking the right questions, and leveraging change. You may feel like you are in quicksand, but you don't have to live in it. During my third year of teaching, Bridget helped me leverage change to get out of a seemingly deep teaching rut.

I was teaching United States History for the second time. I felt the course was well-balanced with the appropriate source material, and I felt very confident with my assessments. One of the most challenging parts of this teaching rut was that I did not know I was in one. As confident as ever, I went lesson after lesson for the first two months of school, teaching what I thought was shaping into a wonderful semester. In this second iteration of United States History, we began the semester by debating the difference between liberty and freedom using the introduction from *David Hackett Fischer's Liberty and Freedom: A Visual History of America's Founding Ideas* to set the parameters of our semester-long dialogue. As a class, we began to form varying definitions of liberty and freedom using Fischer as a foundation and many primary sources from the American Revolution. In each lesson, we read a primary source for content while building skills, including close reading, annotation, evidence implementation, and thesis construction. At the end of the unit, the students were asked to pull together their source material and use the skills they had developed to answer the following question; "*To what extent should the Revolutionary era be seen as a time of freedom?*". Students received the essential question at the start of the semester, so hopes were high that they would perform well. They had ample time to practice their essay writing skills and had all the evidence necessary to answer the question. This question is complex at any level of historical writing, but when I read the first round of drafts, I was floored.

My best students had failed to make a cohesive and coherent argument. Each student performed well in constructing an argumentative and nuanced thesis statement, but the analysis of source material in light of the question was seriously off the mark. Most students did very well in setting up their argument, asserting that the Revolutionary Era was a time of limited freedom.

However, the same group of students that had constructed a coherent thesis continually miscategorized evidence that supported freedom with evidence that argued for liberty. In my mind, we had discussed in great detail the extent of freedom and liberty in each primary source, slowly building to an understanding of how it all played out in the Revolutionary era. This was the first time I had been hit by the stark contrast of the classroom of the mind meaning the learning I thought was going on in my head versus the reality of what student experience in my classroom was yielding. Of course, this was the first draft, and students would have another chance to make changes with some feedback, but in my mind, I needed to figure out where it all went wrong. Thinking of a growth mindset approach, I was ready to take on the challenge and put in the effort, but I did not know where to begin. In the following class, I was going to have to offer the same challenge to my students, but I did not know what this new and better effort would be. I turned to the only person I knew that could help me solve such a complex problem, Bridget.

Bridget was a master teacher with specific training in instructional coaching and learning science. Over a long career, she had crafted many toolkits and frameworks which would eventually pull me out of the teaching mire I found myself in. Throughout this thesis, I will continue emphasizing the importance of observing practices when possible and not solely relying on learner reporting as data. In this instance, it was the end of the semester with no time for Bridget to come to observe my practice. The damage had been done, and Bridget would mentor me through this moment, using my storytelling to frame her inquiry. Using reporting to construct a data set is less than ideal, but with Bridget's experience, I felt confident we could find a solution based on my storytelling. As a professional golf coach can tell from the sound of a driver where the ball went, Bridget would be able to listen to my recollections to see whether I sliced it off the heel or hooked it off the toe. I recalled to Bridget each of the subsequent lessons I had given my students and took her through the Revolutionary era assessment. Once she had a good idea of the classroom framework, she asked how often I quizzed the students on content. In my head, I thought I had been "quizzing" them every day through class discussions and homework assignments. I never wanted to be like my high school history teacher, who quizzed daily. I felt quizzing too often creates poor rapport with students and places them under unnecessary stress. I explained this reasoning to Bridget, and she smiled. Almost like a psychic, she had planned to share a book with young faculty later in the year that would solve my problems, *Small Teaching* by James Lang.

From the start of the semester, I finally thought I had put together a near-perfect United States history curriculum. After the triumphs and tribulations of my first year teaching the course,

I assumed I had worked the kinks out of my lesson plans and created assessments that were driving my students' learning. I was operating under a fixed mindset and didn't even realize it. Long ago, I had read the work of Carol Dweck and her work with a growth mindset. I had also assumed that I approached my teaching with such a mindset, but when I slowed down to reflect on my teaching practice, I was not being thoughtful enough to make Dweck's theory actionable in my teaching. Bridget said that to make our beliefs a part of our practice, we need to make them actionable and accountable. Bridget said I should set professional goals each year in each course I taught. That way, my beliefs, such as a growth mindset, would become action items on my agenda. At first glance, I was fearful that I would be unable to identify what went wrong with my assessment and unsure where to best place my efforts to make the appropriate changes. Bridget assured me that these changes were actionable, manageable, and measurable. Bridget's call for me to be more intentional with structuring learning in my classroom was a valuable lesson I never forgot. In my classroom, my students were exposed to critical historical ideas and competencies. However, my students would never meet my expectations without a more explicit structure to measure and reflect upon the learning. This truth has been continually reinforced to me as I have studied the work of successful mentor coaches, mentoring relationships, and student learning. To add more structure to my classroom learning, Bridget gave me a copy of Lang's *Small Teaching* and told me to read Chapter 1 on Retrieval Practice.

The subject of the book was true to the name of its title. Lang offered small, high-leverage interventions that could easily be implemented in my curriculum. The two main principles I took from this chapter, "frequency matters" and "require thinking", still inform my curriculum today. "Frequency matters" is the idea that students should be quizzed or asked to retrieve knowledge as often as possible (Lang, 2016, p. 37). Lang recommends students should be quizzed a minimum of once a week and as much as once a class. Lang's "require thinking" principle refers to how teachers can connect simple memorization with higher-order thinking. For example, in Lang's classroom, he wants his student to know how Robert Burns' Scottish identity affected his writing. When quizzing students in preparation for an assessment, Lang would ask his student a high-order thinking question instead of just having them select Burns' nationality from a list. Lang offers a sample question: "How does the national identity of Roberts Burns influence his writing?" (Lang, 2016, p. 38). These simple but effective principles taught me how to change my teaching practice, but I still needed help to see how they could be leveraged in my classroom.

With Bridget's help, I could see that even though I was exposing students to important content, I was not testing their recall of the content with enough frequency. When we read and discussed Jefferson's Declaration of Independence draft, I should have also been quizzing them consistently on its contents and what it meant in the context of our essential question. I thought this was achieved by annotation, class discussion, and homework assignments, but I realized their practice was more focused when they were quizzed. Another useful aspect of the retrieval practice was to require students to think. I would often give students fact sheets about critical historical figures to use as a part of their analysis of primary sources. This was good practice in theory, but instead of providing them with a list of facts such as one listing Thomas Jefferson as a Democratic-Republican and a states' right advocate, I should have been posting questions to prompt their thinking; *How did Jefferson's political identity and stance of states' right effect the course of American freedom?* I implemented these retrieval methods during my second semester United States History course and saw the results. My students were far better at retrieving content to analyze primary sources. I was thankful to Bridget for her intervention and focused on the frame of mind that a growth mindset is an active mindset.

I was also grateful to Bridget for opening my mind to the kind of support that I could provide for my colleagues. When I first approached Bridget with my problem, she simply could have given me some straightforward advice and sent me on my way. *Oh, Conor, you need to provide more quizzes between assessments.* Instead, she used coaching strategies and methods to change my teaching practice for the immediate term and my career. Bridget took the time to place me at the center of the learning process and form an authentic partnership. She used her expertise to influence my development but was also thoughtful of my goals as an educator. Bridget showed me a reality where mentoring can (1) prioritize an equal partnership and (2) utilize personal expertise as a fundamental element of learning. After this experience with Bridget, I became curious about how this type of mentorship was done and how it was learned. In the following chapter, Chapter 2 Literature Review, I review key literature from the mentoring and coaching fields that highlight the effectiveness of the models, strategies, and methods that inform mentoring interventions like Bridget's.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A Short Disclaimer

Before discussing the vast and expansive arena of mentoring and coaching literature, I want to identify critical points that explain my inclusions and exclusions of the different pertinent source materials. Coaching and mentoring literature exist in a well-explored dominion and vibrant community that shares innovators, educators, texts, and ideas. Since there is much cross-pollination across the literature, I offer the following observations from my reading of past and contemporary mentoring and coaching literature. (1) Many researchers and practitioners in these fields of study have come to similar conclusions on how best to implement coaching and mentoring practice, (2) These common conclusions do not always share the same definitive language but advocate for similar theories of action in teaching and learning practice, (3) Many of the authors of this literature are active practitioners meaning one can benefit more by attending their workshops or consulting them personally as opposed to just reading the literature. These focus points have pushed me to narrow the scope of the literature to a group of widely circulated and active practitioners and use the language from this definitive group of practitioners. Many sample cases in this chapter will reference practitioners' direct experiences as evidence instead of solely relying on their published works. The scope of literature in this study was also narrowed by utilizing literature that addressed the three tiers of mentoring (1) the experience of the mentee, (2) the experience and pedagogy of the mentor, and (3) the experience and pedagogy of mentor coaches. Much of the literature I will review in this section will heavily feature the experience of the mentee and mentor. To better understand the experience of coaching mentors, I focused on interviewing and observing instructional and mentor coaching experts who worked primarily for learning organizations. Information on mentor coaching as a specific area of literature is mainly found in adult learning programs, school consulting companies, and graduate programs. A full report on all three tiers of mentoring and their usage in this study will be summarized in section four of this chapter Mentoring and Coaching: What Can We Learn From Our Pedagogical Neighbor. In the first section of the literature review, I would like to detail where mentoring fits into the life of independent schools or, in the language of systems scientist Peter Senge, learning organizations.

The Big Picture

The first step to appreciating the potential efficacy of mentoring in practice is to look at the larger system, in this case, a school or learning organization. Systems literature offers a helpful guide to potential mentors and mentees on how mentoring is affected by organizational influence and how mentoring relationships can model, change, and improve core values and competencies within schools. In Senge's recent book *Schools That Learn*, Senge asserts that successful schools can be qualified as learning organizations. Senge defines learning organizations as organizations that facilitate the learning of their constituents (board of trustees, administration, employees, students, parents) and continually transform themselves based on various methods of reflective practice (Senge, 2012). Senge argues that for a school to be considered a learning organization, it must be adaptive and transformative. Transformative and adaptive schools must have the proper organizational architecture in place, including guiding ideas, innovations to infrastructure, and theories/tools/methods of inquiry (Senge, 2012). Senge defines "guiding ideas" as "deliberately articulated, profound statements that provide a philosophical underpinning for organization change" (Senge, 2012, p. 73). "Innovations in infrastructure" refers to a set of basic facilities and systems that support the sustainability of the learning environment, such as master schedules, communication systems, professional development design, and classrooms (Senge, 2012, p. 73). Senge's final key to a sustainable organizational architecture which he labels theories, tools, and methods of inquiry, are more ambiguous. Senge argues that for schools to be adaptive and transformative, they must also be reflective. According to Senge, schools must employ tools and methods of inquiry supported by well-tested theories. These theories, tools, and methods must be used to ask the right questions so that schools have the proper perspectives to reflect upon and make changes for the betterment of their constituents.

Mentors should try to understand the different components of their respective systems to know the learning opportunities within the system and how the system affects their mentoring relationship. Mentors with a systems knowledge of their school can employ what Senge and other systems thinkers call "leverage". Senge defines leverage as "small relatively inexpensive, well-focused actions...that produce significant, enduring improvements" (Senge, 2012, p. 6). Seeing the bigger picture allows the mentor to identify the most effective interventions that can be

used to aid a mentee and show their mentee how simple actions can lead to change. Another practical competency that can be taught at a systems level is emotional resilience. A mentor should work to understand how the system may be affecting their mentee similarly or differently than themselves. These reasons may include but are not limited to systemic racism, gender/sexual orientation bias, or stereotype threat. Mentors cannot be experts in all things, and often people have multiple mentors that vary in their professional focus and competencies. Still, attempts at understanding the systems we work in can alleviate unnecessary strain and confusion when working in complex teaching and learning environments like independent schools.

Mentorship: A Moving Target and A Sliding Scale

The purpose of this section is to create space for the reader to think about the definition of mentorship, acknowledge its diverse and fluid nature, and assert that mentoring is an adaptive and flexible role that lives on a spectrum moving between directive and non-directive intervention.

Mentorship is a problematic term to nail down due to the diverse nature of its applications in different professional fields, and the wide-ranging competencies and methods mentors are called to use during mentoring relationships. The term mentor and its origins are often credited to Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the aptly named character Mentor is the wise old guide to the younger, less experienced Telemachus. Now that mentoring practice has become a more explored field of study, many definitions of mentorship exist and are complicated mainly by additive models, methodologies, characteristics, or competencies. For example, in most mentoring relationships mentors are often called to pass on knowledge to their mentees. In this example, mentoring is simply advising or giving out wisdom to the inexperienced mentee who uses the wisdom to change their practice.

This simplistic definition of mentorship becomes more complex when the mentoring relationship features an added characteristic such as reciprocity. A reciprocal mentoring relationship involves mutual benefit to both the mentor and mentee, both parties are called to make clear their motivations, contributions, and goals for the relationship. In a reciprocal relationship, the mentee benefits from receiving guidance on how to change their practice. The mentor benefits from seeing their methodology in action and having the mentee give feedback on its application and efficacy.

Mentoring relationships differ not only based on the relationship's characteristics but also on mentor competencies and a mentor's suitability to help a mentee in different contexts. For

example, one function of a mentor could be to offer their mentee career advice and use their professional network to help their mentee find well-suited professional development opportunities. Educating a mentee about beneficial growth opportunities can be a common and essential practice in any mentoring relationship. Still, this exchange does not necessarily require the mentor to have certain competencies, such as a practical application of adult learning theory. Some industry professionals even use a different term, sponsorship, to classify professional relationships with colleagues that prioritize career development. For this reason, professionals sometimes have multiple mentors to aid in various aspects of their professional and personal lives. One mentor may be better suited to observe areas for change in practice, while another might be better at giving sound career advice. This claim is not to suggest that mentors cannot work on different competencies during mentoring relationships but to assert that a mentor’s current competencies can shift the dynamic and focus of a relationship.

The goal of this section is not to weed out every nuance in the definition of mentoring practice but to highlight the commonalities and differences within mentoring relationships. Below I will explain a framework, called the forms of help spectrum (figure 1.2), from a development consulting group, Graydin, that offers a visual aid for the adaptable and flexible role of mentors and similar professional roles.

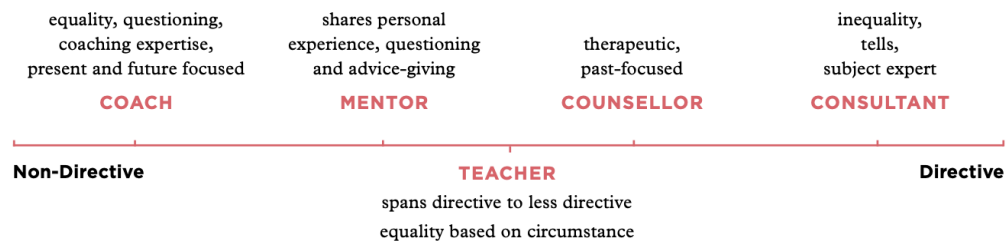


Figure 1.2 Graydin Forms of Help Spectrum

In the forms of help spectrum, the role of the mentor is the second least directive form of help on the scale. The immediate difference between a mentor and a coach, according to Graydin, is that mentors will use personal experience to guide their mentees. According to Graydin, a coach never uses personal experience or advice-giving as an intervention tool but instead maintains that the person they are coaching needs to have full responsibility and ownership of the learning process. The confidence in this non-directive coaching relationship comes from a fundamental belief that the learner is fully equipped to solve their problems and will have a much more impactful learning experience. While mentoring and coaching are different, it is evident that mentors can

benefit from learning to be “coach-like”. In this next section *Mentoring and Coaching: What Can We Learn From Our Pedagogical Neighbor*, I discuss the similarities and differences between these two forms of help and highlight what practices mentors should adopt from coaching.

Mentoring and Coaching: What Can We Learn From Our Pedagogical Neighbor

In the *The Art of Coaching*, Elena Aguilar asserts that “while there are critical distinguishing factors between a mentor and a coach, the sensibility and outcome are the same: the learner is met and accepted wherever she is in her learning trajectory, she is encouraged and supported, she may be pushed, and in the end, she’s a competent practitioner” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 6). Aguilar is right to argue that there are many “critical distinguishing factors” that differentiate mentor and coaching. In a mentoring role the intended outcome is similar to that of a coach. Every mentor wishes for their mentee to become a “competent practitioner” and successful mentoring relationships can achieve this result. One critical factor differentiating mentoring and coaching is the distinction between aim versus outcome. The intended results or outcome for the coachee/mentee are, in their intention, the same; a more competent professional. However, the aim of coaching and mentoring is different. As discussed above, mentoring is a very fluid and dynamic role that calls for a mixture of non-directive/directive intervention and using one’s expertise to guide the mentee. In its purest form coaching principle maintains that the coaches use only non-directive methods of intervention and that the coachee, not the coach has the necessary knowledge for development and solutions to problems. This pure form of coaching, similar to definitions of mentoring practice, is further complicated by additive terms used to characterize coaching, such as Jim Knight’s use of the term “instructional” coach. Additive terms such as the word “instructional” change the aim of specific coaching relationships and allow for the use of a broader range of intervention methods, most notably methods that are considered more directive than non-directive. Let us first look at a brief comparison between mentoring and coaching in their simplest forms. In this context, the mentoring relationship is between a skilled practitioner with professional experience that uses personal experience and other directive methods. In contrast, the coach is purely facilitative and simply acts as a sounding board to allow the coachee to set their own goals and use internal knowledge to define problems and find potential solutions.

Successful mentoring establishes a mutually beneficial relationship between two professionals to help the mentor and mentee develop competencies that benefit the learning organization and the larger learning community. In a mentoring relationship, it is often necessary

that the mentor draws from their personal experience and uses their experience to use directive forms of intervention such as advice-giving. The aim of mentoring is to (1) create both organic and inorganic networks of community building that support the long-term sustainability of learning organizations, (2) help the mentee develop critical competencies, habits, and dispositions that help them reach their personal, and professional goals and (3) facilitate the leadership development of experienced professionals. During mentoring relationships, both the mentor and mentee work together to achieve proficiency in competencies such as strategic planning, growth mindset, and emotional resilience, which support schools' well-being and organizational architecture. The role of the mentor is to share their expertise and help their mentee develop new competencies through learning opportunities and reflective practice. The mentee's role is to take on new learning opportunities and be receptive to feedback to change their practice. At the same time, the mentor is responsible for accepting feedback from the mentee and adjusting their practice to suit the needs of their mentees. Through this type of exchange, the mentor can continue to develop and refine their leadership skills as their awareness and sensibilities of the relationship change. In these ideal mentoring relationships, the mentee and mentor both develop as professional educators. Mainly, the mentor looks to help the mentee develop for the benefit of the mentee and the learning organization. An additional benefit many mentors may pursue is to teach and advocate a specific range of pedagogical beliefs to their mentees that they believe are beneficial to the professional field of education. The mentee can, in turn, help further develop, validate, and share these pedagogical beliefs with the learning organization and the educational field at large.

Though often compared to roles such as mentoring and teaching, coaching is distinct due to its aim. The late Sir John Whitmore, pioneer of the coaching field and author of the celebrated book *Coaching For Performance*, defines coaching as “unlocking people's potential to maximize their own performance. It [coaching] is helping them to learn rather than teaching them” (Whitmore, 2010). Whitmore’s pioneering definition of coaching and his coaching framework, the GROW model, has continued to influence the coaching industry and have been further developed by coaching groups such as Graydin, a professional development organization driven to improve leadership, communication, and wellbeing in schools through coaching and being coach-like. The GROW model stands for Goal (What’s your goal?), Reality (What is your current situation?), Options (What are your options for moving forward, Will (What will you do now?) (Whitmore, 2010). This type of framework aims to ask the coachee questions rather than telling them what to do. This methodology is the key tenant of coaching because it places responsibility

and agency on the coachee, allowing them to find solutions within themselves. When we can answer questions for ourselves, it allows for powerful moments of enduring learning or deep learning instead of surface learning.

A mentoring or coaching relationship aims to create a framework in which enduring or deep learning is possible as opposed to surface learning. Surface learning is sometimes necessary for mentoring relationships when timely interventions require directive methods such as telling or giving advice. President of the Instructional Coaching Group Jim Knight describes surface learning as moments “when we make minor adjustments, try something out for a while, but we don’t really make significant steps forward” (Knight, 2018, p. 16). Conversely, when we engage in enduring learning (which is also referred to as deep learning in the academic field) we change our “assumptions about how we do what we do” and “get to the core of who we are” (Knight, 2018, p. 16). Mentees are more likely to make long-term changes to their practice when mentors use non-directive interventions. Using non-directive methods also makes the mentee's learning explicit, giving the mentee a reproducible skill set they can use to mentor in the future.

Non-directive intervention challenges the learner (the mentee) to take responsibility for solving their problems. Graydin continues to build on this type of work with its coaching model, as seen in its Anatomy Foundational Coaching course. Graydin asserts that there are three truths of coaching; (1) the coach’s role is to ask, not tell (2) the coachee has all the answers (3) the coachee is capable and whole (Simpson & Cerri, 2011, p. 13). These truths clarify that the role of a coach is to be an adroit facilitator and ask effective questions to guide their coachee to unearth their internal wisdom. Effective dialogue requires the coach to internalize a set of beliefs and become proficient in an inquiry and experiential-focused skill set. Some coaching professionals argue that coaches only need competency in coaching skills and do not need to have expertise in the field of the person they are coaching.

In mentorship, the mentor is usually an expert in the mentee’s professional field and often uses personal experience as one of their development tools. When a mentor acts as an “expert” they “do not withhold their expertise” but advocate for strategies from their experience that they feel will be helpful (Knight, 2018, p. 13). The mentors aim is to maintain a balance where mentees is in the “position” of “decision maker” while advocating for strategies that will help the mentee achieve their goals (Knight, 2018, p. 13). Many coaches never use personal experience as a developmental tool since they believe their coachee has the answers in their own experiences. However, there is debate among professional coaches that field knowledge, if not expertise, is necessary for coaching relationships. In the field of mentoring, generally, the mentor and mentee

collaborate on an agenda and use the mentor's personal experience as a centerpiece of learning. Unlike a mentor, a coach ensures that the coachee decides the agenda and the desired outcomes for coaching sessions. Even though these roles of directive/non-directive intervention have differences in aim; mentoring can still greatly benefit from adopting "coach-like" practices. For example, many of the best learning opportunities rely on inquiry and experienced-based practices. Some of the best moments of growth and development in the classroom occur when the teacher uses methods that challenge the student to acquire content knowledge or a skill-based competency utilizing the student's base knowledge and commitment to learning. The same claim makes sense when applied to mentoring relationships. Our mentees greatly benefit when we place the responsibility for learning in their own hands. When we ask our mentees effective questions and push them to reflect on their practice they will more likely know how to apply competencies in daily practice.

In this study, particularly in Chapter 4 and 5, I will share specific stories of interventions used by mentors that are coach-like meaning they vastly rely on inquiry, focus on the learner, and strive for enduring or deep learning. I will also highlight directive methods that are effective, but limited in their application for enduring learning for our mentees. Certain directive methods are important for any mentor to have in their tool kit and must be employed usually in time-sensitive situations and generally when the needs (immediate or long-term) of the learning organizations are placed above the mentee's needs. To further discuss the appropriateness of non-directive vs. directive forms of intervention, it is important to take stock of different models and approaches advocated by the most prominent coaching consultants and organizations. This study argues that mentors should work using a hybrid model incorporating several methods used by Jim Knight of Instructional Coaching Group, Elena Aguilar of Bright Morning Consulting, and Gradyin Coaching Group. These prominent figures and organizations are not the only influential practitioners in the field of coaching but their pedagogy is well supported by research-based practices. Each of these organizations also has a well-resourced and dedicated leadership team that goes to great lengths to synthesize and incorporate industry knowledge to refine their methodology continually.

In comparing and contrasting the coaching pedagogies of Knight, Aguilar, and Graydin, I hope to provide a window into the possible coach-like models that are sustainable and effective for mentoring practice in independent schools. To begin, it is important to identify the different types of coaching models and approaches that are acknowledged in the works of Knight, Aguilar, and Graydin as well as the scope of the intended interventions. In his most recent book, *The*

Impact Cycle Knight focuses on instructional coaching which he defines as relationships where “instructional coaches partner with teachers to analyze current reality, set goals, identify and explain teaching strategies to meet goals, and provide support until the goals are met” (Knight, 2018, p. 3). Knight offers three possible approaches to instructional coaching: facilitative, directive, and dialogical. For Knight, learning focuses on improving a coachee’s instructional ability and student experience. Though an intervention that improves someone’s instructional capacity can have larger implications on learning organizations as a whole, the aim of Knight’s coaching model is specifically to address the needs of the instructional employee. In the work of Aguilar and Graydin, their interventions' scope and intended impact are much larger when thinking about how coaching relationships can change who we are and how we think. While Graydin simply refers to this metacognitive model as “coaching”, Aguilar uses “transformational coaching”. Aguilar defines transformational coaching as a model that “...incorporates strategies from directive and facilitative coaching, as well as cognitive and ontological coaching” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). Aguilar says that what makes transformational coaching distinct is “the scope that it attempts to affect and the processes used” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). Transformational coaching is “directed at three domains and intends to affect” (1) “The individual client and their behaviors, beliefs, and being” (2) “The institutions and systems in which the client works --and the people who work within those systems” and (3) “the broader educational and social system in which we live” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). The Graydin model of coaching has no additive term to define itself because they fundamentally believe that coaching in its purest form is metacognitive and ontological by nature. Graydin firmly believes that when applied to larger systems like Aguilar’s transformational coaching, their coaching model can achieve similar outcomes. Graydin believes all industries and professionals would benefit from being coach-like. However, their initial focus is more specifically on the individual client. At Graydin, the coach's responsibility is to “create a space and conversation for your coachee to learn about who they are, what they want, and how to achieve their goals and dreams” (Simpson & Cerri, 2011, p. 5). Unlike Knight and Aguilar, Graydin does not use any directive forms of intervention and believes the coachee has all the knowledge necessary to solve their problems. Since there are so many different models and approaches to coaching, I will provide definitions and examples for each in terms of how Knight, Aguilar, and Graydin present them. I will compare and contrast their proposed strengths and weaknesses and ultimately provide a consensus on which are most appropriate for the use of mentors in independent school settings.

Knight's work focuses on encouraging "effective teaching to improve student learning" in a coaching model he calls instructional coaching (Knight, 2018, p. 2). In Knight's work with the Instructional Coaching Group, he acknowledges that the coaching industry is exploding, and a person can just about find a specific coach for any type of practice they want to improve. In believing that a client would reach out to a particular coach to learn about a specific practice Knight's definition of coaching is at odds with the one used by Graydin. Graydin would contend that a coach's only expertise must be a certain coaching skill set. In the Graydin model, a certified coach can coach someone in anything because the answer to the coachee's problem is already within the coachee. Knight's instructional coaching model advocates for three approaches to coaching; directive, facilitative, and dialogical. In Knight's analysis of these different approaches, he evaluates that they all have different strengths and weaknesses. Graydin would argue that any coaching approaches that utilize non-directive measures are counterproductive to the ultimate goal of coaching, which is to allow the coachee to solve their problems. Let's first look at the most direct or instructive approaches to coaching advocated by Knight and Aguilar.

The directive or instructive coaching model is best implemented in time-sensitive situations when the coachee is looking to change a behavior or needs specific knowledge to implement a new strategy that they do not already possess. The strengths of this coaching model are that it can be used for the sake of triage and gives the coach greater control over how the coachee implements that prescribed strategy. Knight asserts that "...the goal of the of the directive coach is to ensure fidelity to a proven model, not adaptation of the model to the unique needs of children or strengths of a teacher" (Knight, 2018, p. 11). In *The Art of Coaching* Aguilar uses the example of a new teacher struggling with classroom management and organization. The new teacher is completely overwhelmed by the new realities of her job and requires an immediate intervention to lift up her spirit and encourage her that she can do her job. In this specific scenario, Aguilar notices that her colleague is exhausted and needs a quick fix. Aguilar acknowledges that in this situation, she could have asked her colleague to set up a series of observation periods and schedule several debriefs to encourage a solution generated by the colleague's learning methodically. However, in this scenario, Aguilar decided to tell her colleague about some practical strategies she could implement immediately. These simple but "high leverage" strategies gave Aguilar's colleague the shot in the arm she needed to face the next challenge. In the immediate term, Knight and Aguilar advocate that coaches should have some directive coaching strategies in their toolbox, but this approach has limitations. Directive coaching in comparison to other less directive approaches, is "less likely to result in long-term

changes of practice or internalization of learning” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 22). Aguilar recalls many occasions where she returns to colleagues long after directive interventions and observes that they have since given up on the strategy. Aguilar recommends that coaches implement “...strategies that support educators to explore, develop, and change their beliefs and ways of being” (Aguilar, 2013). To accomplish this level of intervention that encourages the internalization of learning and long-term changes in behavior, Aguilar advocates for a coaching model called transformational coaching. Knight shares similar ideas about the limitations of directive coaching. Knight argues that directive coaching is the least effective model in encouraging deep learning and assumes a level of buy-in from the coachee that does not always exist. Buy-in is critical to developing trust in a coaching relationship, and most coaching models offer a specific strategy to develop trust.

To develop trust, almost all coaching advocates agree that effective coaching models maintain a “partnership approach”. Directive coaching can often diminish the “expertise and autonomy” of the coachee, which “engenders resistance” and creates a hierarchical relationship between the coach and coachee (Knight, 2018, p. 12). Another issue with directive coaching is that directive strategies usually lack the ownership and flexibility that a coachee needs to implement in complex settings such as schools (Knight, 2018, p. 12). Instead of using directive coaching, Knight advocates for a model of his own called dialogical coaching. Dialogical coaching is “...an approach to coaching that combines the facilitative coach’s respect for the professionalism of teachers with the directive coach’s ability to identify and describe effective strategies...” (Knight, 2018, p.12). As previously stated in the previous chapter, Aguilar offers a similar model that melds together multiple coaching strategies called transformational coaching. Before discussing transformational and dialogical models of coaching, it will be important to understand some examples of facilitative coaching, which is the foundation for both these emerging models.

Facilitative coaches act as a “sounding board” encouraging their coaches to “...share their ideas openly by listening with empathy, paraphrasing, and asking powerful questions” (Knight, 2018, p. 10). Facilitative coaching is based on two fundamental principles; (1) the coachee possesses the knowledge they need to make a change so the coach's role is to facilitate the unpacking and application of the knowledge and (2) the use of a coaches expertise or personal experience will only serve to limit the coachee’s growth as a professional (Knight, 2018, p. 10). A coach’s understanding of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is crucial to implementing facilitative coaching. The ZPD is commonly understood as “the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can do with help” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 23). A skillful facilitator

will know how to shift the framework or scaffolding of the coaching sessions based on a “gradual release of responsibility” to give the coachee ownership and a sense of autonomy in creating solutions (Aguilar, 2013, p. 23). In a successful example of facilitative coaching, Aguilar uses paraphrasing and inquiry to aid a new teaching colleague in unpacking the success of a recent lesson. In this example, the new teacher is excited about a recent lesson in which the students worked well in groups to analyze a series of documents. However, in her excitement, she is worried that she will be unable to rekindle the magic again. Using a Socratic-like dialogue as an inquiry framework, Aguilar asks her colleague a series of questions to reflect on the steps she felt made the lesson successful. In this coaching session, Aguilar encourages the new teacher by making the point that since she can highlight the steps that led to the success, she will most certainly be able to continue to build on these findings in working towards greater frequency in successful lessons. If a coachee cannot identify the reason for their success or does not know how to improve their practice, then facilitative coaching is not an appropriate coaching model. Aguilar’s transformational coaching and Knight’s dialogical coaching are two hybrid coaching models that combine directive and non-directive coaching strategies to best suit the varying needs of the coachee.

Transformational coaching addresses “...three domains and intends to affect...” (1) “the individual client and their behaviors, beliefs, and being” (2) “ the institutions and systems in which the client works --and the people who work within those systems (3) “the broader educational and social system in which we live” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). Transformational coaching has the largest intended impact and employs systems thinking and ontology to facilitate and frame solutions. Aguilar defines the work of a transformational coach as trying “...to surface the connections between these three [aforementioned] domains, to leverage change between them, and to intentionally direct our efforts so that the impact we have on an individual will reverberate on other levels” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). In the *Art of Coaching* Aguilar offers several brief examples of how transformational coaching addresses the first domain a colleague’s “behaviors, beliefs, and being”.

In one example, Aguilar details her work with an instructional employee who was an exceptional and thoughtful teacher and a member of the school’s leadership team. Although she was an excellent teacher and a well-meaning leader, her “being” or how she presented verbally and non-verbally to her peers, was offputting and detrimental to collaboration. Many members of the leadership team felt like they could not share their ideas during meetings due to the coachee’s “annoyed” demeanor and the perception that she often “dismissed” the ideas of her colleagues

(Aguilar, 2013, p. 26). Aguilar retrieved these data points by talking with other leadership team members. When she reported these findings to her coachee it was clear that this state of being and attributed behaviors did not match her beliefs about leadership or reflect how she wanted to engage with her colleagues. Aguilar helped the coachee work to change these behaviors and explore her beliefs about collaboration. Aguilar then had the coachee take her new behaviors and beliefs and align them with a new vision of how she would work with her colleagues. In doing so, the coachee could create a clear vision for how she wanted to interact with colleagues. In this example, you can see how Aguilar changed her coach's being to affect how the leadership team collaborated positively. Transformational coaching also works from a systems perspective.

Aguilar advocates for coaches to see different aspects of schools as intrinsically interrelated and to use high leverage change when possible. Aguilar discusses a few scenarios highlighting the individual problems and the systems at play that may affect the individual. For example “a new teacher struggling with classroom management” would benefit from an administration thinking about “systems for on-boarding new teachers” or a “principal who is frustrated by his staff’s lack of compliance with email protocol” may want to look into “...the school’s formal and informal communication systems” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 27). Another example Aguilar offers is a teacher attempting to diagnose why children are not completing homework for class. Some initial findings might be that the students are lazy or that there are no consequences for not turning it in. However, after further investigation what might be the case is that many students in the class do not have adequate space and time to complete their assignments. A high-leverage implementation to solve this problem could be to introduce an afterschool homework program (Aguilar, 2013, p. 28). Aguilar acknowledges that of course, some “macro issues” are not within the control of the coachee or school “...but without an understanding of the larger systems at play, our response to immediate problems may be misguided, often tend to blame individuals, and are not likely to result in sustainable change” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 28). Similar to Aguilar, Knight offers a coaching model that combines directive and facilitative strategies; dialogical coaching.

Knight’s dialogical coaching model allows coaches to balance advocacy and inquiry (Knight, 2018, p. 12). The coach does not need to withhold their expertise but instead shares research-based strategies they think could be effective in helping coachees achieve their goals. Unlike directive coaching, dialogical coaching makes the coachee the decision-maker and the two stakeholders work in partnership to modify strategies to fit the needs of the coachee. The coach does not try to persuade the coachee to change their implementation using advocacy but uses

dialogue to adapt the strategy. The goal of this coaching model is to allow for the coach to impart knowledge the coachee does not have and also maintain an equal partnership by judging the strategy's success based on its results. The results of the strategy should align with the coachee's intended goal as opposed to an evaluation of implementation by the coach. Balancing advocacy and inquiry allows a more fruitful learning process for the coachee, who will solve their problems with support. All of these different coaching models can help inform mentor practice. Like a coach, a mentor should have a comprehensive toolkit that features multiple coaching models, including directive, facilitative, dialogical, and transformational.

The time and space allotted in a busy school calendar will likely dictate which coaching model is best adapted by the mentor. Using directive forms of intervention has its place and can undeniably be an essential tool for any mentor. Directive strategies are best used to quickly solve issues that are time-sensitive or used to solve a crisis that needs immediate attention. For example, if a mentee is about to step into a difficult parent-teacher conference. You may not have time to practice a difficult conversation or ask your mentee a series of questions to dredge up strategies they may have used in the past. In this situation, giving advice and using your personal experience would greatly benefit your mentee and allow the relationship to develop further. Of course, this type of mentoring intervention is not the most effective if the goal of mentorship is to provide your mentee with deep learning opportunities. Success in learning organizations such as schools requires resilient and agile thinking, so mentees need these deep learning experiences. If we are always simply interjecting or using our experience to guide our mentees, we are not allowing them the time to reflect and become their best selves. Each professional needs to develop their unique sense of being to identify their strengths and weaknesses. For example, let's think of a colleague who is a charismatic public speaker that endears others to follow their lead through rousing speeches and partner them with a mentee who is an introvert and, despite being an excellent professional, lacks these qualities. We should not expect the mentee to slowly develop into the same character as their mentor, but instead allow them to find the best public speaker within themselves. Perhaps the best they will ever do is to speak truthfully, compassionately, and short. Still, this honest improvement will allow the best qualities of their public speaking to shine instead of developing an inauthentic self. The other issue with directive strategies is that they will not encourage the mentee to "...make long term changes of practice..." or lead to the "...internalization of learning" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 22).

The facilitative coaching model is most effective when the goal of the mentoring relationship is deep learning, allowing the mentee opportunities to develop new habits and make

long-term changes to their teaching and learning practice. To be a facilitator, you use dialogue to allow your mentee to reflect upon their own experiences. This mentoring model is only effective if you believe your mentee has adequate knowledge and simply you need to bring it out of them. If you have the time, the facilitative model is worth using, even if you question whether your mentee has the proper knowledge. It is always possible to shift between coaching models, but it is best to start with non-directive methods to allow for the best learning opportunities for your mentee. The facilitative model is also useful when you are not an expert in the intervention your mentee needs. The realizations and solutions that can surface when we give fellow professionals space and time to think for themselves are amazing. Knight's dialogical coaching model offers the right mixture of the directive and facilitative strategies that fit the complex realities of school settings.

In using the dialogical model of coaching mentors do not need to hide their professional expertise and can also position the mentee as the central decision-maker. A mentor is free to offer a strategy to help their mentee solve a problem but will use goal-setting to partner with the mentee placing them at the center of the process. For example, a mentee has a class of students struggling to provide written analysis for an essential unit question. After a brief conversation with the mentee, you find that their student's written work lacks sufficient evidence to support their claims. You, and your mentee, formulate a new goal for their class; *student writing for each essential unit question will feature a minimum of three key terms in each paragraph*. Since you know your mentee is struggling to get their students working towards this goal, you suggest a retrieval strategy that you have used in the past to build up student content knowledge. Your mentee asks you to help them set up the retrieval strategy for the next unit and meet bi-weekly to share some student writing pieces as the class builds toward the end of the unit. Instead of evaluating the implementation of the retrieval strategy based on the mentor's opinion, you will evaluate based on whether it satisfies the mentee's goal. Your mentee will take you through how they used the strategy to see if any adjustments can be made to get them closer to their goal of better student writing. If possible, it is best practice to go in and observe the mentee in their classroom. In this mentor relationship, the mentor is not withholding information but acting as a thought partner through dialogue while offering effective strategies and collaborative feedback to work towards a common goal. This coaching model allows the mentee to lead the learning process while supported by the mentor's experience. Dialogical coaching is less hierarchical than directive coaching and allows the mentee to take ownership of the strategy and internalize how strategies can be adapted to their benefit.

Dialogical coaching is a useful model that mentors can use at the instructional level or be used to address the specific needs of a professional. Transformational coaching may offer a sustainable model for administrative positions and program heads. Transformational coaching is best suited for mentors advising mentees in situations such as; (1) dramatically shifting a mentee's outlook on a particular issue or problem, (2) making major administrative decisions or implementing programming that will shift school culture or (3) auditing existing organizational architecture that does not seem to serve the school best.

Mentoring and Growth Mindset: Theory in Action

In many schools and classrooms across the world, teachers are utilizing a growth mindset pedagogy to create positive and productive learning environments for students.¹ Teachers teach their students about brain science by explaining the roles of neuroplasticity and neurogenesis, allowing students to conclude that with the right effort and engagement, they will become better through practice and reflection. Teachers integrate active learning methods and tools that encourage habits of mind that establish resilient dispositions and create curricula that initially emphasize process over product. In these types of learning environments that exist within learning organizations, our failures become normalized, and the language of criticism is reframed. Instead of letting students see the outcome as the result, teachers hold students to high expectations coupled with support and feedback that focuses on student practice and effort. These are intellectual components where students have agency and the ability to take initiative and feel empowered by the opportunity to grow as a learner. Students who are exposed to these environments adopt a positive mindset that leads to self-belief and perseverance in the face of initial failure. This process of growth is continually supported by a reciprocal process of data collection, reflection, and growth-oriented goal setting. This aspect of growth mindset pedagogy is even more effective when this process is published to the student so they can track their process and highlights key areas for growth. In many ways, this is the ideal environment for our students to learn in, but why doesn't this reality always apply to adults?

¹ In 2018, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) polled over 600,000 15-year-olds from 78 countries about their use of growth mindset. The study results showed nearly 2 out of 3 students who participated in PISA across all countries demonstrated a growth mindset. Students who exhibited a growth mindset scored significantly higher than their peers across all subjects. For more information see Sparks (2021).

Many educators find themselves unnerved by classroom visits and find criticism to be a direct attack on their livelihood. If we ask our students to adopt this positive learning framework, shouldn't the same evidence-based practice apply to adults? Which begs the question: how can we create a culture that welcomes this type of adult learning? Do we have the time, energy, and resources to change the learning culture? What role can and should mentors play in this paradigm shift? I will illustrate potential solutions for these questions through mentor narratives in Chapters 4 and 5 and discuss the application of these solutions in Chapters 6 and 7.

Mentoring and Emotional Resilience: Theory in Action

Over the past two decades, the lasting impact of adopting the growth mindset or similar forms of popularized neuroscience acknowledging the importance of agency, failure, and perseverance as key factors in the learning process have been clear. A trove of books, articles, podcasts, Ted Talks, and subsequent professional development programs and conferences has changed how we approach our instructional work forever. The next wave of significant change will follow another transition in curricular focus toward social and emotional learning. Garnering emotional intelligence through engaging in social and emotional learning is the keystone model for building emotionally resilient habits and dispositions. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social and emotional learning as “the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions”. Although this transition in learning focus has progressed over the last decade, it has been greatly accelerated by two major factors; (1) the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic which has attributed to unprecedented rates of anxiety and depression (2) a call to better understand how our identity and emotions attribute to positive community building and the systemic inequalities of our society.

In recent years, educators have probably not received a greater collective call to take a step back to take stock of the emotional resilience of adults and students alike. In her book, *Onward*, Elena Aguilar defines emotional resilience as a set of habits and dispositions that allow certain individuals to bounce back quickly from adversity (Aguilar, 2018, p. 3). Aguilar argues that for the sake of our schools, we should focus on building up emotional resilience in our communities. Aguilar asserts that “lack of resilience” has “financial cost and contributes to staff

instability, which in turn negatively impacts students learning and experience”. Many teachers are leaving education behind altogether. “High turnover rates at schools make it hard to accumulate professional capital, hinder the implementation of programs, contribute to low levels of trust among stakeholders, and make staff and student culture fragile” (Aguilar, 2018, p. 4). To manage these current realities all stakeholders need “...time, space, and attention to manage stress” and cultivate resilience (Aguilar, 2018, p.5). Aguilar believes that if we give this space and time to cultivate emotional resilience, we can address the organizational and systemic conditions that prevent our schools from thriving. It benefits all schools' mentoring practices to focus on this curricular and societal shift. Mentors in school settings have already started to play a role in encouraging mentees to develop habits that help foster emotionally resilient dispositions. In Chapter 5, I will share a mentoring narrative that illustrates how a mentor can encourage the development of emotional resilience. Chapter 5 will also include a social and emotional learning curriculum that coaches use to teach educators the fundamental principles of developing emotional intelligence and resilience in adolescent and adult learners.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

The research for this thesis project utilized several qualitative methods, including a qualitative survey, one-to-one interviews, and case study research. Instead of focusing on an a priori hypothesis, I used an inductive approach using an interview guide and code structure to catalog and analyze my exploration of mentoring in independent schools. The central goal of this study is to deeply understand the phenomenon of mentoring practice in three tiers (1) the experience of the mentee, (2) the experience and pedagogy of mentors (3) the experience and pedagogy of mentor coaches. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I could not visit and directly observe mentorship. Instead, I conducted a series of interviews to elicit narratives to uncover the experience of mentees, mentors, and mentor coaches. I used the narratives to construct case studies to compare experiences and identify common themes to generate a potential hypothesis to understand what makes for effective mentoring. I also drew from an existing pool of case studies from other authors to use as samples for the depth, breadth, and narrative style I was looking to incorporate into my written work. The results presented recurrent themes highlighting effective mentoring habits and behaviors and potential conceptual models that could be used to form

recommendations for a mentoring practicum. These practicum recommendations will serve as guidelines to be utilized by school professionals looking to develop a mentoring program.

Sampling: Selecting Study Participants

This study initially focused on honing in on the experience of individuals who had mentee, mentor, and mentor coaching experiences. Since my study relied on gathering narratives, I sent out a mentoring survey to eight different independent schools where I had direct contacts. To find and collect honest and rich narratives from individuals, I offered participants complete anonymity as individuals and for their respective institutions. I quickly found a lively pool of willing storytellers and began to conduct interviews. In selecting professionals to interview, I was looking for diversity of experience and knowledge. In the end, I selected a group of fifteen participants who met three criteria; (1) they have been previously mentored, (2) they had mentoring experience and were currently mentoring someone, and (3) they had received formal training in mentoring or coaching. I also interviewed their mentees to capture the experience of all three mentoring tiers. Several of them had experienced formalized mentoring programs, but informal mentorship was the more common experience. Several school administrators performed a role similar to mentor coaching, most commonly titled “Dean of Faculty”, “Director of Teaching and Learning”, and other similarly titled administrative positions. Although these professionals act as mentor coaches in some situations, this is an incidental reality of their role in secondary education and not the primary function of their administrative position. Many administrative interviewees who held positions that involved mentor coaching in some capacity told me to look at coaching models and different coaching organizations to understand better how mentors are coached.

Coaches who worked within instructional coaching or professional coaching organizations as opposed to educators who performed similar roles at their respective schools had more formal documentation of their models, methods, and strategies. These experienced coaches and coaching organizations provided much of the terminology I used to characterize and categorize the narratives. During the interview process, I did not preselect a maximum number of interviews I would conduct. Instead, I continued interviewing participants until I felt a “theoretical saturation point” had been established and no new major themes could be drawn out of the process (Curry, 2015).

Instead of writing a narrative for every mentoring story collected, I elected to focus on mentoring stories that illustrated two vital competencies growth mindset and emotional resilience. I selected these two competencies because they were widely discussed among study participants, are current topics in independent schools, and are crucial to the vitality and longevity of the effectiveness of educators in independent schools. Growth mindset is an established competency that is well-explored and something that I, along with most interviewees, had experienced and observed in mentoring practice at all three-tier levels. Emotional resilience was featured in this study because it is one of the key competencies in social-emotional learning. Currently, there is an emerging push to incorporate social-emotional learning in schools, and educators will need to find enduring ways to weave it into the organizational architecture of schools, primarily through operational and instructional employees.

Data Collection

Several challenges arose during the data collection process, making it difficult to produce deep and meaningful narratives that could be further analyzed. Establishing trusting relationships with the interviewees was the most significant barrier to collecting narratives through in-depth interviews. I could only meet with a handful of interviewees post-vaccination, so many of my interviews were conducted over the phone or via Zoom. To establish trust, I offered each interviewee complete anonymity and focused on taking steps to present myself as non-threatening or adversarial. I also conducted several lead-up and follow-up sessions with many participants to gain greater detail. To create a level of comfort with participants, I wanted the interview to be framed like a conversation and allow the participant to have an equal share in steering the discussion while feathering in several key questions I wanted to ask. I used an interview guide that featured a group of specific questions to allow for relative consistency across interviews but would only interject or force transitions on participants to change the subject if it came naturally. Due to this interview style, conversations lasted much longer than I anticipated and often offered interesting but tangential insights. However, I found that the stories were honest and meaningful at the end of the process.

The interview guide was not a strict road map but merely a framework where I acted as a conversational guide to allow the interviewee to go into as much detail as possible (Lofland, 2006). The interview guide has a list of questions coupled with probes to clarify the intent of the question or encourage the interviewee to go into more depth on a topic. Due to the study's

inductive nature, the interview questions were specifically broad and non-directive, allowing for a breadth and depth of answers. The non-directive intention also allowed for an open exploration of emergent themes as they arose in each interview. The questions in the interview guide were sometimes asked in different sequences, and certain questions about mentoring or coaching were dropped based on the expertise of the interviewees. Some interviewees had cross-professional experiences in mentoring and coaching, but the majority of interviewees identified as a mentor or a coach. A few of the interviewees even rejected the dichotomy between the two terms and identified as an “educator” that works on a spectrum of help that can either be “mentor-like” or “coach-like” depending on the environment or situational context.

Table 2 Interview Guide

| Questions | Purpose |
|---|---|
| Please describe what you do at your school or organization. | To identify the role and responsibilities each candidate held at their respective institutions. |
| Please describe any work that you do as an educator outside of your school or organization. | To identify knowledge and competencies learned outside their respective institutions that may offer pertinent insights into how they developed as educators. |
| What is mentorship? | To explore the different terminology, traits, and characteristics educators use to define mentorship. |
| Can you tell me about an experience you had as a mentor, mentee, or mentor coach? | To gauge the level of mentoring experience of each candidate. To examine the different experiences at each part of the mentoring cycle. |
| What are the models, strategies, and methods used in mentoring? | To examine if experienced mentors had organized practices they used to mentor. To identify and catalog the different models, strategies, and methods mentors use. |
| What are key habits or competencies that mentors teach their mentees? (What are key competencies that educators learn?) | To identify what habits or competencies experienced mentors consider to be the most important to teach. |
| What is coaching? | To explore the different terminology, traits, and characteristics educators use to define coaching. To examine if coaching definitions share potential similarities with mentoring. |
| Can you tell me about an experience you had as a coach? | To gauge the level of coaching experience of each candidate. To examine similarities of experience between coaching relationships and mentoring relationships. |
| What are the models, methods, and strategies used in coaching? | To identify and catalog the different models, strategies, and methods coaches use. To examine if there are similar coaching practices that mentors also use. |

| | |
|--|---|
| What are key habits or competencies that coaches teach their coachees? (What are key competencies that educators learn?) | To identify what habits or competencies experienced coaches consider to be the most important to teach. |
|--|---|

Data Analysis

The analysis of the narratives and existing data was an “iterative process” toggling back between the individual perspectives of each participant and comparing their experiences with the larger pool of study participants (Curry, 2015). I used an evolving code structure to organize and codify the analytical process (see appendix A). Each code of the structure was a “word or short phrase that represents the essence or key attribute of narrative information” (Curry, 2015). The code structure was not a “purely inductive, grounded method” but a hybrid method using both “de novo coding” and a “start list method” (Curry, 2015). The use of this “integrated approach” was to “retain the benefits of inductive coding” while understanding that “certain code types are useful in developing certain forms of output” (Curry, 2015). The de novo coding method was used to limit the possibility of preconceived conclusions. Still, it did rely heavily on constant and consistent analytical comparisons to each emerging narrative in the participant sample pool. The start list comprised of codes from relevant literature to provide an early framework for the study to build on. The use of the start list method allowed for greater “precision and efficiency” when analyzing the data creating a framework that began “with broad code types” that later became “subcodes” as each narrative was analyzed (Curry, 2015). This study utilized a “constant comparison method” in which the code structure evolved throughout the data collection and data analysis process expanding to integrate new understandings and refining code definitions after conducting each interview and writing each narrative (Curry, 2015).

Rigor

The three major criticisms that challenge qualitative methods of research are “lack of reproducibility”, “lack of generalizability”, and “researcher bias” in data collection and analysis (Curry, 2015). Reproducibility can be “defined as obtaining consistent results using the same data and code as the original study” (Miceli, 2019, p. 13). Generalizability is “the degree to which the results of a study can be applied to a larger population” (Institute for Health & Work, 2006). “Bias” is defined as “any tendency which prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question” (Pannucci, C. J., & Wilkins, E. G. 2010). When applied to research, “bias occurs when systematic

error [is] introduced into sampling or testing by selecting or encouraging one outcome or answer over others” (Pannucci, C. J., & Wilkins, E. G. 2010). Careful considerations were made in each step of the research process to focus on these areas and limit researcher bias where possible.

Regarding reproducibility, it is important to acknowledge that a qualitative study that relies on existing data, in-depth interviews, and case studies is not directly reproducible. There exists variability in the range of language that could be used in the taxonomy of mentoring practice. However, the ultimate purpose of this study is not to consolidate and categorize all the models, methods, and strategies that exist in mentoring practice. The ultimate purpose is to make the phenomenological experience between mentees, mentors, and mentor coaches explicit. Reproduction of this study may result in a difference in language for the name of certain practices or an increase in the number of key practices; however, the overwhelming “essence or key attribute[s] of narrative information” would be similar. It is impossible to generalize the study's findings in qualitative research.

Generalizability is impossible in a qualitative study for several factors, including sample selection, sample size, and theoretical saturation (Curry, 2015). In a qualitative study, a researcher will purposely select their participants, in this case, based on their willingness to share a narrative, which creates a small sample size that cannot be generalized. The researcher will continue sampling participants until a point of theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation can be defined in many ways, but one helpful definition comes out of the work of the Institute for Primary Care and Health Sciences at Keele University in an article titled “Saturation in qualitative research: exploring its conceptualization and operationalization”. In the article, the authors assert that theoretical saturation in a study based on interviews and existing data can be achieved through data saturation or “informational redundancy” (Saunders et al., 2017; Sandelowski, 2008). For example, “in interviews, when the researcher begins to hear the same comments again and again, data saturation is being reached... it is then time to stop collecting information and to start analysing what has been collected” (Sandelowski, 2008). Simply the research is at an intersection where data is redundant and does not “...lead to any new emergent themes” (Given, 2015). Sample selection, sample size, and theoretical saturation are all limiting factors that prevent a qualitative study from being generalized into a larger context. However, what is achieved by qualitative methods is a deep and rich understanding of the experiences of mentees, mentors, and mentor coaches. The purpose of this study is not to highlight experiences that are generalizable, but instead transferable.

Transferability “...does not involve broad claims, but invites readers of research to make connections between elements of a study and their own experience” (Barnes, J. et al. 2022). Transferability is “performed by the readers of research” and can be defined as “the process of applying the results of research in one situation to other similar situations” (Barnes, J. et al. 2022). The reader is aided in this process by “thick description” or “a detailed description” of “subject(s), location, method, role of study, etc.” (Barnes, J. et al. 2022). Thick description “allows the reader to make an informed judgment about whether they can transfer the findings to their own situation” (Barnes, J. et al. 2022). The in-depth detail of the study and narratives allow the reader to understand the context and behaviors of effective mentoring practice. It then becomes incumbent upon the reader to “make adjustments for the different setting and be prepared for different results” (Barnes, J. et al. 2022).

Researcher bias is unavoidable and is littered throughout every step of the qualitative process, from designing data collection instruments, “the process of interviewing and collecting data”, to “the process of analysis and interpretation” (Curry, 2015). It is simply not possible to detach the researcher from their biases, “nor is it possible to specify procedures which if followed will systematically eliminate bias and error. We need, therefore, to think of the social processes that might keep research honest and fair and enhance its quality” (Norris, 1997). Critical introspection of the researcher and the use of “critical friends and colleagues” are two “social processes” to keep the researchers study “honest and fair”. Critical introspection “involves a deliberate effort at voicing their [the researchers] prejudices and assumptions so that they can be considered openly and challenged” (Norris, 1997). During the entire study process, I kept a series of journals to track my thoughts on mentoring practice. Before and after each interview, I would take 15 to 20 minutes to journal how my preconceptions might affect the data collection process. This process allowed me to maintain a clear mindset to avoid using previous insights from other interviews to guide the next one. I also employed the aid “critical friends and colleagues” who can “...help the researcher explore their preferences for certain kinds of evidence, interpretations and explanations and consider alternatives, locate blind spots and omissions, assess sampling procedures to highlight selection biases, examine judgements and make the processes of research more public” (Norris, 1997). During the interview process, I consulted with several colleagues at school who I knew had different views on using coaching applications in mentoring practice. These trusted colleagues challenged my thinking and pushed me to present a balanced view. In the end, “critical introspection” and the use of critical friends and colleagues” do not entirely

wash the researcher of bias but go a long way in ensuring the honesty, fairness, and quality of the research (Norris, 1997).

Conclusion

In summary, by conducting a mentoring survey and interviewing study participants and industry experts, I was able to interview fifteen participants who have been actively involved in all three tiers of mentoring practice. Through these fifteen interviews, I identified and categorized emergent themes into insights supported by the relevant thesis literature. I then constructed narratives based on these interviews to illustrate the three tiers of mentoring practice through the lenses of two competencies: growth mindset and emotional intelligence. In combining these research methods, I explored a current gap in the literature that focuses on how mentoring can be improved by adopting elements of coaching practice. In the next two chapters, Chapters 4 and 5, I share two narratives that offer a rich understanding of how coaching practices can improve mentoring relationships.

CHAPTER 4: WHAT PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES CAN TEACH US ABOUT MENTORING GROWTH MINDSET

Why Use Mentoring Narratives

As a history teacher, I have long appreciated the importance of storytelling. As an educator, it has become more pressing to use empowering stories to invite complexity into the classroom to challenge different historical interpretations and analyze narratives. When the facts and events of history are weaved into a narrative, it offers something for people to understand and hold onto. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's 2009 TED talk, *The Danger of a Single Story*, always serves as a helpful reminder that as our awareness and sensibilities change, new stories or recrafted stories allow crucial and underrepresented perspectives to challenge commonly held understandings of the past. As a teaching tool, in the words of author and instructional coach Elena Aguilar, stories "tell us who we are and what is possible for us" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 70). To illustrate mentoring practice, I will tell compelling stories that offer the complex exchanges between mentors, mentees, and mentor coaches. The purpose of these stories is to identify the varying perspectives of these key stakeholders in mentoring practice and externalize the fundamental beliefs, habits, and behaviors that inform successful mentoring relationships. To

allow mentors and mentees to offer honest appraisals of their experiences, each participant was offered complete anonymity, and all identifying information, including real names and places, was purposefully not included. The only descriptors attributed to participants are characteristics crucial to understanding the scope and scale of the mentoring intervention. The mentor coaches are formally identified and represented because of their work in well-known organizations and have published works that are widely circulated. To give an example of how these narratives can offer (1) complex scenarios of varying perspectives and (2) practical tools for mentor practice, I have selected a story from Elena Aguilar's *The Art of Coaching* to share. The story features her observation of a teacher struggling with classroom management. Aguilar uses this story to highlight one of her essential coaching frameworks, the "optical refractor". For this study, I offer Aguilar's story and analytical tool to show a perspective in which coaching strategies can be used to highlight the best practices in mentoring.

Good Mentoring: The Importance of Multiple Frames or Lenses

In Aguilar's *The Art of Coaching*, she uses the story of Mr. Delgado to address a seemingly simple classroom management issue. Instead of relaying the entirety of the story here, I will offer the pertinent details and dive into Aguilar's usage of the optical refractor framework to break down the complexity of Mr. Delgado's story. At the end of explaining Aguilar's optical refractor, I will return to the more crucial question; *how do Aguilar's story and analysis inform good mentoring practice?* By the end of this section, it will be evident how specific strategies and methods in instructional coaching can be used to inform mentoring practice. The stories following this analysis of Aguilar's classroom management story will be stories from my experiences and those collected through observation, interviews, and transcribed narratives. Similar to the work of Aguilar, these stories will acknowledge complexity, externalize and make explicit the work of key stakeholders, and identify habits of mind that inform good practice.

Aguilar's story begins with a brief vignette of Mr. Delgado's work at Turtlerock Middle School. Mr. Delgado is an Afro-Cuban male in his sixties with a British accent. He came to Turtlerock Middle with a poor track record of classroom management from his previous school. He was hired reluctantly two days before the start of the academic year because the principal could not find a more suitable candidate. During the early fall of the school year, the principal of the school communicates to Aguilar, who has been hired as an instructional coach, that they are appalled with Mr. Delgado's inability to manage a classroom. Without solicitation, Mr. Delgado

shows up at Aguilar's office one afternoon to ask Aguilar to observe his classroom. Aguilar is surprised that Mr. Delgado had approached her for help since earlier in the year, he had consistently dodged her, missing appointments to meet up and redirecting her attempts to garner his trust. Aguilar agrees to observe Mr. Delgado's class and is overwhelmed with where to begin in debriefing Mr. Delgado on her visit. Aguilar observes a chaotic classroom that Mr. Delgado has little control over. She observes one particularly visceral interaction between Mr. Delgado and a student named Davontae. While other students are working on a worksheet in the first minutes of class, Davontae enters the classroom eight minutes late, making comments such as "What the f**k are we doing today? This boring-a** s**t. I hate Spanish. I don't want to learn this stupid language" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 47) Mr. Delgado initially ignores his behavior. Davontae then throws his worksheet across the room as a paper airplane. The classroom quickly ripples into chaos, with more students throwing paper planes and starting to act out. Mr. Delgado loses his temper and yells at Davontae to leave the classroom. Davontae initially refuses to leave until Mr. Delgado throws Davontae's backpack at the door and threatens to call security. After Davontae leaves the class, the students eventually calm down, and Mr. Delgado can finish the lesson. Aguilar observes that the lesson does not meet its intended objective, is awkwardly sequenced, and many students never complete the worksheet associated with the lesson. Another fallout of the lesson is that Davontae is suspended from school. For any instructional coach, it would be initially difficult to pinpoint exactly where to begin with Mr. Delgado.

In this case, Aguilar relies on two important factors. She has set aside adequate time between the observation and the debrief meeting and also has a coaching framework to analyze her noticings. To prepare for her observational debrief with Mr. Delgado, Aguilar uses the optical refractor to break down her visit. The optical refractor is a term that Aguilar borrows from optometry. In reality, the optical refractor is a "massive device with six lenses and multiple settings" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 49). According to Aguilar, optometrists must use these different lenses and settings to access a person's vision. Aguilar uses this metaphor to assert that "our naked eyes alone are not powerful enough to see all that we need to see, to diagnose root causes or complex intertwining of issues" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 49). Aguilar uses six lenses in the optical refractor framework to analyze evidence from different perspectives. Aguilar notes that the first five lenses are taken from the National Equity Project, and the sixth lens, emotional intelligence, is based on the work of science journalist Daniel Goleman. The lenses include inquiry, change management, systems thinking, adult learning, systemic oppression, and emotional intelligence.

Aguilar begins her analysis by looking at how she will word her questions to frame a productive inquiry session. Aguilar asserts that asking a variety of questions opens the possibility of greater discovery, while looking for answers narrows the possible solutions to a problem. In the lens of inquiry, Aguilar strives to ask questions from various perspectives, arguing that the goal is to increase the range of evidence that allows for more informed decision-making. During this series of questioning, the instructional coach (and mentor in the case of this study) must accept that not everything can be understood through this lens, but the value of asking your mentee a few good questions is well worth the effort. Aguilar uses this initial lens to ask a wide range of questions to open up possible definitions for Mr. Delgado's perceived classroom management problem.

To begin dissecting the inquiry lens Aguilar starts with where she first heard of Mr. Delgado's trouble, the school principal. The principal had sent Aguilar to work with Mr. Delgado and asserted that his classroom management was incredibly weak. Now Aguilar could approach creating her list of questions based on the principal's inceptive understanding of the problem but decides to open her inquiry to allow other stakeholders to widen the range of possible definitions of the problem and possibly multiple solutions. To increase the number of stakeholders involved in this process, Aguilar first analyzes the data that the principal has used to determine that Mr. Delgado is an incompetent classroom manager. Of course, Aguilar has witnessed Mr. Delgado's poor management skills but is more curious to see how Mr. Delgado himself would define the problem. Aguilar knows that the principal is basing his conclusion of the problem on two primary data points; he has visited Mr. Delgado's classroom on multiple occasions and gathered office referrals (reports on student/teacher behavior). Aguilar has had previous conversations with the principal about what he observed in Mr. Delgado's class, but this is not enough detail to make any conclusions. Since Aguilar cannot see what the principal observed, she looks at the office referrals. From the referral data, Aguilar is inspired to ask several questions; "Are there specific groups of students with whom Mr. Delgado struggles with? Are there times of day, or certain periods, when he has more difficulty?" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 51). This line of questioning pushes Aguilar to think that a student survey about classroom disruptions would provide valuable data. After concluding these initial avenues to pursue, Aguilar returns to the friction between the principal and Mr. Delgado. The principal has clearly identified Mr. Delgado's classroom management as the key issue, but Aguilar is also interested in how Mr. Delgado and his students would define the problem. Aguilar argues that it is vital for the teacher to "own the question" so that they will "take responsibility for the answer" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 52). Through this first course

of action, Aguilar determined that Mr. Delgado's poor classroom management skills may not be the problem and lists several contributing factors at play, including "lesson planning, classroom routines, and procedures, the assignment students were asked to complete..." (Aguilar, 2013, p. 52). Aguilar concludes by asserting that the initial problem is often a result of many variables, and many factors have to be analyzed before looking for potential solutions.

After framing the problem through the inquiry lens, the process shifts to change management, "which pushes us to consider how change might be made" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 52). Change management also overlaps with the next lens, systems thinking, which involves looking at the highest leverage point for change. Keeping the larger system in mind, Aguilar begins her work by looking at the individual, Mr. Delgado. Aguilar assesses the knowledge and skill Mr. Delgado has that can be built upon, as well as what skills could be improved and what knowledge gaps could be filled to create positive change in the classroom. As part of this process, Aguilar must also determine how much Mr. Delgado is willing to change. Once Aguilar finishes her analysis of the individual, the focus shifts to the school systems that influence Mr. Delgado's classroom. From this point of departure, Aguilar will look to consolidate areas of skill and knowledge to "expand his capacity" and leverage school resources that can affect dynamic change (Aguilar, 2013, p. 53).

The next step in the optical refractor framework uses systems thinking to uncover what circumstances outside the scope of Mr. Delgado's classroom may be affecting his 'problem' of classroom management. "The lens of systems thinking presumes that what we observe, whatever is happening in that moment, is exactly what is supposed to happen in the system as it is--there is a logical, rational explanation for what we see" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 53). In applying this lens to Mr. Delgado's situation, Aguilar explores the school systems that would directly affect classroom management, namely the school's behavioral management system and its onboarding process for new teachers. Through this lens, Aguilar will also look to understand the expectations of students and staff and the process used to communicate these expectations. Aguilar also realized that she would need to learn how classes are scheduled to understand the system. Her initial conversations with students about class scheduling led to an interesting thread to pull on. Many of the students in the school were assigned to Mr. Delgado's Spanish class with little or no interest in taking the subject. This critical insight illuminated Aguilar's reality that she did not fully understand the system she was working in and needed further investigation of why the system was producing negative results. Aguilar, at that moment, realized she must ask questions of the principal, the school counselor (charged with assigning student class schedules), and Mr. Delgado to understand

how the system educated and communicated school-wide expectations. Aguilar acknowledges that beyond the complexity of school, there are also larger systems at work that impact the school and Mr. Delgado's classroom. There is a reality that changes in some of these macro systems are impossible. Still, it is important to understand where the highest leverage points exist in framing potential solutions. Once Aguilar can assess the systems at work to identify areas for change, finding resources to support Mr. Delgado's learning becomes crucial.

The next lens focuses on the process of increasing Mr. Delgado's capacity through adult learning. Aguilar begins the explanation of this lens by focusing on the difference between child and adult learning. For starters, adults generally bring more experience, which an instructional coach or mentor can build on. Aguilar calls adult educators to be mindful of people's previous experiences because it is crucial to "understand what experiences someone has had, and then create more meaningful experiences for learning" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 55). Aguilar also notes it is important for adults to have control of their learning and that learning experiences are intentionally achievable and practical. In a mentoring relationship, there is no "selling" element; in a coaching relationship, the coach must continually convince the coachee that the learning is going somewhere. However, mentors need to allow mentees choice and establish a belief that the mentor's interventions are achievable and practical. Aguilar argues that once the learning experience is in place the skill or knowledge must be continually supported and practiced. Another essential element of the learning process is reflective practice; the mentor observes the practice, the mentee receives feedback on the practice, the mentee reflects on the feedback making adjustments, and the mentee practices again. Without this reflective cycle, there is no way to ensure that new knowledge or skill will result in a habitual change in practice. Aguilar concludes that for learning to take place, the learner must "feel emotionally safe" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 56).

To focus on how adult learning could impact Mr. Delgado Aguilar looks to explore various aspects of his experience. Aguilar profiles Mr. Delgado as an older person of color in his late fifties who has lived in two different countries during two distinct periods of his life. She is also curious about how these cultural experiences have established Mr. Delgado's belief around how children behave and receive discipline. In terms of Mr. Delgado's adult learning, Aguilar is looking to evaluate where he wants to improve, what practical goals he could achieve, and what support he needs to "feel emotionally safe". Aguilar also wants Mr. Delgado to identify what strengths he already has from his previous experience. From here, Aguilar takes a step back to

examine the macro issues affecting the system. The following lens, called the lens of systemic or structural oppression, investigates social inequality in institutions.

Aguilar argues that to make high-leverage change in Mr. Delgado's classroom, "a close examination of the structures that hold oppression must be made along with our examination of the individual consciousness of those within [the system]" (Aguilar, 2013, pp. 57-58). Aguilar uses the terms prejudice ("preconceived judgment or opinion that is usually based on limited information") and racism to help define the lens of systemic or structural oppression (Aguilar, 2013, pp. 57-58). She begins with the idea that humans are born without prejudice and that prejudices are established due to limited information and exposure to misinformation. Since prejudice is something that we acquire, Aguilar asserts that it is also something we can unlearn. Aguilar defines racism as "a system of advantage based on race-- a personal ideology and a system of institutional policies or practices that manifest in the beliefs and actions of individuals" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 57). Aguilar discusses that prejudice can be further used to explain racism. "Racism is prejudice plus power-- racial prejudice combined with social power (access to resources and decision making) leads to the institutionalization of racist policies and practices" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 57). Aguilar finishes her thoughts by defining systemic oppression as the reality that "entire groups of people have been intentionally disempowered because of their identity in order to maintain an unequal power structure that subjugates one group over another" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 57). She then discusses how this lens can be applied to understand further what is going on in Mr. Delgado's classroom.

Aguilar first wonders what it must be like for Mr. Delgado, a black man from a "different culture and country" to teach a class with predominantly African American students. Aguilar wonders whether the students relate to him or if they see him as an outsider due to his identity. This thought process leads Aguilar to question who has the power in this situation? Aguilar determines that neither Mr. Delgado nor the students have the power. There is a consistent struggle between Mr. Delgado and his students for control, creating a power vacuum. The students use disruption to gain power but inevitably lose it when Mr. Delgado disciplines them or the school administration intervenes. Aguilar settles on the reality that power lies in the behavioral management system since it controls the outcomes (in this case, Davontae's suspension). Aguilar reflects, "if I consider that this source of power is fraught with implications of a system that historically has oppressed African American men, then I wonder how Mr. Delgado might feel using it, or not using it" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 59). This line of inquiry provides the framing for more questions to ask Mr. Delgado and acknowledges the larger macro systems

that affect Mr. Delgado's classroom. The final lens Aguilar uses in framing solutions for complex problems is the lens of emotional intelligence.

Aguilar defines emotional intelligence as the "ability or skill to identify, assess, and control the emotions of oneself, others, and of groups" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 59). Aguilar credits the work of Daniel Goleman and his book, *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* for informing the work to create this lens. The questions to analyze the use of emotional intelligence are broken down into four categories self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Before using this lens to analyze Mr. Delgado's classroom, let us look at sample questions, Aguilar has created for each of the four categories; 1) Self-awareness- when does he recognize how his feelings are affecting him at work? How does he speak about his feelings? 2) Self-management- how does he respond to disturbing emotions? 3) Social awareness- can he sense the unspoken emotions in a person or group? 4) Relationship management- Does he create resonance and move people with a compelling vision or shared mission? If so how? (Aguilar, 2013, pp. 60-61). The emotional intelligence lens often leads Aguilar to write many questions similar to the examples given. Due to the sheer volume of questions that can come from this process, Aguilar continually scans a long list choosing ones that seem like they would yield more immediate insights. In terms of self-awareness, Aguilar is interested how aware Mr. Delgado is of his emotions? Does he realize his increasing frustration during class, and can he access the tools to deal with his feelings appropriately? When Aguilar takes stock of Mr. Delgado's self-management, she is particularly interested in how Mr. Delgado frames his emotional experience. Aguilar asks questions like, "does he see them as opportunities to improve his teaching practice?", "How has he dealt with challenges in the past?", "Does he feel pessimistic or optimistic about being able to address these issues?" (Aguilar, 2013, pp. 61-62). Aguilar emphasizes that this area of debriefing is a delicate process calling for instructional coaches (mentors) to use their emotional intelligence to gauge how much this person is willing to share about their emotional experience. Aguilar acknowledges that discussing feelings in a work environment can be seen as unwarranted or unprofessional among many social groups and cultures. Aguilar will also investigate whether Mr. Delgado can sense emotional disturbances in his students and what tools he has to deal with these situations. In this case study, does he have the emotional intelligence and skillset to intervene and change Davontae's poor behavior? Aguilar makes it clear that "the purpose of my [her] coaching is not to impose a belief system, but help my [her] coachee explore his beliefs and actions" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 62). To better understand these beliefs and actions, Aguilar will use the lenses mentioned to develop a final list of

questions. Her final questions will be used to frame the debrief, but Aguilar will remain attuned to Mr. Delgado's responses not to miss critical intervention points.

Aguilar sets up a debrief plan (see appendix B) using each lens to framework essential questions to uncover more about Mr. Delgado's beliefs and actions to see what possible interventions can be made to implement change. After presenting these questions, Aguilar introduces some interesting conclusions about her conversation with Mr. Delgado that offers insights into Mr. Delgado's perceived inability to manage a classroom. Aguilar begins their conversation by asking Mr. Delgado about his emotional awareness. Did he realize that he was losing his temper? Mr. Delgado apologized for the situation and said he tried to calm down several times during class and ignored the poor student behavior. Mr. Delgado says that his students are already in a difficult situation and is not trying to add to it by taking his anger out of the classroom. Aguilar sees an opportunity here to pivot the conversation. She has encouraged Mr. Delgado to share a belief. He believes his students are in difficult situations and empathizes with their experiences. Aguilar asks Mr. Delgado to describe the problem as he sees it. Mr. Delgado says that he is aware that the principal thinks that the issue in his class is that he is not strict enough. The principal believes that if he used the classroom management system, he would not have any behavioral problems. At this moment, Aguilar notes the irritation in Mr. Delgado's voice and sees an opportunity to understand how his beliefs and emotions are hindering his practice. After further questioning, Mr. Delgado discloses that he missed the behavioral management training since he was hired two days into the school year. Even though the administration promised him he would be trained at a later date, the training was never rescheduled. Mr. Delgado also tells Aguilar that the administration insinuated he would be fired if he did not show improvement. The administration asks that Mr. Delgado use Aguilar as a resource to improve his practice. Aguilar sees this disclosure as an opportunity to assure Mr. Delgado that her goal is not to force a program on him or "fix" him but instead to be a support system and offer resources. Aguilar shifts the conversation to find more about Mr. Delgado's teaching background to provide insight into how his experience affects student interactions. Mr. Delgado readily talks about his background with joy, highlighting that developing relationships with students is one of his strengths because he had challenges adapting to new educational environments as a refugee and immigrant to the United States. Aguilar affirms to Mr. Delgado that it is significant that he feels confident developing relationships with students but wonders what Mr. Delgado knows about Davontae.

Mr. Delgado tells Aguilar that several factors make his Spanish 2 class challenging for Davontae. Firstly Davontae is a homeless Katrina refugee living with a disabled guardian. Mr. Delgado also details that Davontae has learning difficulties and poor English language skills. Mr. Delgado feels for Davontae's experience as a refugee and has tried to advocate for counseling support and re-examine Davontae's course schedule.

Unfortunately, their school district's resources are often limited and slowed by bureaucratic measures. Aguilar identifies several factors outside Mr. Delgado's classroom that affect his class environment. Aguilar asks the school counselor why Davontae is in Spanish 2 despite his poor language skills, and he has never taken Spanish. The school counselor tells Aguilar that it is the only elective that fits his schedule except for the advanced band. Several primary schools feed into the school Mr. Delgado works at, but Aguilar notices that only students from a well-funded, predominantly white school district are in the music class. Many other feeder districts had to cut their music programs without the intervention of funding from the Parent Associations. The resulting disparity is a class of 30 students, only two who are black, in an 80 percent African American school. In this one debrief, Aguilar identifies various system issues, including onboarding new faculty, how students' course schedules are determined, and what socio-emotional resources are available to the student body. Aguilar realizes that not all of these are quick fixes but partners with Mr. Delgado to address some of these system failures within the school. Aguilar then asks Mr. Delgado to speak about things he can control in his classroom.

Aguilar begins this process by asking Mr. Delgado what he expects of his students. Mr. Delgado believes that students should be intrinsically motivated to be successful. Aguilar acknowledges and validates that this is the ideal scenario but explains to Mr. Delgado that it is also part of his job to draw the students in. Aguilar asks Mr. Delgado what techniques or strategies he has to deal with emotional students. Mr. Delgado admits that he has been stumped in this area but is happy for suggestions. Aguilar offers Mr. Delgado some strategies to try, but when she refers to the school behavioral management plan, he shuts down again, seemingly disinterested. Aguilar could tell there was some conflict with his plan implementation. Mr. Delgado divulges that he felt the classroom management plan treated the students like "second-class citizens" and "criminals". Mr. Delgado tells Aguilar that he does not want to be a part of a strategy that predominantly ends in the suspension of black students. Mr. Delgado felt a blatant contradiction in his vocation to encourage student learning while disciplining them in a way that he deemed inappropriate. Aguilar and Mr. Delgado agreed to work with one another for the rest of the year. Together they began to address some of the more significant systems issues

(pushing the administration to rethink course scheduling and new faculty onboarding, changing Davontae's schedule, and referring Davontae to mental health counseling), but not all systems can be changed quickly. Aguilar also gave Mr. Delgado some strategies to implement in his classroom to address student behavior. Aguilar argues that it was vital that she uses the multiple lenses of the optical refractor to address Mr. Delgado's situation.

Suppose Aguilar has not used the optical refractor to frame the conversation; she may have cited only Mr. Delgado's management skills and never seen the entire system at work. The optical refractor was vital in addressing the complexly intertwined factors that put a strain on Mr. Delgado's classroom. This intervention allowed Aguilar to see beyond the principal's initial misgivings about Mr. Delgado and deconstruct the perception that he is a poor classroom manager. This ability to deconstruct perceived behaviors or actions is crucial for anyone who wants to be an effective mentor. At this moment, it is important to come to terms with the time limitations. Time, as it is in most industries, is a highly contentious and precious commodity at private schools. In offering Aguilar's story and analytical framework, I would not suggest that a mentor would be able to nor should try to do all the work of an instructional coach. Much of that work is done by selfless colleagues, department chairs, and various administrative positions, including the Dean of Faculty and Director of Teaching and Learning. However, a framework such as Aguilar's optical refractor is an example of a research-based strategy that can be used to support effective mentoring. Mentors need more than just strategies in their toolkit to be effective. It is also necessary for mentors to develop and encourage specific competencies that predispose them to deal with the challenges of the school context. In the following sections and the next chapter, I will discuss why a growth mindset and emotional resilience are just as necessary as any tool to incorporate into our mentoring practice.

Mentorship: Encouraging A Growth Mindset

To illustrate the learning of the two major competencies of this thesis project, growth mindset and emotional resilience, I will share two mentoring narratives across chapters 4 and 5. Each mentoring narrative will be accompanied by a section on how mentor coaches teach mentors to encourage competencies like growth mindset and emotional resilience. In this first section, "Mentorship: Encouraging A Growth Mindset", I will share a narrative that shows how a mentor can encourage the mentee to develop a growth mindset. In the following section, "Coaching Mentors How To Mentor A Growth Mindset", I will share the curriculum a mentor coach would

implement to instruct a mentor on how to encourage a growth mindset. The mentor and mentee narratives will elicit the actions and reflections of the mentoring relationship from the perspectives of the mentee and mentor. The mentor coaching sections will feature descriptions from a mentor coach describing how someone would learn to use the specific strategy utilized in the narrative.

This first narrative features a mentee, Will, and his mentor Meredith. Will is a science teacher at an independent school. He is a long-serving member of the school and a veteran teacher looking to improve his teaching practice in the classroom. He is working with the Director of Teaching and Learning, Meredith, who is also an experienced instructional coach and listening expert. During this mentoring intervention, Meredith had been working to instill a growth mindset as a cultural value at this school for the past few years. Challenging a school to continually learn and transform (acting as a learning organization) is not simple. It requires many macro and micro-interventions to establish a culture of learning. In this narrative, I will illustrate an example of a micro intervention that aimed to be one of the smaller but integral parts of creating an institution that learns. This micro intervention focuses on Meredith's relationship with Will, which exemplifies a teaching leader's ability to mentor an instructional employee. This mentoring relationship is one of the key stakeholder relationships that help organizations continually learn and transform. In this relationship, you will notice Meredith utilizes modeling, observation, and inquiry to encourage Will's development of a growth mindset. I will first illustrate how Meredith used these skills and then offer a sample of a learning framework created by Dr. Nicole Furlonge, which explains how mentor coaches encourage a growth mindset in the accompanying section, "Coaching Mentors How To Mentor A Growth Mindset".

Will's relationship with Meredith began about three years before the instructional intervention. Will and Meredith worked as teaching colleagues, both department chairs of their respective disciplines, before Meredith accepted a position as Director of Teaching and Learning. Throughout the narrative, you will notice Will reported very different highlighted priorities of the relationship than his mentor Meredith. You will see that Will's focus was on relationship building and trust. Meredith's perspective highlights the instructional coaching strategies she used during the intervention and will further illustrate how she built trust. I will discuss more why this distinction is important at the end of this section.

Will approached Meredith about a problem with an assessment he had administered to two sections of the same course. In his teaching career, he has experienced a number of different reasons why assessment performance may be low. He listed several reasons, including less

effective execution of a lesson plan on a particular day, low student concentration from lack of sleep, the makeup of the course rosters, etc. Will expressed that there are many different variables when analyzing student performance on assessments. What he found particularly troubling and frustrating about this particular assessment was poor performance across his entire course roster. It seemed every student had struggled with the assessment, and he could not identify a unifying factor(s) as to why. Will described this moment in approaching Meredith as difficult because opening yourself to feedback is a highly vulnerable moment. Will's mindset, like that of many professionals, is that they do not initially want feedback; professionals want people to appreciate and understand the work that they do. Feedback for many professionals can feel like a direct assault on their character, as many educators often define themselves by their work. Will believed that the primary reason his relationship with Meredith and her intervention was successful was the trust they built early on and throughout their relationship.

Meredith's main focus in working with Will was to discover what may be behind the poor test assessment performance and open up different ways to look at the learning in his classroom. One initial thought that Will found helpful was Meredith's point that student learning is not always about solving the problem. Research would contend that students wrestling and being challenged by the course material is vitally important to their growth. Meredith assured Will that even though the students had struggled, that did not necessarily mean their learning over the last unit had been wasteful. Meredith explained to Will that perhaps they would find ways to improve the assessment or change the lead-up to the assessment, but there was no reason to assume that the learning happening in the classroom was poor. This open-ended solutions approach is what opened the door for Will and Meredith. Meredith was not looking to identify weaknesses or comment on Will's assessment immediately but instead made an affirming statement that student struggle is a natural result of the learning process. Meredith was also open to using various avenues of inquiry to examine the problem. Her initial question was not prescriptive but explorative. Will found this initial grounding of their relationship to be affirming and created a space where he felt safe to receive feedback.

Will and Meredith had several points of contact throughout the process. First and foremost was a bi-weekly meeting that grounded their work. Every other week they would stop and reflect on the learning in Will's classroom. They would then devise a set of goals and objectives to work toward Will's next lesson. Meredith would also communicate with Will each time one of these goals/objectives was achieved to check in on how the new learning strategies were working. Will thought this moment was important because Meredith was not looking for a

quick fix; instead, they worked to solve the problem intentionally and methodically. Will also had great confidence that because of Meredith's educational background in adult learning and her respect for his input, the relationship would prove fruitful.

Meredith is an educational expert on critical listening and utilizes inquiry listening and reflective practice. She used these effective mentoring strategies throughout her work with Will. Before getting into Meredith's recollection of their relationship, it will be important to offer context from our interview, which illuminates a clearer picture of Meredith's work on listening and inquiry. Meredith began the interview by explaining that there are different types of listening, and each has its use in professional spaces. Meredith explains that in studying and understanding listening, one must appreciate both the scientific neuroscience component and the humanities' emotional component. In this particular intervention, Meredith asserted the importance of knowing the difference between expansive listening versus inquiry listening. Meredith attributed the idea of expansive listening to the work of Elena Aguilar, which can be found in her most recent book, *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*. Aguilar explains that expansive listening is without judgment or the goal of fixing a problem. Aguilar says expansive listening is to "listen through these ways of listening one at a time. Imagine that they are radio stations and flip through the channels, listening for what's available on each station." Aguilar has put together a listening tool kit with different 'ways of listening', including 'for the big picture', 'with love', 'for pain', and more (Aguilar, 2018). During this intervention, Meredith used inquiry listening, which is a technique that involves using broad questions through a process of defining the problem, data collection, and reflection. Meredith asserts that inquiry listening allows a type of deep listening that creates an environment for practitioners to learn how to solve problems. In this case, Meredith structured an inquiry listening experience to allow Will to figure out what was going on in his class.

Will has taught science for over a decade and has extensive experience in chemical laboratories. Will had approached Meredith for help after he had two sections of students perform poorly on an exam he designed for a unit on Mole structures. Will explained to Meredith that he was frustrated that something was going wrong in his classroom and did not know what to change on the exam or how to help his students. Meredith was currently serving as Director of Teaching and Learning, and Will asked her for help approaching the problem. Meredith clarified that at this stage of inquiry listening, it is not the mentor's job to solve the problem. Meredith had Will briefly describe what he thought the problem was. Will's short description described that he thought the assessment must have been poorly designed and that he should just scrap the

assessment altogether. After gathering a problem description from Will, Meredith knew it was too early to conclude that Will's problem description was accurate. At this moment, Will was frustrated that there was no simple answer to his problem. Acknowledging Will's frustration, Meredith saw an opportunity for herself to model deep listening and teach Will how inquiry listening can lead to more thoughtful academic practice.

Meredith asked Will to describe the problem in as much detail as possible. The first session of the problem description lasted almost 45 minutes. In this session, Meredith offered no advice but encouraged Will to tell her more about the class sections and what he perceived as the problem. After this initial meeting, Meredith reviewed her notes on the conversation and transitioned to the data collection stage. In this stage of the process, Meredith decided to perform several class visits, interview students from both sections, and watch Will's extra help sessions. Meredith emphasized that during the class visit, she focused more on what the class sounded like than what it looked like. After a series of visits and watching Will's extra help sessions, Will and Meredith agreed to meet again. Meredith shared all the data she had collected with Will and framed the conversation by telling Will "what she noticed" in his Chemistry sections. The main aspect of her data analysis was that students seemed to be missing significant benchmark moments to reflect on what they had learned. Also, some students felt uncomfortable asking content questions in class or seeking extra help. A few students raised concerns that they feel pressure to know everything already in his class and that asking questions can be very intimidating. Will realized that the test was not as poorly designed as he had thought, but he needed to adjust his classroom structure and culture. He immediately wanted to start adjusting the Mole unit to prevent this from happening again next year.

Meredith interjected here and advised Will to make these adjustments in the upcoming unit to test their findings. Will was then asked to set goals for the unit and make minor structural adjustments to his class that could significantly impact student learning. It was clear to Meredith that students in his class needed more feedback between assessments. Will started to use listening protocols to see the emotional level of his students in the class. Will also began using exit tickets (short and quick worksheets that highlight the lesson's focus at the end of a class period) to check for student learning at the end of each lesson. He also decided to test students at pre-assigned benchmarks before the next exam to give them more consistent feedback on their work. Meredith made another series of visits to check for a culture change. At the end of the quarter, Will saw a significant rise in student performance on the second assessment. Through this process, it became

clear to Will that he could not have solved this problem without the slow, deep-diving nature of inquiry listening.

During my interview with Meredith, she explained that at the administrative level, inquiry listening is included in a broader category of learning called adaptive leadership. Adaptive leadership is making slow, small, and deliberate changes to structure and practice, as reflected in Meredith's work with Will. This slow, small-step process allowed Will to learn a new skill he can now employ himself in the future. Meredith juxtaposed adaptive leadership with technical leadership. Technical leadership is marked by direct problem-solving and advice-giving, which does not create an environment for transferable learning. Meredith argues that adaptive leadership is necessary to create a school community with a growth mindset to support an enduring learning culture. She encouraged Will to take a slower approach to diagnosing problems, and this allowed Will to transfer new understanding to future teaching practice. Following this work, Will pursued a degree in assessment design.

Coaching Mentors How To Mentor A Growth Mindset

To reiterate from an early chapter, a growth mindset “is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things that you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others” (Dweck, 2006, p. 7). Most fundamentally speaking, a “growth mindset is based on change” (Dweck, 2006, p. 223). Several considerations must be examined when learning how to coach a growth mindset i.e. to effect change in others or help others become agents of change. Coaching and mentoring a growth mindset is truly transformational but involves balancing the science of adult learning and an understanding of human emotion. To learn how to teach a growth mindset, mentor coaches teach mentors pedagogy that promotes long-term change in mentee practices. Pedagogy should emphasize the mentee's ownership of the learning process, which involves using measurables, like goal setting to create a partnership. It is also critical that the pedagogy allows for deep learning opportunities so that the mentee forms growth mindset habits to develop a growth mindset as a disposition, not a temporary frame of mind.

Effective pedagogy usually involves learning specific mental models, such as a learning framework that contains effective strategies to focus the mentoring practice and name the actions that need to be taken by the mentor and mentee. The learning framework not only grounds the mentoring relationship but also provides a structure that looks to define problems through inquiry and identify specific interventions that are actionable and sustainable. A learning framework will

also include a method of data collection (quantitative or qualitative), in many cases, a list of goals coupled with objectives. A learning framework allows the implementation of different strategies and the possibility of measuring them. A learning framework that is inquiry-based, actionable, sustainable, and measurable creates an environment where deep learning occurs and long-term change is possible. Before identifying a specific learning framework as an example, we should also consider the context or landscape in which our mentoring practice takes place. As mentors, we must learn to understand our learning organization's macro and microsystems. Mentor coaches teach mentors to toggle between understanding how change can be made to the mentee's system and changing particular parts of the system.

At the macro level, mentor coaches ask mentors to begin at systems-level thinking about how in any given intervention, the mentee's problem is in some way a direct output of their environment. Though not every problem can be solved by systems thinking, best practices involve the mentor continually reflecting on what environmental factors could impact their mentee. The purpose of this specific lens of understanding is to be able to enact high-leverage change. For example, if you have a mentee that is a new teacher struggling to produce effective assessments there are a variety of possible interventions. A more immediate intervention would involve you as the mentor looking at the assessment and its effectiveness in the classroom. You would evaluate the assessment experience of all participating stakeholders by having an inquiry-based dialogue with the mentee, surveying the students, observing the assessment process, returning to dialogue, reflecting on practice, and finally making changes to practice. This type of intervention can be effective, but not necessarily one that produces high-leverage change. For example, in conversations with your mentee, it may surface that they do not know what effective assessments look like. Perhaps they cobbled together their assessments by drawing from their own experiences or from a colleague whose assessments may not fit the learning structure in the mentee's classroom. A high-leverage change that would affect the system would be establishing effective assessment workshops for new instructional employees. Especially when looking to encourage a growth mindset, it is important that the systems in action within the learning organization support this ideology. One of the best ways for mentor coaches to teach mentors and mentees is through a period of intense exposure through annual learning symposiums. Typically held at the end of the academic year these learning symposiums are important gatherings that involve workshops that encourage mentors and mentees to work towards change and transformation of different practices. Although the focal point of these workshops is adult learning for the faculty, they also serve as a great practice arena for mentoring.

During these symposiums, educators can engage in important conversations and workshops that allow them to discover and understand their beliefs, identify behaviors, and cultivate new habits to effect change. For example, let us look at a learning framework created by Teaching and Learning expert Dr. Nicole Furlonge, which can be used to structure a year-end symposium.

Dr. Nicole Furlonge currently serves as Professor and Director of the Klingenstein Center at the Teachers College at Columbia University. The Klingenstein Center offers degree programs for educators to develop and strengthen their leadership skills. In addition to her work at the Klingenstein Center, Dr. Furlonge is the co-founder of LEARNS Collaborative. This organization serves as “a catalyzer for human-centered, equitable change in organizations” through various professional learning offerings (Klingenstein Center, 2022). Before taking on her position at the Klingenstein Center, Dr. Furlonge worked as the Director of Teaching and Learning at the Holderness School. During her time at Holderness School, Dr. Furlonge developed and tested a learning framework that is now central to the work of the LEARNS Collaborative called the LEARNS framework. LEARNS is a flexible framework and acronym that utilizes inquiry-based learning and reflective practice to create opportunities for enduring learning. LEARNS Collaborative explains that the parts of LEARN can be used synergistically, or educators can “think of each letter in LEARNS as a ‘pull’ prompt, tool, and informed strategy you can use in whole or part -- and when it is useful” (Learns Collaborative, 2022). The LEARNS framework is broken down into six different lenses Listening, Engaging, Asking, Reflecting, Networking, and Sharing. Each lens is coupled with an essential question and an affirming statement of action. These lenses aim to uncover, name, and understand the current practices at a learning organization and look for potential areas of transformation. For example, in using the Sharing lens, educators are prompted to consider “How might we make more enduring our own learning by sharing understanding with others? How might sharing understanding enhance peer-to-peer learning?” (Learns Collaborative, 2022). This prompt is to push educators to consider “what” actions can be taken to transform current practices (Learns Collaborative, 2022). The prompt is then followed by an affirming statement of action, giving educators a clear objective for “how” we share (Learns Collaborative, 2022). The statement asks educators to “share to make learning more enduring and to grow the capacity of others” (Learns Collaborative, 2022). The next step is to make this learning active through practice. One of the more powerful strategies that came out of the original LEARNS symposium was using Collaborative Feedback Groups (Learns Collaborative, 2022).

Collaborative Feedback Groups (CFGs) are a peer coaching model that helps facilitate the delivery and acceptance of feedback on a specific practice or artifact. CFGs allow mentors and mentees to actively model a growth mindset by opening themselves up to the vulnerability of feedback. CFGs also enable mentors and mentees to practice asking three fundamental types of questions (1) focusing, (2) clarifying, and (3) probing questions that are crucial to implementing effective interventions in mentoring relationships. Like many coaching strategies, CFGs are organized in a framework of specific protocols to create a safe environment for professionals to discuss ways to improve their practice. The CFG begins with the assigning of specific roles for each participant. The minimum number of participants in a CFG is three, including a facilitator, presenter, and participant tasked with giving feedback. The role of the facilitator is to hold the group accountable for CFG protocols and ensure the effectiveness of the coaching model. Once the facilitator introduces the protocols and all roles are assigned, the presenter “shares their dilemma”(KSI Reflection Protocol, 2021). The presenter gives participants a copy of an artifact, such as a classwork assignment or unit assessment.

Next, the presenter identifies the assignment's learning goals and explains the dilemma. The presenter then frames their dilemma and learning goals into a focusing question. An example of a focusing question would be *Why did my writing exercise assignment on annotation not improve student evidence implementation?* This initial step here is essential for mentors and mentees to practice. When mentees learn to ask good focusing questions, they understand the importance of framing problems using learning goals and inquiry. Using learning goals to focus the feedback allows the mentee to detach themselves from the backlash of feedback. The participants/mentors giving the mentee/presenter feedback are not judging whether the presenter is a good educator but whether their learning goals have been effectively achieved through the assignment. These learning goals allow the participants/mentors to give specific feedback that does not feel like a direct attack. Secondly, the mentee learns that framing problems through inquiry, as opposed to statements, opens up opportunities for more potential solutions. After the presenter has asked their focusing question and the facilitator has confirmed this is the question they would like to ask, the participants are allotted a short period to ask clarifying questions, followed by a silent examination of the assignment.

Clarifying questions are meant to “clarify the dilemma and provide the nuts and bolts so that participants can ask good probing questions and provide useful feedback later in the protocol” (School Reform Initiative). An example of a clarifying question would be *how many lessons have students been working on evidence implementation before this assignment?* These

questions are simple but a critical initial step in understanding the context of the presenter's dilemma. Once all clarifying questions are answered, the participants silently examine the artifact for ten minutes before asking probing questions. An effective probing question "empowers the person being asked the question to solve the problem or manage the dilemma" and also "stimulates reflective thinking by moving thinking from reaction to reflection" (Thompson-Grove, 2022). Probing questions are an important tool that allows mentors to avoid advice-giving and create reflective moments for enduring learning. An example of a probing question would be *What is the connection between student annotation and evidence implementation?* After the probing question is answered, the participants take notes on what kinds of "warm and cool" feedback they will offer during the feedback session. Warm feedback is "comments about general strengths of the work and how the work presented seems to meet the desired learning goals" (KSI Reflection Protocol, 2021). Cool feedback is "comments about possible disconnects between the desired learning goals and the work itself, as well as other gaps or problems the participants perceive" (KSI Reflection Protocol, 2021). The presenting of warm and cool feedback is then followed by a period of reflection by the presenter and a debrief by the facilitator. During the reflection period, the presenter is given time to respond to the participants while the participants remain silent. "This is not a time for the presenter to rebut or affirm each point, but rather for the presenter to think aloud about what they learned and what questions remain" (KSI Reflection Protocol, 2021). The presenter can then formulate a plan of action to change their teaching practice. The facilitator then leads a debriefing session to discuss the efficacy of the protocols and what can be improved for future sessions. CFGs can be stratified throughout the year so educators can continually practice problem framing and inquiry, two important and influential tools used in mentoring relationships. CFGs are another coaching model that will help educators build the base skills to reinforce a growth mindset as an institutional practice.

Conclusion

In the next chapter, Chapter 5, "Participant Narratives and What They Can Teach Us About Encouraging Emotional Intelligence and Building Resilience", I will offer another mentoring narrative that focuses on how mentors encourage emotional intelligence and help build emotional resilience. In the first section of Chapter 5, "Mentorship: Encouraging A Growth Mindset", I will share a narrative that shows how a mentor can encourage the mentee to develop a

growth mindset. In the first section, “Mentorship: Encouraging Emotional Intelligence and Building Resilience”, I will share the story of how mentor Cindy helped mentee Kyle increase his emotional intelligence which allowed him to develop more resilience habits and behaviors. In the accompanying section, “Coaching Mentors How To Mentor Emotional Intelligence and Resilience”, I offer a coaching framework that mentor coaches use to teach mentors how to help their mentees increase emotional intelligence by changing their dispositions toward certain stimuli.

CHAPTER 5: WHAT PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES CAN TEACH US ABOUT MENTORING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE & RESILIENCE

Mentorship: Encouraging Emotional Intelligence and Building Resilience

The mentorship journey of emotional intelligence and resilience is not a linear road we can easily track; instead, it is a spiderweb. Emotional intelligence and building emotional resilience do not come from one place but are scattered in our memories and shaped by our being, behaviors, and beliefs (Aguilar, 2018). Those with strong levels of emotional resilience understand who they are, the habits and dispositions that dictate their behaviors, and clearly understand how their beliefs have established them. Since emotional resilience is a competency deeply tied to who we are and our formative experiences, many people who have developed resilient dispositions and habits did not learn these capacities through traditional mentoring or coaching. The shared experience that unites those who have built emotional resilience is that they have had some kind of catalyst to bring them into a state of discernment about who they are. Self-knowledge is the first stage of building up emotional resilience. The catalyst starting the reflective process toward self-knowledge can take many forms. The catalyst could be a person that encourages us to reflect or a new perspective on a past event that has informed our dispositions. The person could be a mentor, therapist, or another individual or group that deeply listens and asks questions about our identity. The event could be a trauma or triumph that has affected how we react to stimuli. Regardless of what the catalyst is, once we have been forced, challenged, or encouraged to reflect on our identity and the experiences that have shaped our being, the work begins. Cindy, an independent school educator, is one such individual who has been working towards being a catalyst for transformation. In this section, I will share a narrative of her work with a mentee, Kyle. In this first part of the narrative, I will provide context for their relationship and tell the story from Cindy and Kyle’s perspectives. I will also highlight the

strategies and methods used by Cindy to mentor Kyle. To provide context for their mentoring story, it is important to understand how Cindy developed her mentoring toolkit.

The advent of resilience as a key component of education stems from many educators' call to shift focus to health and well-being. "Over the last decade or two, in many schools across the United States and in other countries, there has been increased attention to the social and emotional learning (SEL) needs of children" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 4). Social emotional learning is "...the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" (Niemi, 2020). Many educators like Cindy are calling for SEL not just to be a critical component of children education but also for adults as well. SEL advocates such as Cindy know "...what's needed isn't more professional development on deconstructing standards or academic discourse or using data driven instruction. What's needed is time, space, and attention to managing stress and cultivating resilience" (Aguilar, 2018, p. 5). Over a fifteen-year career in equity and inclusion, Cindy has learned and developed a tool kit filled with effective frameworks to help individuals and organizations effect change. Cindy's toolkit, similar to SEL instruction, supports the development of emotionally resilient habits and dispositions. In this narrative, you will see how Cindy uses an equity and inclusion framework to help her mentee Kyle increase his resilience and change his habits and dispositions. Similarly, in the following section, titled Coaching Mentors How To Mentor Emotional Intelligence and Resilience, I will share how mentor coaches design and utilize SEL frameworks to systemically impact their learning organizations.

Cindy's work starts with the belief that not only living through certain experiences help build resilience but that educators can design learning opportunities to uncover and develop resilient habits and dispositions. Our identities and lived experiences play central roles in our emotional resilience journey but so too does the way in which we define our approach towards emotional resilience. Our approach can be defined in many ways, but it generally focuses on the greatest stressors that threaten our identity and sense of fulfillment. Our vocation and the work that we do also plays a role in how we look to build emotional resilience in ourselves and our communities. For Cindy, because of her identity, vocation, and lived experience, the path towards emotional resilience has focused on social justice. Since social justice is so critical in her approach to emotional resilience, the framework she uses to address emotional resilience is derived from the justice, equity, and inclusion space and carefully employs systems thinking.

Cindy pays particular attention to systems and structures that increase and decrease our ability to build resilient habits and dispositions. Cindy used this approach with her mentee Kyle to increase his own emotional intelligence and resilience to become a better educator.

Similar to many mentoring stories, Kyle's story begins with vulnerability. Kyle was deeply unsettled by a realization about his identity after his third year of teaching. The school he was working at had started a new initiative for faculty to begin mandatory education and training on gender, race, equity, and inclusion. Kyle had come from a very traditional background and had little experience discussing gender or race. He had little experience reflecting on his socialization as a cisgender straight white male and felt very uncomfortable discussing his lack of knowledge with colleagues. Earlier in the week, a BIPOC colleague recently sent out an article on embedded racist behaviors in schools. In reading the long list, Kyle found that he was guilty of at least four behaviors over the last semester. None of the behaviors were intentionally malicious but were, unfortunately, beliefs and behaviors that informed his instruction and coaching and had profound ramifications on his students. Kyle could not reconcile his identity as an educator that loved his students with an identity as an educator who perpetuated racist behaviors. He had never considered himself to be a racist, but the article had spurred him to do some more research on his own. After reading several more articles and books, there was no denying the reality. His comfort and inaction did not make him a neutral party in social justice activism but instead a bystander and, in some cases, a perpetrator. Kyle was not sure what move to make next. He had some trusted colleagues well-versed in antiracist education, but they all identified as educators of color. Kyle was not sure he could face them. The following month, the school held a student/faculty conference on race, equity, and inclusion. Cindy ran the conference and worked with faculty and students to offer different sessions. Kyle saw this as an opportunity to start self-work in equity and inclusion and offered to run a session.

Cindy helped Kyle assemble a session where he asked students to read different primary sources that featured varied perspectives of pivotal events in United States history. In this session, the academic skill focus was historiography, to model and build up the historical skills of recognizing and understanding that written history is not strictly fact but also a matter of interpretation. The session's primary focus was to educate students that interpretations of history are potent tools that can either be used to validate or marginalize human experience. Kyle immensely enjoyed his work with Cindy during this conference and decided he could partner with her to wrestle with his deeply troubling realization. Kyle contacted Cindy to ask if they could meet to discuss further equity and inclusion work opportunities.

Kyle and Cindy agreed to meet the following week to discuss elements of the United States history curriculum that could be amended to include a more extensive set of BIPOC voices. Cindy brought several helpful guides and texts to the meeting to help Kyle see how he could actively frame and model in class to practice and engage in racial conversations. She also offered specific activities supported by current research on adolescent metacognition in the history classroom. Cindy outlined to Kyle that for students to have meaningful conversations about race, they must also become more aware of aspects of their socialization. Cindy explained that this work is challenging for adolescents but necessary to cultivate social and emotional skills. In the history classroom, Kyle felt the obligation not only to teach students how to analyze and corroborate different historical interpretations but also to teach students empathy. Kyle saw that Cindy had thought deeply about the intersectionality and interplay of equity and inclusion curriculum, the humanities as an academic discipline, and learning science. At this moment, Kyle felt he could disclose his internal struggle from earlier in the semester. He was unsure how Cindy would receive him, but what was clear to him was that Cindy had the knowledge to help, and at the moment, he felt he could be vulnerable.

Kyle leaned into his vulnerability and told Cindy about his internal struggle with his identity as an antiracist educator. Kyle expressed to Cindy that he wanted to change but was unsure what to do. He felt helpless in asking for guidance because he did not want to place his burden of re-education on someone else but did not know where to begin. Kyle explained that he engaged in some research and had goals to alter some of his lesson plans but had a sinking feeling that much of that work was just a bandage to cover up the shame he had been feeling. In response, Cindy smiled back and told Kyle she was glad he was willing to share something so personal. Cindy told Kyle that the phenomena he was experiencing were normal and that one of the most significant blocks to adult learning is the “need to know” or “already be an expert” at everything. By using these simple words, Cindy could put Kyle’s hesitancy at ease. She said it was great that he was looking to find a point of departure for his work, but he would need to commit himself and do much self-work. Cindy began their work by asking Kyle to imagine a common coaching question using “how might” language. Coaches and mentors often use “how might” language to formulate potential solutions through inquiry and give the coachee or mentee agency. The coachee or mentee is forced to be the architect and begin the solution-framing process through engineering a potential outcome. The mentor/coach can then help the mentee/coachee challenge and reframe the “how might” question. If the “how might” question is effective, the mentor and mentee deconstruct the question into specific goals supported by achievable outcomes. Cindy

asked Kyle to consider “*how might your role as an antiracist educator take shape at our school?*”. Kyle had begun to think about how he could start to make some changes in his teaching practice based on the curriculum Cindy had previously shared, but beyond that initial vision, he was unsure how to proceed.

Kyle thought about how he would encourage his students to make changes. He would need to start with some learning goals supported by achievable objectives. Cindy suggested that to establish these goals, Kyle should use a specific framework to focus his approach and help conceptualize what possible outcomes could look like. Cindy shared an article, “The Role of Senior Leaders in Building a Race Equity Culture”, with Kyle to outline potential frameworks to help forge a path forward. Cindy advised Kyle to begin by examining how he sees the four levels of racism at play through the lens of his lived experience. The Four Levels of Racism include personal, interpersonal, institutional, and structural (Suarez, 2018, p. 2). The personal level of racism consists of the “private beliefs, prejudices, and ideas that individuals have about the superiority of whites and the inferiority of people of color” (Suarez, 2018, p. 2). Interpersonal racism is “the expression of racism between individuals” and “occurs when individuals interact and their private beliefs affect their interactions” (Suarez, 2018, p. 2). Institutional racism includes “discriminatory treatment, unfair policies and practices, inequitable opportunities and impacts within organizations and institutions, based on race, that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes” (Suarez, 2018, p. 2). Structural racism is “a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequality. It is a racial bias among institutions and across society. It involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors including the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color” (Suarez, 2018, p. 2). Cindy not only suggested using this race equity framework but also that he would need to have goals to develop new emotionally resilient habits and dispositions if he wanted to transform his “mindset” and “practice” (Suarez, 2018, p. 2). Emotionally resilient habits and dispositions would give Kyle the support necessary to make sustainable change and continue through the challenges that come with progressing through the learning zones (comfort zone, fear zone, learning zone, growth zone).

To make changes to his current beliefs and behaviors Cindy and Kyle decided to focus on three resilient dispositions that would aid Kyle in overcoming some of the common challenges white allies face in their growth towards antiracism. Cindy began this process by asking Kyle

what dispositions might get in the way of his success. Kyle was worried about a number of different dispositions, including uncertainty, ignorance, and patience. In this context, “uncertainty” is defined as “fear [of] saying or doing the wrong thing, or being perceived as blind toward the experiences” (Suarez, 2018, p. 3). Cindy asked Kyle how another disposition other than “fear” or “uncertainty” might support his goals? Kyle listed back several character traits, including “courage”, “determination”, and “vulnerability”. To overcome “uncertainty” Cindy suggested that Kyle accept the necessity of “vulnerability” to achieve his goals. Kyle agreed that accepting vulnerability as a disposition would allow him to overcome fear or shame around his past beliefs and behaviors and prevent him from using internal excuses for inaction. Kyle felt he could sit in discomfort and allow himself to be vulnerable, but he was still concerned about his lack of knowledge and feared he would continue to make mistakes without realizing his impact.

Cindy agreed that this would be a likely outcome and something that would be tricky to navigate. Cindy suggested that since she could not observe Kyle at all times, he should dedicate himself to keeping a journal. He would not need to log everything but could write down moments of his day where he felt one of the dispositions was being tested. Together Cindy and Kyle discussed two more problematic mindsets that Kyle wanted to combat “ignorance” and “lack of patience”. Cindy worked with Kyle to figure out how he defined his ignorance. Cindy offered a definition from an article they shared as a common text, “The Role of Senior Leaders in Building a Race Equity Culture”. Kyle agreed his “ignorance” was a “lack of awareness” defined as “personal biases that inadvertently perpetuate structural racism” (Suarez, 2018, p. 3). Kyle would need to work to unearth and understand his “personal biases” to not “inadvertently perpetuate” racist behaviors. Kyle decided to focus on developing discernment as a disposition. Discernment would allow Kyle to focus on self-awareness and continually think about how his behaviors in relation to the four levels of racism work towards race equity. Lastly, Kyle wanted to develop a resilient disposition to overcome “impatience”, which can set in due to the “non-linearity of the work required to build a Race Equity Culture”(Suarez, 2018, p. 3). The self-work “to drive inclusion and shift culture” requires educators to “go beyond the transactional” and “requires embracing the challenges and tension that often accompany this [race equity] work” (Suarez, 2018, p. 3). To effectively overcome “impatience”, Kyle decided to work on developing perseverance. To ensure Kyle’s habit and disposition building had a clear path forward, Kyle and Cindy decided to commit to a one-on-one meeting every other week to discuss Kyle’s journal. In these meetings, Cindy would focus on helping Kyle externalize his thought process and identify specific habits that were either helping or hindering the development of his antiracist dispositions.

In follow-ups with Cindy after our initial conversations, she asked me to share a short message about her thoughts and feelings about mentorship and coaching practice. Cindy shared that as mentors and coaches, we have the responsibility and opportunity to be catalysts for those in our lives. We also have a chance to show our mentees a way forward that is highly effective and focuses on desirable learning outcomes.

Coaching Mentors How To Mentor Emotional Intelligence and Resilience

Coaching emotional intelligence and resilience begin with clearly understanding the intended learning process. As previously mentioned, emotional resilience involves developing habits and dispositions that allow individuals to understand their emotions and behaviors to influence how they respond to stimuli (Aguilar, 2018). Educators must engage in social and emotional learning to develop emotionally resilient habits to increase their emotional intelligence and resilience. To engage in social and emotional learning to develop emotional resilience, it is also important to consider three realities that Elena Aguilar asserts are the underpinnings of development. As stated in the Chapter 1 Introduction; (1) “we have tremendous power in how we interpret” (2) “the opportunity for resilience originates in how we make sense of the things that happen because interpretation dictates actions” (3) “a substantial amount of our ability to be resilient is fostered in our daily habits” (Aguilar, 2018, pp. 2-3). In the previous section, we learned how a mentor, utilizing Aguilar’s above underpinnings, can use a learning framework to help an individual develop resilience. However, how do mentors learn to design a curriculum that encourages emotional resilience? Many educators learn to develop and adapt learning frameworks by engaging with SEL organizations. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning is such an organization that equip educators with a toolkit to help others develop emotional resilience and other critical dispositions. CASEL, (The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) an organization that has been teaching the coaching of social and emotional learning since 1994, defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as:

“an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (Niemi, 2020).

Through the work of CASEL, entire learning organizations can use their SEL frameworks to prioritize the development of resilience. CASEL asserts that five competencies are central to the makeup of social and emotional learning. These competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL). Each of these competencies greatly contributes to the important work of developing emotional resilience. CASEL emphasizes that it is critical for the adults in a learning organization to build up these competencies prior to beginning a school-wide program. At the inaugural SEL Exchange in 2019, a now annual summit where leaders in SEL gather to discuss and share best practices, school leaders cited that if they could restart their SEL program from the beginning, they would have focused more time on starting the learning with adults. These reflections are further supported by the work of psychologists who assert that the best type of SEL learning is systemic, which heavily relies on the influence of employee stakeholders (J.L. Mahoney et al., 2021).

Systemic SEL involves a “universal approach” where “all students and adults in the setting [school] are engaged in a coordinated learning process” (J.L. Mahoney et al., 2021, p. 6). In order “to promote SECs [social, emotional competencies] through systemic SEL, implementing coordinated, universal EBPs [evidence-based programming] is critical” (J.L. Mahoney et al., 2021, p. 6). The best way to ensure the efficacy of EBPs and one of the key areas in the theory of action for Systemic SEL is to “strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacity” (J.L. Mahoney et al., 2021, p. 4). Adults are crucial stakeholders in the continued improvement of SEL, not just the implementation. For adults to support Systemic SEL, they engage in SEL on two fronts: learning how to coach SEL and taking on the role of a learner.

Similar to developing a growth mindset, the best way to learn how to coach SEL involves establishing intentional moments for enduring learning ingrained across the system, allowing frequent opportunities for modeling and practice, and giving adequate time for reflection on learning. CASEL’s theory of action also “identifies four key activities for strengthening adults’ SEL competence and capacities” (CASEL, 2019, p. 1). CASEL advocates that schools that want to integrate SEL successfully should have as many school leaders as possible to train SEL practices and clearly understand SEL benefits (CASEL, 2019, p. 1). The more program leaders involved in the process “ensures that SEL is not siloed into a single department or viewed as a stand-alone initiative...” (CASEL, 2019, p. 1). Schools also need to provide SEL sessions that are “high-quality professional learning” opportunities and give adults the time and space to “critically reflect on and deepen their own social, emotional, and cultural competencies” (CASEL, 2019, p.

1). These adult-focused sessions are critical in establishing “communities of adults who know and trust one another and who are skilled at working together toward shared goals for implementing, improving, and sustaining SEL” (CASEL, 2019, p. 1). To ensure the efficacy of SEL learning, CASEL offers a practical systemic approach that can be ingrained across programs and more individualized or group-based learning to build SEL competencies.

SEL coaches begin by coaching adults on how to coach a systemic approach that is flexible and adaptable across different programmatic offerings in schools. CASEL advocates learning how to coach SEL educators should use the SEL 3 Signature Practices, which include Welcoming Inclusion Activities, Engaging Strategies, and Optimistic Conclusion (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 3). The 3 Signature Practices are not an “SEL curriculum” but “are one concrete example of a way to help people understand and practice the goals of an overall systemic SEL implementation plan” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 4). The 3 Signature Practices also follow researched-based practices to create a sustainable, equitable, and effective learning environment (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7). The Welcoming Inclusion Activity focuses on community building using “rituals or routine openings to establish safety and predictability, support contribution by all voices, set norms for respectful listening, and allow people to connect with one another to create a sense of belonging” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 56). A sample suggestion is to begin the meeting with an opened ended question, allow participants to form partnerships to discuss the prompt, and then allow time for a few groups to share their thoughts with the entire group (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 56). The Engaging Strategies “are brain compatible strategies that can foster: relationships, cultural humility and responsiveness, empowerment, and collaboration” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 56). Engaging Strategies also “provide a space for integrating new information into long-term memory” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 56). For Engaging Strategies, CASEL offers a sample activity familiar to many teachers called Think-Ink-Pair-Share (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 56). Think-Ink-Pair-Share involves “generating ideas and deepening understanding through reflection, writing, speaking and listening” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 56). The final practice, Optimistic Closure, asks participants to “reflect on, then name, something that helps them leave on an optimistic note. This provides intentional closure, opens space for expressing disequilibrium, reinforces the topic, and creates momentum towards taking action” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 56). Reflection is critical to establishing the collaborative and collective agency in the learning process and makes continuous improvement of the implementation of SEL possible. When all 3 Signature Practices are effectively facilitated, modeled, and practiced, mentors learn how to create an equitable and

effective learning environment where learning becomes optimal (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7).

Mentors learn actionable and sustainable strategies that are essential components of coaching pedagogy. For a coaching session to be equitable, mentors learn how to use SEL strategies to ensure equity of voice, inclusion, and collectivism (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7). Mentors who engage in adult SEL also utilize the “ABCs of an effective learning environment”, which are Autonomy, Belonging, and Competence (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7). Autonomy focuses on “the need to be in control of oneself and empowered to make decisions (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7). Therefore mentors are coached to create sessions or meetings where participants can “make personal choices about what they say and do” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7). Mentors are also coached to build community and create a sense of belonging. Belonging refers to an individual’s “need to be accepted and valued by others” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7). Coaches help mentors design activities where “every person can be heard and seen without judgment, and help build relationships with others and with content” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7). Coaches also look to find ways for mentors to constantly use competencies across different SEL skills. When mentors learn how to utilize the SEL 3 Signature practices, they will have “opportunities to be effective across a variety of contexts” (McKay Bryson et al, 2019, p. 7).

Taking part in a social-emotional learning program and working on coaching social-emotional learning are prime vehicles to learn how to be an effective coach and mentor. The overall structure of implementing social-emotional learning at a learning organization and the strategies and methods of doing the work of social-emotional learning offers an excellent model of how to structure a mentoring program and practice mentoring. First and foremost, social-emotional learning requires a systems thinking approach that is mindful of leverage and how to incorporate several key stakeholders in the learning process. Coaches and mentors do not work in a vacuum but must change or leverage the system they work in to benefit their mentee or coachee. Social-emotional learning also emphasizes creating space and time for reflection and feedback on learning moments. Lack of reflection prevents the learner from making meaningful and last changing. In a similar fashion, feedback provides critical knowledge for the practitioner to understand the effectiveness of their interventions. Furthermore, many social-emotional learning programs have established flexible and sustainable learning routines and reflective exercises that can be adapted to new contexts.

Before offering a brief “Conclusion” section to transition to the next chapter, I would like to offer a story that provides critical insight into a current reality in the mentoring landscape. This

story does not directly deal with mentoring a growth mindset or emotional resilience but addresses and highlights an important reality about mentoring that cannot be ignored by this study. During the interview process, I operated under the unconscious assumption that most independent school professionals have access to mentors that can understand their lived experiences. In the section below, “Assumptions and Blind Spots”, I offer reflections and suggestions from an experienced mentor, Mark, on how race and gender identity play a critical role in mentoring practice.

Assumptions and Blind Spots

As I mentioned in Chapter 3 Methodology, I used a very open interviewing style that led to many interesting but sometimes tangential conversations about mentorship. Though I did not make space for some tangential insights I felt the need to include the story told by Mark. Initially, I had arranged to interview Mark about emotional resilience, but quickly our conversations transitioned to discussing how identity plays a significant role in mentorship and how mentors need to consider how race and gender identity affect their ability to mentor. My conversation with Mark struck a cord, and I began to think more about how my identity played a role in mentoring relationships. As a cisgender white male, I started this thesis project with an assumption that quickly highlighted a blind spot. I assumed, like myself, that every person in independent schools could easily find a mentor at their institution that would empathize with their experience and help them navigate their professional career as an educator. However, this is not the case for many individuals, particularly our BIPOC and LGBTQ colleagues. Although there are independent schools that have a group of diverse faculty, there are some that do not. The purpose of this section is not to posit a solution for diversity in independent schools but to acknowledge the need for mentors to have competency in cross-racial, cross-gender, and cross-experiential mentoring if they are mentoring someone that does not relate to their lived experience. To highlight this need, I will share the story of Mark. Now to be clear, Mark’s story is not featured here as a representative narrative of all experiences of different people who may struggle to find a mentor. Mark’s story is his own. However, I hope to clarify that to be an effective mentor; we must all continually reflect on our assumptions and blind spots. Perhaps this story can help begin this reflection.

Mark has served in almost every administrative capacity in independent schools. At his core, Mark considers himself to be a teacher first. When reflecting on his place after a longstanding career, Mark returns to that core as an English literature teacher. Ralph Ellison's

Invisible Man often returns to the forefront of Mark's thoughts as he reflects on his career. Mark recalls the scene where the grandfather offers the narrator one last piece of advice on his deathbed: "Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open... Learn it to the younguns," he whispered fiercely; then he died." For Mark, the reality of racial prejudice in his profession has forced him to live in "the lion's mouth" and "undermine 'em with grins". Now that he has reached nearer to the end of his career, he hopes to "learn it to the young guns". For Mark, he had no such guide to help him navigate the early missteps of independent school life. Being Asian American, he had limited opportunities to be mentored or see active modeling of other Asian American administrative leaders. Mark recalls many conversations with BIPOC colleagues about the difficult experiences of taking ownership of your identity during the different stages of your independent school career and constant renegotiation.

He recalls one of the earliest failed mentoring experiences as a teaching fellow at a boarding school in New England. The mentor in question was a leading well-respected educator at the school, and being Asian American could have been a potentially influential mentor for Mark. However, this educator did not want to be labeled as the aid to the Asian American cause. Mark explains that the strength of conformity in the boarding school environment can often create an aversion to the ownership of a person's racial identity. For Mark's career, it made it difficult to establish a mentorship relationship with other Asian Americans who could understand his unique experience and help guide him in his professional development from a young teacher of English literature to a high-level administrator.

Mark found that the most beneficial mentoring experiences happened at summer conferences and institutes outside his school. For this reason, Mark discovered his earliest mentors among black colleagues. In this space, Mark found like-minded educational leaders who could empathize with his situation and strengthen his resolve to push forward into an administration that was not so welcoming to diverse leadership.

At conferences and institutes, BIPOC educators who worked in independent schools can come together and address issues unique to their experience. Mark expressed that the largest conference has recently returned to "being run by people of color and for people of color". These professional development opportunities have not always been actively run by BIPOC faculty, and

the level of ownership over the conference has resulted in a more significant and beneficial impact on BIPOC educators who work in independent schools. These conferences and institutes have created a mentoring platform that was not possible before. Young and promising BIPOC educators looking to take on leadership positions in independent schools now have a more established network. Mark explains that coupled with the increase in communicative technology, he has established mentoring relationships with people he cannot regularly speak with face to face. This increase in networking and communication ability is filling the gap. It allows young BIPOC educators to identify appropriate mentors and stay in communication to navigate problems that arise in their daily professional lives. This dual approach has begun to address the limited access to a pool of appropriate mentors that Mark experienced in his career. Beyond simple professional advice such as contract negotiations and programming changes, Mark looks to instill a specific set of qualities. He again reflects on Ellison. He tells his mentees "to be a spy in every country," to be subversive. To support this work, Mark has two primary goals; to invigorate their spirits and impart the capacity to endure.

Mark's story is not an uncommon experience, and his story coincides with a genuine problem facing schools today. In their co-authored chapter on Mentoring and Coaching, from the *International Handbook on the Preparation and Development of School Leaders*, Dr. Bruce G. Barnett and Gary R. O'Mahony discuss "the induction and transition of principals" as a paramount concern especially if "there are particular circumstances that encourage or discourage capable educators from seeking the position" (Lumby et al., 2008, p. 232). Barnett and O'Mahony assert that all mentoring relationships begin with trust. Mentees looking to go into administration must find "...respected administrators, who are committed to the process as well as trustworthy individuals capable of establishing a level of candor needed for such work [mentorship]" (Lumby et al., 2008, p. 239). Mark would argue that mentors of administrators must have the "candor" to be honest in helping BIPOC educators navigate a profession that is affected by aversive racism. Given the small pool of administrators of color, access to such mentorship is often challenging. For that reason, this study would advocate that mentors consider training in cross-racial, cross-gender, and cross-experiential mentoring.

Conclusion

While studying and analyzing the three tiers of mentoring, many models, strategies, and methods for effective mentoring practice emerged. In the following Chapter 6 Study Findings-

Introduction & Discussion, I will present the study's major findings and discuss their impact on the field of mentoring practice.

CHAPTER 6: STUDY FINDINGS- INTRODUCTION & DISCUSSION

This study began as an exploration into uncovering what makes for effective mentoring relationships. Mentorship has been a pivotal vehicle for professional development and growth since the inception of independent schools. At independent schools, there exists a number of experienced and skillful educators that remain untapped resources for crucial learning opportunities for their colleagues through mentoring relationships. Many educators are energized by the idea of mentoring but do not always possess the pedagogical training to structure enduring learning opportunities for their colleagues. This fault does not lie with experienced educators or learning organizations. However, it is a natural gap in knowledge and skill because it is not common practice for all independent school educators to pursue pedagogical degrees or certifications in coaching or adult learning theory. This study supports the theory that educators can form more effective mentoring relationships with colleagues by applying specific coaching models, strategies, and methods. The major findings of this study suggest that there are a number of critical factors that inform effective mentoring practice. These critical factors include (1) an understanding of systems thinking, inquiry framing, and organizational change, (2) an appreciation of mentoring as a flexible and adaptable role that ranges from directive to non-directive, (3) a recognition that the most desirable outcome of a mentoring relationship is enduring learning and transformation, (4) a reliance on dialogical and transformational coaching as models that can inform effective mentoring practice, (5) and the use of mentoring interventions/strategies/methods that utilize frameworks that are informed by research-based practices and “balance advocacy and inquiry” (Knight, 2018).

Major Findings

Systems Thinking, Inquiry Framing, and Organizational Change

There is a strong correlation between systems thinking, effective mentoring practice, and organizational change. Systems thinking allows mentors to understand components of a learning organization that are either helping or hindering their mentee. This kind of thinking can uncover potential solutions that are not easily discoverable in isolating thinking patterns. Systems thinking

also promotes using high-leverage change, which can inform efficient and cost-effective methods for intervention. Systems thinking interventions empower mentors to align the competencies and capacities they look to encourage in their mentees with the mission, core values, and strategic initiatives of their learning organization.

The benefits of systems thinking highlighted in the literature reviewed in this thesis and the mentoring narratives support the rationale for practicing inquiry framing. When we use specific frameworks, such as the National Equity Projects Optical Refractor (detailed in Chapter 4), advocated for by Elena Aguilar, to structure our approach to problem-solving, we increase the likelihood of uncovering effective solutions. Inquiry framing also promotes deep learning, which I will discuss later in this chapter. These findings offer insight into how mentors could use these coaching methods and strategies to improve their mentoring practice. Coaches often use inquiry-based methods to remain facilitative and contribute to coachees' deep learning. Mentors can use systems thinking and inquiry-based frameworks to avoid directive practices such as advice-giving, which dissolves opportunities for deep learning. It should be clearly stated that using systems thinking or inquiry-based frameworks is not always appropriate in all contexts, and there are limitations to its applicability in mentoring relationships. However, if the central aim of the relationship is facilitating the enduring learning of the mentee or solving a complex problem, then systems thinking or inquiry-based frameworks are invaluable tools. Also, using systems thinking and inquiry-based frameworks requires much practice, feedback, and reflection to reach competency.

This thesis also recognizes that for the sake of triage or in the context of an immediate crisis, advising, as opposed to mentoring, can be a useful tool. “Adivising” involves using solely directive methods of intervention to assist a mentee who is in immediate need. The generalizability of these specific findings is limited by the amount of time and resources a learning organization is willing to invest in this area of professional development. Independent schools constantly deal with the realities of competing goods. Schools with greater resources can alleviate some mentoring needs by employing professional coaches. This study, however, supports investment into professional development that equips current employees with coach-like skills. Investing in existing employees is a more sustainable and cost-effective model for schools that do not have the financial means or institutional infrastructure to support hiring professional coaches. Another benefit of promoting coach-like habits and behaviors is the further promotion of collective communal learning and centering well-being. Educators who learn to be coach-like are more likely to seek feedback to improve as professionals. They are also more likely to focus on

developing emotionally intelligent and resilient habits that will mitigate burnout and support restorative community-building practices. Learning to be coach-like would benefit anyone with a leadership position at a learning organization.

The Role of the Mentor & Mentoring Applications of Dialogical and Transformational Coaching Models

Mentoring practice in independent schools requires flexibility and adaptability ranging from facilitative (non-directive) roles to directive roles due to the realities of school environments, which are unpredictable. Being an effective mentor in a school environment requires the ability to toggle between various roles, which helps educators be mindful of how they are listening and what questions they are asking. Acknowledging our roles allows us to effectively frame our inquiry, ask the right questions, and uncover constructive solutions. It is also important to name out loud what kind of conversation we want to structure with our mentee. Dialogue is not a clandestine act but an open practice that recognizes the mentee as a genuine partner. A helpful model encapsulating this reality is Graydin’s forms of help spectrum featured in the Chapter 2 Literature Review, which identifies and describes different roles on a spectrum (figure 1.2) from non-directive (facilitative) to directive.

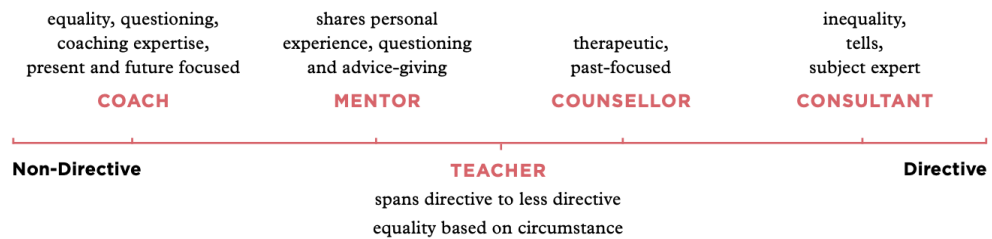


Figure 1.2 Graydin Forms of Help Spectrum

This model illustrates that coaching is a small part of a toolkit of practices that an educator can employ. It also serves as a visual representation of the many roles that an educator could take on during a day at work. For example, if I am acting as a “consultant” because my mentee needs immediate support, my mentee should understand why I am taking on this role and how it will support them. It is not uncommon for many educators to toggle between these roles throughout the day. A mentor could receive specific professional training in all these roles. Still, by utilizing hybrid models like transformational and dialogical coaching, a mentor can bring together many of the strengths of these different roles. This is not to suggest that someone would become an expert

coach, mentor, teacher, counselor, and consultant by adopting hybrid coaching models but instead asserts that utilizing these models would be a focused and applicable approach to learning effective mentor practices in the independent school context. As a reminder, Knight's dialogical coaching model offers a balance between "advocacy and inquiry", meaning the use of a specific strategy is appraised by how well it meets the mentee's goal as opposed to the mentor's opinion (Knight, 2018). Aguilar's transformational coaching model "...incorporates strategies from directive and facilitative coaching, as well as cognitive and ontological coaching" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). Transformational coaching is "...directed at three domains and intends to affect" (1) "the individual client and their behaviors, beliefs, and being" (2) "the institutions and systems in which the client works --and the people who work within those systems" and (3) "the broader educational and social system in which we live" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). Both these models are analyzed in the Chapter 2 Literature Review, and their effective use in Chapter 4 and 5 mentoring narratives is clear.

Knight's dialogical coaching is an effective mentoring model because it focuses on maintaining an equitable relationship and utilizes the mentor's personal experience and expertise. The dialogical coaching model also focuses on building a partnership instead of creating a hierarchy where the mentee is seen as the mentor's subordinate. Knight's dialogical model and its effects are evident in the Chapter 4 Growth Mindset narrative with mentor Meredith and mentee Will. Meredith can construct a mentoring framework where she uses inquiry to empower and create deep learning opportunities for Will but also utilizes her expertise in student learning to advocate for specific strategies Will can implement in his class. Meredith can also use dialogical strategies that build trust, allowing Will to be vulnerable and open to feedback. Dialogical coaching also offers an approach more suitable for a mentee's immediate needs, such as Will's immediate need to shift his instructional practices. Knight's focus on goal-orientated growth is crucial in encouraging mentors and mentees to work towards specific goals and objectives. Due to Knight's research's instructional focus and the narratives collected, this study did not specifically address the application of dialogical coaching outside classroom instruction. However, since Knight's research builds on key adult learning principles and methods with a proven track record, it is reasonable to suggest that these findings are transferable and that Knight's dialogical coaching model has utility in other areas of school life outside the classroom. While the instructional focus is clear, his framework can be easily adapted to effect change in other areas of school life. Aguilar's transformational coaching model also offers an applicable framework that can be used to inform effective mentoring practice.

Transformational coaching can be used when dialogical coaching does not serve the mentee's needs or is not a serviceable model for the mentor. Dialogical coaching is best used when the mentor is an expert in the area they are trying to effect change, such as classroom instruction. In this context, it is also helpful for the mentee to work towards a specific competency and identify aspects of their problem, but perhaps not yet have adequate solutions. Transformational coaching can be beneficial when a mentor works outside their expertise, the mentee's problem is deeply complex or not easily identifiable, or the mentee is trying to change a habit or behavior. The application of transformational coaching and its effect was evident in the Chapter 5 mentoring narrative, which featured mentor Cindy and mentee Kyle. Kyle's problem was too complex to begin with directive strategies or methods. To change racist beliefs and behaviors that informed his teaching and coaching practice, he needed a more holistic approach than dialogical coaching in the form of transformational coaching. As previously stated transformational coaching involves understanding and affecting change in "three domains" which include "the individual client [mentee] and his behaviors, beliefs, and being", "the institution and systems (departments, teams, and schools) in which the client works...", and "the broader educational and social systems in which we live" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). As a transformational coach or mentor, Cindy's goal was "...to surface the connection between these three domains, "...leverage change between them...", and "intentionally direct" specific methods and strategies that "...will reverberate on other levels" (Aguilar, 2013, p. 25). To effect change in all three domains, Cindy used a race equity framework to encourage Kyle to open up his awareness and understanding of race inequity at a systems level. Cindy also applied social and emotional learning goals, including having Kyle work towards developing emotionally resilient dispositions. Developing emotionally resilient dispositions that are antiracist allowed Kyle to see how his personal development would increase his ability to develop sensibilities towards racially inequitable behaviors and be better positioned to act in an antiracist manner. In this context, transformational coaching can also be a useful framework for mentors to "deconstruct" complex problems (Aguilar, 2013).

Due to the lack of data on the use of transformational coaching by new coaches, this study cannot confirm that mentors with limited coaching experience could utilize this model effectively in the immediate term. Data (from the thesis literature and from narratives) suggests mentors could use the component parts of transformational coaching effectively and immediately. Since transformational coaching is comprised of directive, facilitative, cognitive, and ontological coaching, mentors can effectively use the component parts of transformational coaching as they

work toward competency (Aguilar, 2013). Competency in this context would mean using the components (directive, facilitative, ontological, and cognitive) of transformational coaching to effect change in all three domains. In the immediate term, mentees will still greatly benefit from aspects of transformational coaching even if the mentor is not proficient in leveraging all three domains of coaching.

Effective Mentoring Interventions, Strategies, & Methods That Prioritize Deep Learning & Transformation

Most effective mentoring interventions begin with a focus on the fundamental building blocks of human connection; trust and vulnerability. Without establishing a trusting relationship that prioritizes authentic partnership, it is impossible to create moments of vulnerability between mentor and mentee that lead to disclosure. Disclosure is a crucial component of dialogue and many other features of a mentoring relationship. Trust and vulnerability are not dispositions achieved at the beginning of a mentoring relationship but are constant fixtures and serve as a barometer of the health and effectiveness of the relationship. Since the base goal of any mentoring relationship is to create and sustain trust, many of the effective strategies and methods used by coaches could be effectively implemented by mentors, focusing on building trust and creating safe environments for observation and dialogue. Effective mentors base their strategies and methods on researched-based practices that are key to establishing an efficacious and healthy mentoring relationship.

The initial use of research-based practices starts with setting the parameters of the mentoring relationship. As seen in the thesis literature and narratives, effective mentors begin with establishing the foundations of a constructive and productive adult learning environment. The construction of this environment begins with a framing of the problem, which can be achieved by an inquiry-based framework that cultivates “structural” or “creative” tension (Senge, 2012, p. 78). Peter Senge describes “structural tension” as “a rubber band set up between the two poles of your vision and current reality: the band is stretched, and as it pulls back to its normal shape, it will pull reality and the vision closer together” (Senge, 2012, p. 78). The focus of the mentor is to help their mentee understand the conscious and “unconscious” actions and “opportunities” that take place during this learning process (Senge, 2012, p. 78). “By cultivating the ability to hold both your vision and your current reality in mind, you [and your mentee] become attuned to the path between them” (Senge, 2012, p. 78). Several considerations must be examined to maintain an inquiry-based framework that supports structural tension. The most

effective way to define the “vision” is to outline the desired learning outcomes. For the mentee's benefit, the outcomes generally support enduring or deep learning where the mentee can internalize habits and behaviors to transform current practices. The next step involves goalsetting, which is a critical component of transformation.

The focus of goal setting is to establish learning goals and a set of actions to influence practice effectively. While there are many different approaches to goal setting, one of the best-researched methods is “SMART” goals developed by Jan O’Neill and Anne Conzemius, which was popularized through their co-authored book *The Power of SMART Goals* (Aguilar, 2013, p. 126). Elena Aguilar, in her book *The Art of Coaching*, states that some learning organizations “have added an E to represent equitable” (Aguilar, 2013, p. 126). The acronym stands for “strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, results-based, time-bound, and equitable” (Aguilar Art of Coaching 126). Using a constructive goal-setting methodology presents an opportunity for the mentor to increase the likelihood of measurable changes to current practice. It also allows the mentor and mentee to begin an authentic partnership by co-creating the goals. This initial dialogue focused on goal setting is critical to further developing a genuine partnership. At the start of mentoring relationships, it is important to respect the mentee as a professional and allow them to generate initial learning outcomes and goals. The mentor can then suggest and fine-tune the mentee’s goals and advocate for particular strategies to achieve objectives.

When the mentor and mentee have established learning outcomes and goals, it becomes time to decide between facilitative and directive strategies and methods. Research shows that facilitative strategies and methods are more effective in establishing long-term changes in mentee practice, but as shown in the thesis literature and narratives, it is more common that a mentor will operate on a spectrum between facilitative and directive to meet the shifting needs of their mentee. Regardless of the use of facilitative or directive methods, there remain components of mentoring practice that should always be used when the context allows. These components include dialogue, observation, reflection, and feedback. Dialogue is a facilitative strategy and should be used as the basis of any mentoring relationship, even if your current focus involves using directive methods. Dialogue should be conducted minimally once a month but is generally more effective on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Dialogue, when appropriately structured, gives the mentee agency and a space to feel respected and heard as a professional. Mentors can use dialogue to practice inquiry and listening. Mentees, in turn, are learning to externalize their thought processes and discover different thinking patterns that can unlock solutions. Dialogue is

also an opportunity for mentors to show they can be trusted and invested in the mentee. The general focus of mentoring dialogues is discussing specific practices or framing solutions to a problem. Dialogues also usually incorporate observation, feedback, and reflection.

Inquiry-based dialogue can be used to facilitate effective learning opportunities, but it is best when paired with observation. Observation is critical because it allows the mentor to see the mentee in practice. Most importantly, when observing our mentees in action, we use a specific methodology to heighten our awareness and open our minds to a variety of potential solutions. For example, in Chapter 4, it was clear to mentor Meredith in observing Will that it would be just as important to note what his class instruction sounded like as opposed to just writing her noticings of what she visually observed. In this mentoring intervention, the added layer of listening and sound allowed Meredith to tap into the content of classroom discussion and understand the emotions invoked by the learning environment. Meredith also established a reciprocal feedback loop between herself and mentee Will so that they could continue refining her proposed intervention's effectiveness throughout the process. The feedback loop allowed Will to express whether the proposed strategies were helping him reach his teaching goals while allowing Meredith to advocate for different strategies based on Will's needs. Meredith set time for reflection at the end of each meeting to affirm goals and objectives and make necessary adjustments. In using reflective practice as a constant in the relationship, Meredith allowed Will to identify the stages of his change in teaching behaviors. Using a metacognitive technique, Will could take ownership of his newly learned behaviors, making it more likely that he would adopt the behaviors permanently. Meredith's mentoring cycle of observation, data collection, reflection, and the implementation of new practice increases the likelihood of transformation and ultimately prioritizes deep learning.

Conclusion

Now that I have presented and discussed the major findings of the study I will offer a final reflection on my research in the last chapter, Chapter 7 Conclusion: Reflection, Recommendations For Practicum, & Suggestions For Further Studies. In this final section of the thesis, I reflect on the project's aim, offer concise answers to the research problem, and synthesize the major takeaways to answer the research questions. I will also offer recommendations for developing a mentoring practicum and make suggestions for further studies.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION- REFLECTION, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICUM & SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Study Reflection: Returning to the Problem Statement and Research Questions

This study aimed to identify effective models, strategies, and methods mentors can use in independent schools to encourage specific competencies in their mentees. Analyzing relevant thesis literature, conducting interviews, and developing mentoring case studies showed that mentors can use coaching models, strategies, and methods to ensure effective practice. Independent school educators can apply the dialogical and transformational coaching models to the independent school setting because they maintain contextual adaptability and flexibility using both directive and facilitative intervention methods. Dialogical and transformational coaching also prioritize the most desired outcomes: the deep learning of the mentee and the change (i.e. transformation) of beliefs, habits, and behaviors. To facilitate the collection of knowledge required to come to this conclusion, a set of exploratory and research questions was used to traverse the mentoring and coaching landscapes. These questions listed in Chapter 1 Study Research & Stating the Research Questions are the following:

Exploratory Questions

1. What is mentorship? How is it different from similar roles like coaching?
2. What are the models, methods, and strategies that make for effective mentoring?

Research Questions

3. Can mentors benefit from learning and applying pedagogy from different coaching models?
4. What types of interventions are most effective in mentoring relationships?
5. Do mentoring relationships require mentor interventions that balance directive and facilitative forms of intervention?
6. How do mentors encourage specific competencies like a growth mindset and emotional resilience?

In this closing chapter, I will address these research questions using a synthesis of insights from the previous chapters to conclude with a cohesive answer in reviewing each research question. In doing so, I hope to bring a clear focus to the most impactful takeaways of the research. In reflecting on each research question, I will discuss the effectiveness of my methodology, present limitations of the data if applicable, and discuss how this study contributed to the mentoring field. I will also use the major findings to offer recommendations for a mentoring practicum and make suggestions for further studies.

Mentoring vs. Coaching

When I first formulated the research question, *What is mentorship? How is it different from similar roles like coaching?* I thought the question would be a means to an end. My plan was to establish clear definitions of mentorship and coaching and use the solicited definitions as keystone terms to catalog activities that were either perceived as mentoring actions or coaching actions. Initially, when conducting introductory surveys, instead of finding conclusive answers, I was offered several different definitions of both terms, some of which contested the two words as synonyms. In reviewing further thesis literature and conducting interviews with industry professionals, I quickly concluded that there was a distinct difference between the two roles. Still, my initial confusion sparked a new question. *Why are mentorship and coaching sometimes conflated? What are the distinct characteristics that differentiate them?* In answering this question, I was immediately brought back to a Practical Wisdom course I had taken a few years ago. In the course, we started the term by reading Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. In the text, Aristotle has to work diligently and write with clarity to explain seemingly simple terms like happiness. In Aristotle's discussion, two critical factors often aided in defining terms; the aim or goal of the practice and the approach or actions to be taken to complete a practice. To find clarity in defining both roles, I focused on discovering the aim, actions or approaches, and outcomes of mentoring and coaching.

The immediate difference between mentoring and coaching is found in analyzing the dynamics of both relationships. The aim of both relationships is to help the mentee or coachee become a more competent practitioner. In mentoring and coaching practice, there is often a knowledge or skill gap that separates the mentor/coach and mentee/coachee. Also, the effectiveness and development of mentoring and coaching relationships rely heavily on establishing trust and vulnerability, but how each role establishes trust and vulnerability is slightly nuanced. In mentoring practice, the primary focus is relationship development which requires disclosure from both persons. Initially, disclosure often leads to the use of directive methods like using personal experience and advice-giving to support the mentee. Mentors also use personal experience to build the foundations of the relationship. In coaching, the primary focus is the specific objectives and goals of the coachee. Since coaching is specifically a professional arrangement, the coach has the emotional distance to build trust based on the effectiveness of their coaching efforts instead of disclosing personal information. Since coaches do not have to prioritize disclosure, coaches can initially consider a wider range of facilitative interventions.

Both mentoring and coaching relationships are fruitful and can develop and improve mentee or coachee competencies. However, in terms of outcomes, especially when deep learning is paramount, and transformation is desired, coaching interventions lead to better results.

While this study was able to establish consensus and clarity in defining mentoring relationships and how coaching practice can inform good mentoring practice, there remains a debate in the coaching industry in two key facets; (1) does a coach need to be an expert in the field or discipline in which they are coaching and (2) does effective coaching completely avoid directive interventions and only utilize facilitative strategies and methods. While this debate makes it challenging to make definitive conclusions in the field of coaching, the arguments presented by different coaching experts provided helpful insights for mentoring practice. First, mentors will not always have expert knowledge in the areas their mentees need support. In these situations, mentors can utilize the facilitative tools presented by coaching experts who assert that coaches do not need field expertise in the areas they want to effect change. Second, mentoring relationships generally demand that mentors use strategies and methods that exist on a spectrum between directive and facilitative. From this insight, it became clear that dialogical and transformational coaching models would effectively offer mentoring practice tools because both models maintain a balance between directive and facilitative. In this sense, the debate in coaching pedagogy provided a wide array of helpful tools for mentors.

Though coaching experts disagreed on elements of coaching pedagogy, there was a consensus that data collection, inquiry framing, dialogue, and reflection are critical to coaching interventions. These overwhelmingly utilized coaching strategies should be used by mentors and form the basic principles for the mentoring practicum recommendations made at the end of this chapter. In our role as mentors, we have the flexibility to utilize a range of different interventions, but this flexibility also comes with responsibility. Like coaches, we must continually evaluate how our practice is helping our mentees achieve their and our own goals. When the opportunity and context allow for it, mentors should strive to use facilitative strategies and methods.

Finding Effective Mentoring Models

To better understand effective mentoring practice, this study investigated mentoring at three tiers; the mentee experience, the mentor experience, and the pedagogy of mentor coaches. The purpose of using this three-tier model was, first and foremost, to understand the interworkings of a mentoring relationship. During the initial research phase of this study, I

conducted a survey asking volunteer participants to share their experiences as mentees, mentors, and mentor coaches. During the initial survey and interview process, the overwhelming majority of participants had been mentored and served as mentors. The study participants described the relationships as “formal” and “informal”. The “formal” relationships were intentionally created by the schools they worked at or were part of a professional development or degree program. The “informal” relationships were organically established and generally involved the mentee approaching a colleague they admired for certain characteristics and qualities. In the mentoring survey, I asked participants to name different methods or approaches they used to structure their mentoring relationships. I also asked them how they learned to mentor and if they had used a specific mentoring curriculum. I received several different responses. Most survey participants had never had any formalized mentor training and based much of their practice on past experiences and professional literature. Although most survey participants did not use specific language to reference the methods or approaches, mentoring relationships were most commonly structured around meetings set aside to dialogue with a mentee. Survey participants who had formal training in mentoring practice received their training as a component of a degree program, working with an outside learning organization, or working with a professional development organization.

After this initial survey and the first set of interviews, I pursued follow-up interviews with survey participants who had met three criteria: (1) they had been previously mentored, (2) they had mentoring experience or were currently mentoring someone, (3) they had received formal training in mentoring or coaching. This choice was not to dismiss or devalue the work in mentoring relationships without formal training. The focus was to find a select group of study participants with the greatest knowledge of the three tiers of mentoring practice. It was also clear that this subgroup of survey participants had the most formalized thoughts about specific mentoring models and strategies and had clear language to express their opinions. From this set of criteria, I had a list of fifteen candidates to interview. I conducted interviews with each candidate using the interview guide in Chapter 3 Methodology. After each interview, it became apparent that most informed strategies and methods used in mentoring practice came from the participant’s instructional or leadership coach's training. In these interview sessions, I started to formulate more precise answers to two more questions; *What are the models, methods, and strategies that make for effective mentoring? Can mentors benefit from learning and applying pedagogy from different coaching models?* These two questions stemmed from the research I conducted during my independent study on educational leadership, of which mentoring was a significant

component. During my independent study research, I read a great deal about mentoring in leadership positions and noticed that much of the shared literature among school leaders came from the coaching industry. In these exchanges, the school leaders identified as playing the role of a mentor but most of the formal structures they used in their mentoring practice seemed to come from the professional coaching industry. Most of the mentoring literature focused on highlighting desirable social and emotional characteristics of a good mentor and how these characteristics help mentees uncover solutions to their problems. The coaching literature focused on advocating for particular models and methods of adult learning offering case studies as illustrations. In these two research questions, I was searching for an answer to bring together the best qualities of mentoring and coaching practice.

During the interview process, many study participants continued to reference the same literature and industry professionals they trusted to inform their practice. Many of these names had come up during my independent study and were foundational in completing the literature review for this thesis. The most referenced literature and industry professionals were the works of Jim Knight and Elena Aguilar. As the study developed I continued to reference the effective mentoring practices that were established in the code structure by study participants. It became clear the dialogical coaching model developed by Knight and the transformational coaching model developed by Aguilar had the most desirable characteristics. Even though both these models are clearly situated as coaching roles, their application in mentoring practice is evident. Dialogical and transformational coaching balance the humanity of the relationship while providing effective structure to achieve specific outcomes.

Adaptable and Flexible Interventions

Mentors constantly deal with complex contexts and unpredictable circumstances that require mentors to be adaptable and flexible. Therefore this study has suggested mentoring interventions that utilize models, strategies, and methods that support an adaptable and flexible approach. Dialogical and transformational coaching are two critical models that support this kind of effective mentoring practice. The strategies and methods used in dialogical and transformational coaching are considered adaptable because they can be used diagnostically in different situations when the context of a problem is not fully understood. These coaching models also use flexible strategies and methods, meaning they can be adjusted during the process and address unforeseen circumstances and variables that occur during the intervention. In Chapter 4

and 5 mentoring narratives, mentors Meredith and Cindy utilized dialogical and transformational coaching, respectively, to provide adaptable and flexible interventions that benefited their mentees.

The Chapter 4 mentoring narrative on growth mindset illustrated mentor Meredith using a dialogical coaching model to help mentee Will explore the question of why his students performed poorly on an assessment. This context necessitated an adaptable intervention because Meredith and Will were unsure of the cause of the poor assessment results. Meredith structured a dialogical relationship by using a mentoring cycle that used the following steps (1) observation, (2) data collection, (3) dialogue, (4) goal setting, (5) strategy implementation, (6) feedback, (8) strategy adjustment. The dialogical structure of their relationship positioned Will as the central decision-maker and allowed Meredith to act as a guide. The mentoring cycle allowed Meredith and Will to open up their minds to various factors that could define the problem, allowing the opportunity to pursue a greater number of potential solutions. Meredith's intervention can be considered flexible because of her use of inquiry listening. Inquiry listening is a flexible method by design because it focuses on using broad questions to uncover and address unforeseen circumstances systemically. The utility of inquiry listening becomes clear when compared to directive methods like advice-giving. Though advice-giving allows mentors to use their expertise, it ignores or devalues vital information the mentee provides when asked broad questions.

The Chapter 5 mentoring narrative on emotional resilience illustrated mentor Cindy's use of transformational coaching to support her mentee Kyle in adopting antiracist dispositions. Transformational coaching is adaptable because it utilizes strategies and methods from four coaching types: directive, facilitative, cognitive, and ontological. Transformational coaching is flexible because it employs "leverage" or "small relatively inexpensive, well-focused actions...that produce significant, enduring improvements" (Senge, 2012, p. 6). As a transformational mentor, Cindy focused on using an ontological learning framework (race equity framework) to explore Kyle's beliefs, behaviors, and habits that negatively impacted his ability to adapt antiracist dispositions. To support this ontological learning framework, Cindy used "inexpensive, well-focused actions", including an inquiry framework ("how might" language), goal setting, and journaling to support Kyle's work toward adopting new dispositions. Meredith and Cindy's commitment to adaptable and flexible interventions allowed them to be effective mentors and prioritized opportunities for deep learning for their mentees.

Recommendations For Mentoring Practicum

To bridge the transfer of the study findings from theoretical use to practical application, I have written three recommendations for a mentoring practicum. These recommendations result from synthesizing data gathered from thesis literature and study participant experience. Each recommendation will highlight how a specific model, strategy, or method can be used to aid in developing better mentoring practices.

Recommendation # 1

A mentoring practicum should start by teaching an overarching mentoring structure. The overarching structure can be a model or a series of informed strategies and methods to manage the needs of the relationship. The overarching structure should be tailored to fit the intended outcomes of the mentoring program, orientated to facilitate organizational goals, or address the perceived action stages of the mentoring relationship.

Proposed structures and the scaffolding provided by these structures can be exceedingly simple, but mentoring relationships need a solid foundation. The two models proposed in this study, dialogical and transformational coaching, are readily available models that have been well-researched and have published guides. Even though these two models are contextually adaptable and situationally flexible, a school should still create its own model to fit the needs of the institution.

Mentoring programs do not necessarily need to be orientated around the school's needs and have virtuous merits in their own right. Mentoring programs can be entirely voluntary and initially focus on building community among employees. Mentoring relationships can exist entirely for employees' benefit and outside the scope of institutional influence. While these more organic mentoring relationships are valuable mentoring relationships can also be an effective vehicle for professional development and growth in schools. Mentoring programs can also be utilized in a more specific capacity by ingraining organizational goals or action stages and proposed interventions in the mentoring curriculum. One approach to developing a mentoring program would be to structure the curriculum based on a specific focus. This approach would be effective when developing a specific programmatic aspect of the organization or establishing organizational change. For example, suppose a school wanted to prioritize employee usage of feedback. In that case, the mentoring program could have an inherent focus on developing the

capacity of professionals to engage in dialogue through giving and receiving feedback. In this sense, the mentoring program would be a vehicle to establish a specific capacity or set of competencies that the school wants to instill in its employees. Another approach would be to develop the mentoring curriculum based on the action stages of a specific aspect of organizational architecture, like the academic calendar. A mentoring program focused on the academic calendar would allow mentors to practice employing both directive and facilitative strategies throughout the year. For example, at the beginning of each year, many institutions begin with an onboarding process for new employees and a reboarding process in which all employees participate. Veteran employees could be given time to support the onboarding process. Veterans could use directive methods such as advice-giving or sponsoring to help new faculty acclimate and use reflective strategies to offer experienced employees a framing to start the school year positively.

Recommendation # 2

Regardless of program focus or selected mentoring model, a mentoring practicum should use Knight's "partnership approach" as a guide to create mentoring relationships that maintain trust. A "partnership approach" allows mentors to design environments based on two critical pillars of trust: vulnerability and disclosure.

As suggested by this study, Jim Knight offers a coaching model called dialogical coaching, which offers an adaptable and flexible model that mentors can use to structure their mentoring practice. Dialogical coaching emphasizes what Knight calls a "partnership approach" and "balances advocacy with inquiry" (Knight, 2018, p. 12). To maintain an authentic partnership with a mentee Knight offers seven principles "equality", "choice", "voice", "dialogue", "reflection", "praxis", and "reciprocity" (Knight, 2018, p. 5). To uphold the principle of "equality" mentors and mentees need to approach each conversation with an empathetic mindset and acknowledge that the other partner is bringing equal value to the relationship. This principle affords both partners the sense of security to freely share ideas and make decisions together while intentionally destabilizing hierarchy. The principle of "choice" asserts that while mentoring relationships are a reciprocal process, the ultimate and final decision maker should be the mentee (Knight, 2018, p. 5).. Since the mentor initially holds more power in the relationship due to their experience and expertise, leaving the final "choice" to the mentee equalizes the relationship. Since mentoring relationships are not generally obliged relationships like coaching

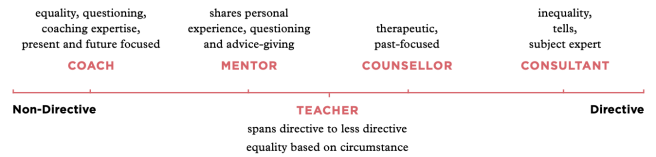
relationships the principle of “choice” is often easily met. When mentors sustain “equality” and present “choice” the result is the principle of “voice” where conversations become “open and candid” and mentees “feel safe expressing what they think and feel” (Knight, 2018, p. 5). Partnership principles “dialogue” and “reflection” are similarly critical to maintaining an authentic partnership. The utility of “dialogue” and “reflection” in mentoring is best understood within the context of the dialogical coaching model.

When a mentor engages “dialogically”, they work in a balanced space between directive and facilitative intervention (Knight, 2018, p. 12). Mentors do not just give direct advice on how to solve a problem. Nor does the mentor simply act as “a sounding board” (Knight, 2018). Instead, they use their experience and expertise to ask “powerful questions”, offer suggestions, and partner with the mentee to discuss possible solutions. After a mentee has used a mentor’s suggested strategy or method the pair will reflect on the effectiveness of the strategy or method. Instead of an appraisal from mentor, the effectiveness of the strategy or method is judged by whether it meets the mentee’s goal(s) (Knight, 2018, p. 13). This model allows the mentor to be an advocate and facilitator instead of an evaluator. Since the mentor is not seen as an evaluator, which can be an adversarial relationship, the mentoring relationship can focus on the principles of “praxis” and “reciprocity”. “Praxis” is a principle that asks mentors to focus on creating opportunities for their mentees that are meaningful, actionable, and repeatable (Knight, 2018, p. 5). When mentors create opportunities for mentees to engage in praxis, the mentee has a clear concept of the theory, understands how to apply the theory in action, and can evaluate how well the theory was applied. When a mentee engages in “praxis”, they are engaging in a learning process that gives the mentee ownership of knowledge, allowing them to apply their knowledge to new contexts in the future (Knight, 2018, p. 5). The last principle of a partnership approach is “reciprocity”, which is “the inevitable outcome of an authentic partnership” (Knight, 2018, p. 5). When the mentor adheres to the six partnership principles, the outcome is a reciprocal and fulfilling partnership where both mentor and mentee learn.

Recommendation # 3

Teaching effective dialogue must be at the center of the teaching methodology. Effective dialogue uses role identification, inquiry framing, a goal-oriented partnership, and feedback loops.

Dialogue is a seemingly simple action, but doing so effectively is an extremely difficult and complex skill. For this reason, a mentoring practicum should initially focus on the practice of dialogue. While some experienced practitioners can hold a successful dialogue with little conscious thought about their actions, several steps make for effective dialogue. To begin an effective dialogue, mentors must first identify the role of support they will take on and be attuned to what degree of intervention is necessary, depending on the context of the mentee’s problem or goals. To identify your mentoring role, it can be helpful to use a visual aid such as Graydin’s forms of help spectrum (as pictured above). As a mentor, these prescribed roles can help us imagine how to categorize certain actions as facilitative (non-directive) or directive. As a mentor, it is important to initially focus on a facilitative intervention since interventions of this kind prioritize deep learning and transformation. However, mentors should be aware of moments that require role switching, which involves more immediate action and the use of directive intervention. After the mentor has identified their initial role, they should use an inquiry framework to facilitate a dialogue with the mentee.



Inquiry frameworks are essential to the mentoring tool kit since they provide an organized cycle that structures an effective dialogue. There is a vast array of inquiry frameworks available to educators that are widely circulated and tailored to achieve different outcomes. However, most inquiry frameworks share similar phases. An inquiry framework begins with an orientation phase, establishing initial understandings and asking broad questions to define the perceived problem. The second phase focuses on exploration by using different methods to collect data and a follow-up process of analysis and interpretation to establish the thematic meaning of trends within the data. The third phase involves processing the established themes or trends into an action plan. The action plan is usually a list of goals coupled with specific objectives. The fourth phase concludes the process by reflecting on the effectiveness of the action plan and collecting feedback to improve future practice. The effectiveness of the action plan should be judged based on how well the action plan addressed the goals of the mentoring partnership (Knight, 2018, p. 13). This study suggests starting with an established inquiry framework and then making tweaks to tailor the framework as you gain experience. Some suggested frameworks come from Elena Aguilar’s Book *The Art of Coaching*; The Ladder of Inference and the Coach’s Optical Refractor, Kath Murdoch’s *Cycle of Inquiry*, or you can read an

entire book focused on a large inquiry framework in Jim Knight's *The Impact Cycle*. Similar to the benefits of an inquiry framework, dialogues are also supported by maintaining a goal-oriented partnership by utilizing a feedback loop. As highlighted in the previous recommendation, the effectiveness of a mentoring strategy or method should be judged based on how well it meets the goals of the partnership as opposed to the individual opinion of the mentor or mentee (Knight, 2018, p. 13). A goal-oriented approach allows for greater emotional detachment from feedback made by the mentor or mentee. The emotional detachment creates an environment for open and honest discussion, which can be structured as a loop to constantly evaluate whether a goal is being met and how a strategy or method can be altered to meet a set goal.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the study findings and the continued pursuit to improve the efficacy of mentoring relationships in independent schools, I suggest the following possibilities for future studies.

1. A qualitative study to investigate the ability of novice mentors to learn and implement the key tenants of dialogical and transformational coaching at their institutions. While it is clear that mentors can benefit from adopting coaching skills into their practice, it remains unclear what the learning curve would be for mentors who do not have a coaching background i.e., novice practitioners. This study focused on skillful and experienced coaches and mentors who utilized coaching interventions in both their capacities as coaches and mentors. This study can, therefore, not confirm the immediate accessibility of a coaching skillset to novice practitioners. To better understand the implications of the study findings on novice practitioners, future studies could study a group of novice practitioners and assess their ability to learn and implement coaching models, strategies, and methods. The study could identify potential pitfalls and highlight effective pedagogical practices to improve mentoring practicum for novice practitioners.

2. Future studies could explore the impact of introducing dialogical and transformational coaching models at a systems level in a learning organization. This study posited the theory that introducing a coaching mindset at a systems level would give a school the ability to establish organizational change. A research group could set up two coinciding studies to track the progress of dialogical and transformational coaching. For example, if a school was trying to integrate

project-based learning into its curriculum, the study could catalog and analyze the effectiveness of dialogical coaching in implementing project-based learning across the curriculum. For transformational coaching, the study could assess a school trying to shift school culture. For example, if a school redesigns its student discipline system from punitive to restorative, the study could examine and evaluate the benefits of using transformational coaching to make the shift.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CODE STRUCTURE

Code Structure: Understanding the Experience of Mentor Coaches, Mentors, Mentees

Research Question: To identify effective models, strategies, and methods mentors can use in independent schools to encourage a growth mindset and emotional resilience.

1. Learning Organizations
 - a. Mentoring/Coaching Programs at Universities and Colleges
 - b. Formal/Informal Mentoring within Independent Schools
 - c. Formal/Informal Mentoring outside Independent Schools
 - d. Professional Mentoring/Coaching Organizations
2. Models
 - a. Professional Coaching (Graydin Model)
 - b. Facilitative Coaching
 - c. Directive Coaching
 - d. Transformational Coaching
 - e. Dialogical Coaching
3. Strategies
 - a. Forms of Help Spectrum (Directive to Non-directive: Coach, Mentor, Counselor, Consultant)
 - b. Systems Thinking
4. Methods
 - a. Shared texts
 - b. Observational tools
 - c. Dialogue Structures
 - d. Researched-based interventions
5. Competencies
 - a. Growth Mindset
 - b. Emotional Resilience
 - i. Socioemotional Learning
 - ii. Deep Listening

APPENDIX B: AGUILAR'S DEBRIEF PLAN

Table 4.1. Coaching Conversation: Debrief Plan

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Teacher observed: <u>Mr. Delgado</u> | | |
| 1 | Question: How are you feeling about today? | |
| | My Thinking | Lenses Used |
| | This will reveal some information about Mr. Delgado's emotional intelligence: What language does he use to discuss what happened? How does he name his own emotions? Or does he bypass that topic and move into other topics? I want to start our conversation by opening this space because in order to have a discussion about other areas, we often need to clear emotions first. This is what makes coaching unique and effective—we acknowledge the presence and role of emotions, we attend to them, and we support our clients in processing them. | Emotional Intelligence |
| 2 | Question: How do you see the problem or the challenge in that incident? What do you think was going on? | |
| | My Thinking | Lenses Used |
| | I want to understand how Mr. Delgado sees "the problem." Is it his own management skills, as the principal believes? Is it the students and the disruptive student, as teachers sometimes feel? Does he feel that someone else (the principal) has defined "the problem" and determined that <i>Mr. Delgado</i> is the problem? | Inquiry |
| | If Mr. Delgado talks about the students' behavior, I may ask if there are groups of students in specific periods that he struggles more with. | Inquiry |
| | I am curious how Mr. Delgado will speak about the students' emotional expressions—how does he name their feelings? How does he interpret them? Did he recognize Davontae's frustration level when he entered the room? How does Mr. Delgado deal with students' feelings? Did he recognize his own increasing frustration? | Emotional Intelligence |
| | I will be listening in this conversation for how Mr. Delgado talks about power, if he does at all. Does he see power as residing within the classroom teacher? Does he feel students have "too much power" or none at all? I may ask him directly where he feels that the power lays, if he doesn't address this question. | Systemic Oppression |
| | I am also wondering if Mr. Delgado makes any connection between his own instructional skills and student behavior. I wonder if there's an entry point here for instructional coaching, which could incorporate everything from instructional objectives to his vision for himself as an instructor. | Inquiry |

(continued)