Changing the Lens: Mentors and Their Effect on Novice Teacher Attitudes Towards Student Achievement

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements For the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

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August 2015
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated my family, friends, and colleagues. To my wife, Blanca. With you by my side, all things are possible. To my friend Giancarlo. I could not have made it without you. To my colleagues at the Teacher Training Academy and my supervisor, Jan Peaks. Their encouragement and her support have been invaluable. And, of course, thanks to Kathleen Rowlands. Thank you Kathy for your kindly support in helping me think and write like a scholar.
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Abstract

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

The purpose of this study is to examine the role mentors play in the development of attitudes and perspectives of novice teachers. Specifically, this study explored how mentors assist new teachers in re-framing their thinking about their students and their teaching practice. The study included accounts of how mentor teachers, through reflective conversations, move novice teachers towards an affirming perspective about their students. Additionally, this study examined how those mentors assisted novice teachers in re-examining their teaching strategies. This study’s central research questions are: How do full-release mentors shape novice teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic abilities? What kind of frames are used by mentors to help novice teachers...
view their students? The primary data source was the full-release mentors participating in the district’s induction program. Data was obtained through semi-structured interviews. The results indicate that mentors use three frames reshaping novice teachers’ perceptions: developing student relationships, changing the locus of control, and using data to re-interpret situations. This study will contribute professional knowledge to the field of mentoring and may be used in mentor trainings to increase mentor effectiveness and improve student achievement.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The academic performance of US students in reading, mathematics, and science has stalled since 2009 while other nations continue to make substantial gains (Heitin, 2013). Commenting on the recent results from the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Education Secretary Arne Duncan remarked that the results reveal, “…a picture of educational stagnation” (Clayton, 2013). That report provided a telling example of the fact that since 2000, there has been no improvement in the mathematics and science scores of 15 year-olds in the United States as compared with those of students from other countries (Kelly et al., 2013).

In California, where the public schools serve the largest and most diverse student population in the United States, students are not meeting the state’s academic standards. California educates approximately two million students in its thirty largest school districts. Those districts are facing the stresses brought on by the economic crisis, both nationally and locally. These stresses affect the state’s ability to educate its children (Edsource, 2012). Test scores are making small improvements, but still half of California’s students are not “proficient” (Wechsler et al., 2007). In 2013, California 4th and 8th grade students placed below the national average in both mathematics and reading (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

It is common knowledge that the work of a teacher is difficult. (Fairbanks et al., 2010) tell us that, “…the life of a teacher involves living within a ‘system’ in which there are multiple worlds making multiple demands” (p. 167). To help understand how those multiple demands play out in a teacher’s world, educational psychologist Shulman (2004) compared teaching in the classroom as equivalent to working as an emergency room
physician. Whereas most physicians will treat only one patient at a time, an emergency room doctor has many patients arriving at once with a wide variety of ailments and injuries. The doctor needs to make multiple diagnoses, effectively divide his or her time and energy to those who with the greatest needs, and determine the best course of action for each individual patient. Like the emergency room physicians, classroom teachers have multiple clients, all requiring attention and care. Teachers must work with up to thirty-five, or more, students at once. Along with diagnosing the learning needs for every single student, the teachers must constantly monitor behavior, engagement, and safety for the entire class. Shulman concluded that classroom teaching “…is perhaps the most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced, and frightening activity that our species has invented (p.504). Educational reformers comment repeatedly on the challenges for new teachers. New teachers can be left to fend for themselves in a sink-or-swim environment or may be given the most challenging assignments to endure a trial-by-fire (Richard M Ingersoll, 2012).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) addressed the growing importance of teacher reforms by declaring that all students be taught by a teacher who is highly qualified (Darling-Hammond, 2005). This enactment had the effect of focusing educational policy on the relationship between novice teachers and students’ achievements (Ackermann, 2012). Duncan (2009) addressed issues of teacher quality when he referred to President Johnson’s 1965 speech that America did not need simply more teachers, but needed more good teachers. In reintroducing the discussion in the 21st century, Duncan acknowledged that because of today’s technological and economic
environment, there now exists a new era of accountability. Teachers can no longer say, “I taught it, but the students didn’t learn it” (para. 11).

**Two Factors Influencing Teacher Performance**

**Deficit Thinking**

There have been extensive studies and documentation on the phenomenon of deficit thinking; however there has been little research done on the developmental process of an affirming perspective. According to Garcia (2004), there are even fewer empirical studies done on what works towards developing an affirmative model instead of a deficit model. If mentors are to assist novice teachers in developing a positive perspective about their students, mentors need to know what mentoring strategies have shown to be effective.

Novice teachers often work under a set of simplistic conceptions of teaching, what Westerman (1991) identifies as, “…unelaborated schemas about children” (p. 302). What this means is that novice teachers often have unsophisticated views about children, and how they learn. Beginning teachers, because they are disproportionally placed in schools with students who struggle with low socio-economic problems, diverse languages, and very low academic skills, may develop negative attitudes and assumptions about their students (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Kilgore, Ross & Zbikowski, 1990; Rust, 1994). This may lead them to lower their expectations for their students and, in turn, depend on an unsubstantial set of pedagogical practices (Guskey, 1995 as cited in (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). New teachers may develop a “dysconscious” habit of mind, developing perceptions and attitudes that justify the inequities of student performance, based on the students’ ethnicity, social status, or primary language (King, 1991).
It has long been recognized that beginning teachers are more likely to be assigned to teach less capable students or more difficult classes. The teachers assigned to these classes may not have had adequate training to work with challenging students (Veenman, 1984). Zeichner (2003) stated that low performing schools, or schools with a predominating student population of African-American or Latino students, were more likely to be staffed by less qualified teachers. In addition, teachers working in low performing schools are faced, not only with difficult classroom environments, but also with bureaucracies that can negatively affect the way they behave and their attitudes towards student learning. These bureaucracies create attitudes that students need to be “fixed” because the problems with the students’ low performances are not the fault of the system, but of the students (Weiner, 2006).

Another possible cause of novice teachers’ deficit thinking is the cultural mismatch that comes from most novice teachers being placed into low-performing and challenging schools. The teachers’ difficult experiences can create the perception that diversity is bad (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004). Interestingly, there have been a large number of studies done on the topic of deficit thinking, but there is a paucity of research on how developing an affirming perspective can transform a teacher’s practice (Weiner, 2006). This deficit thinking is pervasive, not only in schools, but in the culture in general. The deficit paradigm extends into areas outside of education, such as the national obsession with obesity. The blaming of victims for their deficits is, perhaps, a natural tendency of people. Weiner continues:

The deficit paradigm that is so deeply embedded in urban school mirrors a proclivity in national debates about a range of problems. For example, in response
to the epidemic of obesity in our youth, public debate and proposed solutions frequently focus on individual behavior and character: If individuals would just say no to French fries or make healthy meals for their children we could solve the crisis (Weiner, 2006).

The inclination to see students’ poor performance as their own fault inhibits teachers from examining their own pedagogical practices.

Research identifies deficit thinking resulting from a cultural mismatch. Teachers see diversity as disadvantage. Today’s California teachers are mostly white (67.2%) and female (72.4%). The students they teach are often racially and culturally different. Latinos make up 51.4% of the students. Whites students are only 26.6% of the student population with Asian and African American students making up 8.5% and 6.7% respectively. Chances are, teachers today are standing in front of students who are culturally different from them and who have life experiences unfamiliar to teachers. This means that if teachers are not given opportunities to understand diversity as an asset, they are likely to perceive cultural differences as a problem.

**Teacher Quality**

A quality teacher in the classroom matters more than any other factor in terms of student achievement. If students from a wide range of backgrounds are to succeed in college or careers, it is important that they have quality teachers. It has been estimated that teachers have two to three times the impact on student math and reading scores than do other school services, such as the facilities the child attends, or the leadership of the school or district. Although other aspects influence student performance such as family circumstances, those factors are largely out of the control of policy-makers, school
officials, and teachers. As a result, policy makers and school leaders are beginning to focus their attention on the impact novice teachers have student performance (Ackermann, 2012; Zeichner, 2003).

A key problem associated with these issues is the role of teacher beliefs about their students and how their students are performing academically. Teachers’ perceptions of why their students may or may not perform to expectations may influence teachers’ reflective thinking and dictate the course of actions those teachers may take. If teachers see the root causes of performance as due to the flawed character of their students or because of family or community situations, they may perceive that student outcomes are out of their control. These teacher belief systems are formulated in the early years of their practice and may be positively influenced by the intervention of a mentor.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the role mentors play in the development of positive attitudes and perspectives of novice teachers. This study provides an overview and analysis regarding the practice of mentors and the novice teachers with whom they work. Specifically, this study explores how mentors assist new teachers in re-framing their thinking about their students and their teaching practices. This study includes accounts of how mentors, through reflective conversations, move novice teachers towards an affirming perspective about their students. Additionally, this study examines how those mentors assist novice teachers in re-examining their teaching strategies.

**Theoretical Framework**

The framework for this study is a combination of two central ideas from two separate studies: (Re)framing Classroom Contexts: How New Teachers and Mentors
View Diverse Learners and Challenges of Practice (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004) and Ambitious Pedagogy by Novice Teachers: Who Benefits from Tool-Supported Collaborative Inquiry into Practice and Why? (Windschitl, Thompson, & Braaten, 2011). Both studies examined the role of novice teachers’ perceptions of their decision-making processes (see figure 1.1, for graphic display of conceptual framework). The purpose of this current study is to examine what frames, or mental models, mentors and novice teachers use to view diverse learners in the classroom.

I describe these studies in greater detail below, and consequently define what was compelling about these studies in terms of my own work. I also describe, how my own research modifies the intentions and findings of these studies, to further enhance my own inquiries.

**(Re)framing Novice Teacher Perceptions**

Achinstein and Barrett (2004) developed their concept of frames from the work of Bolman and Deal (2013). For Bolman and Deal, a frame is “...a mental model—a set of ideas and assumptions — that you carry in your head to help you understand and negotiate a particular ‘territory’” (p.10). In other words, frames are the schema that provides the mental tools and strategies to deal with situations or solve dilemmas. Bolman and Deal emphasize the importance of frames because problems rarely come with a set of instructions. A frame provides the orientation needed to navigate through the ins and outs of complex situations.

Bolman and Deal identified their frames as structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. For the purpose of their study, Achinstein and Barrett adapted Bolman and Deal’s terms for the mentoring process, reducing them to three: managerial,
human relations, and political. A managerial frame focuses on the issues of managing student behavior and the rules and procedures of the classroom. The human relations frame views the classroom as a community and focuses on the relationships between teacher and students and among the students themselves. The political frame focuses on the struggles for equality and social change in the classroom. Though Bolman and Deal propose that the political frame is about negotiations between conflicting interests, Achinstein and Barrett suggest that it can also be thought of in terms of the mission for social justice that many teachers bring to their work. These three frames are the main schemas or mental models Achinstein and Barrett detected during their study when observing the interactions between mentors and novice teachers.

Achinstein and Barrett (2004) defined “reframing” as a process of seeing situations from multiple perspectives. When mentors work with novice teachers, they offer, through their discussions, observations, and examinations of student work which provide different ways of looking at situations. Sometimes, mentors will think aloud about how they view and interpret the situation. At other times, mentors may listen to the novice teacher, listening for openings or entry points for discussion. Both strategies help the novice teacher develop more detailed mental models, thereby changing novice teachers’ “interpretive lens” (Orland, 2001). Through this change in perspective, novice teachers may see situations at a more nuanced level of sophistication and see solutions that had not yet been revealed.

This study used the concept of frames and the re-framing process to examine how mentors purposefully try to shape or enrich a novice teacher’s perspective or schema. Novice teachers’ lack of experience and expertise provides them with a limited repertoire
of perspectives. Westerman (1991) pointed out that novice teachers may be unable to effectively work out solutions to problems in the classroom because of their unsophisticated schemas about students. The interactions between mentor and teacher may lead to changes in perception and expanded schemas using the work of Achinstein and Barrett, this study specifically explores how mentors initiate that change.

**Continuum of Practice**

Windschitl, Thompson, and Braaten (2011) explored how first-year teachers could adopt an “ambitious pedagogy” (p. 1315). They defined ambitious pedagogy as teaching that, “… deliberately aims to get students of all racial, ethnic, class, and gender categories to understand important ideas, participate in the discourses of the discipline, and solve ‘authentic problems’” (p. 1315). Ambitious pedagogy asks teachers to adapt their teaching to the needs of students while maintaining high standards of student performance. Achinstein and Barrett explored a mechanism that would encourage teachers to, not only engage in culturally relevant pedagogy, but also use techniques to involve the students in the discipline as practitioners. Teachers practicing ambitious pedagogy have students generate their own solutions to problems, develop their own strategies for learning, and test their own hypothesis.

Windschitl, Thompson, and Braaten (2011) explored how novice teachers’ collegial discussions of students’ work affect their understandings of instruction and student performance. The researchers focused on the novice teachers’ analysis of student work, not on the behaviors and performance of the beginning teacher. The authors point out that novice teachers, when asked to discuss student learning, often become preoccupied with the mechanics or logistics of the instructional activity rather than exploring
what students learned. The teachers’ group discussions revealed that the way participating teachers expressed their thoughts about their teaching and the dilemmas they faced could be placed on a continuum. The authors defined one end of the continuum as “problems with students” (p. 1322). The teachers at this end of the continuum summarized their teaching problems as problems with students failing to understand the content or meet teacher expectations. Using language that indicated frustration with an apparent lack of success with students, teachers at this end of the continuum expressed modest levels of expectations for student learning. They viewed student learning as an all or nothing proposition. Either the students understood the concepts, or they failed to grasp any learning at all. The teachers understood learning as an acquisition model; the teacher’s responsibility was to dispense information, and the students had most of the responsibility for acquiring it.

At the other end of the continuum, approximately one-third of the participating teachers were identified as showing a “…genuine sense of curiosity and intellectual challenge…” (p. 1323). These teachers were more interested in supporting students in their learning rather than in providing direct instruction. The teachers’ conversations were characterized as “puzzles of practice” (p. 1323). These teachers discussed their practice as intellectual challenges. They formulated their narratives in language that revealed a desire to improve student learning as opposed to language focused only on teaching for correct responses on assignments. These teachers demonstrated that they considered how to help students construct their own understanding of the content. These teachers tailored their practice to meet the students’ cognitive needs and seemed to understand that learning was about sense making, not task completion.
The perspectives that novice teachers hold influence their teaching practice. Unsophisticated frames for viewing pedagogical problems limit novice teachers. Specifically viewing the student as the problem frees the teacher from the responsibility to seek better solutions. The theoretical framework for the study combines Achinstein and Barrett’s (2004) ideas of re-framing novice teachers’ schema with Windschitl, Thompson, and Braaten’s (2011) continuum describing problems with students through puzzles of practice. This study will examine how mentors frame interactions with novice teachers in order to move them along the continuum from “problems with students” to “puzzles of practice.”

**Figure 1.1**

![Diagram](image)

**Research Questions**

The central research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. How do full-release mentors shape novice teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic abilities?
2. What kind of frames are used by mentors help novice teachers view their students?

**Significance of the Study**

The problem this study addresses is the deficit thinking that can be demonstrated by novice teachers. Information gained from this study will contribute to the knowledge base regarding the mentoring of novice teachers as well as the effects of the mentoring process on teacher thinking. The questions of how mentors may affect attitudinal changes in novice teachers are important ones as teacher education programs nationwide are expected to recruit, select, and prepare approximately 200,000 new teachers every year (*Our future, our teachers: The Obama administration's plan for teacher education reform and improvement*, 2011).

To date, there has been little evidence in the literature exploring the mechanisms by which mentors use reflective language to reframe novice teachers’ perspectives on student performance and pedagogical practice. In this study, all the mentors are full-time support providers, defined by the district as “full-release.” As full-release mentors, their sole proprietary duty is to observe and meet with novice teachers. This means that those mentors have multiple opportunities throughout the year to practice, reflect upon, and amend their mentoring language. This study proposes to examine how those mentors shape novice teachers’ perspectives on students and teaching practice.

**Definition of Terms**

*Beginning teacher:* a credentialed teacher who is beginning the induction process.

*Induction:* the support and guidance provided to novice credentialed teachers and school administrators in the early stages of their careers. Induction encompasses orientation to
the workplace, socialization, mentoring, and guidance through beginning teacher practice. The purpose of induction is to assist the new teacher in the transition from “student of teaching to teacher of students.” In California, teachers are required to engage in an inquiry process of their teaching practice with the support of a mentor. Reflection is an integral component of the inquiry process.

*Mentor:* experienced individuals, willing to share their knowledge and expertise with someone less experienced in a relation of mutual trust.

*Novice:* a protégé, mentee, a novice teacher who receives help, guidance, training, and support from a more experienced veteran teacher.

**Limitations**

The defined population of this study is the full-release mentors participating in the Underhill School District (USD, a pseudonym) induction program. The number of participants was limited by the constraints of time and location. The study was limited to mentors working for USD during the years 2014-2015.

**Delimitations**

Study findings are limited to the personal recollections, feelings, and experiences of the mentors in one school district; therefore, results are not generalized to other populations. The study was structured to interview a population of mentors who participated in the teacher induction program during the 2014-2015 school year. The mentors selected work with secondary teachers in low-performing schools. The selection was delimited to 10-12 mentors.
Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters, a reference list, and several appendices. The first chapter provides a brief introduction to the issues of the achievement gap, novice teacher development and the government’s response, the role of induction, mentoring, and deficit model thinking. The statement of the problem, the purpose and significance, overview of methodology, the study’s limitations and delimitations, and the study’s theoretical framework follow this. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature, including a critical synthesis of the empirical literature according to relevant themes or variables, and a justification for ways in which the study addresses a gap in the literature. Chapter 3 situates the study in a particular methodological tradition, provides a rationale for this approach, describes the research setting and research methods, and describes data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 4 organizes and reports the study’s main findings, including the presentation of relevant qualitative data. Emerging themes are exemplified by participant quotations. Finally, Chapter 5 interprets and discusses the results in light of the study’s research questions, literature review, and conceptual framework, concluding with strengths and limitations of the study, future research, and recommendations for policy and practice, such as action planning for education improvement.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The major focus of this study is to examine the role mentors play in assisting their new teachers in re-framing their thinking about their students and their teaching practice. Therefore, this literature review begins with an examination of the current research on induction programs in the United States, and in California in particular. The next section discusses mentoring as a general practice, providing definitions, a discussion of the various forms mentoring may take, and mentor/mentee relations. This is followed by an examination of frames as outlined by Bolman and Deal (2013). Reflection and its role in the teacher profession are discussed, including an examination of how reflective thinking may be promoted. The concluding sections examine deficit model thinking and its negative effects on teaching practice.

Induction

A History of Induction

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) state that, historically, the teaching profession has not had a formalized and structured induction process, the kind of initiation into the profession that has been commonly used in other white-collar professions. For classroom teachers, induction was considered as a part of a beginning teacher’s entry into the school environment.

The 1970s and 1980s brought new ideas about how induction was to be conceived. Initially thought of as passive support to socialize individuals into the profession, it moved towards a structured planned program, offering short-term assistance to new teachers. There were four major influences during those two decades that created the impetus for reconceiving induction. Those influences were:
• Growth of research literature on the subject of new teacher development

• Political mandates to institutionalize the process of new teacher development including five-year programs to obtain a credential

• Alternative credentialing options

• State mandated curriculum.

Additionally, there was a rising demand from educators themselves for more reform, such as those reforms that were presented by The Association of Teacher Educators Blue Ribbon Task Force in 1986, which said that induction should be equated with the beginning teaching experience (Lawson, 1992).

The 1990s saw the number of teachers participating in induction programs grow substantially as more new teachers entered the profession. It soon became obvious that these new teachers needed assistance in learning to cope with the many demands of the profession, including managing students and learning to work in a school environment (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

**Induction in the United States**

The early years of the Bush administration brought forth The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). NCLB renewed interest in beginning teacher support. Later, under the Obama Administration, using a framework, that encouraged competition to build reform efforts, the Department of Education’s Race to the Top program allocated up to 4.3 billion dollars to support system-wide reforms, including teacher support.

Practices on induction vary from state to state. With approximately 15,000 school districts employing upwards of three million teachers, it is difficult to examine all programs (Bullough, 2012). However, Education Week’s Quality Counts 2010 reports
that 23 states require all new teachers to participate in a state-funded mentor program, but only 18 states require new teachers to participate in state-funded induction programs. Nineteen states have established standards for the selection, training, and/or matching mentors. This indicates that nearly half of the states recognize the importance of mentoring for the development of new teacher, but do not require established full induction programs to meet needs of beginning teachers ("State of the states: Holding all states to high standards," 2010).

**Induction in California**

Bullough (2012) suggests that California is a primary locus for examining the teacher induction process in the United States. In California, the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) grant program was established in 1992. The grant was created to fund various opportunities and functions for first and second year teachers who have completed their preliminary credentials (Lovo, Cavazos, & Simmons, 2006). The program was created to give new teachers a smooth transition into the classroom, enabling them to adjust to the complexities of teaching and to work towards improving their classroom practice. The BTSA program is different from other state sponsored induction programs in that it is co-sponsored by both the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the California Department of Education. As part of their induction program, beginning teachers in California engage in an inquiry process that investigates their teaching practice. Teachers examine how they are teaching through the lens of their students’ work and reflections on their students’ past performances. Full-time mentors or part-time support providers assist them through the cyclical process of plan, teach, assess, reflect, and apply.
Benefits of Induction Programs

Teachers participating in induction programs are less likely to leave the profession early and therefore end up staying in the profession longer (Barnes, Crowe, & Schaefer, 2007). Hahs-Vaughn and Scherff (2008) examined whether mentoring and induction activities were a factor in teacher migration, retention or attrition. Using data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (1999), they concluded that mentoring and induction activities were not a significant factor in whether teachers moved to other schools or stayed. However, the study only covered retention; it did not address attrition (if the teachers left the profession altogether). The authors point out that one possibility for the discrepancy with other research—that they did not find mentoring or induction to be a significant factor in teacher retention/attrition—is that the statistical data they utilized for their research was obtained before NCLB. They suggest that before NCLB, there might have been less accountability and thus less pressure to have students succeed on standardized tests. Consequently, this could possibly result in a less stressful work environment for teachers, and thus rates of retention and attrition would be correspondingly affected.

Smith and Ingersoll (2004) examined induction to determine if the process has a positive effect on the retention of beginning teachers. Using data from the United States Census Bureau, the study looked at a sampling of 3,235 first year teachers and found that beginning teachers were less likely to transfer to other schools and were less likely to leave the teaching profession altogether when the mentees were provided with mentors in the same subject area or grade level. Although this study had the advantage of a large sampling, there were some limitations. The quality of the mentor’s understanding of how
to support new teachers was not addressed. However, other researchers have stated that the connection between induction and retention is more tenuous, claiming that it can be difficult to completely separate the reasons teachers choose to stay or leave the profession. (Hahs-Vaughn & Scherff, 2008; Lopez, Lash, Schaffner, Shields, & Wagner, 2004).

There is a significant cost to local school districts for the replacement of new teachers who leave the profession. It has been estimated that the cost of recruitment, hiring, and training a teacher’s replacement may upwards a third of a teacher’s annual salary. In the Chicago Public Schools, for example, the loss of a teacher costs the district $17,872, whereas, the cost for an effective induction program is $6000 per teacher (Barnes et al., 2007; McElroy, 2012).

Mentoring

Defining Mentors and Mentoring

The idea of mentoring goes as far back as ancient Greece. The first mention of mentoring can be found in Homer’s epic poem, The Odyssey. Odysseus is preparing to embark on a ten-year voyage and leaves his young son, Telemachus, to be guided and counseled by his trusted friend, Mentor. While Odysseus is on his voyage, Mentor acts as an advisor who is there to help the young boy grow in mind, body, and spirit (Jonson, 2002). From this ancient beginning, mentors have been seen as individuals who share their considerable experience and knowledge with less experienced colleagues (Ackermann, 2012). Mentoring has been described as a process of helping new teachers move from dependence on the mentor to a state of autonomy. Effective mentors do not offer solutions to their protégés, but engage in a process to help novice teachers discover
for themselves the solutions to their teaching and management problems. (Ballantyne & And, 1995; Killian & Wilkins, 2009). Smith (2007) describes mentoring as a form of support that not only provides the novice guidance, but also challenges the novice so that he or she may develop and grow in the practice. Anderson and Shannon (1988) define mentoring as:

A nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/or personal development. Mentoring functions are carried out within the context of an ongoing, caring relationship between mentor and protégé (p. 40).

The mentoring process is more than helping a younger colleague acclimate to the duties of the profession; it involves multiple roles and building a relationship.

The essential characteristics of mentoring are engaging in a process of nurturing, serving as a role model, focusing on both professional and personal development, and generating and maintaining a caring relationship (Anderson & Shannon, 1988). Mentors soon become aware of the amount of learning novice teachers have to do as they guide the novice teacher through the myriad of daily teaching decisions (McCrary & Mazur, 2010). Mentors not only provide advice on work related tasks, but also encourage critical reflection while providing feedback to their mentees (Ballantyne & And, 1995). Mentors may see their work as a matter of helping the novice teacher to survive, of helping them take responsibility for their teaching, of helping the novice teacher succeed, and possibly,
of assisting them accept a social justice stance to their pedagogy (Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, & Dana, 2009).

**Forms of Mentoring**

Varney (2009) states that both mandated and voluntary mentoring are capable of building people’s skills and talents. Voluntary mentoring has the potential to promote the growth of the whole individual as long as the mentoring includes informal communications between the participants. Conversations between mentors and mentees are apt to be more productive and open than those in mandated relationships because of the nurturing nature of voluntary participation.

Mentoring can take the form of a buddy system as examined by Ballantyne and And (1995). The study described and evaluated the roles of buddy mentors and the functions of those mentors in relation to the developing needs and concerns of beginning teachers. Ballantyne and And concluded that the mentoring process involves a progression towards autonomy on the part of the mentee. However, the authors note that the buddy mentor system does not appear to meet the need for sustained critical reflection adequately. Buddy mentors need to do more than just respond to specific concerns or areas where the mentee currently needs assistance. The study suggests that mentors must accept responsibility for the professional growth and development of the beginning teacher. Buddy mentors may develop supportive relationships with their teachers; however, they may not be effective in giving the critical advice needed to move their novice teachers forward in their practices.

Any kind of support given to new teachers needs to be more than a buddy system (Danielson, 2002), where beginning teachers work with a more experienced teacher.
She emphasizes that, while giving new teachers emotional support can be an important part of their growth, it is not enough when it comes to assisting teachers in developing their pedagogical skills. It is important that mentors or cooperating teachers assist new teachers in their development of teaching strategies, classroom management skills, and effective lesson planning. Danielson also affirms that teachers who get support are more likely to continue to remain in the profession.

**Mentoring Practices**

Mentoring is the principal strategy used in induction programs. The usual practice is to use veteran teachers to support novice teachers (Achinstein & Athanases, 2006). Traditionally, it has been understood that novice teachers are subjected to a sink-or-swim situation as they begin their careers. Induction programs are established to assist the new teacher through this period and mentors are considered a key factor in assisting the novice teacher through this stage (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Mentors may provide the novice teacher meaningful observational experiences and provide reflective discussions that promote improved practice. Although Achinstein and Athanases (2006) argue that the idea of a survival stage for new teachers has largely gone unquestioned, mentors do consider helping beginning teachers through that stage a significant part of their duties (Yendol-Hoppey et al., 2009).

**Mentor and Mentee Relationships**

Evidence has shown that the pairing of mentor and novice teacher is important to the success of the mentoring relationship. Beginning teachers felt they had the strongest level of support when their mentor either taught the same grade level or the same content area as they did (Flores & Day, 2006; LoCasale-Crouch, Davis, Wiens, & Pianta, 2012).
The kind of relationship that exists between the new teacher and the mentors leads to different roles the mentor plays and different mentoring strategies the mentor may use. Wang and Odell (2007) state that three underlying paradigms exist related to the mentor and mentee relationship: the humanistic, the situated apprentice, and the critical constructivist. The humanistic relationship is about the learning problems associated with the learners’ perceptions about their competence. The situated apprentice relationship deals with how the novice teacher gradually learns about the context and culture of teaching and what it means to be a teacher. The critical constructivist relationship views learning as a continuous process of deconstructing prior knowledge and then reconstructing it into new knowledge. This relationship is premised on the belief that all knowledge is built by the learner. These three paradigms provide a construct with which to view the purpose and dynamics of different mentor/mentee relationships. Each perspective implies different roles and obligations for the mentor, from one providing emotional support through the shock and stress of being a new teacher (humanistic), to being the expert to help novice teachers develop new skills (situated apprentice), to the critique of practice that directs new teachers towards social justice and becoming an agent for change (critical constructivist). Wang and Odell propose that understanding these three paradigms assists programs in moving teachers to more reform-minded teaching. A well-matched relationship between mentor and mentee, where both mentor and mentee share the same purpose and goals, is more likely to promote growth on the part of the mentee.

Frames and the Process of Framing

This study examines how mentors reshape beginning teachers perspectives about their
students. Teacher perspectives are, for the purpose of this study, conceived as frames.

Frames are the mental models individuals use to negotiate and maneuver within a situation or circumstance. “A frame…is a coherent set of ideas or beliefs forming a prism or lens that enables you to see and understand more clearly what goes on from day to day” (Bolman and Deal, 2013, loc 1253). That is, frames are the ideas and assumptions people carry in their head that make working in the world easier.

According to Bolman and Deal, there are four frames for viewing an organization and the individuals within it.

- A structural frame sees organizations in terms of formal roles and responsibilities. For example, individuals with a human resource frame view organizations as having an obligation to serve the needs of its members.

- A human resource frame views organizations and people in a symbiotic relationship. Organizations exist to serve the needs to people, not vice-versa. A desirable relationship is when the the work of the organization meets the needs of individuals and the work of the individuals matches the needs of the organization.

- A political frame sees organizations as a world of competing individual and group interests, bargaining and negotiating for scarce resources. From the political perspective, an organizations goals and policies grow from negotiations between interests groups.

- A symbolic frame views organizations and its members as a constantly changing arena where values and vision bring order and clarity. The
importance of symbols and celebrations within an organization bring
meaning and purpose to those who work there.

Bolman and Deal describe the creation of these frames as similar to the intuition process. The process can be non-conscious—individuals engage in the intuition process without being aware of it and intuitive thinking happens almost instantaneously. Frames, like intuition, are a holistic process, meaning that patterns and their possible meaning emerge from the whole field of perception (Dane & Pratt, 2007).

The process of framing is matching the mental models to the circumstances of the situation. However, sometimes individuals responsible for making decisions will misread situations. In essence, they become “cocooned” within their own worldviews. This may make it difficult to be aware of other options for action (Bolman & Deal, 2013, loc 498). Teachers may have difficulty in correctly interpreting the cause of poor student performance because of their limited perspectives on what may be causing the problem.

The ability to reframe the mental model is actually the ability to break frames. Bolman and Deal state that successful reframing involves a process similar to what physicians do: constantly re-evaluating the situation until they have an understanding of the condition and are able to make a diagnosis. They note, “in any situation, one cognitive map may be more helpful than others” (Bolman & Deal, 2013, loc. 6432). An effective reframing process requires the use of multiple lenses through which to view the circumstances.

**Reflection and Teacher Education**

Reflection offers the opportunity to stretch one’s mind from the mere accumulation of facts towards wisdom. The process involves thinking about the meaning of actions and events and how those meanings may be applied to situations where there is
no obvious solution (Moon, 1999). The reflection process can grow as teachers develop their reflective skills, which can lead to more nuanced instructional practice. Bean and Stevens (2002) found that pre-service teachers’ reflections tended to rely heavily on their personal belief systems or material from their coursework, whereas in-service teachers reflected more in the context of their teaching situations. This may indicate that scaffolding and support, such as work with a mentor, may help beginning teachers reframe their perspectives about teaching, and possibly, their views of students. Mentors working with novice teachers should assist the new teacher in interpreting the prior experiences with an eye towards how those interpretations may influence future actions (Schon, 1983; Urzua & Vasquez, 2008).

A primary reason for reflection, as Grimmett (1988) points out, is that the way a problem is conceptualized affects the kind of solutions implemented. Because reflection “…engages practitioners in a ‘conversation’ with a problematic situation,” the act of reflecting enables teachers to use their existing repertoire of strategies and knowledge to deal with new situations (p.9). Reflection on past events and decisions adds insights into teaching practice that may not be obtained by other means (Baird, Fensham, Gunstone, & White, 1991).

It is through reflective language that mentors and novice teachers communicate and verbalize each other’s thoughts and perceptions. Often both parties use metaphors to illustrate their thoughts (Urzua & Vasquez, 2008). Schon (1988) finds that metaphors have a unique place in discussions of reflection. He returns to the original Greek definition of metaphor (“to carry across”) and states that the process of carrying across is transformative, where prior experiences lead to understanding new situations. Metaphors
may reveal not only the struggles of new teachers, but also give clues towards their
growth and development (Gratch, 1998; Russell, Munby, Spafford, & Johnston, 1988;
Urzua & Vasquez, 2008).

**Defining Reflection**

Two key figures emerge from discussions of the definition of reflection in
education and its various qualities: John Dewey and Donald Schon. Dewey (1933)
defined reflective thinking as, “…the kind of thinking that consists in turning a subject
over in the mind and giving it serious and consecutive considerations” (p.3). This defines
reflection as engaging in a process of deep thought about a particular idea. However,
according to Dewey, there is more than mere thinking about a subject; the thinking must
have a purpose, a goal for future action. For Dewey, the, “…train must lead
somewhere…” (p.5). According to Dewey, two fundamental characteristics make up
reflective thinking. First, there exists a state of mental disequilibrium, a questioning or
wondering. Second is the purposeful act of seeking a solution or inquiring how to answer
the questions.

Schon stressed that there was a difference between reflection of action and
reflection in action. The former deals with teachers reflecting upon decisions after the
fact, and the latter deals with teachers’ “on the spot experimenting” (Schon, 1983). Schon
identifies both processes as when teachers reframe a problem situation and call upon their
own repertoire of knowledge and skills. This might begin a recurring reframing of
situations as the teacher looks back and reviews situations again and again (Schon, 1983).
The reflection-in-action that Schon speaks about is the tacit knowledge that professionals
possess, but may not be able to put into words. Osterman (1990) points out that reflection
upon that tacit knowledge requires a developing ability to articulate that knowledge in order to both share and reflect with colleagues.

In order to empower teachers in their own decision-making processes, teachers need to become “transformative intellectuals” (Nieto, 2003, p. 390). This means that they engage in a systematic process of looking back on their teaching practice. Thinking, writing, or engaging in conversations with colleagues and mentors, can do this. Additionally, they can observe themselves or others teaching and use these reflective opportunities to gauge the effectiveness of that teaching (Farrell, 2004). The reflective process requires teachers to look at their teaching and understand what it is that they value. Examining their beliefs makes teachers take more responsibility for the instructional and classroom management decisions they make in the classroom (Korthagen, 1993 as cited in Farrell, 2004).

Eraut (1990, as cited in Humphreys (2000)) expanded upon Schon’s two-part model of reflection. Instead of Schon’s reflection-in-action and reflection-of-action, Eraut formulated three groups: the teacher’s immediate reaction without reflection, the immediate reaction with reflection, and the postponed reflective reaction. This means that, according to Eraut, teachers may commit to actions and never engage in reflective thinking, during the act or after.

Researchers share a belief in the importance of reflection as it applies to future actions. Conway (2001) notes:

Reflection is not only about taking the long view backward in time, but also, and this is borne out in experience, about looking forward toward the horizon.

Looking toward the future with knowledge of the past from the viewpoint of the
present, I am suggesting, is a particularly salient aspect of novice teachers’ everyday experience (Conway, 2001).

So reflection means more than a mere recollection of past events. It is a look backward as a way to make better decisions regarding future actions. Urzua and Vasquez (2008) concluded that it was important for mentors and supervisors to insure that discussions of past events lead to conclusions about future proceedings. They claim that an orientation towards the future will promote novice teachers in interpreting both the past and the present.

**What Inhibits and Promotes Reflection**

It is important to recognize some of the factors that might inhibit teachers reflecting on their practice. In order for novice teachers to become reflective practitioners, it is necessary for teachers to see themselves as reflective learners. Humphreys and Susak (2000) claim that the idea of teachers focusing on themselves as learners is a new or original perspective. Even though beginning teachers may develop reflective skills with practice, it is possible that they do not have the disposition to become truly effective reflective practitioners (Cavanagh & Prescott, 2010).

A beginning teacher’s busy schedule may make it difficult to engage in reflective practices (Francis, 1995). Cavanagh and Prescott (2010) suggest that having enough time to reflect is important so that teachers can have the opportunity to grapple with the real pedagogical issues. Teachers need time to reflect on the problem solving aspects of a situation, rather than merely articulating the problem.

Where novice teachers work—meaning the physical space of their employment—may influence their development as reflective educators. Humphreys and Susak (2000)
suggest that the conditions of the school site where teachers work might influence the teachers’ abilities to “deconstruct their professional actions,” permitting a new reality or perspective to surface (p. 89). Humphreys and Susak claim that novice teachers tend to cite the school system or the students themselves as the cause of their problems. This deficit model of thinking inhibits the teachers’ abilities to analyze their own actions as teachers.

Scaffolding has been shown to support the reflective process (Bean & Stevens, 2002). Berghoff, Blackwell, and Wisehart (2011) state there are three methods for supporting reflection. First is for teachers to struggle with dilemmas, thought-provoking events with a degree of uncertainty in the outcome. Pushing teachers outside of their comfort zone forces them to struggle with understanding the contexts of situations. The second is to follow structured protocols, using step-by-step guidelines while engaging in the last method, a form of collaborative inquiry. Hatton and Smith (1995) remark that four broad categories of activities to promote or encourage reflection include action research, case studies, supervised practicum teaching experiences or microteaching, and structured curriculum tasks designed by the educational institution.

Teachers’ abilities to express their reflective thoughts are just as important as the act of reflection itself. Reflection is not only gaining a, “conscious awareness of the craft of practice…” (Osterman, 1990, p. 138), but also having the ability to speak about the knowledge gained from reflection. The act of writing provides a means of promoting a deeper reflective experience. Cohen-Sayag and Fischl (2012) examined how novice teachers’ reflective writing changed over time and analyzed it to see if there were any links to the teachers’ classroom practice. Their study found that when writing out their
reflections, teachers used greater detail during the second semester of their program. However, the majority of participants did not reflect at a substantially higher level. The authors surmised that the improvement in details was the result of more practice. Though most of the reflections were descriptive in nature, they can be categorized as illustrating entry points to higher levels of reflective writing. The results were inconclusive as to whether reflective writing has links to improved classroom teaching. The authors suggest that linking reflective writing to classroom practice needs further research.

Various specific strategies have been examined for promoting reflection. For example, Berghoff, Blackwell, and Wisehart (2011) examined the effects of using critical reflection in urban teacher education. They defined critical reflection as having teachers look beyond their own experiences to those of other teachers and also viewing their position in a social, political, or economic light. Using three basic teaching strategies for facilitating reflection—probing questions, collaborative protocols, and dilemmas—they wanted to see if beginning teachers could move beyond reflecting on their own individual concerns and begin to frame their reflections within those larger contexts. The study found evidence that all three instructional strategies had a positive influence on novice teachers’ learning. The researchers pointed out that the strategy of using probing questions was part of all three case studies. This suggests that probing questions should be part of any reflective process.

Yost (2006) also examined another form of critical reflection to empower beginning teachers, giving them the problem-solving tools to deal with the numerous challenges they face in the classroom. She defined critical reflection as a problem-solving protocol to help new teachers identify issues, make connections to research, implementing
alternative strategies for problem solving, and observing the results. Her qualitative study showed that having opportunities to reflect through this protocol with a mentor was, according to the new teachers, one of the most valuable aspects of their education as teachers.

How can we measure reflective thinking? Lee’s (2005) findings supported the claim that the content of a teacher’s reflection, and depth of the reflection, are influenced by such conditions as total teaching hours, the training of, and relationship with, the mentor and the general atmosphere where the reflective process took place. Lee’s recommendations for assisting new teachers with reflection include the following. First, it is important to use multiple tools or aids to facilitate reflection. The use of journals, dialogues, observational learning, and clinical interviews are suggested aids in coaching new teachers. Additionally, she points out that the form of communication used affects the level of reflection. Some teachers reflected very deeply in written responses while others reflected at a deeper level during conversations with peers and mentors. Second, it is important for teacher educators to have prior knowledge of their beginning teachers. Knowledge of a new teacher’s background will help the teacher educator select an appropriate reflection tool or task.

**Deficit Model Thinking**

One of the factors that influences teachers and their deficit thinking is the reality shock they experience as they transition from teacher preparation to actual teaching. This can be a traumatic experience. Reality shock occurs when a new teacher, usually given the more difficult classes, loses, “…the missionary ideals formed during teacher training…” due to harsh classroom realities such as students’ lack of requisite skills or
challenging behavior (Veenman, 1984, p. 143). Reality shock may influence teachers’ classroom practices, causing them to behave in ways contrary to their own original beliefs and moving them toward more authoritarian dispositions.

Beginning teachers may come into the profession with experiences that have given them an unrealistic view of the challenges of teaching. Most new teachers overestimate their abilities to handle classroom management and create an organized and structured classroom. If a teacher’s prior experiences before teaching are as camp counselors or tutors, they may underestimate the difficulties of roll book carrying teachers and subsequently experience the realities of managing large numbers of students, dealing with discipline, determining the needs of every student, and designing engaging instructional experiences (Weinstein, 1988).

**Defining the Deficit Model**

Deficit thinking perceives low-income students as having limited educational abilities. Teachers with a deficit mindset perceive students as the creators of their own problems (Valencia, Valenzuela, & Sloan, 2001). When teachers believe that students and their families are to blame for their low-academic performance, their way of thinking becomes a barrier that may prevent the teacher from exploring opportunities to assist those students (Harris, 2012). Weiner (2006) explains that such teachers look at the students' poor behavior and academic performance and believe that students must be fixed because the problems exist within the students and their families and not in the "social ecology" of the district or school (p. 42). What this means is that teachers are more inclined to blame students rather than explore how the educational system affects
the students’ learning. This deficit perception of students is not race or culture limited (Garcia & Guerra, 2004).

**Negative Effects of Deficit Thinking on Teaching Practice**

A deficit paradigm creates negative consequences for both students and teachers. When teachers hold a viewpoint that places blame on the students, they may miss students’ actual abilities and talents. A deficit perception may prevent teachers from seeing what their students can actually accomplish and learn. Deficit thinking may also prevent teachers from fully exploring and examining their own abilities to educate those students. Teachers may not be able to see their own potential and will overlook possible ideas and strategies for teaching this population (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Weiner, 2006).

Teachers conduct interactions with their students through the lens of their own personal experiences, beliefs, and values. The deficit perceptions teachers have of students’ family backgrounds and student academic abilities lowers the teachers’ expectations of their students’ abilities to manage their own behavior and of their academic performance. Teachers' feelings of compassion may lead them to over-compensate for their students' perceived difficulties. Teachers may try to create the kind of caring environments they think their students need, but this can often be at the expense of academic instruction (Garcia & Guerra, 2004). This overcompensation may deny students a rigorous curriculum.

Warburton and Torff (2005) suggest that teachers who perceive their students as low-performing give lower-level critical thinking activities, even though the teachers may believe that higher-level thinking activities would benefit those students. However, Zohar, Degani, and Vaaknin (2001) suggest that teachers believe that giving low-
performing students higher-order thinking activities is inappropriate. Their study suggested that teachers believe that high-level activities are beyond low-performing students and those students are better served when given low-level work because they are "stuck" at an early phase of the learning process (p.482).

Examining the beliefs of pre-service special education teachers provides insight into the development of deficit thinking. Brantlinger (1996) found three stages for this particular group of teachers. At Stage I, after pre-service teachers finished their coursework on special education, the teachers developed the idea that students with special needs would benefit from inclusion with general education students. However, their statements also expressed some opposition to inclusion. The teachers were motivated, but naïve about the requirements and demands of teaching. In Stage II, those initial ideals were tarnished and teachers articulated a return to their original beliefs that special education students are better served in separate environments. However, if the pre-service teachers had positive student teaching experiences, they moved on to Stage III. They held realistic impressions about the difficulty of inclusion and returned to their reconfirmed ideals. This progression suggested that the detrimental perspectives that develop from reality shock might be ameliorated with quality teaching experiences with mentoring colleagues.

Another possible avenue to reduce or prevent deficit thinking is for teachers to get to know their students as individuals. Walsh (2006) recommends teachers engage in activities to learn and understand their students on a personal level, become acquainted with their interests, and work to develop trust. Teachers with an affirmative model of their students understand that learning occurs in a social context and knowing students
strengths, areas for growth, and preconceptions are essential for becoming learner-centered teachers (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005).

Though these may be possible steps for teachers to take to move beyond a deficit view of their students, Harris (2012) contends that it is not enough. Teachers must, “…reframe their expectations of students” (p.145). Reframing prevents novice teachers from floundering aimlessly but gives them guidance and direction. When teachers are able to view their students’ academic performance in a light that illuminates their concerns as, not the fault of their students, but as problem-solving opportunities, they can begin to focus and navigate their ideas towards fostering student growth. It is this reframing, done with the assistance of a mentor, that forms the center of this study.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this grounded theory case study is to understand how full-release mentors shape the perceptions of novice teachers in a large urban school district. The study explored how successful reflective mentoring strategies can assist novice teachers to develop more reflective and analytical perceptions of their work. Using the work of Windschitl, Thompson, and Braaten (2011) and Achinstein and Barrett (2004) to inform the theoretical framework, this study examined how mentors reframe novice teachers’ perspectives from a “problem with students” outlook to a “puzzle of practice” perspective.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. How do full-release mentors shape novice teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic abilities?
2. What kind of frames are used by mentors help novice teachers view their students?

Chapter Organization

The chapter begins with a discussion of this study’s research tradition, and why it was selected. Next, the chapter describes and justifies the selection of the research setting, organization of the induction program and an explanation and justification of how participants were selected for this study. The next section discusses both the instruments and procedures for data collection, the interview protocol construction, as well as the method for conducting the interviews. How documented reflections were collected is described and the protocol for coding both the documents and the interviews. The data
analysis section follows, which describes the methods and technology used for coding and analysis. Finally, the researcher’s role in planning and conducting the study is described, and how that role includes assumptions and issues that could have significant ramifications.

**Research Tradition**

This research study is guided by the tradition of grounded theory. Schram (2006) states that the research tradition of grounded theory seeks to “…[develop] a substantive theory that is derived from and grounded in data” (p.73). Creswell (2012) explains that grounded theory designs are qualitative, systematic studies that seek to explain the actions, processes, or interactions among various people. The grounded theory tradition is a methodology used for developing a theory that is “grounded” in the data (Glesne, 2001, p. 21).

This is a case study because it is an in-depth analysis and description of events within a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). The case study is bounded because the researcher conducted interviews with mentors about their work with novice teachers. Additionally, this case study can be further characterized as having the three special features of case studies: it will be particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 2009). The study is particularistic because it will focus on the reflective process between the mentor and the participating teachers. Their process is described in detail, offering a thick description of the reflection process. Finally, the study is heuristic because it will provide a deeper understanding of how mentors move their participating teachers from a deficit viewpoint of students towards a more pedagogical perspective.
In this study, I sought to understand how mentors shape the attitudes and perspectives of novice teachers. Grounded theory is a tradition concerned with discovering the underlying theory or mechanism of events or actions and is therefore strongly connected to my research purpose. This tradition is suited to answering the questions of my research as they are focused on how mentors shape novice teachers’ perspectives of their students. Grounded theory looks beyond a description of the data to develop a theory that arises from data analysis. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Glesne, 2011) According to Schram (2006), grounded theory seeks to understand a process that proceeds over time. The grounded theory tradition assumes that in order to understand how events evolve and change, the researcher must be aware of the interrelationship between and among the causes, conditions, and consequences. My research examined how full-time release mentors affect new teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic performance.

There are some basic assumptions within the grounded theory tradition that I have considered. Schram (2006) states that one assumption of grounded theory is that reality is socially constructed; it is constantly evolving and being revised. This means that my participants’ understanding of the mentoring process comes from their interactions with other people and the process may not be the same for everyone. This is why grounded theory is a process theory, which focuses on the actions of individuals, and how events over time relate to the topic being examined. My study is designed to examine that interaction between mentor and mentee and how that interaction might assist novice teachers to reflect upon their perspectives of their students.
Grounded theory research examines a process over time. Schram (2006) describes this quality of grounded theory as a process that examines the interactions of people over time and explores the possible meanings of the sequences of those interactions. New teachers engage in a reflective process over many months with their mentors. This process involves the mentor asking probing questions of the new teacher in order to encourage the teacher to reflect upon various aspects of their practice. As part of that reflective process, many times the mentor and mentee will examine the academic performance of students. This study asked mentors to identify mentees with a deficit perspective (problems with students), and examine if the reflections done with the mentor, over the course of the several months, moves the mentee away from that deficit perspective.

Research Setting and Context

District Setting
This study was conducted within Underhill School District (a pseudonym), a large urban school district, located in the southwestern United States with a culturally diverse student population. Over 80% are students of color. The research participants of this study are full-time mentors, participating in an induction program conducted by Underhill School District. This district needs to replace approximately seven percent of the teacher workforce each year.

Program Setting
The full-release mentors who participated in this study work in the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP, a pseudonym), a state certified induction program required of all beginning teachers (mentees) who possess a preliminary credential. The program is designed to help newly credentialed teachers receive a clear credential within
two years. To clear their credential, mentees engage in an inquiry of their pedagogical practice(s) with the aid and assistance of a full-time release mentor. Mentees engage in a cycle of plan, teach, reflect and apply. This cycle is part of an inquiry process where the mentees look at student work, plan lessons to address the identified needs, reflect on how the lessons went, and apply what they learn to future lessons. The overall goal is to accelerate new teachers’ practice and increase student learning.

This study examined an induction program that began in 2011 as a pilot program within the larger induction program of the district. The program is in a partnership with the New Teacher Center, a national nonprofit “dedicated to improving student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of new teachers and school leaders” (www.newteachercenter.org). After two years as a pilot, the program is now a fully functioning part of the district’s induction process and is currently charged with servicing one hundred percent of all first year teachers holding a preliminary credential.

**Research Site Selection Strategy**

In selecting this district and induction program, I used the criterion and network backyard selection strategy. A criterion based selection strategy uses an identified set of criteria for choosing a site. A network and backyard selection strategy means that my participants are accessible through my contacts at work. (Glesne, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This district meets the criteria of having an induction program. I am currently employed by this district and work with the induction program as a full-release mentor. This means that I had access to the network of mentors and to the gatekeepers of the induction program and school sites that I used in this study.
There are advantages and disadvantages to my being a mentor in the program from which I am selecting mentors to interview. Backyard research allowed me to have easy access to information about the candidates I interviewed. The research I conducted with the mentors required that I establish not only trust, but also boundaries; so all participants understood that our conversations were for the sake of research. Glesne (2011) discussed the issue of dangerous knowledge defined as information that can range from merely problematic to potentially harmful. I had to be cognizant of the fact that I heard information that was sensitive to other individuals within the program, be they other mentees, mentors, or program supervisors.

Data Sources and Research Sample

Data Source

My primary data source was the full-release mentors participating in the district’s induction program. Because this is a grounded theory study, I explored the interactions and processes between mentors and beginning teachers, and that exploration came from the views of those selected mentors (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The mentors selected are employed by the district as full-release mentors for the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP).

Sampling Strategies

I used the theoretical or concept sampling strategy because this strategy helped generate a grounded theory (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2012). This purposeful sampling involves selecting and interviewing individuals who will be able to contribute to my evolving theory. I used a combined strategy of criterion and network sampling. Criterion based sampling allowed me to select participants who had all had similar experiences working with beginning teachers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). The criterion
is that they must be mentors and must work with teachers in secondary schools. The reason for these criteria is that teachers working in a secondary school environment have different interactions with their students than do elementary school teachers. Factors such as the increased number of students they teach and the limited time they have to interact with students during the school day, provide experiences for secondary teachers that are different from those of elementary teachers who typically work with far fewer students in integrated classrooms. I used a network sampling strategy to obtain possible respondents from my network of mentor colleagues (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I used a brief introductory survey of my colleagues to recruit participants who meet the criteria.

To begin the invitational process, I started by first meeting with the supervisor of the induction program. At this meeting, I discussed the possible protocol for inviting participants, and I shared my invitation letter for her approval. Mentors who meet the criteria from the initial survey received letters inviting them to participate. I reviewed all replies and, using the identified criterion, selected ten to twelve possible candidates. Contact with the participants was via email, and I made arrangements to interview them after school hours. During this initial contact, I asked for preliminary information such as their primary educational center location and school locations.

**Sampling Characteristics**

The participants in this study are all mentors who currently work as full-time support providers for Underhill School District. Participants were of both genders and within an age group of approximately twenty-five to sixty years of age. All participants had classroom experience. Some participants have been school site administrators.
## Sampling Demographics

The sampling demographics can be found on Table 4.1

### Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Participant (Pseudonym)</th>
<th>Years of Classroom Experience</th>
<th>Years Mentoring for BTIP</th>
<th>Years Mentoring Experience Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Susan</td>
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Practical Considerations

There were several practical issues I had to consider. I might not have been able to secure interviews with ten to twelve mentors. Additionally, all interviews had to be conducted after school hours, and some mentors might have been reluctant to stay at their school site after work hours. In those situations, I offered the opportunity to conduct telephone interviews at a mutually convenient time.

Ethical Issues

According to Kvale and Brinkman (2009), it is ethically important that I ensured the confidentiality of all participants during the recruitment process. I needed to provide assurances to the mentors that all information collected from interviews would not be shared with their assigned program mentors. Additionally, I am currently a full-time release mentor in the same induction program as the sampling participants. It was important that all mentors understood that I am collecting data for research and not collecting information for the district or the induction program.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data Collection Instruments

I used a semi-structured interview protocol to collect data from the mentors. Creswell (2012) states that such interviews are “…when researchers ask one or more participants general, open-ended questions and record their answers” (p. 622). This means that interviewing is a process of asking questions of one individual where the researcher records the individuals’ responses for data analysis.

This study is in the grounded theory tradition. Creswell (2012) points out that interviews are the primary qualitative data collection procedure for grounded theory designs. Interviews allowed me to ask the specific questions necessary to obtain the
information about beginning teachers’ attitudes toward their students. Interviewing was essential to my research purpose because, according to (Rossman & Rallis, 2003), it is critical for comprehending how participants view their worlds. As a researcher, I am trying to understand two things: how mentors shape novice teachers’ perceptions about their students’ academic performance and what conceptual frames are used by mentors to reshape those perceptions. Interviews allowed me to get into the participants’ world. I wanted to understand the individual perspectives of the mentors and gather their insights regarding their relationships with their novice teachers (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Interviews were recorded using the audio recorder on my iPad (Creswell, 2012). During the interview, I took some brief observational notes, but primarily remained engaged in the conversations with the participant.

**Data Collection Procedures**

I conducted a preliminary online survey to generate a list of possible mentors to participate in the study. This survey was created using Google Docs. The use of Google Docs allowed me to create a private account for the sole purpose of creating and maintaining the survey for this study. This was helpful in maintaining the confidentiality of this study. From this list, I sent an invitational message to each possible candidate who met the criteria. The message included a cover letter, the invitation letter, and my contact information. Each possible candidate was assigned a randomly generated number. This process took approximately two weeks. The respondents received a packet containing adult consent forms, information about the interview protocol, and information about the token remuneration for their participation in the study. This material was reviewed with the participants when I meet them for the interview.
The data collection procedure for this study was 10-12 one-on-one semi-structured interviews. The face-to-face interviews consisted of 8 open-ended questions and included various probing questions to clarify or elaborate the respondents’ answers. I began by asking respondents to lead me through a “grand tour” of their relationships with their beginning teachers (Glesne, 2011; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). These questions invited the respondents to provide an overview of a typical meeting with their beginning teachers. I constructed subsequent questions to help me understand the relationship the mentors have with their beginning teachers. Interview questions gradually narrowed from general mentoring related questions to specific questions that pertained to the mentors’ perspective of their beginning teachers’ attitudes towards students. I used probing questions, a strategy fundamental to successful interviewing, in order encourage respondents to share more information and elaborate upon what they had said (Bernard, 1994). All questions refrained from using ambiguous or complex wording, and I did not ask “yes” or “no” questions. I avoided leading or sensitive questions too soon in the interview (see Appendix E for interview questions).

During the first two weeks of November, I contacted the respondents via email to schedule the interviews. I used Google Calendar to record the schedule. Reminder emails were be sent to participants approximately one week before the scheduled interview. I scheduled an interview per week. The interview process proceeded for a period of four months. I did not need to reschedule any interviews.

I met with the participants at a location that was convenient for them after school hours. This was usually a local coffeehouse or at their school location. I would arrange for us to sit next to each other. After initial greetings and welcome, I reviewed the
background and purpose of the study, the confidentiality clause and their right to
discontinue the interview or review the transcripts. The interviews lasted approximately
forty-five minutes. I followed the prescribed interview protocol.

At the conclusion of the interview, I thanked them for their participation, asked if
they had any questions, gave them their compensation for participating, and reviewed
with them again their rights as a participant in this study. I also asked if they would be
willing to review the interview transcripts so that I could secure a member check
(Carlson, 2010; Creswell, 2012).

Data Analysis

Data Preparation

Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed by a professional transcription
service as soon as possible after the interview. The transcriber was told to type them
verbatim. Personally identifying information was redacted from any transcript quotation
that was used in the findings or discussion chapters of this dissertation. Observational
notes were converted to text and included in the transcript (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

Preliminary Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using a progressive coding system that goes from
open coding, to axial coding, and concludes with selective coding (Bloomberg & Volpe,
2012). The first step in the data analysis process was to revisit the conceptual framework
for the study to guide my analysis. The theoretical framework for this analysis developed
from the work of Windschitl, Thompson, and Braaten (2011) and Achinstein and Barrett
(2004). Specifically, I looked for terms and phrases that suggest problems with students,
exploring one’s own pedagogical practice, and themes such as classroom management,
personal relationships with students, and pedagogical choices. I used these terms and
phrases to build the initial skeletal structure of my coding process. According to Glesne (2011), the initial skeletal structure enabled me to use the information I recorded to continuously shape and bring focus to my study. Key terms were addressed to see if they could be used in the coding process. This initial coding included segmenting chunks of transcribed data and associating those chunks with major themes. I conducted an initial reading of the transcripts to look for major quotations and important statements. Some of these quotations required further investigation. This first reading required modification of some initial themes.

**Thematic Data Analysis**

As this study is in the grounded theory tradition, I used a constant comparative method of data analysis. All coded data was compared to other data in an ongoing process in order to make connections and to see how the data could be categorized (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). According to Glesne (2011), the process of coding is a matter of continuous sorting, classification, and defining the “…scraps of collected data…that are applicable to your research purpose” (p. 194). The thematic analysis of the transcribed data began with the segmenting of data and linking those segments to the emerging themes. I used the coded chunks of data from paragraphs or sections of the transcribed interviews to summarize key underlying ideas or concepts that created these themes. Themes that had common characteristics were linked together and as additional themes and codes emerge, they too were linked to established themes. I used the qualitative analysis computer software program, Deedoose.com, to assist me with coding data, building connections and establishing themes. As I worked through the transcripts, codes required some clarifications as themes and ideas revealed themselves and came
into sharper focus. Various codes needed to be expanded upon or condensed into smaller units.

As I read through my data, I used written and audio memos to record my progress and thoughts about codes. Written memos were recorded using the Dedoose software. I used the Notability audio application on my tablet to record my thoughts and commentary of my progress while coding the transcriptions. These memos helped trigger ideas and assisted me in developing new descriptors. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). As more transcripts were analyzed, additional codes or themes were revealed. Using the Dedoose software, I developed networks of code families by merging or separating code segments. The software provided me with a visual representation of the coded data that assisted me in finding networks and connections.

**Interpretation**

Data was coded, organized, classified and displayed in a manner that aided in interpretation and connecting the interview transcript data in a meaningful way to the study’s research questions. The theoretical framework shaped the overall ideas of the codes. Major themes from this study such as “problem students,” “pedagogical practice,” and “reflection” helped formulate a structure, or conceptual map, that I was used for interpretation. From this organized structure of data analysis, relationships to the ideas were revealed and conclusions were drawn.

Glesne (2011) states that there are four questions to consider that to help determine the trustworthiness of the researcher’s interpretation. The first question asked is “What did I notice?” I was cognizant of the fact that while I might be aware of one element, I might be missing something else. Question two asks “Why did I notice what I
noticed?” This question encouraged me to be aware of my own subjectivity in my observations and questions. As I examined the data, I asked question three, “How will I interpret the data; am I critical of what I am examining and am I giving the analysis process sufficient time for me to fully engage in the data?” Lastly, I asked myself the fourth question, “How will I know my interpretations are the correct ones?” I reviewed the memos I recorded and asked colleagues to review my analysis for additional opinions.

**Role of the Researcher**

**My Embodiments**

It is important that I understand my own assumptions and behaviors in order to fully realize how those factors may impact my research (Watt, 2007). I realize that I have some fixed attributes and those attributes affect how I perceive and act in the world. They also affect how others will respond to me (Glesne, 2011). For example, I am a white male with over two decades of classroom teaching experience. I had to recognize that my embodiment of those characteristics would affect, not only me, but also my research participants. I had take into account that my research participants may have perceived me in many different lights. For example, I may be have been perceived as an elder mentor, which might inhibit the respondents’ comments. To mitigate against these perceptions, I limited my interactions with the participants, sharing my personal experiences only occasionally, and spending more time listening than talking (Seidman, 2006).

**My Roles**

I am a researcher. In that role, I practiced the research techniques and strategies of data collection and analysis. I transcribed the interviews and coded both the interviews and examined for possible themes. My role was to examine the data and to come to some conclusions about the apparent results. I am also a mentor. I am currently working as a
full-time release mentor who supports beginning teachers. My participants and I are co-workers and colleagues. I support beginning teachers in the same program that my research participants are in. My last role was as a doctoral student. I engaged in the process of studying the beginning teachers reflective process as a vehicle to learn and develop as an educational researcher and leader.

**Research Bias**

I bring several assumptions to this research study. As an educator for over two decades, I assume that the quality of a teacher’s pedagogy determines his or her classroom effectiveness and, in turn, determines student success. I also believe that a quality teacher education program can improve teacher performance. For the past eight years, I have worked with a program that focuses on teacher education and development. I have seen beginning teachers grow from inexperienced teachers to educators with a clear sense of purpose and a roadmap for future growth. I believe that effective mentors can provide beginning teachers with a meaningful apprenticeship of their practice. I assume my fellow mentors view their role in their beginning teachers development in ways similar to my own.

I interviewed mentors who are currently participating in an induction program. I was aware of the goals of that program, and I was cautious to separate my participants’ interviews from the goals of the mentor program. Conversely, because I am a mentor for that induction program, I was mindful that the participants might or would know that I am a mentor and a colleague. They might view our conversation as a discussion about the program and its effectiveness. I was also aware that I am a veteran member of the program. Some of the mentors I interviewed were less experienced in the program than I
am and may have viewed our relationship in terms of learner and mentor. That view might have altered the tenor of the interview.

**Mitigation Strategies**

To mitigate against data collection bias, I shared my data collection strategies with my peers, members of my dissertation committee, and my dissertation chair (Glesne, 2011; Miles & Huberman, 1994). I used triangulation methods for site selection and the setting for the interviews. I purposefully selected mentors who worked in locations other than the locations to which I am assigned. I used a wide variety of participants, purposefully selecting only those mentors who work with secondary teachers. From the list of participants who agreed to be interviewed, I selected a variety of school locations and participant backgrounds. I conducted interviews at off-campus sites.

An additional concern was how this study affected me and thus affected my interpretations of the data. As a full-time release mentor myself, I have expectations and outcomes for my beginning teachers. I had to be aware that my expectations for my beginning teachers might be different from those of the participants’ mentor. I had to understand that I would be seeing through the lens of my own experiences with my teachers. I used the community of practice as described by (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). To keep myself oriented and to help me navigate through the data with the eyes of a researcher, I had critical discussions with colleagues, classmates, members of my dissertation committee, and my dissertation chair.
Chapter 4: Findings

This grounded theory study examines how full-release mentors shape novice teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic performance. Data were collected to identify possible successful methodologies used by full-release mentors. The researcher conducted interviews with full-release mentors who are assisting K–12 beginning teachers. These teachers currently possess a provisional credential and are completing the requirements for a California Clear Teaching Credential. Interviews addressed such topics as reframing perspectives, deficit model thinking, and mentoring language.

Currently, little empirical evidence exists that explores the mechanisms by which mentors use reflective language to reframe novice teachers’ perspectives about their students. LoCasale-Crouch, Davis, Wiens, and Pianta (2012) suggest that further studies are necessary in order to have a complete understanding of the mentoring strategies that are identified as most effective. This study seeks to fill that gap by examining the mentoring language used by full-release mentors to shape the teachers’ perspectives about their students. The mentor’s goal is to assist those new teachers in analyzing their practice instead of blaming students for their unsatisfactory academic performance.

Novice teachers come to the classroom with many preconceived notions about what it means to be a teacher; as a result, they often underestimate the demands of the profession. After the initial “reality shock” (Veenman, 1984), novice teachers may begin to blame their lack of success on factors other than themselves and their practices. The teachers might blame unresponsive parents, lack of support from administration, or the student’s moral character (Berghoff, Blackwell, & Wisehart, 2011; Bullough, 2005).
Full-release mentors have the opportunity to develop positive relationships with their novice teachers and explore their mentees’ perspectives about their students. The mentors in this study meet with individual mentees approximately once a week. The meeting may be a conversation with the beginning teachers or a classroom observation of the teachers’ practice. This study proposes to examine how those mentors shape novice teacher perspectives of the students in their teaching practice.

This chapter will begin with the research questions and then will follow with a summary of the research methods and sampling demographics. That will be followed by the findings organized under each research question. This chapter concludes with a summary.

**Research Questions**

This study was driven by research questions that seek to understand the ways that mentors, working with beginning teachers, help those beginning teachers re-frame their perspectives of student achievement. This study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do full-release mentors shape novice teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic abilities?
2. What kinds of conceptual frames are used by mentors to help novice teachers view their students?

**Research Methods**

Twelve interviews were conducted with the mentors. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. Questions covered a range of topics including the mentors’ personal experiences as mentors, their perceptions of their beginning teachers and those
beginning teachers’ attitudes towards students, and the strategies and methodologies employed by the mentors to help shape their beginning teachers’ perspectives. Following each interview, electronic recordings were transcribed into text. Transcriptions of interviews were then entered into Dedoose, a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program. This software allowed the researcher to organize the data into themes and, from the themes, determine codes. Codes created during the primary analysis of the data served as the basis for the development of more in-depth codes and themes.

This study set out to understand how mentors affect the attitudes and perspectives of beginning teachers regarding their students’ performance. This district currently employs 42 full-release mentors to assist beginning teachers in their induction program. All of these mentors are former administrators, and/or out of the classroom teachers, and/or and former instructional coaches.

RQ 1. How do full-release mentors shape novice teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic abilities?

Two strategies emerged from the data. Ten mentors consistently addressed the first strategy, listening, though not as a proactive strategy. All mentors addressed the use of reflective questioning as a strategy they use.

**Listening to the Mentee**

Nine mentors, out of the 12 interviewed for this study, specifically expressed the importance of listening. One of the key reasons given for the importance of listening was that the mentor needed to know and understand the challenges and concerns from the mentee’s point of view. In other words, mentors need to know what is troubling the new teacher. Effective listening also helps the mentors determine how they might best support
their novice teachers. All twelve mentors interviewed received substantial training from the New Teacher Center (NTC) on reflective questioning, use of the NTC tools, and coaching strategies.

Emily is a second year mentor BTIP. She has been a literacy coach and an administrative instructional coach for a total of four years. Emily pointed out that, for her, listening comes first, before reflective questions. Here she states the importance of listening for understanding what concerns her new teachers. She stated, “Well, I think one thing is to be there and to be a good listener. Listening to what they have to say and what's pressing to them and being flexible.” In other words, Emily believes that the mentor must understand the concerns of the new teacher and have a degree of flexibility in determining what to discuss with the teacher.

Betty has been working for the BTIP program for two years. Prior to placing with the program, she had 12 years of mentoring experience. Her experiences working with beginning teachers included recruiting beginning teachers to work for the district and support in job placement. Betty agrees with Emily that mentors must understand the challenges new teachers face, and suggested, that for her, allowing the mentees to express their challenges helped her understand how to guide them. Betty stated:

I think in terms of the way that I use [listening], I usually try to reflectively listen to what my mentees are saying…Maybe their challenges, or what's going on in their classroom or at their school site. When I first started, the other mentors said that you have to allow them to empty their cup [vent] before you can move forward. I never thought about that in that way, but it's so true, because you really have to listen to what's going on and then you can help them and guide
them in reflecting on their practice or what they may be doing in their classroom that affects either their practice or their student behavior or what's going on. I think for me, it's more listening and then guiding and asking clarifying questions and then helping them to reflect and then guiding them hopefully to see if they tweak some things or make some changes.

Betty realizes that before her mentee can be open to new information or suggestions, her mentee needs to address the most important emotional issues. The emotional context of her teacher’s situation needs to be addressed before looking at data or reflection. Another mentor, Amy, discussed a mentee’s frustration with her students. Amy has four years mentoring experience working with the BTIP. She said:

I remember having a conversation with a teacher who just said, “They can't, they can't, they can't.” She was working on a credential then teaching for about seven years but still hadn't cleared it. [She said,] “They can't do it. I've done this, I've done that, I've done this. They can't.”

For Amy, it was important to listen to the obvious frustration this teacher was experiencing. Amy stated that it would have been ineffective to start right away suggesting strategies and providing solutions. The teacher needed to vent before the mentoring process could begin.

For another mentor, listening first was a personal challenge to her mentoring practice. Susan has worked for as a mentor for the BTIP program two years. Prior to her position as a mentor, she was a literacy coach for seven years. Susan grappled with her tendency to put forth her own ideas and strategies first, even though she realized that she needed to listen to, and privilege her mentees’ issues. She explained:
One of the things that I struggle with is, I’m an idea person. I have a lot of ideas and sometimes I just want to tell the person, “What if you try this? This would be great. Have you ever done this? I’ve done this before.” Then I realize you really have to hold back and really listen because the greatest power is the teacher coming to that knowledge on their own as opposed to me telling them what they could be doing and what would help them. I think that’s what I took away the most in those times when I was in the [mentor trainings] and somebody later said to me, “Oh you really listened and you didn’t give any recommendations” and [the novice teacher] came around.

Betty’s point is that it is important to listen so that new teachers can create their own understandings through reflective conversation. Betty is ready to share her thoughts and ideas, but she knows she must hold back in order for the new ideas to come from her novice teacher. Mentees need to realize that they are not always going to get solutions from the mentors and that they really have the answers themselves. Mentors needs to understand that they must take a step back and not try to solve the problem. Induction is not about providing solutions to beginning teachers, but having the teachers use their own knowledge to create solutions. As discussed later in this study, this is particularly important for teachers with deficit thinking because, if solutions are offered by their mentors, the mentees often puts up roadblocks.

Donald agreed with this, stating that the mentoring process begins with listening to the beginning teacher’s needs. Donald has had extensive experience working with beginning teachers. Prior to his position as mentor for the BTIP program, Donald worked for six years in the district’s intern credentialing program. His duties there were similar to
his work as a BTIP mentor. He has taught evening courses for credential candidates, conducted classroom observations, and engaged in reflective conversations with new teachers. He explained, “Most of what I would do as far as this mentoring process is concerned is hearing what their needs are and getting them to devise their own answers and solutions for the problems that they identified.” Donald summarizes the importance of listening to assist the mentee in formulating their own solutions to issues and challenges in the classroom. He demonstrates how the effective mentor does not come as an expert, but works to reveal the expertise of the mentee. This fits the overall purpose of induction programs, because the intent is to assist mentees in developing the skills and expertise they learned in pre-service credentialing coursework.

For most of the mentors who participated in this study, listening to the mentees was an important component to the mentoring process and a prerequisite for building effective reflective questions. Richard also discussed the importance of listening. Richard has been a mentor with BTIP for two years and prior to that, he was a social studies teacher for seven years. When he was working with a mentee, where the beginning teacher felt her students could not produce work without extensive supervision, Richard also understood that he needed to listen first, explaining:

A lot of it is just I'm listening to what she has to say about that, listening to those challenges, and a lot of it is just trying to get her to think about it in a different way. Trying to get her to think of some ways that she can support her students, maybe some strategies, maybe some things that she's already done. Richard is using the teacher’s statements to build his reflective questions about the students’ academic abilities. For Richard, his listening serves dual purposes. First, he is
listening to understand the teacher’s concerns. He is also listening to formulate the appropriate mentoring strategy. Richard may offer a support strategy or present information to the mentee to consider.

However, some of the mentors described various degrees of resistance from their new teachers. These roadblocks came in many forms, from the mentee’s slow and reluctant willingness to reconsider their situations, to out-right refusals to make changes. For example, Hillary described a novice teacher with a serious reluctance to accept suggestions that were offered by her mentor. Hillary has been mentoring for 11 years. Her experiences include having previously administered an induction program herself. Currently, along with mentoring, she is one of the administrative team members for the BTIP program. She said:

The one teacher that I have this year I had last year as well, the guy that’s Korean-American and he’s a natural immigrant. He was born in Korea. I could not get him to move last year to save my soul. I thought I was just going to shoot myself practically. It seemed like I constantly heard, “That won’t work. That won’t work. That won’t work.” But underneath it all, he intellectually knows that some of his thinking is not really very helpful.

Hillary is referring to her teacher’s frustration and the roadblocks he is creating. Hillary infers that her mentee may understand that the obstacles he is creating hinder his development as an educator. Hillary continued to work with him, using reflective questioning. She described her efforts, saying, “I asked him, ‘What kind of interactions do you have in the classroom with the kids? How do you interact with them? Would you be willing to let me script your interactions with the kids?’” Eventually Hillary realized
that she needed to exercise some restraint and not push too hard for change. She explained:

It took a while. We read some articles together and talked about a number of things and finally he was willing to [try some new strategies]. I was a little worried because if I opened up the Pandora’s Box too fast, he might have to retreat and become defensive and protect himself from it. You have to move pretty carefully. If you’re in a convincing type mode, you’ve lost. You have to be seeing the world through their eyes a little bit, and you’ve got to try to help them move through that.

Hillary is making the point that reshaping opinions and perspectives is a process that cannot be rushed. The mentors must consider the degree of disequilibrium a new teacher can accept without causing the teacher to become defensive. This is an important point to understand because the nature of reflection. Reflection of action—when mentors ask mentees to recall past actions—requires a certain degree of honesty from the mentee and trust in the mentor’s non-evaluative agenda.

**Reflective Questioning**

The primary mechanism used by mentors to reshape perceptions or offer alternative perspectives was reflective questioning, a methodology encouraged by the training that all mentors receive. Some mentors received training in cognitive coaching while employed in their previous positions. All mentors have participated in professional development devised and conducted by NTC that focused substantially on the reflective process for building professional competency.
The main mechanism mentors use to shift their beginning teachers’ perspectives is reflection, and, more specifically, reflective questioning. Reflective questions directed to the new teacher ask the teacher to recall past actions or decisions. Using a structured protocol, the mentors ask the mentees non-evaluative questions in order to elicit a reflective response about an issue or dilemma. The purpose of the reflective conversation is to encourage the development of the new teachers’ problem solving abilities. In other words, the purpose of reflective questions is to allow the novice teacher to revisit situations and ponder alternatives.

Reflection that is more than a mere recalling of past events must have at least two additional characteristics. First, the reflective process must have a form of questioning or wondering about what took place. Secondly, there must be a purpose to the process of recall—a goal of a more sophisticated or elaborate perspective on the actions in question (Dewey, 1933). In other words, reflection for the individuals included in this study, involved a thoughtful contemplation of past performance in order to improve future performance.

One goal of the reflective conversation is to get the new teachers to truly understand what is happening within their classrooms. New teachers may be unaware of issues taking place during lessons, and mentors can offer perspectives the novices had not considered. This was the situation Betty described in working with one of her new teachers. In the particular case she described, Betty had to be quite direct to help her mentee consider an important issue in the classroom: the issue of personal presence. According to Betty, the teacher had an issue with classroom management. Her mentee had attended several classroom management workshops and trainings but was not seeing
the intended changes in her students’ behavior. The teacher excused the lack of results by blaming the school and the principal. According to Betty, her mentee said:

"Oh, they were good, but ... It's all stuff I know anyway, and it's hard for me to do that because there is no follow through at the school. The principal is never around." Betty responded: “I’m really, really honing in and making her reflect on what is really going on into her classroom. At one point, I even said to her, "You know, have you considered that you really don't have a presence in the classroom?"

Betty’s approach with that mentee was to directly bring the issue to the forefront for consideration because while the teacher’s lack of classroom presence caused a problem for her. Betty realized that in order for the teacher to move forward in her practice, the teacher would need to be made aware of an undetected issue. Trust and a positive relationship are important when mentors need to be direct because issues of self-efficacy, on the part of the mentee, begin to play a role.

On the other hand, Richard used a more indirect approach. His mentee felt that the community where she taught did not value education. That is, she was blaming community norms for her student’s lack of success, a clear form of deficit thinking. Richard’s reflective questions asked the teacher to consider the evidence. “I tried to get her to tell me, ‘Why do you think that? What do you based that on? What conversations with parents, when you communicate with them? How often do you communicate with parents?’”

Richard was trying to get his mentee to recall how often she communicated with parents. He was also trying to get his new teacher to consider how those conversations
are framed. Richard suspected that his mentee might be putting parents on the defensive. He concluded that it was probable his new teacher had limited experience in building partnerships with parents. Richard wanted his mentee to frame the parent conference in terms of a supportive partnership. Richard mentioned using the Communication with Families tool developed by NTC. The tool provides the mentor with questions meant to solicit reflective thinking about how to interact with parents and build a supportive relationship. Mentors record the mentees’ responses. Richard used Communication with Families to facilitate the conversation with his teachers. He said, “I get her to maybe reflect on the conversations that she has with parents, we have that Communicating with Families tool. I asked her how she frames that conversation with the families.”

Richard used the NTC tool to find out how the teacher framed her discussions with parents. For Richard, the NTC tool provided a protocol for asking questions. Basically, Richard is stating that the use of the tool was instrumental in structuring his conversation with his mentee. In the end, Richard felt he had made some progress with her perspective, though he could not be conclusive about her progress.

Dorothy uses reflective questions to assist her mentee in exploring why a student was not performing as expected. Dorothy has been mentoring for nine years. Prior to her position on BTIP, she was a literacy coach at an elementary school. Dorothy describes how an encounter with a student led to an opportunity to reframe a teacher’s perception about the students. Dorothy, while observing a class, had an opportunity to talk to one of her mentee’s students about his work.

She heard me talking to him, and so she said, "I don't even know why you're trying." I just was like, "It's better that he turns in something." She's just like,
"Well, I don't know why you're bothering. He's a lost cause." For me, that bothers me. I was just like, "You know, no one's a lost cause."

Dorothy continues her conversation with her mentee after the observation was concluded, and all the students had left the classroom. Dorothy asked her mentee what she thought the reasons were why the student was not performing in class.

Just in talking to her afterwards about it, and just asking her, "Why do you think Adrian doesn't do his book reports?" She said, "I gave them time in class." She provides the books. I was just trying to ask her more about it and not to say, "Don't talk to him like that," but [use more gentle persuasion]. I just said, "What do you think it would take to get him to do some of the work in class?" She was just like, "I don't know," that kind of response. [I asked her,] "Do we think that it could be maybe he doesn't understand everything that needs to be done?"

Dorothy is using reflective questioning to suggest that her mentee might want to consider alternates to understanding why the student doesn’t work besides attributing his lack of effort to a faulty character. From the interview data, it is evident that Dorothy wants the beginning teacher to consider that pupil’s poor performance as a pedagogical puzzle to be solved as opposed to thinking of it as a revelation of the student’s character.

Susan also used reflective questions after listening to her mentee and concluding there were issues that needed further examination. The beginning teacher’s comments provided the entry point for Susan to begin the reflective process. An entry point is an opportunity to introduce new information, a support strategy, or a possible formative assessment tool or process as defined by NTC. She said:
I had a tenth grade geometry teacher at a high school last year. He was [from a] different cultural and ethnic background from his students, and he had a really difficult time finding positive attributes about his students. He constantly said things like, “They don’t want to learn.” “They don’t want to improve.” “Their parents aren’t involved.” “Parents don’t seem to care.” “They’re not going to change.” “I could probably try that but it’s not going to make a difference.” That was the kind of language that he would use. Interestingly enough, his son is a high school student in [our district] at a different school.

When asked during the interview why she thought it was interesting that the teacher’s son attended school in the same district, she replied:

Because one of the ways that I think I shifted his way of thinking was when I knew him well enough to feel comfortable I said to him, “How do you want your son’s teachers to talk about your son? Because imagine these kids in this class, they’re somebody kids.”

This example demonstrates how the mentors used statements from the beginning teacher to begin a reflective conversation that reframes the teacher’s point of view. The viewpoints expressed by this mentee are also illustrative of the kind of language used when teachers feel frustrated about their lack of control. The mentee’s use of the pronoun “they” indicates a feeling that of responsibility for behavior is not the mentee’s responsibility.

Mentors also used reflective questions to help the mentee understand their students. Sometimes, this process involves asking questions designed to generate possible reasons as to why students did not perform as expected. Other times, reflective
questioning could involve prompting the teacher to reflect on what might be going through their students’ minds. In other words, mentors used reflective questions to help the mentee either see alternative reasons for their students’ poor performance, or to help them empathize with the students by understanding their perspectives.

Though the use of reflective questions was consistently mentioned by most mentors, one mentor described a more direct approach with his mentees. Arthur is a second year mentor with the BTIP program. Arthur was born and educated in the Middle East. Arthur says that because he was raised and educated in another country, he started as a teacher with a different perspective on how a teacher should manage a class and how students should behave. At the time, for him, teachers had far more authority to control their students’ behavior. From his perspective, his mentees’ culture played an important role in how they viewed their students. He described a Korean immigrant teacher’s perception of responsibility and how the teacher ultimately had to take control of the situation. His mentee felt that her students were challenging her. Arthur stated, “She’s Korean. That’s what I got from her. [She says,] ‘In my country, students are behaving in a such way…they do not respond [negatively], they respect me, they listen, they do not run.’”

According to Arthur, this teacher is struggling with the cultural differences between her country of origin and students in the United States. Arthur did not mention whether this teacher had taught in Korea. It is unclear whether the teacher is referring to her professional experience as an educator or her memories as a student. As Arthur describes his conversations with this mentee, his approach appears to be more direct and instructional. Arthur’s statements to his beginning teacher are phrased, not as questions
for the teacher to ponder and reflect upon, but as directive statements about Arthur’s interpretation of situation.

I say, “It’s okay. You could be right. That’s what happens, and I totally understand where you’re coming from, but that’s the reality we’re in here, and let’s see what can we do to understand why our students are doing this, and now [here are] our next steps.”

Arthur stated in the interview that he had limited success with this particular beginning teacher. Arthur felt that his mentee considered the cultural differences between herself and her students to be a major roadblock to her success. Though Arthur had other teachers who taught with similar cultural differences, he expressed concern that this mentee might not overcome the teaching challenges created by the cultural difference.

*RQ #2. What kinds of Conceptual Frames are used by mentors to help novice teachers view their students?*

Bolman and Deal (2013) describe a frame as, “…a mental model—a set of ideas and assumptions—that you carry in your head to help you understand and negotiate a particular ‘territory’” (p. 10). Frames provide mental pictures, which individuals use to make decisions and act within particular situations. Frames help organize the meaning of experience. Frames give both a perspective to a situation but also a boundary to that perspective. The act of reframing, as defined by Achinstein and Barrett (2004) is a process of offering alternative perspectives to existing perspectives. To put it another way, reframing creates an alternative way of viewing a situation. Using the constructs of “frames” and “reframing” allowed the researcher to explore the mechanisms mentors might use in reshaping beginning teachers’ perspectives.
Student Relationships

For many students, especially at-risk students, relationships with teachers have a substantial influence on class performance (Muller, 2001). How teachers perceive students—and act on those perceptions—may affect the student’s academic performance, positively or negatively. For mentors, offering advice and counsel on building positive relationships with students begins with helping their mentees understand the importance of knowing students as individuals. For the mentor, this means having the novice teacher learn as much as possible about their pupils as possible, aside from test scores and district supplied demographics. The mentors suggest various methods to their mentees for learning about their students. For the mentors, the goal was to assist the beginning teachers to shift their negative perspectives about students and thereby reframe their perspectives positively.

Nine mentors mentioned the importance of positive teacher–student relationships in helping novice teachers gain a more positive perspective on their students. For example, Arthur pointed out that when novice teachers describe students as unsuccessful, the mentor might encourage them to build more positive relationships with their students. Helping novice teachers build positive relationships with their students helps mentors change novice teachers’ perspectives. Arthur said:

[The students] did not see themselves as successful, and they felt…the teacher does not like me, or it’s not that she does not like me, she does not know who I am, and she does not know anything about me…. The students did not feel like they’re close [to their teachers]. So one of the things I work on with my teachers [is their relationships with students]. I said, “Let’s get our students’ focus back.
Let’s build that trust.” I said, “Let’s see what you can do to start getting closer to your students. Get to know them. Ask them how they’re doing today. Ask if there is anything bothering them. Ask them what they have learned?”

Arthur is suggesting to his mentee that developing a personal connection with students is a matter of simply talking to them—at least as a first step. These seemingly inconsequential conversations can be the beginning of building positive relationships and trust between teachers and students. An inconsequential conversation is a verbal interaction with a student that does not have any bearing on students’ behavior or academics; commonly referred to as “small talk.”

Although knowledge of students is important to the mentees, they must also know how to learn about their students. When a teacher commented that her students do not care about school, Hillary suggested an alternative venue for meeting and talking to the students, re-framing how that teacher might interact with her students. She explained:

I had a teacher say, “This kid doesn’t really care. Their parents just aren’t involved.” I said, “Could you find time at lunch or at a time period without ignoring the other kids where you could be with this student in a different venue of some sort like at the lunch table or something unless that would compete with their social time? It depends upon the kid. You have to know the kid well enough to know what would be the venue in which you could get together with them for say 10 or 15 minutes and share a cookie or some chips or a little food or something and just have a little talk and really, what you’re doing is interviewing them but not under the hot spotlight kind of thing but friendly kind of thing.”
Hillary has tried to get the teacher to see that they can talk and learn about their students with the mere act of having inconsequential conversations. Hillary found this to be a successful strategy for building student relationships.

That has been pretty successful. I’ve had a couple of times where teachers have tried it and come back shocked to hear the things the kids would say and what happened was they actually felt rewarded by the kid because the kid responded. “What are your dreams? What do you want to do? What do you do with yourself? I notice you like to doodle. Are you an artist?” You have to have them find an entry point with the kid that’s coming in the back door—which is what you try to do with the teacher.

Here, Hillary summarized her approach. She listens for an entry point, where the teacher is expressing frustration, and uses it as a point of entry to shift the teacher’s thinking away from herself to that of her students.

If you can catch a teacher talking about a situation where they felt uncomfortable in an academic situation, answering a question, or where they make a mistake or feel vulnerable, you can say, “Gee, I wonder if that’s what so and so was feeling. Do you think maybe the reason the kid does that, whatever it is, is a for a similar reason?”

Hillary’s questions reframe the emotional context of the situation away from the teacher and onto the students. The purpose is to help the teacher realize that the teacher and the students might have be experiencing similar frustrations. Then, the teacher can see that the actions of the students are not due to poor parenting or a disrespectful culture, but a common behavior when people are frustrated with a task.
Donald is another mentor who comes to mentoring from an elementary school background. Donald shared a conversation with a beginning teacher where he pointed out that if she consciously thinks about how she cares for her students, it will change her perspective on what is happening in the classroom. He reported:

I just said, “Well you care. If you are the only person that cares [for them], you can set some precedent and help them move forward. You may or may not be successful, but you have to come at them with a caring perspective.”

He also helped her consider how she communicated her feelings to her students less formally. He said: “I also asked her about body language and comments made to students, off hand comments, and how they might be perceived. I got her to reflect more on what she says to the students on a minute-by-minute, day-by-day basis.” Thus we can see, through the use of reflective questions, Donald is asking his mentee to consider the non-pedagogical statements she, as the teacher, is making. He wants her to recognize how both verbal and non-verbal communication can affect how students feel about their teacher. The reflective questions help crystalize, for the mentee, Donald’s earlier statement about the importance of a caring perspective.

Paul shared a discussion he had with his mentee regarding the academic performance of the teacher’s students. Paul has been a mentor with BTIP for two years. Paul leads the teacher through a reflective conversation about the teacher’s level of knowledge about her students. Paul explained his mentoring process:

You've got to back into it. By that I mean, to the teacher, you're saying that your class did really poorly, and why did you think it is? Their first response often times is, “I don't know. I did what I'm supposed to do. I gave them the material
and taught it, and they didn't get it.” Then I say, “Well, let's go down another
level. Let's talk about what I was going to say about your student’ reading skills.
What do you know about your students’ reading levels?” [The teacher says,]
“Well, I just assumed they read at 8th grade level.” I tell them, “You can't assume
that. Maybe what you were doing, although you knew who was at an 8th grade
level, maybe you have a large percentage of kids who are at a 4th grade level.” I
try to tell my teachers that you have to look at every variable in the process.
It is evident that Paul’s intention is to assist the mentee in realizing that her expectations
of her students were too high for the class she was teaching. Paul realized that his mentee
did not know enough about her students’ academic levels to make appropriate judgments
about their performance and modify her expectations appropriately.
Paul described how he used a reflection tool that was developed by the New
Teacher Center. The tool is called Knowing Students Across Multiple Dimensions and is
utilized by the mentors to assist reflective conversations about a mentee’s knowledge of
students. The questions are categorized into three sections. The first section asks the
mentee to describe what they know about a student’s personal background and history.
The mentor explores the beginning teacher’s their knowledge of the student’s educational
history, life events, family composition and possible family dynamics that might affect a
student’s academic achievement (parents working, siblings in higher grades or siblings
requiring babysitting, etc.) This is followed with questions regarding the mentees’
perceptions of the focus students’ particular learning styles, such as if students are
auditory or kinesthetic learners. The mentor and mentee also examine what the mentee
might know about how the focus students learn best—seating preferences, independent or
group work, and maturity level. The final section involves the mentor exploring with the mentee the metacognitive aspects of the focus students. Exploratory reflective questions cover such topics as how well the students controls their behavior, if they set goals for their learning, and their aptitude for reflection and revision of school work. Paul uses this tool to move his mentees away from a “negative mindset” and to teach them to be cautious about judging students. He explains:

We talk a lot about Knowing Students Across Multiple Dimensions. I don't think our teachers’ necessarily do as good a job with that. That's the one tool I'm finding this year that a lot of teachers are coming up short with data. I ask, “What do you know about so and so outside of the school?” I get a lot of, "Um." [I will say,] “Let's start with something easy. Do you know if mom and dad are in the house? [The teacher will reply,] “I know mom is. I don't know if there's a dad.” I will ask about siblings? Again, the teacher will say, “I don't know if there's a siblings.” I will ask, “What do they do outside of school?” [The mentee will reply,] “I don't know.” Then often times, they'll be like, “I really should spend some time trying to find this out.” They become aware of the fact that they really don't know a lot about these kids. That's how I try to move them off the negative mindset. Don't judge these kids and call them lazy until we know what might be impeding their performance.

Paul’s use of the Knowing Students Across Multiple Dimensions helped his mentees understand their students as people. By using the tool to conduct reflective conversations with his new teachers he helps them reveal other possibilities about student motivation other than calling them “lazy.”
Susan also reframes her mentee’s viewpoint with a discussion about students as people and about what the students may be going through. She described how an honest conversation about the conditions at a student’s home might account for the challenges the beginning teacher faces with that student. She stated:

Then after our conversation, I started being more honest with him saying,

“Maybe you need to see these kids as just kids that have a really hard home life. Nothing you or I have ever experienced. Let’s put ourselves in their shoes. Can you imagine what that’s like? How do we teach when we know that they’re coming to school with those things in their minds every day?”

In other words, Susan has proposed to her mentee that he might not fully understand the challenges his students face and how those challenges might affect their performance in school. Susan has reframed the conversation to be about a deeper understanding of students and to instill feelings of empathy.

Taking a different approach, Arthur reframes the conversation to be about the students’ understanding of their teacher. Arthur describes how he helped a teacher rethink her relationship with students by pointing out the positive feedback she received from her pupils. Although he did not describe the actual feedback the students gave their teacher, he suggested that when he shifted her attention toward the positive, she felt better about her situation. He remarked:

I did share the positive feedback that her students give her that day. I wanted her to see them as regular people who care, who love her, because she felt, “These kids do not like me at all.” So I shared some moments, “Did you see this? Do you remember when this student saw this? When they did that?” She liked it.
Sometimes when the mentor reviewed past experiences with the mentee, it reframed the mentee’s perspective. This process of reviewing through the use of data will be explored later when discussing how mentors use data to reframe.

In summary, these mentors assisted their mentee’s in reframing their perspective by using reflective questions or, in one case, an having honest conversation about the situation.

**Locus of Control**

Several mentors explained how they helped new teachers understand what teachers can control and what is out of their control. This is important because, according to Rose and Medway (1981), teachers who believe that student performance is within the realm of their control will generally have higher student achievement than teachers who believe that external factors control student performance. Therefore, the mentors reframed their conversations to suggest to mentees that teachers were in control of their actions and responsible for the consequences.

James has a total of ten years mentoring experience. Before working for the BTIP, he advised and mentored novice teachers participating in the districts internship program. James articulates his point of view on teachers’ locus of control as follows:

From a teaching standpoint, deficit model thinking is a manifestation of a low sense of efficacy on the part of the teacher. A teacher who does not feel efficacious, who feels out of control in a classroom, will quickly identify external factors such as students, the curriculum, parents, or something else as the cause of their instructional problems. They have a very external locus of control. As such,
they’re always playing the blame game. I compare that directly to a teacher who has a high efficacy. When the students are not getting it, their [the teacher with high efficacy’s] first question is, “What am I doing?” Whereas a teacher who has low efficacy, when the students aren’t getting it, their model is, “Well, what is it that they’re not getting? What is it that they’re doing [wrong]? They’re all busy running around and throwing spit wads and tagging at my desks. They’re doing, they’re doing, they’re doing …”

It is evident that the beginning teacher is framing the conversation in terms of “they.” James works to shift the emphasis from “they” to “I” in order to frame the conversation in terms of what the teacher can control. Here, James described a discussion he had with a beginning teacher who was frustrated with her work. He got right to the point and asked her to think about what she could control. He explained:

… now I say, “Well, what’s within your control? What can you do? What are the things that you’re good at?” She says, “Well, I’m pretty good at knowing what the lesson should be.” [I say,] “Okay. Could we have that in writing? Can we plan that? Can we plan it to the minute?” She goes, “Well, I can come up with something.”

James continued his discussion by referring to the importance of listening to how the mentee frames their perceived lack of control. James then assisted the teacher in reflecting on where their control lies.

By listening to the types of responses that they’re saying, [I ask myself] where’s the locus of control in their comments? For instance, if the participating teacher is saying, “These kids,” “This curriculum,” “That textbook,” a lot of those types of
statements are external locus of control statements. Then, how do you use your coaching skills to take it from an external locus to a more of an internal? [You say,] “You speak of these kids.” Now tell me what is it that you can bring to the table, because those are the things you have control over.

Whereas James described various ways his mentees place blame on others, Paul gives a specific example of a mentee who was frustrated with the students giving up. The mentee blamed the school’s administration for the students’ frustration because the administration was late in distributing progress reports. The students were losing their motivation because they were unable to monitor their progress. Paul focuses the teacher on what the teacher can do about the situation. He states:

[Her problem] was about progress reports that were delayed and not going out. Now she's like, "My kids don't know what their grades are. They're starting to give up because they don't even know." I'm saying, "What are you doing about it." She said, "Me and some of the colleagues, we came up with our own little progress report. We agreed that we're going to pass them around, and kid's will fill them out." I said, "That's fantastic. That's a wonderful solution."

Paul refocused the mentee away from the frustration of not getting progress reports—a matter out of the teacher’s control—towards actions the teacher took that addressed the situation. The conversation reminded the teacher that there are often factors that are within their control. Paul provided an affirmation of the teacher’s problem solving process. Paul did not commiserate or re-enforce the blaming of the administration. He also did not offer excuses as to why the progress reports were delayed. Many of the mentors have had administrative experience and it would be understandable to offer
possible reasons for the delay. However, Paul understood that the teacher needed to engage in the problem solving process. Excuses for administrative liabilities might have derailed that process. Paul reframed the situation in such a way as for his mentee to see a positive outcome for her efforts.

Richard described a more indirect approach to reframing. He offered general reflective questions to lead his mentees to think about alternatives to their challenges, and what the new teachers could do to meet those challenges. Richard stated:

…I try to steer the conversation back to them, "What can you do? How can you look at this differently? What kinds of ways are you differentiating? What…background knowledge can you use to help them access the content?" I feel like she needs to find different ways to help them access the content seeing how she can connect back to them. Just to say, "They just don't think. They can't do this," Putting that blame there before thinking about what she can do or why they're not performing at the level [isn’t useful].

Richard pointed out that the mentee believes the students cannot perform and, as a mentor, he must direct the conversation towards some unconsidered options.

Getting novice teachers to recognize their options was a concern for other mentors as well. Dorothy also has difficulty getting her mentees to recognize the control they have and how their actions might affect student performance. She states:

I don't think they reflect as easily [as more experienced teachers]. It's harder to get her to really think about … about how your actions [as a teacher] affect the results that you get, connecting those dots. They do not necessarily connect. Her responses are more about the kids. They have these problems. They are this. It's
the kids, and not connecting the part she plays in what goes on with the kids. That's the part that's harder to connect, without spelling it out for them.

These four mentors explained how they reframed the conversation when novice teachers displayed a lack of personal control over their students’ performance. In short, through either reflective questions or a more direct method, these mentors worked to assist the new teacher in realizing what was in their control and how much they could manage their classroom difficulties.

Using Data

Several mentors described how they use data to help reframe the conversation with their novice teachers. Data, in these instances, means the observed or assessed information coming directly from the students. The next excerpts offer examples of the kinds of data gathered, how it was collected, and how the mentors shared the information with the novice teachers.

Janice is second year mentor with the BTIP program. Her background was in business before moving into the education field. She has been a second grade teacher at a private school and then became a literacy coach for three years. Janice assisted her mentees by examining the data on students provided by the district. Exploring this information, such as the students’ English proficiency or English Language Development levels, she reframes the conversation away from a deficit point of view towards what the data might reveal about the students capabilities and potential. She stated:

That's what I try to do with the mentees when I'm looking at the student work with them. In other words, rather than looking at the kids from the deficit point of view, look at what their brains can do. I say, "Oh look, this child has a lot to say
about this. Oh this student is making simple sentences. Let's look at their ELD level. Oh, that makes sense." I will ask, "What can you tell me about this particular student before we read his work?" [The teacher will answer,] “Oh, he has attention issues.” [I’ll respond,] “Tell me a little bit about how this came about. Was this guided by you?” That kind of stuff.

In other words, Janice directed the novice teacher away from making judgments that were not based on data, but towards using the data to gain a better understanding of her students and their capabilities. Not all mentors used district data. Some help their mentees collect the data available in their own classrooms.

Hillary speaks of mentoring a teacher who was constantly putting up roadblocks. For example, the teacher’s repeated refrain was, “That won’t work! That won’t work!” Hillary tried to improve his practice, by suggesting that his students were not the reason the suggestions would not work. To move the teacher away from these self-imposed obstacles and reframe the conversation towards an approach on practice, Hillary scripted the students’ statements made during a class observation. She stated:

I did script. I just wrote down all of his reactions to the kids’ statements for a period of about 20 to 30 minutes. We looked at them together, and I just said, “Here’s what you see.” He said, “Yeah, that’s pretty accurate.” I said, “Okay. Let’s look at this one.” I picked something I thought was a little more innocuous, not too obvious. I asked, “What were you trying to communicate to that child? What was your message?” He started reading the statement, and he says, “That’s what I said.” He said, “Oh I guess this is what I wanted, but I guess what I said wasn’t quite what the kid could hear.” I asked “How might you have changed
your wording to make it something the kid could hear?” He did see at that moment. It’s like the camera shutter opened up, and there was light. I hoped that he would keep it open long enough to hold on to it. He shut down a little bit, and we moved on. I could see when he’d had enough. He was getting a little tired, so we just shut it down, and I said, “Okay. Good.” He said, “I guess I need to work on being a little more positive.”

Janice sees that sharing actual student statements with her mentee can provide an entry point to refocus the mentee’s attention away from student deficits towards thoughts about his practice. Though Janice scripted lesson observations in a manner that was similar to Hillary, she also developed her own materials for sharing data with her mentee. Here she describes creating spreadsheets and progress reports for another new teacher.

I told her I would be willing to help create a little report for the kids, a little progress report for the kids. I can help her set up a spreadsheet that correlates to the contract and she could use a mail merge system to print out these little reports. She just rolls her eyes and stuff, but actually she went ahead and jumped in and tried it. I’m hoping this week she’s going to be excited to show me what she did. She says, “The kids, I see where they are all the time now. I’ve got it all on the spreadsheet.”

As illustrated by these two examples, Janice uses data collected from her novice teacher’s class. These data are configured and shared in such a way as to reveal information that may offer an alternative perspective to the new teacher, and thus reframe their perspectives on their students’ performance.
Donald pointed out two key factors when using data to reframe the conversation. First, it is important not to take the side of the mentee when the conversation with the mentee displays a deficit form of thinking. Secondly, even though the mentor may disagree with the mentee, it is important not to tell the mentee they are wrong. Donald uses data collected from the teacher about the students. He stated:

First thing is to make sure that I don’t join them on that side of the debate, and don’t tell them that they are wrong. I just want them to see a bigger picture. That’s why I discussed earlier that they look at the data. They keep good records about student performance. A lot of them have gone to portfolios and student-led conferences, and [they are] preparing for that so the students were more aware of what they are doing and can engage in accountable talk with administrators, parents, and teachers.

Mentees may be aware of the need for a wide variety of data sources to determine student progress and for evaluation. Donald uses a variety of data resources to assist new teachers in viewing their students’ academic performance from a larger perspective. Rather than focus on the immediate performance of the students, he leads them through an examination of multiple data sources to get a big picture idea of what the students can do. Donald uses the information the teacher has gathered to move his mentee towards an affirmative model of thinking.

To summarize, these mentors used data collected from either the district or from the mentee’s classroom to reframe the conversation. Whether the data came in the form of scripts, graphs, and charts, or the teacher’s grade book, the mentor used the
information as an entry point to refocus the discussion away from blaming the students towards an examination of pedagogy.

**Summary**

This study addressed two questions: how do mentors reshape novice teachers’ perspectives from a deficit model to an affirmative model and what frames do mentors use to reshape their mentee perspectives on their students academic performance. In regards to the first question, mentors stressed the importance of listening in order to establish trust, support emotional needs, gain perspectives, and gather information. Mentors took time to listen and understand the concerns and needs of their beginning teachers.

Additionally, mentors primarily used reflective questions to reshape teachers thinking from a deficit to affirmative model. Questions were used to assist in the reflective process of deconstructing past actions of the teacher or reviewing how the teacher interprets issues or situations.

The second question this study addressed concerned the frames mentors used to reshape beginning teachers perspectives from a deficit model to an affirmative model. This study found that mentors used a wide variety of frames, however, three frames dominated as strategies: student relationships, locus of control, and using data.

The student relationship model involves framing the conversation with the mentee in terms of learning about their students and building a positive relationship with their students. Mentors who used this reframing strategy determined that their mentees’ deficit model thinking could be changed to an affirmative model when they learned about their students as individuals and began building bridges for positive relationships.
The locus of control reframing strategy involves helping the mentee rethink the degree of control they have over the outcomes within their classroom. Mentors used this reframing strategy when they determined that their mentees’ were blaming outside factors for outcomes or students’ academic performances that were essentially within their control. The mentors’ goal is to build a stronger sense of self-efficacy within the mentee. With a stronger sense of self-efficacy, the mentees will adopt a more problem-solving attitude towards issues in the classroom.
Chapter 5

Summary of the Study

The study focused on how mentors influence the negative mindsets of their beginning teachers with regards to their students’ academic performance. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role mentors play in the development of novice teachers’ perspectives when those teachers demonstrate a deficit model thinking.

The main data source for this grounded theory study was interviews obtained from twelve full-release mentors. These mentors are employed by the Underhill School District to provide guidance and assistance to beginning teachers participating in the district’s program to clear their California teaching credential. Purposeful criterion based sampling was used to select the participants. It is purposeful because I intentionally, not randomly, selected individuals in order to learn about, or better understand, a central phenomenon (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2012). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), criterion-based sampling works well when all the participants have experienced the same phenomenon. The participating mentors came from either an elementary or secondary teaching background; some had administrative experience as well. Qualitative data were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with each mentor (lasting approximately 45 minutes). Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed for themes and codes. Data analysis consisted of coding segments of text relating to the participants views on: 1) the mentoring process, 2) training and professional development, 3) why mentors believe a mentee has deficit thinking, 4) possible reasons for the deficit thinking, and 5) how mentors reframe the conversation.
with the mentee. Participant responses were synthesized thematically and compared to the literature review.

Findings are summarized below for each of the two research questions that guided this study.

1) *How do full-release mentors shape novice teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic abilities?*

   The primary mechanism used by all of the mentors interviewed for this study was reflective questions. Reflective questions directed to the new teacher prompt the teacher to recall past actions or decisions. In other words, the beginning teacher is asked to remember what happened in the classroom or revisit decisions s/he made. The purpose of posing reflective questions is to allow the novice teacher to revisit situations and ponder alternatives. All twelve mentors discussed the use of reflection or how reflection was suggested in the replay of conversations with mentees.

   Mentors use protocol tools, which are graphic aides provided by the New Teacher Center (NTC) that promote inquiry, and implement them following the protocols in which they were trained. The tools are formulated to be utilized for both specific and generic purposes. For example, one tool used was *Communicating with Families*. This tool contains questions and suggests discussion points relevant to the ways in which new teachers address communication with students’ parents or guardians.

   Mentors use both direct and indirect forms of reflective questions. Direct questions are questions that are straightforward in nature. Direct questions can be characterized as inquiries directed toward issues involving the immediate concern of the
new teacher. In other words, direct questions are meant to get to the heart of the matter with the intent of leading the new teacher in a specific direction of productive inquiry.

Indirect questions are more exploratory in nature; indirect questions are more open-ended. Indirect questions open new avenues of thought or direct the conversation to as yet unexplored topics.

2) *What kinds of conceptual frames are used by mentors to help novice teachers view their students?*

There was a wide range of approaches as to how mentors utilized conceptual frames. Three prevalent frames were revealed by the study, which can be thematically described as follows: knowledge of students and building relationships, locus of control, and using data. These three frames were most commonly present in the participant interviews.

Ten of the mentors explained how they framed their conversations towards learning about students and/or building relationships with students. Mentors asked their mentees to explore their understandings of their students as individuals and used that understanding to build positive relationships with their pupils. In some instances, the reflective questions were framed in a manner that encouraged teachers to explore their knowledge about their students. On the other hand, some mentors asked questions directing their new teachers to consider student/teacher relationships and how to effectively build those relationships.

Eight of the mentors framed their conversations to focus on what this study calls “locus of control.” The term applies to the degree a teacher feels his or her actions have an effect on classroom outcomes (Rose & Medway, 1981). One mentor specifically used
the term in his discussion of teacher self-efficacy. A locus of control reframing strategy involved a reexamination of what the novice teacher could and could not control. Mentors asked their beginning teachers to identify the issues they felt were out of their control and what issues they could control.

The third major method for reframing teachers’ perceptions was using data. This frame was revealed when mentors discussed sharing information with their teachers in the forms of charts, scripted observations, or analysis of student work. Mentors presented data to their mentees as a means of opening a topic for discussion or to reveal to the teacher unrecognized issues or opportunities for improving both their pedagogical practices and student achievement.

Discussion

Knowledge of Students and Student Relationships

The importance of building positive relationships in education is well documented within the literature (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Conner, Miles, & Pope, 2014; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). The evidence clearly suggests that a supportive teacher-student relationship is an important factor for students’ academic performance and nonacademic outcomes alike. That supportive teacher and student relationship begins when the teacher has an affirmative model of their students. Teachers who embrace a positive perspective of their students understand that learning occurs in a social context and a firmly grounded understanding of students is crucial for effective teaching. Student-centered teachers know their students’ backgrounds, areas of strengths and opportunities for growth; they work to put that knowledge to use in their lesson
development and classroom management (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005).

One outcome of this study is to show how mentors use knowledge of students and building relationships as a means of reframing certain contexts for teachers. Mentors work to shift the deficit thinking of beginning teachers towards a more affirmative model by suggesting ways those teachers can connect with their pupils. This study suggests that those positive relationships not only support the growth of students, but also assist in the development of positive beliefs for new teachers. This statement is supported by Walsh (2006) who suggests teachers can better understand their students on a personal level, by working with them on an individual basis. Walsh is suggesting that teachers develop more positive relationships with their pupils when they purposefully engage themselves to learn about their students’ lives, thoughts, and feelings.

Many mentors felt that their beginning teachers did not really know their students at a deep enough level to teach them effectively. A rhetorical question used by a participating mentor, James, was, “How can you teach me, if you don’t know me?”

Several of the mentors discussed using the NTC tool, Knowing Students Across Multiple Dimensions. This document is used by mentors with their mentees to explore how much the beginning teacher knows about their students. The tool lists a series of questions divided into three parts. The first part explores what the new teacher knows about the students as individuals. Questions cover such items as family background, language development, personal experiences, and past school history. This is followed by additional questions to examine/assess the beginning teacher’s knowledge of the student’s learning preferences. The mentors ask the beginning teacher to describe, to the
best of their knowledge, how a student best learns. Areas for discussion include seating arrangements (individually or in groups), lighting preferences, and academic aptitudes and learning styles. Lastly, the mentor asks the teacher about the student’s meta-cognitive skills. Issues, such as behavior, time management, and the kind of questions the student asks, are addressed. For the mentors, the overall purpose of the discussion with their teachers is to get to the key question: How are you going to find more vital data on this particular student? Here, Mary talks about how she uses this tool:

The Knowing the Students Across Multiple Dimensions is a good tool to say,

“Okay, if you’re not going to talk about Johnny, let’s pick another kid that you’re struggling with behavioral-wise, and then let’s find out about the kid.” One question asks, “What are you wondering about?” “I’m wondering, does he carry a gun to school?” “Okay, great.” Get into those questions there for a minute and then say, “How are you going to find out?” “I guess I could talk to him.”

Mentors also asked reflective questions for the purpose of examining methods for building positive relationships with students.

**Locus of Control**

According to the research, novice teachers generally begin the year with idealistically high expectations. This period is quickly replaced by “reality shock,” as the novice teachers become aware of the many difficulties that teaching brings. For some teachers, this may be the beginning of developing deficit thinking about their students (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004; Veenman, 1984).

It has been demonstrated that new teachers may feel out of control in their working environment and unaware of the things they have power over. Teachers may
have little confidence that their actions in the classroom will have any effect (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). For example, Susan, a participant mentor, recalled the statements her mentee was making, with a repeated negative refrain. “He constantly said things like, ‘They don’t want to learn.’ ‘They don’t want to improve.’ ‘Their parents aren’t involved.’ ‘They’re not going to change.’” These statements clearly illustrate the language of low self-efficacy. The language Susan’s mentee used suggested a focus on factors beyond the mentee’s control such as the students and their parents.

Arthur also had a mentee who expressed her frustrations through the language of deficit thinking:

She had lower standards for them. [She’d say,] “It’s over with them. They’re not ready. They’re not here to learn. I don’t know what to do for them, and therefore if they’re not learning, I do not know what to do. If they do not listen, I’m not going to teach.” That kind of language. As with Susan’s mentee, the pronouns focus solely on the mentee’s students and how their behaviors preclude the possibility of her teaching them.

When teachers question their ability to make a difference in the classroom, or suggest that they are powerless to control a difficult situation, mentors may offer a different perspective. In other words, mentors may re-direct the mentee, through the use of reflective questions, to see what is and what is not in their control.

**Using Data**

A third way of reframing teachers’ perceptions was to examine data. Data might be in the form of district-supplied information about the students, notations from a lesson observation, or the analysis of student work. Mentors used the NTC observational or
conferencing tools to gather data to share with their mentees. Using these tools allows the mentor to collect data and present the information in a way that supports a reflective conversation with the mentee. For example, the Selected Scripting tool is used for classroom observation. The tool is structured so that the mentor records what happens in the classroom in segmented time segments. Without commentary, the mentor simply records what is said in class by both the teacher and students as well as the actions of both teacher and students.

Mentors used these observational tools to open dialogue regarding teachers’ perceptions of students. From these conversations, mentors were able to reframe the situation, offering alternative perspectives for their mentees. In one instance, Janice was dealing with a beginning teacher who was struggling with a class because of her low expectations. Janice shared data collected from an observation and was able to reframe the discussion. She stated:

I've shown her the selective scripting. I've talked with her about what's working and what's not working. I've talked about the lack of respect that's happening in the classroom, how it makes me feel for allowing this behavior to exist, the level of disrespect the students have for her. There's opportunities for her to add rigor and put her foot down and take control.

In this example, the mentor used data to move the conversation to issues that had not been readily apparent to the teacher.

Some mentors shared various forms of data with their mentees through documents that were either created by the mentor specifically to address an issue or through documents supplied by district resources such as attendance records, demographic
information, or assessment data. There was no single method used by all mentors. Mentors decided upon the approach best suited to the issues that were being discussed with the mentee. Data organized in a color-coded spreadsheet was helpful for Hillary working with a mentee who felt the students were not motivated and trying hard enough. Through her discussion with the teacher, Hillary determined that neither the teacher nor the students were sufficiently aware of how much progress the students were making. In other words, neither the teacher nor the students knew where they stood academically. Hillary decided to share with the teacher information about the students’ class performance through the use of color-coded spreadsheets. As Hillary explained in the interview:

I have consistently tried to create little sheets of the results of their assessments, or their assignments, or things within the inquiries, and so on and I’ve gone ahead and done it for her. It takes a long time. I color coded things, I do all that stuff and gave it back. She says, “Wow that’s really cool”.

In this instance, the teacher received the additional bonus of improved student motivation because the students now had regular feedback on their progress.

**Implications for Educational Practice**

Results from this study may serve to inform teacher education practice and mentor training, specifically the mentor’s role in the formation of positive belief systems for novice teachers.

These results might well increase mentor effectiveness, which, in turn, will accelerate new teacher practice and ultimately increase student achievement.

- Mentors need to be aware of the language of deficit model thinking. Reflective
conversations during their meeting with mentees can reveal how teachers perceive their students' abilities.

- Teachers need information and data on their students in a timely manner. School districts must provide student data to teachers if teachers are to understand their students and use that knowledge to build positive relationships.

- Credentialing programs need to prevent deficit modeling thinking. The reality shock that novice teachers experience comes from the disconnect between the teachers' idealistic expectations and the realities of working in the classroom.

- Administrators need to provide support for novice teachers. When teachers feel that the work they do in the classroom has little effect on the outcomes of student performance, a sense of low self-efficacy builds.

- Induction programs need to address the issue of deficit thinking and low self-efficacy. Induction standards should address the development of teachers' belief systems and feelings of personal growth.

**Recommendations for Professional Development**

This study’s findings suggest a number of recommendations for practice.

- Mentors need to receive professional development in order to understand the deficit mindset model and how it might manifest itself in new teachers. Mentors should learn to observe and understand the nature and character of the signals new teachers display regarding students and student performance, in both conversations and classroom observations.

- Mentors need to understand the possible ramifications of a deficit mindset and how such a mindset may negatively affect how teachers care for and educate their students.
• Mentors need professional development to prepare them to hear and interpret the language of deficit thinking. Mentors need to recognize that language—words and phrases—that new teachers use that indicate a possible deficit model mindset. By being able to detect a deficit mindset, mentors can more effectively begin to tailor the induction activities in order to begin building an affirmative model of thinking for the new teacher.

• Mentors should have professional development specifically in re-framing conversations.

• Mentors need professional development in ways to explore teacher beliefs early in the induction process. From the beginning, mentors need to know how their beginning teachers think about their work. Additionally, the mentor should recognize and understand the language frames used by new teachers when discussing students.

• To further enhance the mentoring process between mentors and novice teachers, mentors should understand the beliefs and perspectives of their mentees. During the initial weeks of induction, mentors should explore their new teachers’ thoughts and attitudes about students, and their beliefs as to why their students do or do not perform as expected. Specifically, a protocol tool should be developed that provides the mentors with suggested reflective questions.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

One area for further research should be an examination of the extent to which reflective questions and reframing change new teachers’ perceptions. This study examined the process of reframing for reshaping beginning teachers’ perspectives but not the results of that process. Because of the limitation of this study, there was not enough
longitudinal evidence to adequately determine the extent or degree to which reframing affects beginning teachers’ perceptions of students and student performance.

Current literature has focused on the belief systems of beginning teachers. However, how mentors feel about their work and their relationships to both teachers and students has not been studied. An examination of the personal belief systems of mentors would be a productive area for additional research.

Another area for future research is an examination of how mentors use data collection to support beginning teachers. There is substantive research on the value of a data-based inquiry process, but little evidence currently exists for how mentors specifically use data collection tools and analysis to support beginning teachers.

For this study, the specific and directed inquiry targeted perceptions and beliefs of beginning teachers. One critical area for future research would be an examination of the deficit model thinking displayed by mentors. Though not clearly evident from this study, mentors also hold opinions about the teachers they work with. Though it is encouraged by colleagues and the program’s vision to have an affirmative model towards the mentees, personal experience has shown that not always to be the case.

The use of full-release mentors is a cornerstone of the BTIP program. These mentors, through their work with their mentees, engage in the reflective process day after day. This constant work with teachers provides the mentors with regular practice and opportunities for refinement of the mentoring strategies. Part-time mentors, as used by many districts, do not have such a situation.

The beginning teachers described by the mentors within this study are all currently completing their induction requirements. Future research could examine how long these
teachers who demonstrated deficit model thinking early in their careers remain in the profession.

Additional research into the beliefs and perspectives of mentors is needed to examine how mentors’ beliefs and understandings of the deficit mindset model affected their mentoring practices.

Future research on what commonalities did the teachers who express a negative mindset have (age, locations of schools, grade levels, etc.)

**Limitations**

Limitations of this study included the collection, analysis, and use of qualitative data. Qualitative data provides only a partial perspective in the ways mentors shape their new teachers beliefs. While the participants’ insights and discussions may provide information and data about their experiences, they cannot be easily generalized to a larger population. The data are neither all encompassing nor exhaustive. There may be other ways that knowledge about mentors and their new teachers might be collected and analyzed. Further research of a quantitative nature might produce results that can be generalized to larger populations.

Data collection time constraints were another limitation. Interviews were conducted within a three-month window during the middle of the school year. This caused a limitation that is two-fold. First, the insights and data collected for the study represent a perspective within a narrow time frame. Second, the mentors’ personal knowledge of the mentees might have been more limited than it would have been had the study occurred later in the year. Some of the new teachers in the study might have started
the program within recent months. This means that a mentor might have just started with a new teacher and have limited knowledge of that teacher and his or her practice.

The survey used for requesting volunteers asked mentors to identify for themselves if they met the criteria for selection in this study. That is, all mentors selected for this study self-reported that they believed to have at least one novice teacher with a deficit mindset. It should be clearly understood that it was up to mentors to interpret his or her understanding of “deficit mindset” for themselves.

All mentors within this study have had universal professional development from NTC. A significant part of the training is in the use of reflective questioning techniques. This suggests that the strategies mentors apply might be different if the mentors had different forms of professional development.

A particular limitation was the researcher’s close ties to the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) program and the mentors working within the program. The researcher has been working with the BTIP program since its first pilot program and has attended all professional development related to the work. The researcher has been using and developing the mentoring practices used in the program for over three years. This means that the researcher has extensive knowledge regarding how mentors do their work. As a result the researcher might have missed opportunities to press for additional elaboration during interviews.

**Conclusion**

This study set out to examine how full-release mentors shape novice teachers perceptions of their students’ academic performance. The goal of this study was not only to identify how mentors reframe the perspectives of beginning teachers, but also to
provide possible future avenues for professional development of mentors and additional means for differentiating the mentoring experience for new teachers.

Current and aspiring mentors will benefit from the findings in this study as they continue to work with novice teachers and help support the development of affirmative model thinking. Mentors who use the three frames discussed in this study—student relationships, locus of control, and using data—should find their novice teachers beginning to shed their deficit thinking and start to demonstrate a higher degree of affirmative model thinking.

It is hoped that the findings from this study will contribute to the understanding of the mentoring process and its role in developing affirmative model thinking in beginning teachers. This is significant, as it will promote more effective mentoring of novice teachers, which, in turn, will improve the learning experiences of students in California’s and the nation’s classrooms.
References


Dear Colleagues,

I will be conducting a research study of mentoring as one of the requirements for completing my doctoral degree (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at California State University, Northridge.

You are invited to participate in this survey as part of my dissertation study is to explore examine the role mentors play in the development of attitudes and perspectives of novice teachers.

The research study aims to better understand the role mentors play in assisting their new teachers in re-framing their thinking about their students and their teaching practice.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. However, your professional input in this survey as a valuable educator will provide crucial data to inform the findings of this research study.

Many thanks in advance and warm regards to you,

Dave Harris

Beginning Teacher Growth and Development Specialist

Please complete the survey by BEFORE October 31, 2014

william.d.harris@lausd.net.
Appendix B

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

SURVEY PROTOCOL
MENTORS ONLY
Distributed via surveymonkey.com

Please complete the survey at or BEFORE October 31, 2014.

I. DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Years of mentoring experience at LAUSD (circle one):
   0-5  5-10  10-15  15-20  20+

2. Years of mentoring experience at BTGD (circle one):
   1  2  3  4

3. I currently mentor _________ teachers

4. I currently work with the following grade levels
   k-2  3-5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

II. TEACHER PERCEPTIONS
1. How important is it that teachers have high expectations for their students?
   Not important  Somewhat important  Very important  I don’t know
2. How important is it that teachers believe their students can achieve in class (Please select one)

Not important    Somewhat important    Very important    I don’t know

3. In your experience as a mentor for BTGD, have you worked with beginning teachers who perceived some of their students from a deficit model: assigning blame to student, families, or communities for poor academic performance. (Select one).

Yes, several teachers    Yes, a few teachers    Yes, one teacher    None    Not sure

Will you be willing to participate in a short face-to-face interview at the beginning of the school year? (Select one)

Yes    No, thanks
Appendix C

Research Invitation
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE
MENTOR/MENTEE RELATIONSHIP STUDY
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Dear ________________,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a dissertation study that I am conducting as a doctoral candidate at California State University, Northridge. My study explores the relationship between mentors and beginning teachers and how that relationship shapes beginning teachers’ views on their students’ academic performance.

As part of the study, I am conducting confidential, private interviews with mentors who are participating in the district’s mentoring program to record and understand their experiences with their beginning teachers. Each interview should take approximately 45 minutes. Responses used in this dissertation will be confidential and your name will not appear in the study.

If you are willing to participate, please contact me at william.d.harris@lausd.net and/or 562-618-3184. Participating in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at anytime.

Your time investment in this study is greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for considering participating in this study.

Thank you,
Appendix D

California State University, Northridge

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Mentoring and Mentee Student Perceptions

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Mentoring and Mentee Student Perceptions, is a study conducted by Dave Harris as part of the requirements for the Ed.D. degree in the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

Researcher:
William David Harris
Department of Educational Leadership and Policies Studies
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330
562-618-3184
william.d.harris.991@my.csun.edu

Faculty Advisor:
Dr. Kathleen D. Rowlands
Department of Secondary Education
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330-8265
818-677-2556
krowlands@csun.edu
PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to explore how mentors shape beginning teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic performance.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements: You are eligible to participate in this study if you are currently working as a full-release mentor in Los Angeles Unified School District’s BGTB Induction program.

Time Commitment: Participation in this study will involve approximately one hour of your time.

PROCEDURES

The following will occur: You will be interviewed after school hours regarding your experiences with your mentor.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include: boredom or mild emotional discomfort. This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits: The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include gaining a further awareness of the mentoring process.

Benefits to Others or Society: The possible benefit to others is an increased understanding of how mentoring can positively affect beginning teachers.
ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION: The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

Compensation for Participation: You will receive $35 gift card for Target stores.

Costs: There is no cost to you for participation in this study.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify Dave Harris immediately.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data: All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be kept with the research data. A pseudonym will be substituted for your real name and the name of the school to ensure confidentiality.

Data Storage: All research data, including transcripts and recordings, will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected. In addition, research data will be stored electronically on a secure cloud-based network that is password protected.

Data Access: The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention: The researchers intend to keep the research data for approximately 10 years. Then it will be destroyed.
Mandated Reporting: Under California law, the researcher, as a state mandated reporter, is required to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has, or is given, such information, he is required to report it to the authorities.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or
discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you
might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with
California State University, Northridge or with the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form
and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

___ I agree to participate in the study.
___ I agree to be audio recorded
___ I do not wish to be audio recorded

___________________________________________________
Participant Signature
Date

___________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

___________________________________________________
Researcher Signature
Date

___________________________________________________
Printed Name of Researcher
Appendix E

Interview Protocol

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening.

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I’d like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose of the interview: As we discussed, this interview is a one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study that explores how mentors shape beginning teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic performance. During this interview, we will talk about your mentoring experience and how your work with your beginning teachers have possibly changed their thinking about student achievement.

Confidentiality:

Any information you share with me today will be used for research purposes only. I will be aggregating results from all interviews, but I will use pseudonyms for any direct quotations. Personally identifiable characteristics, such as your name and school, will not be used to identify you in any report or document. Today’s interview session will be audio-recorded. I will also be taking notes of the conversation. The audio recordings will be transcribed for analysis. The audio recorded file, transcribed file, and notes will be stored securely in a password-protected laptop of the principle investigator until completion of interview analysis. Upon completion of analysis, files and notes will be saved for 10 years. Only the researchers identified in the Consent to Participate will have access to these documents.
access to the files and notes. The files and notes will be accessed and analyzed in strict confidentiality. Finally your name or personally identifying information will not be used in any published or public reports.

Informed consent: This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants.

Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. However, findings from this study may provide insights into the mentoring process and may contribute to our knowledge on the subject.

Interview participants will receive a gift card for their participation in this study. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without being interviewed. You can halt your participation in
the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Identification and contact information of principal investigator: If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, the details of this study, or any other concerns please contact Dave Harris at his mailing address: 4336 Maybank Ave. Lakewood, CA 90712. Alternatively, you may contact Dave Harris via telephone at 562-618-3184 or via email at William.harris.991@my.csun.edu.

Timing: Today’s interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

II. Interview Session

1. Please share with me how your last year as a year one/year two mentor went?
   a. What is it you like about being a mentor?
   b. What challenges have you encountered as mentor?
   c. Did you have a mentor yourself as a new teacher, If so, tell me about that experience.

2. What do you and your beginning teacher do in your mentoring sessions?
   a. Where do you usually meet?
   b. What do you usually discuss?

3. How would you describe your relationship with your beginning teacher?
   a. How do you think they would describe the relationship?

4. I would like to discuss deficit thinking for a moment. Do any of your new teachers come to mind? If so, what traits have you noticed about those teachers that suggest they may have a deficit way of thinking about their students?
5. Share with me some of the things you have noticed during observations or have heard during your conference sessions that might have lead you to conclude they use a deficit lens when thinking about their students?

6. Share with me how your teachers feel about their students’ academic performances in their class
   a. Do they feel that most of their students are doing their best?
   b. For students who are not performing well, how do your beginning teachers describe their performances?
   c. When students do not perform as expected, how do your teachers explain this?

7. Share with me how you help your teachers approach problems through alternative viewpoints.
   a. How do you get your teachers to see difficult situations another way?

8. Share with me some of your thoughts on the role of reflection in changing your teachers’ perspective.
   a. When you are listening to a teacher reflect, what do you listen for?
   b. When you are reading a teacher’s reflection, what do look for?
   c. What do you do if a teacher is not making the connections you hope for?

Closing Questions:
I would like to give you a final opportunity to help us examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn’t get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with

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me? If there’s anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today’s interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview.

Do you have any questions at this time?