The Role of Mentor-Resident Match in a Teacher Residency Program: A Comparison of Three Cases

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Teacher residency programs have emerged in recent years as an alternative to traditional teacher preparation. These programs place pre-service teachers, known as residents, in the classroom of a trained mentor who guides their development over the course of a school year. This resident-mentor match is a major component of the residency experience and understanding how this match influences teacher development is an important line of research. The purpose of this work was to understand how the mentor-resident match influences teacher development in a teacher residency program. We explore this topic through the triangulation of multiple data sources from a longitudinal evaluation study examining the development of secondary residents in one urban teacher residency program. Consistent with findings from previous research, we found through the examination of three resident-mentor matches that the relationship between the resident and mentor plays a critical role in the resident's development throughout the residency year and beyond. The quality of the relationship influences the resident's ability to engage in reflective practice and move from novice to expert in various domains of the teaching profession.

Keywords: *teacher residency, mentor, teacher development, qualitative study, reflection logs*

Over the past decade there has been a shift in how teachers are prepared. Traditional preparation programs typically feature two years of university-based coursework, with a 12 to 16-week student teaching experience at the conclusion of the program (Zeichner, 2018). In the traditional model, coursework is emphasized over practical experience in classrooms. Alternatives to the traditional preparation program can take many forms; however, most offer individuals the ability to meet teaching licensure requirements after completing a brief, intense summer program, which often features non-university-based instructional components and a summer practicum experience (Gastic, 2014). Following hiring as a full-time teacher (e.g., teacher of record), many alternative preparation models offer additional support throughout the first few years in the classroom. These models emphasize practice in the classroom over coursework.

The teacher residency model is a different approach to preparation designed to address the shortcomings of traditional and alternative models (Zeichner et al., 2015). Although some variation exists across residency programs, a typical program features a yearlong pre-service teaching experience in a mentor teacher's classroom, supported by coursework and coaching/mentoring tools designed to encourage reflection and professional learning. In contrast to typical traditional and alternative preparation programs, teacher residencies place equal and concurrent emphasis on both university-based coursework and practice. Residency models are designed to address the challenges of limited student teaching experiences in preparing pre-service teachers for the realities of full-time teaching. Zeichner (2002) comments that new teachers' lack of preparation may be due in part to inadequate student teaching experiences in traditional teacher preparation programs, where there is little emphasis on extended mentoring of preservice teachers. Likewise, Willingham's (2018) recent critique of

teacher education reports novice teachers' most frequent complaint "was that their training had not prepared them for the 'real world'" (p. 38). Fraser and Lefty (2018) have described the residency approach as a "hybrid model," combining the best elements of traditional and alternative approaches. Extended placement of pre-service teachers in the classroom of mentor teachers is a cornerstone of the model; the mentoring role is central to the model's effectiveness and preparing students for success in teaching. Kardos and Johnson (2010) found that well-matched mentors and mentees result in a positive experience for new teachers; however, according to Garza and Werner (2014) many new teachers are inappropriately matched with a mentor. Questions remain about the characteristics of mentor teacher-resident matches most associated with pre-service development and model success, additional research is needed to investigate this relationship in a teacher residency program.

This study examines a core component of the residency model – the role of mentor-mentee/resident match. We address the question, how does the resident-mentor teacher match influence teacher development in an urban residency program? We examine three cases of secondary resident-mentor pairs to explore how their pairing, or match, influenced pre-service preparation experiences during their residency year. As described, the residency includes a full-year placement in a classroom where they work side-by-side with their mentor, combined with university-based coursework. Both the residency experience and university coursework are grounded in the theoretical and empirical literature on teacher development.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework was developed and used to examine the professional growth of new teachers in urban schools (Senechal et al., 2017). The framework considers the urban teacher residency model through the lens of adaptive expertise and its relationship to the

professional development of teachers (Hammerness et al., 2005; Hayden et al., 2013). The framework includes three dimensions of teacher preparation: (1) professional growth in pedagogical content knowledge; this dimension includes knowledge and skills related to content and effective teaching (planning and delivery) and assessment; (2) establishing a learning environment including developing rapport and relationships with students and promoting dispositions supporting a positive classroom environment; and (3) navigating professional expectations. These expectations include learning about professional conduct, obligations, and relationships in the workplace within and outside the classroom setting. Examples include learning to communicate with parents, school routines, non-teaching obligations, and developing collegial relationships. The three dimensions in the framework can be interpreted along a developmental trajectory where residents move from novice to expert. The three dimensions comprising the framework are aligned with specific practices advocated by the National Center for Teacher Residencies.

Adaptive Expertise, Teacher Development, and Reflective Practice

Adaptive expertise is a model that has been used to understand the development of professional knowledge and has gained traction in theoretical and empirical literature on teacher development and teacher quality (Hayden et al., 2013; Shulman & Shulman, 2004). An expert teacher adapts and applies knowledge to unique cases (e.g., students, lessons) within dynamic and complex settings (e.g., classrooms, schools, policy environments) (Berliner, 2001). Expertise in teaching is characterized by one's ability to frame problems of practice in sophisticated ways (Bransford et al., 2005; Cuban, 1992). Teacher development, within the adaptive expertise model, involves progressing through stages from a rule-focused novice to a flexible and innovative expert (Berliner, 2001).

In his discussion of teacher learning, Korthagen (2010) calls for blending situated, or practice-based, learning with opportunities for reflection to encourage in-depth understanding of how pre-service teachers can transfer what they are learning in their university coursework to their K-12 classroom placements. This form of professional reflective practice (Schon, 1983) is facilitated by the use of structured protocols, or tools, to guide reflection, dialogue, and make ongoing connections between theory and practice (Reiman, 1999). The value of such tools has been noted especially for teacher preparation experiences (Farrell, 2007; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Tillman, 2003), and these elements are hallmark features of the teacher residency program under study.

Mentor-Resident Relationships in the Teacher Residency Model

The nature of the mentor-resident relationship is an essential part of the residency experience. Residents who have a positive relationship with their mentor teacher (MT) tend to have a positive experience during the residency year compared to those who have a less than ideal relationship with their MT. Indeed, Garza and Harter (2016) conducted a qualitative study and found that residents' experiences with their MT differed. Some described having a strong relationship with their MT; others described it as challenging. While few residents characterized their MT relationship as being negative, "some described their mentors as judgmental, critical, insincere, and misleading" (Garza & Harter, 2016, p. 413). One possible reason for differences in MT and resident relationships is how the MT views their role. Feiman-Nemser and Parker (1992) found this to be the case in their study of two different teacher preparation programs, one in Los Angeles and the other in Albuquerque. They found the Albuquerque program had more supportive mentoring relationships than those in the Los Angeles program due to the expectations shared in mentor training sessions.

One of the central tensions evident in the mentoring literature is the dual responsibility of the MT - to support the professional growth of the resident while ensuring optimal learning experiences for their students. It can be difficult to balance these responsibilities, where providing residents autonomy allows them to fail and grow from instructional mistakes but may have the negative consequence of diminishing the learning and academic progress of the students in class (Aderibigbe et al., 2016; Goodwin et al., 2016). Having opportunities to learn from failure is an important part of the residency experience (Goodwin et al., 2016; Marshall et al., 2020). Pre-service teachers often report learning more from moments of failure than they do from moments of success (Marshall et al., 2020). However, the policy pressures that exist, particularly in urban schooling contexts, are real. Teachers are held accountable for their students' test scores and are ultimately responsible for their learning. This tension can limit a mentor's willingness to support new instructional ideas and approaches initiated by the resident, knowing that some will be less than successful. The current study seeks to learn how the mentor-resident match influences teacher development in an urban teacher residency program.

Context of the Study

The East Coast Teacher Residency program (ECTR; pseudonym) is located in a mid-sized city in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The program represents a partnership between a local university and the city's school district, which serves approximately 25,000 students. Three out of four students enrolled in the school district are African American and approximately two-thirds are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Almost half of the teachers in the district have five or fewer years of teaching experience, and approximately one in five teachers are in their first or second year in the classroom. This trend is attributed to a high rate of

turnover, and these statistics are typical for many urban school districts with a high-need student population (Papay et al., 2017). ECTR was created in part to respond to the teacher retention challenges faced by school districts in underserved communities.

The ECTR program is based on the seven principles outlined by the National Center for Teacher Residencies (2018) and was designed to prepare and retain high-quality teachers for success in urban settings. The program prepares elementary, secondary, and special education pre-service teachers for K-12 public education classrooms. Program participants are selected through a rigorous process that includes an application packet, a mini-lesson taught in one of the district's schools in front of students, an individual interview, a group interview, and a reflective writing assignment which asks candidates to respond to feedback on their mini-lesson. All candidates possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree in their content area, and almost half of those selected into the program are persons of color.

Mentor teachers are selected through a similarly rigorous process. Individuals wishing to become MTs must complete an online application. After applications are reviewed, those who advance in the process agree to have an unannounced classroom observation over a two-week period. Following the observation, applicants participate in a telephone interview and respond to feedback on the classroom observation. All MTs must have been a teacher for at least three years in the school district to be eligible. As part of the residency program, MTs receive training and support to use mentoring tools and protocols developed by the New Teacher Center (2020) as part of their evidenced-based coaching model.

The program integrates theory and practice where residents co-teach alongside MTs, gradually assuming more teaching responsibility throughout the school year, while they simultaneously complete graduate-level coursework. Residents are enrolled in 18 credit hours of

coursework during the summer before they are placed in a classroom for four days per week (Monday - Thursday) throughout the school year. On Fridays, residents meet as a cohort to discuss and reflect on their teaching. Following their university graduation, residents spend five days a week in the K-12 classroom until the school year concludes in June. At the conclusion of the residency year, program participants earn a master's degree from the university's school of education, a teacher's license, and are placed with a job in the partnering school district where they commit to teach for a minimum of three years. Residents receive continued instructional support throughout their first two years as teachers of record.

Research Method

Design & Data Sources

This study draws on data collected as part of a larger longitudinal evaluation study of ECTR that followed three cohorts of residents from their residency year into their first two years of teaching. The larger study involved a variety of data collection methods including interviews, surveys and focus groups with residents and MTs as well as document analysis of weekly collaborative reflective logs. The present study used a case study design (Yin, 2014) and includes interviews and reflection logs for the first cohort of residents where there was complete longitudinal interview data - a total of five interviews. Three secondary ECTR residents – Becky, Kevin, and Rachel (pseudonyms) – were purposively selected based on their different experiences with their MTs. We intentionally selected diverse mentor-resident pairs to explore how the match influenced residents' development. See Table 1 for specific school and district characteristics.

Table 1

School District and School Placement Descriptions

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Variable	District	Plainsman Middle	Braddock Middle
African American	70%	69%	53%
White	10	10	3
Latino/a	10	19	43
Poverty Rate*	75	70	78
Reading**	58	62	42
Math**	54	56	45
Science**	59	76	53
Attendance Rate	93	88	76
Accreditation Status	58***	Denied	Denied

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*Note: Figures indicate the percentage of the population who identify with the variable of interest. Data obtained from the State Department of Education website. * Poverty rate is based on the percentage of households who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. ** Figures represent schoolwide standardized testing proficiency rates for Reading, Math, and Science. *** Figure represents the percentage of schools within the district that are fully accredited.*

We used multiple data sources to capture participant experiences related to their

mentor match. Doing so allowed us to corroborate their unique experiences. While interviews

provided overall experiences of the mentors and mentees captured at critical time points, the

collaborative reflection logs depicted weekly experiences during the residency year in ways

that added detail to participants' overall descriptions.

Data Collection

Interviews

Residents participated in five semi-structured interviews over the course of the three study years - two interviews during the residency year, two in their first year and one in their second year of teaching. MTs were also interviewed at the end of the residency year. Resident and MT interviews averaged 45 minutes, were audio recorded and professionally transcribed. End-of-year focus groups were also conducted with the MTs as a part of the program evaluation. A total of 15 resident interviews, 2 MT interviews, and 1 MT focus group were included in this analysis.

Reflective Coaching Logs

Each resident-mentor pair or dyad (henceforth referred to as dyad) completed weekly collaborative coaching and reflection logs (henceforth referred to as logs) during the residency year. The logs provided opportunities for reflection, allowed for documentation of resident growth and challenges, and ensured some accountability for using the coaching tools. The logs were comprised of 19 items classified into four sections: (1) basic information such as individual names and dates; (2) open-ended prompts on what residents were learning in their coursework, resident and coach successes and challenges; (3) the time the resident spent solo-teaching, co-teaching, and supporting classroom activities; and (4) checklists on coaching tools used and the type of support provided. Dyads submitted logs to the program supervisor at the end of each week for feedback and to guide coaching support. The log items were assigned numeric indicators to capture completion and the quality of information provided, in terms of missing, relevant, and substantially detailed responses. The reflective logs had numeric and

narrative details that were analyzed using mixed analytic techniques. Approximately 95% of reflective logs contained relevant, codable comments which indicate that the dyad meaningfully engaged in the reflective exercise each week. A total of 77 logs are included in the analysis.

Data analysis

Interviews

A constant-comparative approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to analyze the interview transcripts and identify emerging patterns. Initial codes were informed by the conceptual framework previously described and were then expanded based on transcripts and researcher memos (Maxwell, 2013). The codes used for analysis reflected the conceptual framework and participant voice. For the interview data, four members of the research team met bi-weekly to review coding, discuss interpretations, and resolve coding disagreements. Focus group data from the larger program evaluation were used to supplement the interview data. Data analyses were conducted in ATLAS.ti versions 7 and 8.

Collaborative Coaching and Reflective Logs

Three additional members of the research team met bi-weekly to analyze the collaborative logs. The analysis of the logs was conducted in two stages. The first stage included coding and importing the quantitative elements of the logs into a database. The second stage involved the coding of the narrative information in the logs. When possible, codes common to the interview data analysis were used. However, several additional codes were needed to capture log information specific to challenges such as contextual constraints that influenced coaching, ideas about classroom status and ownership, for example. Numeric data indicated that Becky and her MT showed a lower level of adherence to the coaching model; Kevin and his MT demonstrated variety in their use of

coaching tools. Whereas Kevin spent the most time solo teaching each week of the three

residents (M = 669 minutes/week), Rachel solo taught for roughly half that amount of time

each week (M = 333 minutes). A detailed description of the analytic techniques of

reflective logs is presented elsewhere (Varier & Abrams, 2018). See Table 2 for an

overview of the log data. The full research team met monthly to ensure that data were

being analyzed similarly across multiple sources.

Table 2

Resident-MT Log Data

Resident	Becky	Kevin	Rachel
Total # of logs	25	27	25
% of logs with detailed responses	8 - 100%*	100%	48 - 100%
Mean weekly minutes of solo teaching	516	669	333

*Note: *Becky and MT had only one missing data point for the text responses across seven prompts. In this case, only 8% of log comments for one prompt were detailed (i.e, more than three sentences of relevant comments).*

Findings

We used participants' descriptions of their relationship with their MT from the

interviews to develop a profile of each dyad's match. By match, we broadly refer to the nature

of their relationship and interactions and were explored from the interviews, focus groups, and

logs. We use these profiles to make sense of the resident's development during the residency

year. See Table 3 for description of the mentor-resident dyads.

Table 3

Descriptions of Resident/Coach Dyads

	Kevin	Becky	Rachel
Subject area	Humanities	STEM	STEM
MT teaching experience	More than 10 years	Five or fewer years	Five or fewer years
Coaching style	Directive	Flexible	Flexible until testing
Nature of relationship	Professional only	Professional and friends outside of school	Professional only
Role of resident in classroom	As a student/mentee	As a teacher from day one	As a student/mentee
Openness to resident trying new ideas	Hesitant	Flexible	Flexible until testing

Becky

Becky attributed her positive experience to the fact that she was "pretty well matched" with her MT. She was appreciative of her MT's willingness to share resources, noting, "[My MT] opened up their file cabinet for me and allowed me to take… plans and adapt them to ways that I see fit." Her MT echoed this sentiment and explained they were "similar in temperament and were at the same life stage" as "both are around the same age and had other careers before entering teaching." Becky's MT described her as being "down to earth and calm," and Becky saw her MT as being flexible and open to her trying new ideas in the classroom. Log comments consistently reflected a strong partnership described as "a well-oiled machine."

Kevin

Kevin shared mixed feelings about his relationship with his MT. He characterized it as "professional," and saw differences in their approaches to teaching. Although the expectation of the program is that residents are viewed as co-teachers in the classroom, Kevin's MT viewed him as a student; they were directive in assigning Kevin classroom responsibilities. Kevin noted a tension when he used new instructional strategies independently, and he felt as though his MT was not as open to him trying out new ideas. In contrast, Kevin's MT described their relationship as being positive, noting that it had "grown a great deal." Their coaching style was more directive; and described coaching in behavioral terms, or as a set of actions, in ways that were not connected to Kevin's professional development. Kevin's MT also acknowledged some of Kevin's challenges were attributable to the fact that "[Kevin] never really felt that it was his classroom, because it was mine, and the kids saw me as the teacher." The logs indicated similar themes where the MT's comments were consistently managerial and supervisory and documented progress on the implementation of the coaching model. The logs noted instances of classroom experiences as opportunities "given" to the resident.

Rachel

Throughout the residency year, Rachel described her relationship with her MT as positive, but hinted at possible tension. She described how they each had to "invite each other into their planning" and avoid "stepping on [the MTs] toes." Rachel acknowledged differences in their teaching styles, and the amount of planning she seemed to prefer compared to her MT. Despite any differences, Rachel acknowledged that she learned from her MT, especially how to "make [her content area] more accessible by supplementing with analogies and metaphors." Rachel described her MT as being "very accessible." In a focus group, Rachel's MT and others

revealed relinquishing control of their classrooms was challenging. Rachel felt "more friction" with her MT due to her increasing levels of confidence over the course of the residency year. As the end-of-year statewide testing approached, Rachel noted that her MT was less supportive of her trying new teaching ideas.

We examined the residency experiences as documented in the logs and described in the interviews according to each mentor-resident dyad. One MT did not participate in an interview, so we used data from a focus group they participated in as another data source to consider. Each week, dyads completed the logs collaboratively noting what was working well, what was challenging, and next steps for both the resident and the MT. The analysis of the log comments revealed themes about the resident's strengths, areas of improvement for both the resident and MT, and their use of the coaching tools. We then used the resident interviews from the first two years of teaching to learn how this relationship evolved and how the match during the residency influenced the resident's development and success as a teacher. We present main themes for each case.

Differential Residency Experiences

A major theme that emerged from the interview and log data was that each resident had a unique experience that was influenced to a large extent by their placement with the MT and school context. We highlight these differences below.

Becky and her MT's Residency Year Experience

Becky and her MT had a positive and effective mentor-resident relationship as illustrated by a consistent focus on collaborative instructional practice. Becky regularly noted that planning and delivery of lessons, activities, and assessments were the main focus of their joint-work. As Becky progressed to fully independent teaching, the log entries revealed that she found planning

ahead challenging. At this point, the dyad was focused on independent teaching, rather than co-teaching which enabled the resident and MT to observe and address her challenge with planning. Similarly, grading and staying on top of grading activities was frequently noted as both a challenge and an area that was working well. Becky's MT noted supporting or assisting her with grading and planning as a coaching priority, and stated in a log, "On my end that means setting much harder deadlines and a few 'non-negotiables.'"

Creating assessments, continuous assessment of student learning, and grading were a focus throughout the school year. Log entries specified that summative and formative assessments, using questioning strategies during instruction, and grading student work were all areas of emphasis. Likewise, questioning was a topic that emerged on multiple occasions in the interview data. Becky shared, "My MT is always asking the why's and how's. When I'm up there I'm asking the what's and which's." She and her MT had extensive discussions about her use of questioning techniques; a skill she strove to improve throughout the residency.

The log data from the last quarter of the school year highlighted the emphasis on standardized testing. Narrative comments indicated that Becky and her MT were focused on preparing students to do well on the test. They reviewed tested content, and provided additional support focused on students on the border of passing. Comments revealed that they were managing instructional time, following pacing guides, and finding ways to keep students focused after end-of-year state tests.

Learning to manage student behaviors and classroom management was a common refrain in the resident and MT log comments. The logs suggested that the dyad had classroom management issues with specific classes or class periods. They identified and implemented strategies to create an optimal learning environment. For example, Becky cited throughout her

residency, and even into her first year of teaching, that she did not "want to be a teacher that yells." She explained that she has observed some teachers can maintain control without raising their voices, "and that's a special skill that I would like to eventually get." Becky also recognized the importance of student relationships to maintaining control in the classroom. While this is a skill she continued to hone, Becky conceded, "But I find myself raising my voice when kids repeatedly don't follow instructions and pay attention." Becky's MT commented as she established her authority and voice during her independent teaching, students were increasingly going to Becky with questions without being reminded.

A main challenge of the coaching model was keeping up with the required use of the coaching tools. Becky's MT frequently commented about the demanding coaching cycle and documentation required. Several log entries mentioned the focus on collecting data to observe and provide Becky with feedback. Although collectively the logs indicated adherence to the residency program components, entries explicitly revealed that the MT struggled with the needed effort and motivation to use the formalized coaching tools designed to support the use of data to guide instructional decision making. The logs reflected not only Becky's but also her MT's professional growth. At one point, some of their students were not seeing Becky as their teacher, and the MT shared overhearing a student conversation about their lack of respect for Becky. Her MT explained, "I understand it's a difficult, or almost impossible task, given she will always appear to them as my 'assistant,' but it bothers me - am I somehow contributing to this?" Interviews with Becky indicated she believed her MT created an environment where she was seen as a teacher from day one. Her MT also worked with Becky to improve her time management skills to complete planning and grading activities.

Becky's MT reflected on their shifted roles in the classroom. The model required the

dyad work together as co-teachers in the classroom. The MT felt a sense of ownership about

tension between responsibility as the classroom teacher and role as a mentor. The MT

experienced difficulty adapting to their transition to being out of the classroom (not being the

lead teacher) as well as relief at being able to co-teach after Becky's solo teaching experience

was completed. Yet, there was substantial evidence that the MT welcomed Becky as a partner

from the beginning of the school year. The MT made frequent positive comments about Becky's

progress; "I kind of feel like we are a pretty smooth-running machine at this point. Kids go to B

with more frequency than me for help and questions, the plans are running well, grading and

assessments and classwork are all effective."

Kevin and his MT's Residency Year Experience

The logs for Kevin and his MT showed a high level of adherence to the recommended

use of the coaching tools. For Kevin's MT, the most notable theme was their commitment to the

mentoring role and growth as a coach. They commented consistently throughout the year about

the usefulness of the coaching tools and her desire to improve implementation of the tools. One

log entry noted, "The use of the various tools has been one of the areas of strength for me. I have

enjoyed using the double planning technique and just being able to lend that listening ear for my

resident. I think this experience has allowed me to grow as a professional."

Although interview data suggested otherwise, logs from early in the school year revealed

a positive and supportive relationship between Kevin and his MT. Kevin's MT described

characteristics related to professionalism (being on time), dedication (staying at school until

lesson planning was completed), enthusiasm, and a genuine commitment to building

relationships and rapport with students. Kevin experienced initial challenges or growth areas in

developing the confidence and assertiveness associated with being in an authoritative position in

the classroom and developing a "teacher voice." Developing his teacher voice was a theme of the logs especially in preparation for lead/independent teaching. One log noted, "(Kevin) is still trying to establish (himself) as a disciplinarian." Even in the last weeks of the school year, this was still an issue for him, and they were actively working on it. Another noted, "Since I am back in the room as the assistant teacher, I am becoming more of the disciplinarian in the classroom. We discussed this at great length this week." The MT would often intervene against their professional judgment:

> As a (mentor), I am constantly running to defend Kevin when he has an issue with a student. I often step in to diffuse the situation. I know that this is not a good practice because he will take full responsibility of the classroom soon. We have discussed a plan and different classroom management techniques that he can use.

Interview data suggested that Kevin often viewed the classroom dynamic as one of "good cop bad cop," with his MT taking the bad cop role. Kevin felt as though his MT was lacking in their ability to provide the coaching he needed in classroom management, and he had to look elsewhere for guidance. Kevin shared, "I've sort of been reaching out to as many different people as possible to try to get different ideas and techniques on it, especially on classroom management."

Rachel and Her MT's Residency Year Experience

Rachel explained that from the beginning of her residency year, she and her MT established a routine to develop lessons. She shared, "She's been very flexible basically to kind of let me take plans and change them and use some of her resources but also supplement them... since the very beginning I have felt like we've been co-planning." Rachel explained that although

her MT did not necessarily need to plan out all of the lessons because they had been teaching the same content for a few years, they were "very accessible" and willing to help Rachel go through the lesson plans after school. While Rachel described that her MT helped her develop a greater understanding of making "[her content area] more accessible, by not using only [content-specific] terminology, but by supplementing with analogies, and metaphors, and images", she observed that her MT's unstructured teaching style did not work for her. She stated, "In terms of style, they don't really rely on procedures, and are definitely more disorganized than I would like to be, and they don't like grade and hand back papers in a reliable, consistent way."

When asked about the essential lessons learned in their residency, Becky and Kevin discussed the importance of building relationships early in the school year. This was not unimportant to Rachel; she demonstrated that she cares about her students throughout our interviews with her. However, her answer to this question focused on procedures and instructional strategies extensively, before she addressed the importance of relationships. Rachel described classroom management as her biggest challenge during her residency, while feeling most comfortable with planning and delivering instruction. By the end of her residency she stated, "I definitely feel more comfortable in front of the students," and explained that this comfort also extended to "planning more efficiently and knowing how to change [her] plans."

Mentor-Resident Relationship Post-Residency

Just as resident-MT relationships differed during the residency year, the extent to which residents and their MTs stayed in touch after the residency did as well. Among the three dyads, Becky had the strongest relationship with her MT during the residency year. Unsurprisingly, this relationship continued into her initial years as a classroom teacher. "We live in the same neighborhood. We talk pretty regularly." She explained that her MT shared all of their resources,

and she continued to use them when planning lessons. Similar to the residency year, their relationship remains both personal and professional. Comparatively, Kevin did not have as good of a relationship with his MT during the residency year. After completing the program, he continued to believe that they were not the best match. However, he described their relationship as remaining friendly. He shared, "I mean, yeah, we will meet up and will always be friends. It's good." Their relationship is more personal than professional, as Kevin shared that he prefers to seek out other colleagues to support his classroom practice.

Compared to Becky and Kevin, Rachel had the least communication with her MT following her residency year. Rachel shared that she is not in touch with her MT often, and commented, "The problems I'm having I don't think my MT could help me solve." She further noted that they "only really talk at [district-wide] professional development [meetings]." Her reflections on the residency experience with her MT are mostly positive; however, she also seemed to lament the pairing. She stated, "My MT wasn't very experienced," describing her MT as having the minimum amount of experience required for eligibility. Rachel commented that in many of the areas she has struggled with as a beginning teacher, such as classroom management, she did not feel her MT was significantly better than her at these things.

In summary, the three residents described unique learning experiences and relationships with their MTs. Becky enjoyed the status of a partner and collaborator with her MT and shared similar attitudes toward teaching and learning. They enjoyed a productive professional and personal relationship that was mutually beneficial. Kevin's MT took on a supervisory role and viewed Kevin as a student, rather than a co-partner in the classroom. His MT adhered to the coaching model to provide him with a productive learning experience. Even so, Kevin and his MT differed considerably in their teaching style, which led Kevin to figure out his own

preferences for teaching and learning. They maintained a relationship post-residency that became more personal rather than a continuation of a mentor-resident relationship. Similarly, Rachel's experience as a resident with her MT was affected by the limited teaching experience of her MT. This created a partnership similar to Becky's. However, Rachel perceived a difference in their approach to teaching and learning; she did not view her MT as someone with enough experience to help her navigate the initial years as a teacher.

Two Years after the Residency

Many teacher residency programs, including the one we explore here, were created to address teacher retention issues. We were interested in exploring how program graduates thought about their longevity in the classroom. The three teachers organically brought up how they viewed their future as a teacher during the first four interviews, and they were specifically asked about it at the conclusion of their final interview at the end of the second year of teaching. When asked about his future in teaching, Kevin indicated that he will at least complete his three-year service commitment to the school district and that he intends to remain in the field of education. He wants "to do something that involves bringing [students] out into nature. …something along a similar path, but maybe not an actual classroom teacher…" He explained that he has not made any plans to leave teaching but feels that his "lack of organization" and "inability to plan really well" will lead him to "get burned out really easily." Kevin responded that he has a positive and strong relationship with his students; however, this does not always translate to effective classroom management. He shared, "That's one of my struggles. I'm a very friendly person and the kids see that in me, and they don't really see me as an authoritative figure…they love me, but don't always listen." He indicated that he has made strides in communicating with parents and that his classroom management is better than it was

the first two years, but this is still a challenge. Kevin also described planning as an area in need of improvement. He stated, "…I'm not good at planning. I've always been a procrastinator my whole life… it's just still something that I always have to work on." When asked if he is in touch with his mentor, Kevin answers, "Not really.…we didn't have the best relationship. …it was good, but we had very different teaching styles." Kevin's challenges with planning and organization were persistent issues that he struggled with during his residency year and was documented consistently in the collaborative logs. By contrast, Becky identified classroom management as a continued area of growth. She stated, "You just have to figure out what your rules are going to be and how you're going to set the tone for the year," noting that "setting the tone goes a long way." She also found that planning her classroom with more structure has worked well. Becky is still in touch with her MT and noted that they continue to share resources with her and that she still relies on them for support. Becky is excited about the changes she will make in her classroom in the coming year and indicates that she plans to remain teaching though she was reluctant to say where.

Throughout the interviews over the three years, Rachel discussed how she saw her future in education. At the end of the residency year, she wanted to become a department chair one day, and pursue National Board Certification, indicating a desire to remain in the classroom long-term. However, throughout her first year of teaching, Rachel began to describe the longevity of her teaching career much differently. Halfway through her first year, she described feeling "grateful for [her] service agreement" that commits her to teaching in the school district for three years, noting that without this commitment it would be tempting some days to "move to [the suburbs] or just quit teaching altogether." Most of her frustration stemmed from her frustration with not meeting her expectations to do the job well enough,

though she understood that most teachers do not begin to truly become good teachers until around their third year.

By the end of her first year, Rachel stated that she "always thought of ECTR as a four-year commitment." She seemed prepared to remain in the classroom for the long-term just one year prior. However, by the end of her first year of teaching Rachel viewed staying in the classroom as a commitment to the service agreement she signed when she enrolled in the residency program. When we spoke with her at the end of year two, Rachel was more hopeful about her future in teaching. She said, "I do want to stay at this school, and I've been encouraged by this year because it's just been so much better. And so I'm hopeful that every year will continue to be a little better." She still mentioned her goals of becoming National Board Certified and eventually becoming a department chair; however, she saw herself being in the classroom for the foreseeable future.

All three of the teachers that we followed completed their service agreement with the teacher residency program. However, how they thought about their teaching careers during their first three years was closely connected to how they perceived their mentor match. Interview and log data indicated that Becky had the best relationship and match with her MT. She was also the most consistent of the three in discussing her future as a teacher as long-term. By contrast, both Kevin and Rachel indicated that they were not as satisfied with their matches; both discussed leaving the classroom after their three-year commitment. Although Rachel saw her career as being more long-term by the final interview, Kevin continued to imagine roles outside of the classroom that he might eventually pursue.

Discussion and Conclusion

Much of the discussion around teacher preparation is concerned with variation across

different models of preparation (Fraser & Lefty, 2018), and debates typically center on how

traditional models differ from alternative ones, or how teacher residencies differ from both. Our

work explored differences within one specific model of preparation. Although Becky, Kevin, and

Rachel were all prepared in the same teacher residency program and hired as teachers in the

same school district, their experiences differed in important ways. A previous study on success in

the residency year found that program stakeholders, including affiliated university professors and

teacher residency staff members, identified the MT as pivotal to the resident's experience

(Marshall et al., 2020). Identifying and exploring the impact of differences in resident

experiences with their MT remains important to understanding broader program impacts on

overall teaching success.

Compared to other models of preparation, the teacher residency model allows pre-

service teachers to spend more time in the classroom before becoming teachers of record.

As a result, residents are afforded more opportunities to encounter problems of practice

during their preparation (Garza & Harter, 2016). When residents have different

experiences with their MTs, this impacts the opportunities that they have to learn from

mistakes and engage in reflective practice (Reiman, 1999). Becky's MT was the most

flexible and the most willing to allow her to try new ideas in the classroom, Rachel's MT

was also flexible for most of the year. At the end of their second year of teaching, Becky

and Rachel described feeling hopeful about a long-term career and future in education.

The additional flexibility afforded by their MTs, combined with the yearlong pre-service

placement, allowed them more opportunities to develop pedagogical content knowledge,

which is situation specific (Willingham, 2018). All three of our cases described

challenges with classroom management in their first two years of teaching; indeed, this is

often a struggle for new teachers (Skiba & Rausch, 2013). However, of the three cases we studied, the two residents with the most flexible MTs had the fewest instruction-related challenges in their first years of teaching. Kevin's MT was the least flexible and the least willing to allow him to try new ideas. Many of his initial teaching struggles involved instructional planning, grading, and learning organizational strategies. That Kevin had fewer opportunities to try new ideas aligned with his strengths, comfort level, and vision of effective teaching during his residency was likely a contributing factor to the challenges he experienced as a new teacher.

These findings contribute to our understanding of how teacher residency programs develop teaching expertise and do so through triangulating multiple sources of data. One tension we found dealt with the nature of the relationship between Kevin and his MT. Interview data indicated a strained relationship throughout the residency year and significant philosophical differences between the two; however, log data indicated a more constructive relationship between them. It is possible that Kevin and his MT each perceived their relationship differently. Another possible explanation deals with the nature of the logs as a data source. They are jointly completed to reflect a collaborative reflective conversation between a resident and MT; however, a power dynamic does exist in this relationship. Accordingly, the logs may reflect more of the MTs' perspective than that of the residents. Had we only relied on interview data, we might have developed a different understanding than we did. The same is true if we had relied only on log data. A strength of this study is the use of multiple sources of data to understand the relationship between mentors and their residents.

The increasing popularity of residency programs needs to be met with empirical evidence

that residency programs lead (or do not lead) to the successful preparation of teachers (Barnum, 2017). This study explored the role of the match between residents and mentors in promoting professional growth. The findings should be seen in light of the limitations associated with this study. First, we draw upon three cases and multiple sources to examine the nature of residency experience on account of the resident-MT relationship. That we are unable to connect these experiences with outcomes (student achievement, teacher retention, job satisfaction) is a limitation of the study. Second, we rely on participant perceptions and descriptions of their experiences alone to make interpretations. We do not have observational data that would strengthen the claims and interpretations; however, the inclusion of multiple data sources mitigates the impact of this limitation to some extent. Finally, we note the limitation of only having three cases which impacts our ability to make larger claims about how resident-MT match influences residency experiences and associated outcomes.

While this work focused on three pre-service teachers prepared in a residency program, we believe that our findings are relevant for teacher preparation as a whole. In any model of preparation, the individual that a pre-service teacher will spend the most time learning from and with will be the MT. Therefore, the professional relationship between the pre-service teacher and their MT has important implications. Although there are limitations to this study, this is a first step in this line of research, and findings may inform future studies on the topic. Future studies could also explore MTs' understanding of, and comfort with, allowing the resident to take complete ownership in the classroom and how this aligns with residents' perceptions of their experience. In addition to informing future research, this study also has practical implications. Residency programs should be aware of the role the resident-MT match has on resident development.

Individuals who determine pairings of residents and MTs may also consider personality

traits, dispositions and experience that may lead to stronger matches.

Acknowledgment

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