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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Homegrown Teacher Project

Developing an Early Intervention Pipeline for Future Teachers of Color

by

Yadira Moreno

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2018

Homegrown Teacher Project:

Developing an Early Intervention Pipeline for Future Teachers of Color

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by

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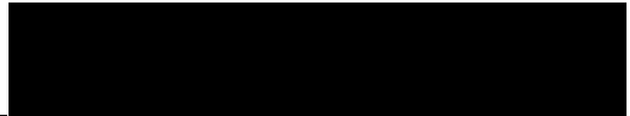
This dissertation written by Yadira Moreno, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

3/22/2018
Date

Dissertation Committee



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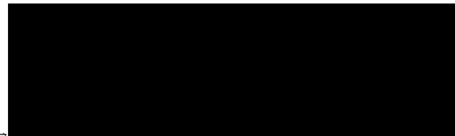

Rebecca Herr Stephenson, Ph.D., Committee Member

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DEDICATION

Para mi Papi y Mami, que toda la vida me inculcaron que "la educación vale más que el dinero." Gracias por enseñarme que todo se logra con trabajo, esfuerzo y el amor de Dios. Ustedes arriesgaron sus vidas por los sueños de oportunidades que tenían para sus hijos, Omar y yo. Por esto y mucho más, son mi motivación para seguir adelante. Gracias por su amor. Que Dios los bendiga siempre. Su hija que sueña ser el orgullo de ustedes. Los amo.

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ABSTRACT

Homegrown Teacher Project:

Developing an Early Intervention Pipeline for Future Teachers of Color

by

Yadira Moreno

The dissertation aims to explore a solution to address the cultural and racial gap between the teaching force and the student population in California. Homegrown teachers are teachers who return to their community where they were born and educated. Addressing the equity issues faced in public schools begins with exploring the benefits of teachers of color in the classroom.

This action research study followed five homegrown first-generation Latina teachers through a 3-month process of mentoring first-generation Latina sixth-graders who hope of entering the teaching profession in the future. The study was guided by critical pedagogy, a mentoring framework, the critical mentoring strategy in addition to social capital theory.

This dissertation documented the voices of the participants as they developed their mentoring relationship in the early intervention teacher pipeline. The challenges and experiences

were documented through observations, researcher's reflection, semistructured interviews, and a focus group.

The study revealed that, with appropriate preparation, students of color are more likely to choose a teaching career and return to their community to become homegrown teachers. The emerging themes of the study were that (a) culture and language shaped the mentoring relationship, (b) homegrown teachers were essential to mentoring students of color, (c) for Latinos, education was a family journey, (d) socializing students of color into career aspirations, (e) acculturation into the teaching profession—learning to become a teacher, and (f) time and gender were the major constraints; redefining future mentoring relationships.

This action research revealed the many benefits for teachers and students to develop critical mentoring relationships.

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

And if we fail, let us be clear that it will not be for the lack of know-how, but for the lack of determination to provide a quality education for all our young people.
--Duncan-Andrade, 2007

Since third grade, when I began volunteering in a kindergarten classroom, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. At that moment, I fell in love with the profession. I could observe the impact teachers instantly had on children; it was evident within the classrooms walls. I spent countless hours with the kindergarten students during my designated recess and lunch break. I ensured Mrs. Lee was always ready for the next school day by preparing materials needed for lessons and completing various tasks such as correcting student work.

Mrs. Lee was my mentor teacher. She welcomed me into her classroom each and every day for over 10 years. I would spend two or three hours after school with her daily. She validated my time with thank you cards, endless praise, and public recognition to other teachers. As a sixth-grader, I was given an exemplary volunteer award for over 1,000 hours of community service during my elementary years. This award was a reflection of my appreciation for the teaching profession and the mentoring process without even realizing it. I never knew Mrs. Lee was keeping track of our time together, but it was a remarkable honor to be acknowledged through this platform.

Volunteering continued through high school and during my home visits from college. During this time, I was unaware of how volunteering would create a mentoring relationship that would prepare me for my entire career. After college, I attended Mrs. Lee's retirement party. During this celebration, Mrs. Lee introduced me to the human resources director, who offered

me a teaching position in my home school district during the event because of the reputation I had gained through my volunteering experience. The teachers in the room had seen my dedication and skills for over 10 years. This experience was my bridge to the future, the social capital component, giving me the opportunity to be hired as a classroom teacher in my home school community. This was my first-hand experience with the power of mentoring, networking, and social capital that clearly changed my life.

Reflecting on these opportunities, I realized the advantage of being a homegrown teacher before I was even in the profession. As a volunteer in the community in which I was raised and educated, I was an asset to the teachers on campus for language translation and questions about the community. I noticed the racial divide between teachers and students. I quickly observed that teachers of color were underrepresented in my urban school community. It was obvious at the school that all the teachers were White and all the students were Latina/os. The main problem I could identify as a teenager was the impossible communication efforts between parents and teachers. This was when the teachers on campus instantly valued me. The teachers would ask Mrs. Lee if I could help them translate a face-to-face conversation with a parent or if I could call home for them. I was asked to translate hundreds of conversations and formal parent conferences for years. During the 1990s, Spanish was not heard from school personnel. As for me, I enjoyed seeing the pride on my teachers' faces when they would see me completing responsible teacher tasks. Many times, I pondered if it was because I exceeded the expectation of an urban school student or simply because they had been involved in my educational career and were witnessing the fruits of their labor within their own environment. They would walk around and introduce me to new teachers who did not know me as a student. I felt like a novelty item through this

experience. Regardless of this reality, Mrs. Lee's encouragement and mentoring, along with other exceptional teachers, served as the vehicle for me to succeed in college. Because of the love and admiration I had for the teaching profession, I would do anything to be a part of it in a formalized setting. I understood that my Spanish language and cultural experiences would be an advantage for me as a future teacher. I knew I would be successful because of the relationships I could develop with parents and students due to our common culture and experiences growing up as first-generation immigrants.

Urban schools should empower and provide educational opportunities directed specifically at students' needs. Programs that educate, support, and encourage the community to visualize opportunities beyond their community are possible through deliberate exposure to successful mentoring opportunities. Due to the experiences I gained through volunteering in a kindergarten classroom at a young age, I learned how to have the confidence to interact with teachers, adults, and students in a school setting. Being exposed to the profession at an early age allowed me to learn about instruction and practices in the context of the school classroom.

Naturally, I become a homegrown urban school teacher. I was a daily inspiration to my students in the classroom. Our culture united our classroom. Spanish was used to bring comprehension of the English language, and experiences were shared in both English and Spanish. We created a classroom community based on trust and collaboration that contributed to academic success. Being able to articulate powerful statements to my students gave me access to their personal trust and to their families. Phrases that I would share were unique and exclusive to homegrown teachers and first-generation Latinas. Time after time, the students in my class would say affirmative statements such as, "I want to be like you." I believe this statement was

because they could truly *see* themselves in me. I was a mirror of opportunity for their future career.

My passion for serving as a homegrown teacher is two-fold. It is an opportunity to give back to the community because of the opportunities it has provided me as an urban school student and because it is a solution to transforming urban schools by creating a mentoring and support system for future teachers of color through an early intervention pipeline. I succeeded because I was cared for through a quality mentoring relationship and, as a result, I had early access to the profession. I understood the expectations of teaching, school culture, teacher expectations, and student learning in my teenage years versus a traditional student teaching experience as a young adult. This opportunity needs to be given to more students who desire to teach in urban schools. Teaching in urban schools is a special calling to serve the whole child. This calling must be developed as early as possible because of the high demands placed on teachers in hard-to-staff urban schools.

Fast forward to today. I am now an urban elementary school principal in the same district I attended as a child, a *homegrown principal.* With this privilege, I consistently witness the special connection homegrown Latina teachers have with the young Latina/o students at my school site. The school demographics are 91% Latina/o and 96% free and reduced lunch. Homegrown teachers contribute to the positive development of self-identity for urban students. This bond contributes not only to academic growth, but also to social and emotional growth.

Through informal conversations, the participant teachers and I expressed interested in mentoring sixth-grade students who were interested in the teaching profession as their future career. This interest stemmed from acknowledging the problem of practice in the community, we

viewed mentoring as a way to give back to the community we serve, and in the future contribute to diversifying the teacher profession. Through our conversations about the need to help support urban youth, we made a commitment to work together to change the problem of practice. Together we addressed the issue by committing time to mentor sixth-grade girls interested in teaching. I was appointed the lead researcher in this action research project with five other homegrown teachers at Miranda Elementary School. The project allowed the protégées to gain insight in the teaching profession. Protégées developed a relationship with a mentor. This relationship contributed to the development of teacher knowledge, networking, and social capital.

As a homegrown school principal this launch of an early mentoring program to serve as a pipeline for sixth-grade students who have an expressed interest in teaching is modeled after my experience in urban elementary schools. I have named this mentoring program *The Homegrown Teacher Project*. It was the mentoring and support from teachers in my early years in elementary school that allowed me, a first-generation Mexican American student, to navigate the academic requirements to attend a prestigious 4-year university.

The goal of The Homegrown Teacher Project is to provide the same support I received through mentoring in an urban elementary school to those students who see themselves as part of the future teaching force in urban schools. The goal of The Homegrown Teacher Project was to prepare future teachers who can be successful in urban schools by providing firsthand experience through a mentoring relationship. The hope is that the mentoring relationship develops into a trusting relationship that will flourish throughout the years with a homegrown teacher on campus. This will support the urban school students to feel confident about the teaching

profession and achieving their fullest potential. Most importantly, by investing in urban youth, this project seeks to contribute to meeting the needs of the 6,226,737 diverse learners in California classrooms to impact the diversity of the teaching force (California Department of Education, 2016).

Background of the Study

Demographic and Democratic Imperative

Achinstein and Ogawa (2011) clearly bring to light the urgency to increase diversity in the teacher work force. The demographic imperative is evident in the disproportionate numbers between students of color in classrooms and the teachers who educate them. In 2016, the California Department of Education reported that 75% of the students are non-White in kindergarten through 12th grade. Hispanics make up 54% of the student population, and the other nondominant ethnicities, such as African American, Asian, Filipino, American Indian, and Pacific Islander, make up 21%. White students make up 24% of the student population. Although students in California become more diverse by the numbers, they experience a primarily White teaching population (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, & Freitas, 2010; Villegas & Irvine, 2010; Villegas, Storm, & Lucas, 2012).

The *democratic imperative* refers to the failure to serve the educational needs of students of color in public education (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010). This imperative encourages a closer look at identifying ways to improve learning conditions for urban youth by hiring teachers of color who may be able to support culturally and linguistically diverse students (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011). By understanding the characteristics and experiences that teachers of color bring to the classroom, a change in student performance and expectations may

be achieved. Achinstein and Ogawa (2011) reported that teachers of color, when compared to White teachers, positively impact standardized test scores, attendance, retention, advanced-level course enrollment, and college aspiration culture within the students. These findings do not imply that White teachers cannot be effective with students of color or that all teachers of color have the same sense of urgency and cultural understanding for students of color (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011). Nevertheless, the discrepancy in the numbers could be one factor that contributes to today's youth not having opportunities to be successful in school.

Urban schools should be places in the community that both empower and provide educational opportunities to students of color (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). These opportunities should include programs that educate, support, and create a college-bound culture and develop college readiness skills for urban youth (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). In addition to this college bound culture, it is imperative to ensure a diverse, qualified teaching force. The population of students of color is growing exponentially, thereby creating more racially diverse schools and a need for representation in the classroom from a diverse population of teachers (Delpit, 2006). However, teachers of color continue to be underrepresented in urban schools (Johnson & Bolshakova, 2015; Partee, 2014). Irizarry (2016) wrote, "Because many communities are segregated by race/ethnicity as well as socioeconomic status, schools are often the first places where Latino youth encounter discrimination based on race, language, and/or class" (p. 28). To ensure that students' of color engage with teachers of color in the classroom, an aggressive intervention is needed to ensure they are prepared to enter the teaching profession (Irvine, 2003).

In urban schools, recruiting and supporting students who seek a future in education will help to diversify and prepare teachers to enter urban schools. By creating mentoring relationships and allowing students to participate in opportunities to understand the profession (e.g., volunteering in a classroom), students and teachers will continue to foster their passion by their commitment to one another (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this dissertation is the cultural and racial gap between the teaching force and the student population (Achinstein et al., 2010; Villegas et al., 2012). Addressing the equity issues in public schools begins by discussing cultural proficiency and identifying institutionalized racism within schools in an effort to create transformational change (Nieto, 2010). This transformation of public education requires intentional and deliberate change in school culture, the teaching force, and the educational system. Teachers of color are significantly underrepresented in public schools, while the population of students of color nationally continues to grow rapidly (Partee, 2014). The gap is created not only because of the lack of students of color graduating and seeking teaching careers, but also due to the high turnover of teachers of color in urban schools (Achienstein et al., 2010; Bireda & Chait, 2011).

To ensure that students' of color become teachers of color in urban classrooms, an aggressive intervention is needed. By 2030, it is expected that students of color will become the numerical majority in elementary and secondary schools (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Bireda & Chait, 2011; Irizarry, 2007; Villegas et al., 2012). In 2016, the California Department of Education reported that Hispanic teachers do not have the same representation as students in the state. In 2016, 65% of California teachers were White, compared to 19% Hispanic. In Mina

County, California (a pseudonym), a densely populated city where the action research took place, the numbers become even more concerning, with 76% White teachers and 12% Hispanic teachers representing the county (California Department of Education, 2016). These numbers highlight the urgency to diversify the teaching profession.

Urban schools face high teacher turnover and are difficult to staff due to common issues associated with large urban communities (Achinstein et al., 2010; Bireda & Chait, 2010). Urban schools struggle to hire and retain qualified teachers, and very often they are not able to provide academic rigor for their students (Milner, 2012). Urban teachers face many challenges, including maintaining beneficial student-teacher relationships, increasing the achievement of students of color, being responsive to the cultural needs of urban youth, and dealing with the issues surrounding poverty in urban schools. Homegrown teachers provide many added benefits for students of color in the classrooms because students need to see teachers who are reflections of themselves (Irizzary, 2007; Nieto, 2010). Teachers of color serve as cultural translators for students of color; as such, these homegrown teachers make connections to students' cultural background and communities (Irvine, 2003; Irvine & Villegas, 2010; Rogers-Ard, Knaus, Epstein, & Mayfield, 2012). Typically, the teacher can speak the students' home language and communicate with parents or guardians first hand. This ability is mainly because, like the student, growing up in the urban community means the teacher is a reflection of the students' language and culture. These benefits contribute to the academic success and emotional well-being of urban youth.

Latina/os lack of academic achievement in urban schools is evident due to the underrepresentation of students enrolled in classrooms that satisfy college-level requirements.

This problem is better known as *tracking*. Tracking is the grouping of students based on their perceived academic ability (Irizarry, 2016). Dropout rates are higher among Latina/os, with only one of two projected to graduate from high school (Irizarry, 2016). It is evident that students' academic needs are not being met in urban schools; instead, they are given access to classes that do not give them credit to even consider higher education. The system of tracking remains unchallenged because students are not able to choose their classes; instead, guidance counselors are given the power to choose the track for the student with little input from the student or their family (Irizarry, 2016). This limits their life choices (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Irizarry, 2016). The data suggest that schools are preparing Latina/o students for low-wage jobs (Cammarota, 2008). Brown (2007) made the claim that Latina/os who leave high school should be termed "pushouts" versus "dropouts" due to the school co-constructing their reasons for leaving high school and not feeling successful to achieve not only academically, but also in their future.

Hiring a teaching force that is culturally proficient and that understands the unique needs of urban schools and students is a necessity in today's classrooms (Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010). Cultural proficiency is evident when there is an effective interaction with other cultures, resulting in acceptance and individual transformation. Culturally proficient teachers have personal values that allow for the acceptance of diverse communities and students, enabling meaningful interaction to occur (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009). This profile is typically a characteristic of homegrown teachers who grew up in diverse neighborhoods, and understand the challenges and perceptions of urban communities (Irizarry, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

This dissertation documented the launch of The Homegrown Teacher Project, which created mentoring relationships between teachers of color and sixth-grade students in urban schools. Through the development of a mentoring relationship, homegrown teachers gave back to their community. The term *homegrown teacher* is given to teachers who return to the community where they were raised and educated (Irizarry, 2007). The mentoring relationships were formed between a homegrown teacher and his or her protégé. The word protégé was deliberately used due to the word *mentee* denoting a deficit connotation in language and creating a hierarchal role in the relationship (Weiston-Serdan, 2017).

The Homegrown Teacher Project served as an early intervention pipeline for homegrown teachers to mentor urban school sixth-graders interested in the teaching profession. This mentoring relationship could potentially support diversifying the teaching profession by inspiring the sixth-grade protégées to access college and enter the teaching profession through the experiences and information gained with their mentors. The goal of developing and understanding the educational road map for the protégé is imperative before they enter college. The protégées were also provided with academic advisement to support their success in middle school and high school. Early outreach is key to be academically eligible to apply to a university after high school while growing up in urban communities. The most difficult encounter for urban youth is navigating the college application and standardized testing requirements. This mentorship will inform the students of all the information needed to succeed in achieving their future goal of teaching in their home community.

The purpose of the study was to document the voices and experiences of teachers and students during the development and growth of their mentoring relationships. Documenting their experience supports the recommendations to create early intervention pipelines to recruit future homegrown teachers. The Homegrown Teacher Project documented the challenges and opportunities of first-generation teachers of color mentoring sixth-grade girls who aspire to be teachers like them. By providing a mentor and beginning to expose them to teaching opportunities at a young age, the hope was to foster love, responsibility, and dedication to the urban teacher profession. This process was documented through an action research study. The documentation included observations, researcher's reflection notes, interviews, and a focus group designed specifically for the mentors. By documenting their experiences, the investigation offered recommendations as a strategy for other school districts to invest in early intervention in order to encourage future teachers of color, resulting in diversifying the future teaching force.

Research Questions

This study focused on the experiences of the participants in The Homegrown Teacher Project. The project is an early intervention teacher pipeline project grounded in critical mentoring between teachers and sixth-grade girls at Miranda Elementary School. The notion of a "homegrown teacher" was the foundation for this intervention program or critical pipeline, in which students of color interested in a future career as a teacher were paired with a teacher of color who is teaching in the community in which they were born and raised. In order to understand the challenges and opportunities with creating a homegrown teaching pipeline, the following questions were the focus of the study:

1. How do homegrown Latina teachers, who are mentoring students to become future teachers, and their protégées conceptualize the challenges and opportunities of this early intervention pipeline?
2. How does The Homegrown Teacher Project provide experiences to prepare sixth-graders for their future career as teachers?

Significance of the Study

This study revealed that, with appropriate preparation, students of color are more likely to choose a teaching career and return to teach in their urban communities (Clewell & Villegas, 1998). Purposeful recruitment efforts that seek future teachers who are likely to succeed even in challenging schools can help increase retention of teachers of color (Bireda & Chait, 2011). Early intervention is needed to attract, retain, and promote future teachers of color (Bireda & Chait, 2011; Partee, 2014). This study also provided insights into the impact an early intervention pipeline has to diversify the teaching force and recruit teachers of color for the profession.

The uniqueness of urban youth requires support beyond the school building to meet the needs of the students and the community. This action research study will prepare future teachers to understand the profession and the college requirements to enter a 4-year institution and a teacher credentialing program. Students of color are in need of qualified teachers (Oakes & Rogers, 2006). Qualified teachers in urban schools are aware of the challenges and strive to build student-teacher relationships, support academic achievement, and provide a special interest to the cultural needs of the learner.

The vision for this action research study was for The Homegrown Teacher Project to inspire urban youth to develop their passion. By focusing on developing urban youth's teaching interest in elementary school, this project allows students to set goals, in order to develop during middle school and high school. Urban youth need this type of experience, responsibility, and focus. This study will provide the protégées who have expressed an interest in teaching, information about the requirements to enter college and teaching credential programs. Planning for college begins in middle school so that students can be academically eligible in high school. The protégées also volunteer and gain invaluable real-world teaching experiences in the classrooms with their mentors. Through this commitment and relationship, the goal for the protégées was to see themselves as confident future teachers in their own community. The protégées learned, grew, and experienced the field of education at an early age. This experience was significant for the protégées as they cultivate a powerful long-term goal.

For urban school districts serving students of color, this action research project should inspire a direct commitment to serve students in creative ways. Urban youth need realistic solutions for dealing with problems that need to be addressed (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008). Diversifying the teaching profession is vital to the success of urban schools and their youth. As principals strive to find teachers who can relate to diverse learners with social and emotional needs, this project may reveal that the future work force is already in the building. By providing guidance and mentoring at an early age, students of color could be the answer to supporting communities of color and urban schools to grow into their full potential. Homegrown teachers are an inspiration to both parents and students in the community. By seeing a

professional come from their community, parents and the students can see the connection between home and the future success of their child.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used to guide the action research project was Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, a mentoring framework (Kram 1983; Weiston-Serdan, 2017), and Stanton-Salazar's (1997) social capital theory. Critical pedagogy grounds the work of mentoring in social justice. Social justice is the notion of examining the distribution of wealth, privilege, and power within society. The mentoring framework (Kram, 1983) served as a foundation for understanding the development of mentoring relationships in urban public schools. Relationships are an integral part of highly effective mentoring relationships between mentor and protégé (Kram, 1983). Weiston-Serdan (2017) urges the significance of critical mentoring; a strategy to supporting urban youth with a mentor who identifies with their race, class, and gender in order to create a relationship that is grounded in trust. Stanton-Salazar's (1997) social capital framework discusses how developed relationships between adults and youth are the networks that create connectedness. These networks create social structures supporting the development of social capital for youth. The Homegrown Teacher Project created the conditions for the mentors and protégées to develop relationships that are critical to the cognitive, professional, emotional, and social development of the protégé. Today, mentorship is viewed as a powerful intervention for urban youth developing social capital (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). The lens of critical pedagogy provides the foundation and ideological rational behind investing in urban youth through mentoring relationships with a caring homegrown teacher.

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy draws on critical educational theory and cultural studies to examine schools and their history. Identifying the social and political functions of the dominant society and how they are evident in school practices. Critical pedagogy leads to an understanding of the world through a social justice lens. Critical pedagogy challenges the assumptions that schools serve to support social and economic mobility (Freire, 1970). It reveals that education can be both emancipatory and alienating, particularly for youth of color. Critical pedagogy insists that schools investigate the cultural and historical process, allowing students to be seen through their race, class, and gender grouping (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). This lens is urgent to understanding urban schools and their function in the community.

Freire (1970) proclaimed that the way to move away from a world of oppression is through praxis and a commitment to transformation. By confronting the culture of domination, awareness begins to support an understanding of the perpetuated cycle. Critical pedagogy supports the notion of recognizing conditions of inequality in society and ensuring this awareness is a motivating practice to transform urban schools (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Freire (1970) wrote, “It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves” (p. 56). Freire reminds of the struggle to transform everyday practices. Understanding structures that reproduce or create social inequalities is the first step to action for social transformation (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Critical pedagogy is challenging the reproductive role of schools and their burden on urban youth. Change begins when awareness of oppressive conditions can be identified and an

active commitment to this disruption takes place within schools (Darder, 2015). Critical pedagogy encourages examining how freedom, choice, and dialogue can come together to support this commitment to change. This change is also known as *liberation*. Three components of critical pedagogy support the importance of an early intervention teacher pipeline in schools are: (a) praxis, (b) dialogue, and (c) critical consciousness.

Mentoring Framework

This dissertation will also be grounded in Kram's (1983) mentorship framework to understand the growth and development of relationships between mentors and protégées. Kram (1983) stated, "Mentor relationships have great potential to facilitate career advancement and psychosocial development in both early and middle adulthood by providing a vehicle for accomplishing these primary tasks" (p. 608).

Kram's research findings present four stages that are developed within a mentoring experience. The stages delineate the organizational factors that cause movements from one phase to the next and illuminate how mentor relationships can unfold over time. Each individual is influenced by the relationship at a different phase. The phases are as follows.

Initiation. Kram (1983) shared that during the first six months to a year the relationship is almost in a stage of fantasy. The protégé sees the positive impact the mentor will have on his/her future. They are supporting and guiding the interactions and start to feel a positive identification with the mentor.

Cultivation. According to Kram (1983), relationships are tested and continue to unfold as the relationship starts to strengthen. With relationship nurturing, the mentor's modeling starts to influence the protégé. During this phase, the protégé becomes optimistic of his/her future as

they understand their role in their environment. In Kram’s (1983) research, she noticed relationships at this stage enable the mentor to truly empower the protégées. Kram (1983) also stated, “The relationship is far richer than anticipated, and the interpersonal bond is far more intimate and personally meaningful” (p. 617).

Separation. Mentoring leads to independence and autonomy of each other during the third phase. Kram (1983) stated that the separation phase is both structural and psychological. Timing is important, because if the separation occurs prematurely, it could cause anxiety. This phase is critical to the development of self, since it will provide the opportunity to demonstrate the benefits and impact of the relationship and showcase talents developed through the relationship.

Redefinition. In the last phase, Kram (1983) indicated, the mentor and protégé relationship has reached a conclusion and becomes more of a friendship. Both individuals continue to have contact with one another but in a more informal setting.

Mentoring has great potential to facilitate career advancement for urban youth. Through the phases of mentoring, skills and knowledge are shared to enhance the growth opportunities of the mentee (Allen-Sommerville, 1994). All stages of progression are unique, depending on the growth and time it takes to develop trust and awareness of one another in the relationship.

Critical Mentoring

Critical mentoring is described as mentoring augmented by a critical consciousness reached through the framework of critical pedagogy that creates an action to support the work with urban youth (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Critical mentoring is the essential change needed in traditional mentoring. This change is necessary because it challenges deficit-based notions in

traditional hierarchal mentoring relationships. This approach to mentoring states actions between mentor and protégé should be informed by critical pedagogy (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Through this focus, critical mentoring includes youth voice, power, and choice (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). These characteristics are essential when working with urban youth, as they learn to be resilient and develop their place in the world. This resiliency builds their confidence to succeed in the future.

In a traditional mentoring relationship, Kram (1983) used the word *protégé* synonymously for mentee throughout her work to discuss the participant in the mentoring relationship. This framework defines a mentoring relationship as consisting of a junior person, the protégé, paired with a senior, more experienced colleague known as the *mentor* (Murphy & Kram, 2014). However, in critical mentoring, the word intentionally used is protégé. According to Weiston-Serdan (2017), the term mentee connotes deficit, as opposed to protégé, which points to a less hierarchical relationship. By using the term protégé, deficit thinking language is removed and relationship development and collaboration are promoted. In this way, collaboration is emphasized—as opposed to fixing or changing the individual. As such, from here forward, the word protégé will be used throughout the document in order to support a critical consciousness about the role of language in this work.

Critical mentoring is intended to address race, ethnicity, and culture in mentoring relationships and to intentionally provide same-race matches for youth to have same-race models (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). In education, in order to support future teachers of color, same-race mentoring is essential for Latina students growing up in urban public schools. Mentoring

relationships have the ability to change education, career, and even life trajectories of youth for mentoring to continue to be an untapped resource (Weiston-Serdan, 2017).

Social Capital

People who are in dialogue have access to social capital. Social capital is the resources and information attained from mentoring relationships. Understanding the power that relationships have to influence others' social capital is essential when supporting Latina/o youth. Social capital helps mentors develop voice and social agency through an equal relationship that achieves trust. Mentoring can be the vehicle that provides sharing information between mentor and protégé. The goal of mentoring is to close social capital gaps between mentor and protégées throughout the development of the relationship (Smith, 2007). These gaps can be cultural, institutional, socioeconomic, and higher education differences. The mentor is crucial in transferring knowledge and developing human capital in the protégé.

Stanton-Salazar (2011) discussed social networks for students of color as their route to privilege and power. He stated that student success is contingent upon interaction and engagement with people who control access to resources in school (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). This development and awareness of power and privilege can be accessed through institutional agents. Awareness of institutional agents as individuals who are positioned to provide Latina/o youth institutional support through access of resources, opportunities, and privilege is crucial in bridging resources to support their future success (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Institutional agents are defined as adults who are positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support for others (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The role of an institutional agent is to share resources,

privilege, or services with others who do not have access to this information and that can facilitate the success or social structure understanding for others (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Teachers take on these roles in urban schools as they have multistranded relationships with Latina/o youth. Stanton-Salazar (2011) defined this relationship as one in which the teacher is also the co-parent, counselor, social worker, mentor, and institutional agent. Mentors are institutional agents who support their protégées with navigating the educational system in these types of multistranded relationships. Mentors can identify how the educational system works for some students and not for others (Nieto, 2010). As institutional agents, mentors reconceptualize their role, to disrupt patterns that do not support students of color and disrupt social order through their actions and advice to their protégé (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Mentors are aware of the structures needed to thrive in social conditions and have made a commitment to transfer this knowledge to their protégé. Transferring this knowledge to their protégé and developing their own social capital contributes to school achievement and belonging (Nieto, 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Teachers who take on the role as mentors or institutional agents assume an invaluable place in the life of Latina/o youth (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Using Stanton-Salazar's framework of social capital for Latina/o youth, the Homegrown Teacher Project could be the vehicle to create these conditions for institutional agents to communicate and develop social capital. Through contact and communication, objectives can be met through the mentoring relationship within the Homegrown Teacher Project.

By understanding critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) as the foundation of the action research study and Kram's (1983) mentoring framework and critical mentoring (Weiston-Serdan,

2017) to guide relationships, The Homegrown Teacher Project allowed mentors and protégées to disrupt conditions of urban school students through the development of social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). This disruption created an awareness of the protégées' full potential because of the commitment and positive influences from their institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). This platform used social capital to create conditions of change in schools. By honoring the union of these frameworks, this platform grounded the work for an action research study.

Research Design

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative data methodologies guided the action research study because its central focus is to understand a social problem as viewed from the perspective of the research participants and the research facilitator (Flick, 2014; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Qualitative methodologies support critical pedagogy—one framework of the current study—as it gives voice to the participants involved in the research process. The participants co-construct meaning during the investigation with the research facilitator. This research allows for dialogue and an emphasis on praxis in a research environment.

Qualitative methodologies allowed for validation of reflection. Flick (2014) described qualitative research as a vehicle to becoming a part of the knowledge. The goal of the data collection is to provide an accurate collection of the perceived challenges and opportunities of an early intervention teacher pipeline from the mentor and protégé perspective observations, interviews and a focus group will be collected throughout the study. The research facilitator will use an observation protocol (Appendix A) for reflection on action and in action (Hendricks, 2006).

Action Research

Due to the complexity of studying teachers and students in their environment, action research design was utilized to collect the voice and experience of practitioners in the field. Action research created the conditions for the research facilitator to use qualitative research methodologies to collect multiple data sets from the study. Craig (2009) defined action research as (a) focus on a social problem in the practitioners' environment, (b) collaborative in nature with other practitioners who have identified the same structural problem, (c) a cyclical process to improve the data collection process, (d) reflective in practice through the action research cycle, and (e) include an action plan to support the problem being investigated in the field. These steps indicate action research being democratic, supporting the participation of others, equitable, acknowledging the worth of the people involved in the research, liberating, providing freedom from oppressive conditions, and enhancing, allowing people to express themselves freely (Stringer, 2014). The values of action research reflect the framework of critical pedagogy, emphasizing the Freirean (1970) principles of dialogue and collaboration.

Research Setting

Toribio Elementary School District was a large urban school district that educated over 18,000 students in the TK–6 grades. The school district educated mostly Latina/o students in the downtown area of a densely populated city. Many students were first-generation students. Due to the centralized location of the city, many immigrants choose to live in the city because of the high availability of jobs in such a concentrated area. Seventy-eight percent of Toribio Elementary School District's students qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. Seventy-four percent were English language learners, with 94% of them speaking Spanish as their home

language. Nine percent of the students were identified as homeless (California Department of Education, 2016).

The action research study took place at Miranda Elementary School, a preschool through sixth-grade elementary school serving over 1,060 students. This elementary school was the largest of 24 schools in the Toribio School District. Miranda Elementary was on a five-track year-round school calendar and had 40 classroom teachers. The students were 91% Hispanic or Latina/o. Eighty six percent of the students in transitional kindergarten (TK) through sixth were classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 92% of the students were on the free and reduced lunch program. In comparison to other similar schools in the county, Miranda Elementary was unique due to the racial composition of teachers of color at the school site.

In 2015, the California Department of Education reported that Mina County teachers were 76% White and 12% Hispanic (California Departments of Education, 2016). At Miranda Elementary School, the data indicate a significantly higher percent of teachers of color. The California Department of Education reported in 2016 that 48% of the teachers were White, 35% Hispanic, 15% Asian, 1% Black, and 1% declined to respond for Miranda Elementary School. These data report that the Hispanic teacher population at Miranda Elementary School is three times higher than the California data.

Participants

Through informal collaboration and analysis of school dynamics during the 2016–2017 academic year, a group of homegrown Latina teachers and myself, the principal, became cognizant that the school had a large number of Latina homegrown teachers who played the role of cultural translators (Irvine, 2003). Over the course of the year through on-going discussion,

these particular Latina teachers expressed interest in nurturing some of the elementary school students who aspire to be future teachers.

The participants in this action research project were five Latina female teachers as mentors, and five sixth-grade Latina female students as the protégées from Miranda Elementary School. As the principal investigator, I led the research process—documenting the mentoring sessions. Pseudonyms have been given to protect the participants and ensure they are not identifiable to anyone but the research facilitator. The participants have chosen fictional names.

Sampling Criteria and Procedures for Recruitment

This action research utilized purposeful sampling criteria to select the homegrown teachers. The criteria for the homegrown teachers included: (a) identified as a first-generation female Latina teacher, (b) attended an urban school in Mina County as an elementary student, and (c) taught at Miranda Elementary for at least two years, and (d) that teachers proposed and volunteered, free of coercion or pressure, to become a mentor and part of the research study. This unique sample was based on the research findings of the positive impact that homegrown teachers have in urban classrooms (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Irizarry, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010).

The protégées were chosen using a purposeful sampling. The criteria of protégé selection included: (a) sixth-grade Latina female student; (b) interested in the teaching profession as indicated in the open-ended sentence frame during the elementary schools college week activity (Appendix E); (c) ability to write to the prompt, "I want to be a teacher because…" from their classroom assignment (Appendix E); (d) currently attending Miranda Elementary School;(e)

have parent or guardian permission received through informed consent at the informational meeting with the research facilitator, and (f) student consented to participate in the study.

Students' written responses to the prompt, "I want to be a teacher because…" were shared with the mentors to match the protégées. The mentors and facilitator worked collaboratively to pair mentors with their protégé. The mentors were assigned to a protégé, in order to have one-on-one sessions. Interested participants not matched to a mentor worked as a group with the research facilitator and still received access to mentoring activities and the college workshop. The goal of the study was to not turn away any interested student in the teaching profession.

Gender

The limitation of gender and not having boys interested in the teaching profession was not only a limitation in the study but also the reality of gender norms within the teaching profession. The data sample did not yield any interested sixth-grade boys in the teaching profession. The study shed light to the disproportionate numbers between male and female teachers not only as interested by future students but also within the profession. As of 2013, females made up 76% of the teaching profession. In elementary schools, the percent increases to 89% of teachers being female (Goldring, Gray, Westat, & Broughman, 2013). The gender paradox is a result of the feminization of the teaching profession (Blount, 1999; Goldstein, 2014, Mertz, 2006).

Methods of Data Collection

To document the launch of The Homegrown Teacher Project, qualitative data were collected through multiple data sets in the field. The research facilitator used observations,

research reflection notes, interviews, and a mentor focus group to understand the perceptions and thoughts of the participants as they experienced in The Homegrown Teacher Project.

Observations and Reflection Notes

Observations were conducted to understand the complexities of the mentoring relationship. Through observations, the research facilitator analyzed interactions and conversations through the use of an observation protocol design based on the literature review findings (Appendix A). Observations are methods of data collection that involve all the senses (Flick, 2014). The researcher's reflection notes were written immediately after the session to allow for reflection and documentation.

Weekly mentoring sessions. Mentors and protégées met weekly for 30 minutes after school in the teachers' classrooms. During the mentoring session, the mentor and protégé engaged in activities based on the California Teaching Standards. The themes focused on objectives and tasks for the protégé participant to begin to understand her vision as a future teacher and the career. Planned mentor/protégé activities were based on the following themes: educational vision, classroom organization, classroom management, and curriculum and lesson planning. The Homegrown Teacher Project engaged the participants for a period of three months. As the research facilitator, I observed the mentoring sessions using the observation tool for a minimum of three sessions for each relationship (Appendix A). Once the session was completed, I would use a researcher's reflection journal to instantly record my thoughts on the sessions. The observations and journals were both coded for data collection.

College workshop. The protégées also attended a single 60-minute workshop with a high school counselor from the local district. The purpose of the workshop was to learn about high

school requirements for college and understand how grades, GPA, and A-G requirements matter to prepare them to attend a university. The school counselor, homegrown herself, had consistently worked with the research facilitator during college week at Miranda Elementary to deliver the message that planning early increases the chances to attend a university.

Semistructured Interviews

The interviews were conducted with all 10 participants. Primary data were acquired from interviews with key participants (Stringer, 2014). The interviews allowed for the participants to communicate with the research facilitator in their own words how they experienced their participation in the action research study. Merriam (1998) stated that interviews allow the primary researcher to investigate opinions, feelings, and knowledge. The technique to collect data was semistructured to promote a conversation between the research facilitator and the participants. These interviews are common when the research facilitator is able to gain trust of the participants through the action research setting (Craig, 2009). Through the relationship of the research facilitator and the participants, the interviews provided valuable information for the inquiry process. All participants were interviewed individually. The interviews took approximately 45 minutes. Interview questions for the participants can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C.

Mentor Focus Group

As collaborators of the research, the focus group ensured flexibility and objectivity between the mentors and the research facilitator. Flick (2014) shared that objectivity through a focus group is the mediation between the participants, this way there is not one person who is dominating the conversation, and the entire group is contributing their thoughts about the social

problem. Focus groups support the checks and balances of data, allowing diverse views to be discussed with all the participants (Flick, 2014). The focus group allowed the exchange of information around the literature review themes about the success of mentoring. The focus group questions are crafted around the findings of the literature themes (Appendix D).

Methods of Data Analysis

Data analysis for action research is grounded in inductive analysis of the findings. Data are collected and analyzed throughout the study with the goal to extract themes and codes from the findings to draw conclusions (Flick, 2014). The uniqueness of action research is that it is an ongoing cycle of inquiry used to ensure that data are analyzed as they are collected versus traditionally reading the data after the study has come to a close (Hendricks, 2017). Stringer (2014) conveyed that the continuous cycle of inquiry supports the research facilitator to think and reflect throughout the study and while analyzing the data. This stage allows for the organization of ideas and concepts throughout the study (Stringer, 2014). Consistently analyzing and thinking about the data allows changes to be made to support the key findings of the research (Hendricks, 2017). The cycle of inquiry in action research can be seen as reducing data, interpreting data, and studying the data to identify themes and patterns (Hendricks, 2017). The more structured data analysis is completed at the end of the study when codes are being developed to analyze text (Hendricks, 2017). This process supports reflection in practice to ensure the data is valid.

Limitations

The limitations of the Homegrown Teacher Project were sample size, gender, and ethnicity of the participants. These limitations were due to the mentors’ and protégées’

characteristics and demographics at Miranda Elementary School. Homegrown teachers were not common in schools because of the scarcity of teachers of color in the profession. For this reason, the sample size, although small in number, actually represents a large number of homegrown teachers in one school. It is not typical for first-generation Latinas to all be teaching within one school.

The self-reporting qualitative measures were also a limitation, as the mentor and protégées reported their reflections, feelings, and assumptions of the mentoring relationship and experience through the interview process with the researcher. The teachers also participated in a focus group to member check their perceived challenges. Selection bias was also present due to the study taking place within the school site where I had been the principal for the past 3 years, with teachers with whom I have had a professional relationship during that time. Due to the data collection period being three months, the time frame also prevented the documentation of the long-term effects of the mentoring program.

As a homegrown protégé, teacher, and administrator myself, I have experienced the benefits of a mentoring relationship first hand, and the support it had for me as a young adult who was hopeful of becoming a teacher. I recognized that my positionality and biases can contribute to data collection of other mentor and protégé experiences during The Homegrown Teacher Project mentoring sessions.

I recognized that observing the mentoring sessions is only a snapshot of the development of the stages of relationships. While it would be ideal to have frequent observations, because of the length of the study, the observations only represented a three-month documentation of the mentoring sessions between the mentors and protégées.

Delimitations

Delimitations of The Homegrown Teacher Project are that the homegrown teachers at Miranda Elementary School restricted the sample size. The mentors had committed to a mentoring relationship with the protégées, with the same sense of urgency for transforming urban schools as the research facilitator. It is important to acknowledge their commitment to creating change for urban youth and the teaching profession. The commitment to inspire and lead students of color to become teachers of color will impact the future of the educational system as an entire community. Because of the uniqueness of having five homegrown teachers that were willing to be part of the research process, the findings might be hard to generalize to another public school due to the quantity of homegrown participants within a large urban school. Therefore it was important to continue to keep these issues in mind throughout the data collection process, in order to be able to create an action plan that could be shared in other school districts to support the goal of transferability and credibility within action research.

Definition of Key Terms

Critical Mentoring – a new way of thinking of the traditional hierarchical mentoring relationship; defined as a strategy to help support urban youth through a well-developed relationship in their immediate environment (Weiston-Serdan, 2017)

Homegrown Teacher – Teachers who return to teach in the community where they were raised and educated (Irizarry, 2007)

The Homegrown Teacher Project – Mentoring action research program geared to encourage urban school Latinas who have communicated an interest in becoming homegrown

teachers by creating experiences with a mentor (institutional agent) to align their college and career path in their elementary years

Institutional Agent – Adults who are positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support for others such as resources, opportunities, access to privilege, or services (Stanton-Salazar, 1997)

Mentor – "A person who gives advice and guidance who plays the role of guide, friend, cheerleader, listener, role model, and tutor" (Ference & Rhodes, 2002, p. 41)

Mentoring – a positive relationship with and contribution by a nonparental adult to the life of a young person (Baker & McGuire, 2005; DuBois & Rhodes, 2006)

People of Color – "Describes groups such as African Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians, and Latinos. This terminology implies the connection among groups and underlines a common experience" (i.e. students of color, teachers of color) (Nieto, 2000, p. 30).

Protégé – A junior person who is paired up with a mentor to receive mentoring; also known as mentee in the literature. Weiston-Serdan (2017) challenges the term mentee as connoting a deficit, as opposed to protégé, which evinces a less hierarchical relationship. By using the term protégé, deficit thinking language is removed and relationship development and collaboration are promoted (Kram, 1983; Murphy & Kram, 2014; Weiston-Serdan, 2017).

Resource Gap – Discrepancy in resources provided to the poorest schools as compared to our wealthiest schools (Nieto, 2000, p.11).

Organization of Dissertation

This action research dissertation documented the inception of an early intervention teacher pipeline, while teachers of color mentored and supported sixth-grade Latinas to become

future homegrown teachers within their community. The benefits of homegrown teachers go beyond their racial or ethnic identification (Irizarry, 2007). Schools need teachers who are not only highly effective but also racially and ethnically diverse. Communities of color are an asset within the diverse world. Homegrown teachers can be the pathway to diversifying the teaching profession. Chapter 1 examined the overall problem and relevance of this study, including the description of The Homegrown Teacher Project. Chapter 2 summarizes the literature of the challenges of urban education, in particular for Latina/o students and the importance of teachers of color in the classrooms. Kathy Kram's (1983) mentoring framework and Weiston-Serdan (2017) remix of mentoring supports the development of critical mentoring relationships for mentors and protégées. Stanton-Salazar social capital framework (1997) shares how mentors become institutional agents, helping students access social capital to succeed in the future. The review focuses on the benefits of homegrown teachers in urban communities and the impact of an early intervention pipeline for the teaching profession that will aim to recruit and retain teachers of color in urban schools. Chapter 3 discusses the action research methodology and the research design protocols used to document the voice of mentors and protégées. Through observations, researcher's reflection notes, interviews with the participants, and a focus group, the qualitative data measured the challenges and opportunities of the inception of the mentoring program. These tools interpret the perceptions of the homegrown teachers and protégées. Chapter 4 includes the qualitative data findings through the presentation of six themes, and Chapter 5 is an analysis of the findings and the implications for school districts to replicate an early intervention pipeline to diversify the future of the teaching profession.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Addressing the challenges and opportunities that are found in urban schools begins to unfold the true complexity of the social structures of schooling. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) wrote, "To be effective, urban education reform movements must begin to develop partnerships with communities that provide young people the opportunities to be successful while maintaining their identities as urban youth" (p.7). These partnerships can support and increase resources to urban communities. By increasing partnerships at urban schools, urban youth embrace their identities and understand their purpose within the educational system. The public education system should influence students to have a proactive role in society and purpose in their adult life. These outcomes serve as a measure of success for urban schools (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

This literature review begins by sharing how the theoretical frameworks of Freire (1970) critical pedagogy, with the stages of development of relationships (Kram, 1983) and critical mentoring (Weiston-Serdan, 2017), including social capital (Stanton-Salazar (1997) will support the study of The Homegrown Teacher Project. Mentors or institutional agents bridge access to information necessary for success, increasing students' human capital through social capital. Next, it discusses the challenges of urban education related to the success of the urban school students' academic achievement, and the importance of teachers of colors' positive influence in the urban education classroom. Lastly, the review focuses on the benefits of homegrown teachers in urban communities and the power of an early intervention pipeline, which will aim to recruit and retain teachers of color in urban schools.

Theoretical Framework

This section discusses how the theoretical frameworks will be foundational in the development of a relationship between a mentor and protégé. The opportunity to make a difference in students' lives is one of the main reasons many people go into teaching (Ference & Rhodes, 2002). This relationship is critical to the cognitive development of teachers and the social relationships between mentor and protégé. Ference and Rhodes (2002) defined mentor as "a person looked upon for advice and guidance who plays the role of guide, friend, cheerleader, listener, role model, and tutor" (p. 43). The research behind successful mentoring relationships is evidence of the social development and focus of the involved protégées. Spencer (2006) indicated that a successful relationship between the mentor and protégé is created through authenticity in relationships and empathy for one another. These findings illustrated the strong sense of supporting one another to achieve the desired outcome. Through authenticity in relationships, the natural development of a bond will guide the protégé toward excellence.

This dissertation is grounded in Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy, Kram's (1983) mentoring framework, Weiston-Serdan (2017) critical mentoring strategy, and Stanton- Salazar's (1997) framework on social capital. Critical pedagogy grounds the work of mentoring in social justice (Freire, 1970). The mentoring framework (Kram, 1983) serves as a foundation for the development of mentoring relationships in urban public schools. Focusing on developing the mentoring relationships into critical mentoring relationships (Weiston-Serdan, 2017) will give urban youth access to social capital through institutional agents and opportunity brokers who facilitate the benefits of strong relationships and networks for communities of color (Coleman, 1988; Kao, 2004; Nieto, 2010; Smith, 2007).

Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy supports the notion of recognizing conditions of inequality in society and ensuring this awareness is a motivating practice to transform urban schools (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). By recognizing social reproduction structures, critical pedagogy makes a plea for social transformation in partnership with marginalized groups (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Critical pedagogy draws on social and critical educational theory and cultural studies to examine schools and their history. Through this process, the ability to identify the social and political functions of the dominant society is crucial and how it is evident in routine school practices. Critical pedagogy challenges these assumptions that school serves to support social and economic mobility. Critical pedagogy insists that schools investigate the cultural and historical process, allowing students to be seen through their race, class, gender grouping and how it contributes to opportunity (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). This issue is urgent to understanding urban schools and their function in the community.

A major function of critical pedagogy is challenging the reproductive role of schools and their demand on urban youth. This challenge involves social, political, and cultural significance that schools perpetuate. Critical pedagogy argues that the economy influences social institutions like schools, because capitalism creates unequal distributions of resources, resulting in oppressive conditions. Baltodano (2015) shared that dominant groups can hide these unjust actions perpetuated by schools systems. Schools do not promote social mobility or equal opportunities; instead they contribute to class stratification (Baltodano, 2015).

With critical pedagogy, change begins when awareness of the oppressive conditions is evident to human beings, and a voice to alter the conditions begins to see light (Darder, 2015).

Critical pedagogy begins to uncover the relationship between knowledge and power (Baltodano, 2015). This deconstruction has revealed how society presents issues as facts versus a social construction to keep people in oppressed conditions. Baltodano (2015) wrote,

> The ideology of the hard-work ethic and meritocracy allows society to blame the victims when people are not able to succeed socially or economically because of the way the economy shapes school policies, labor laws, glass ceilings, or other social constraints (p. 23)

This understanding is the first step to using dialogue to become aware of the culture of power to examine liberation. Critical pedagogy encourages examining how freedom, choice, and dialogue can come together to support the liberation of self and others.

This literature review will examine three components of critical pedagogy to support the importance of a mentoring framework rooted in the critical pedagogy to support social change of students of color in higher education to become future urban school teachers. Through the lens of critical pedagogy, an account of dialogue, critical consciousness, and praxis will be reviewed as the layers of critical pedagogy that are essential to encourage mentoring in public schools to support urban youth.

Critical pedagogy supports the notion that schools are a place of struggle for most urban youth. Through praxis, Freire (1970) posited that dialogue and relationships were the key ingredients to generate others to reinvent the world and support human power (Darder, 2015). Critical pedagogy creates the foundation for mentoring relationships and social justice action. It ensures that the mentoring relationships will support thinking about the educational system, and create spaces for dialogue and reflection to support change in real time. Without understanding the cycle of injustice, dialogue and reflection cannot support change. This is why critical thinking, *conscientizacao*, creates acceptance and promotes true dialogue and praxis.

Problem-posing education, as introduced by Freire (1970), is the opposite of the traditional form of schools, what Freire called the “banking model of education.” The banking model is where the teacher is seen as one who deposits knowledge, and the students just memorize and repeat new knowledge. In this exchange, students do not have knowledge and are not seen as individuals with assets who can contribute to learning. For critical theorist Paulo Freire (1970), problem-posing education is a way to support liberation and freedom. In urban schools, dialogue-problem posing education enables the teacher and students to create a partnership and develop a relationship to support learning (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Freire (1970) contributed to the concept of problem-posing education by concluding that this approach supports teachers and students to overcome their false sense of reality. This realization supports dialogue and praxis in the relationship beginning to shape the notion that students come with information as opposed to just seeking knowledge from school or their teachers.

Dialogue

Dialogue is the true contributor to communication for understanding relationships. The essence of dialogue is *the word* (Freire, 1970). Freire communicated that the word allows for reflection and action, which are the two dimensions of dialogue. Through this reflection process, Freire analyzed the importance of dialogue between men and women as liberation if they are allowed to communicate their own thoughts. True dialogue happens when critical thinking is evident in the conversation with others. Freire (1970) wrote, “Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (p. 93). Through this exchange, students are given a chance to restructure the power relations to create horizontal structures of dialogue in education (Darder, 2015). Dialogue creates a true meaning of

communication with an active process of learning that works together as a form of liberation and hope. Through this relationship, students co-construct knowledge and engage in classroom interactions to direct and share learning in meaningful ways (Darder, 2015).

Freire shared that dialogue requires intense faith in human kind. This faith is discovered by people dialoguing with others (Freire, 1970). Without the faith in people, dialogue could be seen as manipulation of people. True faith comes from seeing a connection of words and actions. Faith contributes to the trust developed in relationships, once faith is evident in the process, dialogue is nurtured (Freire, 1970). Dialogue cannot exist without hope (Freire, 1970). Freire stated that one cannot cross one's arms and wait for change. Reacting and putting up a fight involves hope. Dialogue supports a climate of hope and change. Without hope, the dialogue will be empty and sterile (Freire, 1970).

Critical Consciousness

Critical pedagogy advocates for critical consciousness. Through critical consciousness, it uncovers the power structures and promotes a critical discourse. It uncovers how power is constructed and what is silenced (Baltodano, 2015). The focus of reflection is to transform inequities through the consistent action of reflection; Freire used the term conscientizacao to illustrate the coming of critical social consciousness that allows knowledge to be a product of reflection, dialogue and action. "A critical discourse advocates for an examination of the standard discursive practices in schools, speech patterns, and writing styles, and their role in silencing the voices of marginalized social groups" (Baltodano, 2015, p. 26). The mentoring relationship will be an attempt to provide a structure for true dialogue to support the understanding of relationships and their development across time.

Praxis

The process where teachers and students commit to education that leads to action and reflection is known as *praxis* (Freire, 1970). Praxis can be thought of as a cycle that begins with naming the problem, which leads to reflection, dialogue and action. Freire (1970) defined praxis as "reflection and action upon the world to transform it" (p. 33). This allows for continued focus on social justice through reflection of the problem (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Praxis stems from the belief of critical pedagogy that transformative actions are the outcomes of the relationships between theory, experience, dialogue, and reflection (Baltodano, 2015). This allows for an understanding of the problems and the world around. "Praxis, unlike practice, is not a simple activity, but a committed decision to engage in the consciousness, all facilitated by a critical reading of theory" (Baltodano, 2015, p. 25). Through this process, an awareness of transformation begins to take shape, and resistance becomes evident in practice.

Mentoring Framework

Kathy Kram (1983) referred to a traditional mentoring relationship as a mentor and a protégé. Kram's work comes from a traditionalist framework applied to career advancement and business promotion. The traditional view of mentoring relationships is focused on the dyad, and on what the mentor provides the protégé. The relationship is a one-way relationship, where the mentor holds the knowledge and gives advice to support the less knowledgeable protégé. Most of the time, the mentor does not consider what is happening outside of the formal interactions. In the traditional mentoring framework, a mentor can play an important role in a young person's life by fulfilling a need for nurturing and developing a supportive relationship. Mentors encourage their protégés to set goals, to be mindful of the future, to nurture their talents, and to

consider the possibilities of the future (Ference & Rhodes, 2002). Through the mentoring relationship, the protégé is able to enhance personal growth and advancement (Kram, 1985). Through this growth and advancement a powerful relationship between the mentor and protégé can be cultivated with time.

Critical mentoring (Weiston-Serdan, 2017) is a new way of thinking of the traditional hierarchical mentoring relationships that were detailed in Kram's (1983) mentoring framework. Critical mentoring has been described as a strategy to help support urban youth through a well-developed relationship in their immediate environment. This strategy was identified by Torie Weiston-Serdan and posited that by infusing critical theories into traditional mentoring practices, the protégé learns how power and control can be examined in order to support his/her future success. Her strategy is specifically driven to support students of color in addressing their marginalization so that mentors work with youth to interrupt the status quo (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). While Kram (1983) asserted growth and advancement as the key to a mentoring relationship, critical mentoring supports this same vision but with an understanding of the youth's role in identifying their own needs acquired through their voice.

In a traditional mentoring relationship, Kram (1983) used the word protégé synonymously for mentee. In critical mentoring, the word intentionally used is protégé. Weiston-Serdan (2017) stated that the term mentee connotes deficit, as opposed to protégé which points to a less hierarchical relationship. By being intentional in using the word protégé, deficit thinking language is removed and relationship development and collaboration are promoted.

Another way to consider the differences between traditional and critical mentoring is to think of critical mentoring as taking the traditional mentoring ideas, and adding a remix to

support the urban youth of today. This difference can be discussed as a deeper understanding of the balance of power in a mentoring relationship within an adult and protégé. The true goal of critical mentoring is to decentralize the mentoring adult in order to give voice to the youth in the relationship (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Redesigning who has the power and control in the mentoring relationship gives the youth a voice. Weiston-Serdan (2017) stated that critical mentoring will help youth construct powerful identities, supporting an awareness of critical consciousness, and encouraging youth voice in the relationship. It supports a partnership with youth in order to help create critical spaces for dialogue and growth of both individuals. Both Kram (1983) and Weiston-Serdan (2017) conveyed that mentoring can support others to develop into the best version of themselves in order to succeed personally and professionally. Both authors asserted that the relationship is cultivated over time, and Kram asserted the specific phases the mentoring relationship undergoes.

The Stages of a Mentoring Relationship

Kram (1985) found that strong and influential mentoring relationships will develop through the following four stages. These stages result in an understanding that all mentoring relationships will grow and mature at different rates depending on the conditions of the relationships (Kram, 1985).

Initiation. Kram (1983) shared that during the first six months to a year, the relationship is almost in a stage of fantasy. The protégé fantasizes the positive impact the mentor will have on his/her future. The mentor supports and guides the interactions and the protégé starts to feel a positive identification with the mentor. Depending on the history of the relationship, this phase could be one that moves quickly because of the already developed connection between the

mentor and protégé (Murphy & Kram, 2014). During this early stage, the protégé admires and respects his/her mentor for their competence and their capacity to support and guide them to be successful in their network (Kram, 1985). One of the results is that the protégé feels cared for, supported, and respected by someone they admire and someone who can provide important career advice to support their growth (Kram, 1985). This admiration is the inception of the relationship, where the values and perspective of the world held by the mentor are quickly discussed in this relationship phase. During the initiation stage, the fantasies that are expected during the bonding start to become a reality in practice. The protégé desires guidance, counsel, and confirmation of actions but the specific roles and boundaries have not yet been defined in this initiation stage.

Cultivation. According to Kram (1983), the second stage—cultivation—is a period that can last from two to five years. Relationships are tested and continue to unfold as the relationship starts to strengthen. With relationship nurturing, the mentor's modeling starts to influence the protégé. During this phase, the protégé becomes optimistic of the future as he/she understands their role in their environment. According to Kram (1983), the relationship at this stage truly empowers the protégé. Kram also states that the relationship is fruitful and the bond becomes meaningful and supportive. This stage allows the benefits of the mentoring relationship to be acknowledged. Most importantly, during the cultivation phase, the boundaries of the relationship are clear. The uncertainty that can be present during the first stage—initiation—is not present between the mentor and protégé because of the growth of the relationship (Kram, 1985).

Grounding her work in the business context, Kram discussed how the protégé learns more about the organization in the cultivation stage. Kram (1985) wrote, "Through the relationship,

the young manager not only acquires critical technical skills and learns the ropes of the organizational life, but also has the opportunity to experience confirmation and support for who he is becoming" (p. 55). The most significant role of a mentor during this stage is the ability to open doors in the organization for the protégé. This role supports the career process to be tangible as a future goal.

The cultivation stage comes to an end when the goals of the relationship have been met. For example, changes in the organization or changing positions are often a reason that would cause the cultivation mentoring phase to come to a conclusion. In general, the end of this stage comes when the relationship needs change and the length of this phase will depend on the ability to accomplish the goals that were set out during the beginning of the cultivation stage. At this time, reflecting on the development of the relationship is key to understand the growth over time.

Separation. The third stage of mentoring—the separation phase—leads to independence and autonomy between the mentor and protégé. Kram (1983) stated that the separation stage is both structural and psychological in the mentoring process. Timing is important, because if the separation occurs prematurely, it could cause anxiety. This phase is critical to the development of self, since it will provide the opportunity to demonstrate the benefits and impact of the relationship and showcase talents developed through the relationship.

The separation phase is both a period of loss and a period of excitement for the mentor and protégé (Kram, 1985). Timing is essential to avoid feelings of anger, abandonment, or resentment that could emerge during the separation. Kram (1985) wrote, "The anticipation of becoming peers creates some ambience; competitive feelings may become more pronounced, but the opportunity to establish a more mutual and equal relationship is appealing" (p. 60). The

functions of the relationship easily change due to the growth of the relationship through the years. For example, their titles, job expectations, or responsibilities naturally change over time. The protégé feels more self-reliant and independent (Kram, 1985) and the mentor can seem present "in spirit" to the protégé, which allows for growth within new experiences in the job.

According to Kram (1983), the end of the phase truly occurs when both mentor and protégé recognize that the relationship is not needed in the same capacity because of the growth over time with each of the participants. Awareness of the separation stage allows the final stage of redefinition to take place.

Redefinition. In the last stage, Kram (1985) indicated that the relationship has reached a conclusion and becomes more of a friendship. Both individuals continue to have contact with one another but in a more informal setting. The redefinition phase is finally evidence of the changes that have occurred in both individuals. According to Kram (1985), "Such mentor relationships must end so that young adults have the opportunity to establish autonomy and peer status in relation to their mentors" (p. 50). At times, the relationship can become a friendship, where both individuals have contact on an informal basis to support and care for one another from a distance (Kram, 1985). The relationship emerges to a peer or colleague in the profession, involving an adjustment of the roles. According to Kram, the one thing the relationship allows is proof of a significant contribution to the next generation. At this time, the protégé can take on a mentor role to refine the phases of mentoring to continue the cycle of mentorship. For this reason, it is important to create the conditions of mentoring in professional environments to encourage these supportive relationships in the field.

Understanding Kram's (1983) stages of the mentoring relationship can support the mentor's development of authentic decision making and practices. For instance, if the mentor realizes the phases that the relationship will undergo, the mentor can make decisions to support the personal growth of the protégé. While Kram (1983) advocated for personal growth in business networks, Weiston-Serdan (2017) suggested that the mentoring relationship instead be focused on creating powerful identities because this is more intentional than personal growth. Unlike Kram, Weiston-Serdan asserted that critical mentorship, as it applies to educational contexts, specifically for urban youth. Weiston-Serdan (2017) maintained that relationships provide the birth of social capital (i.e., networks),which is needed to create a powerful identity within a protégé. Critical mentoring therefore demands that mentors are engaged in more culturally responsive ways where youth are seen as collaborators and partners of their own destiny (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). By being centered on the needs of the protégé in the relationship, their personal identities begin to take form on the grounds of finding their voice. Finding their voice leads to developing critical thinking about their choices, stronger decision-making, and could lead to understanding the distribution of power today and in the future. As Wesiton-Serdan (2017) claimed, "Young people must inform the work, especially when operating in marginalized communities" (p.19). Overall, the main difference between the traditional and critical mentoring relationship is, Kram (1983) suggested, that a traditional protégé would seek to find their voice with time, after progressing through designated stages, while Weiston-Serdan (2017) elicited voice from day one of the critical mentoring relationship. Through this value-added relationship, the protégé gains the confidence and the support needed to achieve his or her future vision.

The Function of a Mentoring Relationship

Kram's (1983) framework indicates that certain functions will be developed through the mentoring relationship stages. Kram (1983) examined the earliest studies of mentoring relationships and recognized its hierarchical structures defining the traditional mentoring perspective. In understanding the mentoring relationship through the traditionalist lens, Kram suggested two main functions of a mentoring relationship—career and psychological functions.

Career functions. Kram (1983) argued that career functions are the relationships that involve supporting the advancement of an individual in his/her career. Career functions can be thought of as the traditional idea of mentoring (Portillo, 2007). This traditional idea involves a focus on skill development and an introduction to networking with people who will have influential success on the individual's future (Portillo, 2007). This function relies on the protégé's position, experience, and past and present success in the field (Portillo, 2007).

Psychosocial functions. This psychosocial function of a mentoring relationship is expected to support competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in a professional role (Kram, 1985). Psychosocial functions rely on a relationship that is developed through personal support, confidence building, and identity (Portillo, 2007). This is formed through the interpersonal relationship of the mentor and protégé. Growth is determined through role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship (Portillo, 2007).

Interestingly, research has examined these functions of a mentoring relationship and has found differences related to gender. O'Neil (2012) reviewed studies comparing male and female protégées. The results are compelling, showing that most male mentor relationships focus on

career advancement, while women and women of color tend to focus on the psychosocial functions of mentoring (O'Neil, 2012).

Critical Consciousness. Unlike the traditional view, a critical view suggests that mentoring relationships should be aware of what goes on in youth's personal and emotional growth. For this reason, Weiston-Serdan (2017) recommended that, beyond career or psychosocial function, critical consciousness should be exemplified in the mentoring relationship. This feature of critical mentoring supports the view of traditional mentoring but takes that view deeper by advocating for the mentor to value the protégé's voice throughout the relationship. Specifically, critical mentoring focuses on supporting the development of true relationships through awareness, described as critical consciousness. This awareness, or critical consciousness, is action-oriented support of urban youth, and augments a critical mentoring relationship (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Critical consciousness supports the coming together of critical pedagogy with action research that promotes working *with* the community. Critical mentoring is therefore a heightened awareness of the students' needs within the mentoring relationship, characterized by active work within the youth's environment. This practice is necessary because it challenges deficit-based notions in traditional hierarchal mentoring relationships that, at times, are not even acknowledged. The critical approach to mentoring instead states that actions between mentor and protégé should be informed by critical theories (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). For this reason, the choice of mentor for the specific protégé requires time and strategic planning in order to create a strong mentoring relationship.

Youth voice. Unlike the career and psychosocial functions of the traditional view of mentorship, an aspect of building critical consciousness through critical mentoring is the

inclusion of youth voice in practice (Weiston-Serdan, 2017), which is not discussed in traditional mentoring. Youth voice leads to an understanding of power and choice acquired during the development of the relationship of the mentor and protégé. This growth is critical when working with urban youth, as they learn to be resilient by building their confidence to succeed in their environment. When urban youth interact with positive role models who are relatable and trustworthy, and to find their voice, then mentoring can evolve from traditional hierarchical mentoring relationships to a critical mentoring focus. Applying critical mentoring to education, students gain confidence to succeed within their schools through trusting relationships with adults who understand the value of critical consciousness and the power of valuing student voice for their protégées. Weiston-Serdan (2017) focused on how relationships must be purposeful in cultivating youth voice. For this reason, finding the right mentor supports the work of valuing spaces of dialogue and reimaging power and control in the environment. What should be noted is that, although Kram (1983) is not as explicit about the role of voice in a mentoring relationship, Kram indicated that the mentor should support all stages of the protégé's life. In order to be able to succeed with this challenge, the mentor must know the goals and desires of the protégé, which would only be acquired through voice.

Benefits of Mentorship

There are numerous benefits for both mentor and protégé for participating in a mentoring relationship. A benefit that is clearly evident is the fulfillment a mentor receives from nurturing the personal development of the protégé (Ragins & Scandura, 1994). Applying the mentoring framework to education as an example, teachers who mentor students see the benefit of being

involved in a mentoring program to "work with the community and network within the schools systems as well as to make a difference in a child's life" (Ference & Rhodes, 2002, p. 43).

Similarly, the protégé benefits from the ability to gain experience in his/her chosen profession, which provides the protégé with opportunities and knowledge that could not be acquired outside this dynamic relationship (Kram, 1985). Understanding that protégées are not clones of the mentors and instead integrate their views alongside the mentors provides a powerful new view in the relationship (Wright & Wright, 1987). This ability to experience, participate, and learn from the mentor has invaluable advantages in the years ahead. According to Wright and Wright, the benefits for protégées and mentors serve a dual purpose of encouragement and growth for both participants. This growth, however, is influenced by who serves as the mentor for the protégé.

Cultural match advantages. Applying the work of scholars on mentoring relationships to the educational context, Allen-Summerville (1994) asserted that mentoring particularly supports the advancement of students of color and underrepresented groups, and encourages students to be engaged in their schooling. Traditionally, protégées seek out mentors who are similar to themselves in race/ethnicity and gender (Portillo, 2007). This match supports the idea of serving as a role model, and seeing what success can look like in the future (Wright & Wright, 1987). With a cultural match, counseling and friendship are easier to develop within the mentorship relationship (Portillo, 2007).

Critical mentoring supports the scholarship of Portillo (2007) because it is intended to address race, ethnicity, and culture in mentoring relationships and to intentionally provide cultural matches for youth (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Through this action, youth are able to

develop their voice and challenge the dynamics of power. In education, in order to support future teachers of color, cultural match mentoring is essential for students growing up in urban public schools. Through these critical relationships, mentoring places the students' needs first. Mentoring relationships have the ability to change education, career, and even life trajectories (Weiston-Serdan, 2017), and these relationships should be emphasized in school settings.

Critical mentoring challenges the hierarchal relationships traditionally associated with mentoring to ensure the mentor and protégé are validated during the process of mentor matching to create a dynamic relationship. Sanchez, Colon-Torres, Feauer, Roundfield, and Berardi (2014) developed elements to evaluate when race and ethnicity are an essential part of the mentoring relationship. Sanchez et al. shared the following recommendations to consider when matching a mentor with a protégé: (a) racial similarity/dissimilarity, (b) oppression, (c) ethnic identity, and (d) cultural competence. By analyzing these recommendations, Weiston-Serdan affirmed the power of cultural matching for youth who do not have the same culture as their role models, or who suffer from internalized racism.

Critical mentoring encourages educational practitioners not to operate with the traditional hierarchical model of mentoring relationships in which the mentor "holds" the knowledge. Instead, it encourages transformational practices to lead to institutional changes to support individual needs and collaboration between mentor and protégé. Most importantly, Weiston-Serdan (2017) urged organizations to examine who is doing the mentoring in communities that serve marginalized youth. She stated that the most important stance for cultural relevance is to know who is serving, and how they understand and perceive the community.

Developing Critical Mentoring in Schools

Critical mentoring in schools can happen when the mentor can connect with the protégé to support them through their mentoring journey. Often times, mentoring programs require youth to conform to dysfunctional schools or systems (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). A critical mentor will recognize the structural issues keeping the protégé from succeeding and support them through critical consciousness and awareness of understanding school systems and their ability to push out marginalized and minoritized youth (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Critical mentors are referred to as "opportunity brokers," giving access and extending the networks of young people. Critical mentoring in schools urges leaders to recruit and train adults who serve as these mentors in urban schools.

> Mentoring relationships are formed through understanding, openness, and mutual respect. To do critical mentoring work in schools means to renegotiate spaces so that protégées can speak openly about their experiences, be vulnerable enough to ask for help, and feel free to challenge what they think is wrong without being chastised. (Weiston-Serdan, 2017, p. 87)

This work is critical in changing spaces and having students' voices heard. Schools are challenged to foster critical mentoring relationships, as Weiston-Serdan (2017) reminded schools. It is their responsibility to fully support youth in all capacities.

In order to support goals of critical mentoring, the following should be examined to support the development of a program that meets the needs of youth within the community. Weiston-Serdan (2017) asserted that leaders must be intentional about these actions in order to create a critical space through the following actions: (a) build community, (b) recruit mentors from the community, (c) train your people, and (d) partner with the community to take on issues that are important to them. In practice, this list guides educators to build relationships in the

community in which they serve, using the ideas of working *with* the community not *in* the community. This can be accomplished by recruiting mentors from the community in order to be able to serve with a critical lens and provide a cultural match to the protégé. Once mentors are identified from the community, they will need to be trained to know the purpose and progress of culturally relevant mentoring. Ultimately, these steps facilitate a partnership between mentor and protégé that can lead to the protégé finding their voice to address larger systemic issues within their community.

Social Capital

Social capital supports communities of color by providing a link to information, resources, and networks through social relationships (Coleman, 1988; Kao, 2004; Nieto, 2010; Smith, 2007). James Coleman introduced social capital as a social theory. This social capital framework defined the ideas that social structure and the value of social capital will increase human capital. Coleman (1988) wrote, “All social relations and social structures facilitate some forms of social capital; actors establish relations purposefully and continue them when they continue to provide benefits” (p. S105). Understanding the power relationships have over the influence of human capital allows access to social networks that influence the success of all individuals. Coleman (1988) believed that social capital exists within the relationship of people. A tie to other people allows individuals to gain access to a broad range of resources (Kao, 2004; Nieto, 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2004).

Ricardo Stanton-Salazar (2004) articulated student success as contingent upon interaction and engagement with people who control access to resources in schools. These resources in school are relational for Latina/o youth. Stanton-Salazar (2004) stated that this network

development “has the potential utility to explain how educational achievement and attainment are closely associated with access to supportive relationships and networks” (p. 19). This lens is supportive to networks that support the trajectory of working class Latina/o youth. Social capital is a way to examine how groups in society utilize their social relationships to attain their individual goals and solve their problems. These interactions result in experiencing opportunity and privilege come together through networks and interactions referred to as social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2004).

Social capital in Latina/o working class youth usually is a result of peers and adult agents in school contexts (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Peer social resources and adult relationships encourage Latina/o youth to form commonalities and supportive networks. Through these relationships, the youth become committed themselves to the possibility of achievement. Stanton-Salazar (2001) summarized supportive relationships for Latina/o urban youth by stating, “When such bonding between agent and student becomes a defining characteristic of the school community as a whole, students experience a certain ‘we-ness’ a collective identity that is highly consonant with increased effort engagement and academic achievement” (p. 13). This bond that is created by treating students in a caring way, leads to motivation in the students, because of the bond and individual relationships created with these caring adults. These connections lead to facilitating purposeful actions to accomplish desired ends (Stanton-Salazar, 2004) and the continuous awareness of building networks of success for Latina/o youth.

Institutional Agents

Stanton-Salazar (2004) discussed how these developed relationships between adults and youth are the networks that create connectedness. These networks create connections to social

structure. Social structure is the key to all relationships, making them resourceful and enduring (Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Institutional agents, such as school personnel, provide this connectedness for Latina/o youth. Stanton-Salazar (1997) defined institutional agents as adults who are positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support for others. In the role as an institutional agent, the sharing of support, resources, opportunities, privilege, or services to another person within the organization that has social inequality is key for the disruption of power (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). This transmission of social capital serves as a privilege to have access to social structures and resources acquired through social relationships (Coleman, 1988; Nieto, 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2011). Within the school structure, the mentor becomes the institutional agent, and the protégé becomes the receiver of institutional support. Mentors can serve as institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar, 1997) for their protégé, helping young students navigate the educational system. It is through these institutional agents or mentors that students of color begin to gain social capital. Through this learning, they can negotiate institutional resources and opportunities, information, classroom academic programs, and college and career decision-making.

Stanton-Salazar (2011) shared that teachers are often taking on multiple roles within a student's life; this is known as a multi-stranded relationship. This multi-stranded relationship consists of the teacher becoming a co-parent, counselor, informal social worker, mentor, and the institutional or knowledge agent that navigates Latina/o youth. This concept of a well-rounded relationship highlights the various responsibilities of institutional agents. Stanton-Salazar (2011) discussed 14 roles in an educational context between teacher and student, or mentor and protégé. He had four categories for institutional agent, which include: (a) direct support, (b) integrative

support, (c) system developer, and (d) system linkage and network support. Through these four types of agency, direct support and integrative support are typically seen from mentors in the field with Latina/o youth.

As a direct support institutional agent (Stanton-Salazar, 2011), a mentor is consistently a resource agent, knowledge agent, advisor, advocate, and a networking coach. Through this role, the mentor, provides resources of the system to help gather information for the protégé. As an advocate, they promote and protect their students and teach them to network with institutional agents to support their success. Stanton-Salazar (2011) also described an integrative institutional agent as a mentor who focuses on coordinating participation in networks that are seen as valuable for the future. These two specific roles for institutional agents are crucial for mentoring and developing the social capital of Latina/o students.

Close relationships with teachers impacts student's ability to succeed in the classroom and school environment (Nieto, 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 2004). Teachers who become institutional agents and take on this valuable role for Latina/o youth become a part of a social structure to support students and enhance their social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Teachers who serve as institutional agents can identify that the system works for some students and not for others, and for this reason the sense of urgency to become institutional agents is evident in their work (Nieto, 2010). Mentors reconceptualize their role to disrupt patterns that do not support students and disrupt social order. Stanton-Salazar (1997) clearly stated that the social order rewards students who have social capital. What mentors or institutional agents do is create opportunities to share social capital through the development of information channels and develop an understanding of the obligations and expectations in relationships with Latina/o

youth. The development of the social networks helps students through risk factors or challenges found in urban schools. The concept of teacher-student networks can be embedded within school culture (Liou, Antrope-Gonzalez, & Cooper, 2009).

Mentoring and Social Capital

Research supports that students who have caring and supporting adults do better academically (Liou et al., 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Access to the knowledge and information from a mentor supports the building of a strong relationship for students of color (Smith, 2007). Gaddis (2012) stated, “Relationships based on racial similarity may be so prevalent throughout society because racial similarity and similarity in general, inspires trust” (p. 1,240). In same-race relationships youth see their mentor as being able to connect with their struggle and their circumstances. This relationship supports trust to flourish during their interactions and time together. Once trust is evident, the relationship continues to grow. Mentoring provides the vehicle for sharing information to a protégé in gaining access to social capital. The goal of mentor programs is to close social capital gaps between mentor and protégé (Smith, 2007). Gaps could be cultural, institutional, socioeconomic, professional, and academic. The mentor then shares this knowledge through relationships, creating social capital to support the information channels and creating the development of human capital of the protégé.

Difference in social class can also lead to opportunities not normally part of the protégé’s world. Gaddis (2012) wrote, “A mentor of higher social class could be more important for providing disadvantaged youths with information regarding college and employment that they might not otherwise have access to” (p. 1,263). These differences between social classes

provided protégés with access to a higher socioeconomic mentor who can build their human capital in a variety of contexts and situations.

For students of color, developing the mentorship relationship has major benefits. For one, it allows access to information channels—also known as high-stakes information networks (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). These networks allow students of color to access navigational strategies to gain resources and opportunities to increase their academic progress and begin to think of college as a viable opportunity for themselves (Liou et al., 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Ahn (2010) argued that not all mentors gave the same access to social networks and social capital. Her research determined the information and access college mentors had for high school students who were categorized as college bound. The findings indicated that each mentor had different positions of power, leading to various levels of access to social capital. For this reason, it is important for students of color to be involved with organizations of mentors who are willing to share and consider strategies to interact across resources (Ahn, 2010). This places students of color in the most viable position to succeed as they form relationships to develop their social and human capital. Social capital matters for students' development in life (Putman, 2000). Social capital contributes to school achievement and belonging (Nieto, 2010; Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Understanding Kram's (1983) foundational mentoring framework through the lens of critical pedagogy, and how interactions that foster social capital in urban students can help create successful programs and practices to support a protégé's social capital development. Dialogue, critical consciousness, and praxis will be the foundation needed for Kram's (1983) framework of relationships to support the development of career and psychosocial functions grounded in social

justice that leads to the development of social capital. Critical pedagogy supports teachers and protégées in urban school by having them identify the problem and be part of the social phenomenon to support an early intervention pipeline.

Urban School Students

Theoretically at least, education should serve as means for immigrant children to escape poverty. For this to happen education must serve as a source of opportunity and a pathway to a better life just as it has for other groups in the past.

--Noguera, 2009, p. 7

Students of color face difficult challenges in urban schools. Nieto (2010) pointed out that the struggles of urban school student include poverty, racism, violence, drug abuse, lack of health care, housing, and other challenges that are common in urban communities. Teachers in urban schools need to embrace the uniqueness of urban school students (Jacobs, 2015). Understanding the complexity of poverty and how it impacts the classroom is needed for teachers to make connections and build relationships with students (Jacobs, 2015). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) stated that most children in California do not have fair and equal access to a quality public school education. They remind the reader of the great disparities within schools, typically the common disadvantage for marginalized groups in public schools.

Awareness of the challenges of urban schools help social justice educators to be intentional about their service in urban schools and their target audience to support educational access to all. Urban communities should have access to resources to support academic progress, confidence, and the student in general in becoming college and career ready to succeed. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) commended the knowledge that urban students bring with them to school. This knowledge is not in their textbooks but rather acquired from the streets, family cultural traditions, youth culture, and media (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). This

connection between student and educator will be the hope to focus their future on the graduation path and strive to include post high school work. Ladson-Billings (1994) referred to this as culturally relevant pedagogy, the knowledge urban school teachers need to inspire and motivate urban youth to succeed.

Student and teacher relationships in urban schools. Addressing relationships between teachers and students is central to the development of student learning in urban schools. Nieto (2010) wrote, “The way students are thought about and treated by society and consistently by the schools they attend and the educators who teach them is fundamental in creating academic success or failure” (p. 188). Scholars have argued that hiring caring adults, who are of the same background similar to students, can have a positive effect on achievement, graduation, and college attendance (Noguera, 2009). Teachers of color can enter the profession with the benefit of a heightened awareness of the social political contexts in which students of color are educated. They also tend to hold higher expectations for students of color (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). It is imperative that urban schools hire teachers of color to build relationships and serve as role models for urban youth. Due to the disparities of teachers of color, recruiting homegrown teachers is way to begin addressing the significant gap of teachers of color servicing urban youth.

Academic achievement of students of color. Urban schools continue to be challenged to educate and respond to the high Latina/o and student of color population in public schools. One in every five children currently attending school is Latina/o. Irizarry (2016) stated, “More than 47 million Latinos in the United States currently account for approximately 14 percent of the population, making Latinos the largest ‘minority’ group in the United States” (p. 23). It is

estimated that by 2050, the Latina/o school-age population will grow by more than 150% (Irizarry, 2016). Noguera (2009) stated:

> Despite having been present in the U.S. for centuries, Latinos are over–represented among the ranks of the poor and low income and at least part of the reason for this is the pervasiveness of racialized inequalities, particularly in education. Today Latino youth are more likely than any other ethnic groups to be enrolled in schools not only segregated by race, but class as well. (p. 6)

The public-school education system does not produce the graduation or college completion rates it should for Latina/os and students of color. Data on the academic achievement of Latina/os are daunting. Estimates indicate that only one in two Latina/os complete high school (Irizarry, 2016). Irizarry (2016) cited the U.S. Census when describing the alarming statistics concerning Latina/os as they matriculate through the educational pipeline of higher education:

> Of those that attend college, only 770,000 of the 11 million, or less than 7 percent, will be awarded bachelor's degree, and fewer than 250,00 will go on to warn master's degrees. As the educational pipeline continues to narrow, less than 1 percent will go on to earn a doctorate. These statistics pale in comparison to those for white students, who complete high school and attend and graduate from college at three times the rate of Latinos. (p. 5)

The inability to attend higher education among Latina/o students can be attributed to students' needs being unmet in the public schools about attending higher education. Urban schools have not been meeting the needs of the most vulnerable population in public schools. There must be a focus on how to attain higher education and the benefits from a college degree.

Achievement gap or resource gap. This term is given to the achievement discrepancy between Whites and Asian students compared to Blacks and Brown students (Nieto, 2010). Despite the gains of all students over the years and the implementation of No Child Left Behind law, this gap has not changed with regard to the achievement rate for students. The gap between the scores of White and Asian students compared to African American and Latina/os students is

the equivalent to two full grade levels (Nieto, 2010). Yet, while this is labeled as an achievement gap between students Sonia Nieto (2010) argued that better terminology for achievement gap should be resource gap. The resource gap would give credit to the discrepancy in the resources provided to the poorest schools as compared to our wealthiest schools (Nieto, 2010). Nieto also states that the "caring gap" could also be appropriate term, because of the level of care, attention, and high expectations given to students in the poorest schools compared to the wealthy schools (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

The results of school achievement are predictable. The nation's poorest students are the ones most likely to be denied a quality education and be blamed for their academic failure (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Nieto, 2010). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) concluded, "In the end, schools produce very little mobility for the communities most in need and are the stamp of justification on one's position in the labor force and society" (p. 4). Understanding these harsh realities of how an achievement gap masks the resource or caring gap, could be the change that impacts urban education to function for students under a different light.

Cultural needs of urban school students. Students of color must be nurtured and cared for to support their academic, social, and emotional needs. Irvine (2003) shared the reason why urban school students are unsuccessful in achievement: "I believe that students fail in schools not because their teachers do not know their content, but because their teachers cannot make connections between subject-area content and their students' existing mental schemes, prior knowledge, and cultural perspectives" (p. 47). She went on to state that, for a child to learn, the social and emotional needs of the students must be the focus of the educator. Teachers are

accountable for teaching students who are unmotivated, angry, violent, hungry, homeless, shy and abused (Irvine, 2003). Understanding students for who they are and the funds of knowledge they possess is the beginning of bridging relationships between teachers and students.

Poverty. According to the U.S. Census of 2010, one in seven Americans is living in poverty. Poverty continues to rise, especially for Blacks and Latina/os, who are both over 25% of the total population, indicating that one in four Blacks or Latina/os is in poverty (Darder, 2012). The number of Latina/os and African Americans to live in poverty are twice as high as Whites (Nieto, 2010). Poverty has extraordinarily negative implications for learning (Nieto, 2010). It is a risk factor for urban youth. Children living in poverty experience a negative effect with academics. Urban school teachers must work to understand how to serve students living in poverty. Through professional development, a better understanding of urban youth will help support success in the classroom. Unfortunately, most of the professional development for poverty perpetuates negative stereotypes that can easily take form in today's classrooms and leads to teachers perceiving students' as having a deficit that is irreconcilable through education (Nieto, 2010). Schools must focus on students of color and their unique needs to be the catalyst for student success in urban schools. Education is the only means to escape poverty for urban youth; the challenge begins with increasing the teachers of color in the classroom at urban schools to support relationships and a critical consciousness of urban youth (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Understanding the challenges discussed—student and teacher relationships, academic achievement rate, the social and emotional needs of the students, and the role poverty plays in urban schools—helps teachers serve urban school students with a different lens. Flores-Gonzalez

(2002) stated that teachers who hold deficit views of Latina/o students blame the lack of achievement on the individual student, the family, or even the culture. A student voice expresses the call for change: "Students, including myself, do in fact struggle with issues outside of school, but that does not mean that we cannot achieve at the highest level" (Irizarry, 2016, p. 40). Teachers of color could bring a magnitude of social and emotional connection to urban school students. The next section will discuss the benefits of teachers of color in urban schools to challenge the complexities discussed in the literature review.

Teachers of Color in Urban Schools

Urban schools require intentional and deliberate change in the school's current teaching force (Dilworth & Ardila-Rey, 2004; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010; Partee, 2014). Teachers of color are underrepresented in public education (Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Bireda & Chait, 2011; Partee, 2014). This gap between teachers of color and White teachers is not likely to change anytime soon (Rich, 2015). Urban schools must look to hire a teaching force that is culturally proficient and represents the unique needs of urban youth and schools (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). Irizarry (2016) proclaimed,

> Before working with Latinos or other students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, educators need to recognize and reflect upon their own assumptions regarding cultural difference and the role of education in shaping the cultural landscape of the United States. (p. 33)

There must be an intentional effort to recruit and retain teachers of color in urban schools. Teachers of color benefit all students. Even for the dominant racial group, the need for White students to see people of color as holders of knowledge is imperative to breaking down racial assumptions (Ahmad & Boser, 2014).

Sleeter, Neel, and Kumashiro (2015) shared that having diverse teachers in schools naturally supports equitable decision making for all students of color. Equitable decision-making includes examining policy decisions and data of student success in schools. Teachers of color support decisions to disrupt stereotypes of marginalized groups in public schools. As the teaching profession continues to be predominately White and monolingual, teachers of color have provided many benefits for urban schools students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Irizarry, 2011; Sleeter et al., 2015). Achinstein and Aguirre (2008) articulated, "Teachers who share cultural, linguistic, racial, and class backgrounds with students provide a source of connection and examples of successful adults for youth" (p. 1,507). Teachers of color add benefits to schools beyond the classroom. Ross, Watson, and Simmons (2015) argued that their presence on school grounds simply change the conversations during teacher meetings and share the difference of communities; therefore, school goals and action plans are positively affected to serve students of color.

After several years of research, Rogers-Ard and Lynch (2015) shared the lessons they had learned about diversifying the teaching profession: (a) target recruitment for specific audiences, (b) partnership with universities are beneficial, (c) support for candidates navigating the educational system, and (d) retention for many layers of support to keep teachers in the field. These lessons from Rogers-Ard and Lynch are guideposts for universities and programs that seek to create change to recruit and retain teachers of color in urban public schools.

Increasing representation of teachers of color is an important goal to support public schools in urban communities. Irizarry and May (2011) noted that the connection of Latina/o teachers to Latina/o parents is evident through their language and cultural bond, which helps the

communication to support their child academically in the classroom. There is a cultural alignment that benefits students of color to be educated by teachers of color. Teachers of color have similar life experiences and cultural backgrounds to students that serve as a benefit that contributes to academic achievement (Ingersoll & May, 2011). Teachers of color often speak a different language, and are able to communicate with parents who only speak their first language. Bilingual teachers are often using the first language of the student while teaching to clarify vocabulary and to make connections to their cultural prior knowledge (Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010). These types of cultural connections make a significant difference in comprehending and understanding of new concepts. These linguistic codes that connect the teacher and student often mirror the hopes, dreams, and expectations of the families of the students (Irvine, 2003). For this reason, teachers of color are essential in the classroom for students of color to succeed.

Many students will complete their K–12 education without being taught by a single teacher of color (Irvine, 2003). The national data of the teaching profession showcase a significant gap between the percentage of students of color learning in public schools and the number of teacher of color serving these students in the school system. The nation’s population is seen as a significantly racial divide.

Irvine (2003) has formulated propositions that support the success of teachers of color in urban schools. These propositions are: (a) teachers of color contribute to the academic success of students of color because they serve as cultural translators; (b) teachers of color facilitate academic achievement because their expectations are higher than White teachers, mainly because they often act as parents or advocates for the students of color they serve; and (c) teachers of

color demonstrate unique, culturally based teaching styles that support learning in the classroom in urban schools. These benefits support the need to recruit and retain teachers of color to enter the profession and serve in urban schools.

For urban youth, navigating the educational system is daunting. Many students of color are discouraged from even applying to university or community colleges, because deadlines and standardize tests eliminate them from meeting the application expectations (Dilworth & Ardila-Rey, 2004; Flynn, Hunt, Wickman, Cohen, & Fox, 2015). Inadequate high school counseling is a result of lack of teachers of color in the field. Students need support with financial, academic, and social support to attend higher education (Flynn et al., 2015). Funding for teacher education programs and academic support need to be addressed to recruit and retain a diverse teacher candidate pool for the future of the profession.

Students of color need to be prepared and to graduate with the academic skills to be successful in college. Irvine (2003) surmised that the reason for the teacher of color shortage is the small number of Black and Latina/os graduating with the academic skills needed to prepare them for the teacher education program. Irvine (2003) communicated, “In other words, students of color are not less attracted to teaching than are White students. The problem is that students of color are not graduating from high schools and colleges with the skills necessary to be competent teachers” (p. 61). For this reason, early intervention is crucial to diversify the teaching profession. To ensure students of color are willing to enter the teaching profession, they must be nurtured both academically and socially for them to be successful in higher education.

Early intervention pipelines will be able to support students to have the necessary skills to be successful in college to graduate and enter a teacher education program to support the goal of

diversifying the teaching profession (Dilworth & Ardila-Rey, 2004). Increasing the number of teachers of color does not indicate that White teachers are not able to connect or be effective practitioners in the classrooms with students of color. Instead, it reassures the value of diversifying the teaching force to support commonalities for all students to feel safe and nurtured within school buildings (Irvine, 2003; Nieto 2010; Rogers-Ard & Lynch, 2015).

Retention of Teachers of Color

Teachers of color continue to be underrepresented in their profession at a time when students of color are growing as the dominant sector of the public school population (Partee, 2014). Yet, when they do serve, teachers of color are often found in urban schools, due to their commitment to giving back to the community (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). The problem that arises is the lack of support and networking for teachers of color who encounter challenging conditions without the training and tools to best service students in urban schools. “Recruiting teachers of color, yet failing to prepare them to promote educational equity, does little to alter a system of education characterizes by significant disparities in opportunity and achievement” (Irizarry, 2007, p. 93). Many challenges affect the retention of teachers of color in the field. This section will examine the challenges that contribute to teachers of color leaving the profession.

Teachers of Color Face Challenging Teaching Conditions

The high teacher turnover is attributed to poor working conditions in high poverty urban areas where most teachers of color choose to teach (Achinstein et al., 2010; Ahmad & Boser, 2014; Partee, 2014). Intentionally preparing teachers for the conditions of urban school challenges will lead to decreasing the high turnover rates at urban schools. The frustrations that teachers of color face in urban schools is due to poor working conditions and lack of support in

the field from administration or peers. These issues have teachers questioning their purpose in schools (Ahmad & Boser, 2014). In a study conducted in 2004–2005, out of the 56,244 teachers of color, 30,000 of the teachers left to pursue another career because they were dissatisfied with the teaching profession and lacked job satisfaction; this is about 47% of the teachers of color that made the impactful decision to leave their career of choice (Ahmad & Boser, 2014).

Achinstein et al. (2010) presented patterns teachers of color display while in the field and how the findings of these patterns impact retention in hard-to-staff schools. For one, the lack of understanding of culture and race in schools is a reason teachers of color leave the profession. In Achinstein et al. (2010),the reason teachers of color leave the profession is due particularly to the low expectations or negative attitudes about students of color and the lack of support for culturally relevant teaching. Because teachers of color value the humanistic commitment of the profession, such as being a role model and making connections with students, families, and community, it is difficult to participate in institutions that do not value diversity and do not support teachers of color. The patterns that contribute to teachers of color leaving the profession in hard-to-staff schools with a high number of low-income and nondominant race students are low levels of financial, human, and social capital, including lack of administrative support and lack of teacher decision making (Achinstein et al., 2010).

Possible solutions to increasing the retention of teachers of color is for schools and districts to implement a pipeline for future educators. This solution would support the retention of teachers of color, because the support would continue through college and the credentialing process. Villegas and Clenwell (1998) shared that offering academic and social support for future teachers can increase their completion in teacher education programs. Achinstein et al. (2010)

discussed a solution for retaining teachers of color in urban schools. This solution requires strategies to support and empower teachers in the urban classroom, and give tools for emotional support in urban schools. By understanding the challenges of hard-to-staff schools, and supporting teachers of color through these challenges, the social capital of both teachers and students of color in urban schools will increase.

Homegrown Teachers

Homegrown teachers are those who have made a choice to teach in the community they were raised and educated (Irizarry, 2007). Homegrown teachers are connected to the needs of the community because of their upbringing. Being raised and educated in the same communities where they teach allows for teachers to have a special bond with the students in their classroom (Irizarry, 2007). Teachers become relatable to students of color that usually feel disconnected from the traditional public-school environment. Urban schools teachers who do not have contextual understanding of poverty find it difficult to relate and understand urban youth in their school setting (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Nieto, 2010). In fact, teachers who have little knowledge of the cultures, experience, or understanding of students' cultural background face a greater challenge in the classrooms (Nieto, 2010). For this reason, educating teachers on cultural proficiency supports the development of understanding the complexities and vulnerability of urban youth.

Homegrown teachers help overcome stereotypes of urban youth. They teach students without the deficit assumptions because of the labels imposed by the educational system (Nieto, 2010). Labels such as *at risk* automatically hold a negative connotation of the student's abilities and create barriers to what can be achieved in an educational setting. Ending stereotypes that are

adopted from institutionalized power or classes is crucial to ending the discrimination students of color face. Homegrown teachers can do all of these things: end the pervasive stereotypes, have a positive understanding of student context, and provide an important role model to vulnerable urban youth.

Growing up in an urban community helps teachers better understand the complications of the urban school system. These teachers enter the profession to "pay it forward" to other students of color in the community who, without this support, could easily not achieve academic success of the social capital to succeed in the future. This social justice lens brings value to communities of color and the students of color they serve. By promoting educational equity, homegrown teachers are ensuring an end to the disparities that are common in urban schools (Irizarry, 2007). These disparities are usually in the form of a lack of educational opportunities or academic rigor in classrooms that prevent students of color from the opportunity to attend college (Irizarry, 2007; Nieto, 2010).

Teachers with a commitment to diversity and educational equity believe in their students and see education as vehicle to escape the conditions that perpetuate oppression because of social structures. Homegrown teachers believe their students can enter college and come back as graduates to transform their urban communities (Duncan-Andrade, 2005). "Less successful urban teachers tend to have more modest ambitions, such as wanting their students to study for a test, behave well in class, and persist in school" (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, p. 71). This significant difference in value and commitment to urban youth is the extra push students of color need to break the continuous cycle of oppression their families have faced. "The philosophies of social justice embraced by these educators go beyond the traditional narrative, which sees education as

a vehicle to escape financially impoverished communities" (Duncan-Andrade, 2005, p. 71). This drive supports the success of students of color beyond the classroom by reforming their trajectory to include higher education, which will support their ability to escape the culture of poverty.

Cultural Translators

Teachers of color and students of color create a cultural bond through their collaboration and relationship development (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Teachers of color inspire students of color to be productive members of society. This leads to inspiring the future of goal planning and guiding their commitment to their community. Duncan-Andrade and Morell (2008) wrote, "This approach to urban education reform is a double investment in urban youth and communities. It applies pedagogy and curricula that lend immediate relevance to school in the lives of urban youth" (p. 7). Future teachers who enter the profession think students of color are a cultural mismatch for school settings and cannot learn at the same rate as White middle class students (Delpit, 2006). For this reason, understanding students of color through a cultural eye supports their academic progress and goal-setting mind-set in schools (Irvine, 2003).

Teachers of color also serve as cultural translators to support students of color in the classroom (Irvine, 2003). This ability to be sensitive to students' needs as a cultural translator is essential to promoting the confidence of the students to succeed in school. Cultural conflicts are evidenced in schools that service students of color (Irvine, 2003). Because the culture of students of color is often misunderstood or ignored in schools, cultural dissonance is experienced in schools (Irvine, 2003). By bridging cultures, teachers support students to excel and meet their individual goals.

As cultural translators or cultural brokers, teachers tend to be more aware and comfortable with students of color (Irvine, 2003). Cultural translators are teachers who tend to be knowledgeable, sensitive, and comfortable with students' language, style of presentation, community values, traditions, rituals, legends, myths, history, symbols, and norms (Irvine, 2003). Teachers of color support students of color to adapt and transition in the classroom and mainstream culture. Latina/o teachers are particularly important because of the relationships they foster with Latina/o parents. Teachers are able to communicate in their language, and they use a very personal dialogue and a direct approach with Latina/o parents (Darder, 1993). The ability to communicate without a translator supports the comprehension of achievement between parent, teacher, and student. It also increases parents' level of comfort and ease, which inevitably results in improved communication between home and school and positively impacts student achievement.

Role Models for Students of Color

Teachers of color provide positive models that counteract negative racial stereotypes (Irvine, 2003). Most teachers of color tend to work in urban and inner-city communities where schools are mostly segregated by race (Irvine, 2003). Homegrown teachers understand the cultural background and upbringing of the students, and are less likely to create excuses for learning or for their ability to grow as a learner (Irizarry, 2007). High expectations for students of color are the first intervention for them to graduate from high school and attend higher education.

Cole (1986) shared that having teachers of color benefits the students' self-worth. Most students in urban schools are from low-income backgrounds and are economically disadvantaged. These students tend to have few models in their communities of successful

professionals who are like them (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). For students of color, seeing teachers as professionals means having opportunities they did not think could be possible. Teachers of color bring hope to their students and inspire them to think beyond a repetitive pattern of blue-collar jobs and hope of the possibility of attending college (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011).

Teacher Education Program Complexities

Students of color experience isolation and discrimination in college and particularly in teacher education (Milner, 2010). Increased cost for entering the teaching profession and teacher education programs quickly discourage students of color to seek the teaching profession. Emphasis on rigorous standards, criminal background checks, and fees for multiple tests to apply for the credential mean that most students of color need financial and academic support (Flynn et al., 2015). In a study completed by Flynn et al. in 2012–2013, research was conducted at a major university to discover perceptions of the teaching profession. The research team surveyed and interviewed 626 undergraduates who completed an online survey. One hundred and two (16.5%) were current teacher education majors. All participants were from one or more underrepresented groups (students of color, first-generation, low-income). The data were collected and examined according to trends in the underrepresented groups (Flynn et al., 2015). The study found three major themes on why students of color did not choose teaching as a profession.

Understanding why students of color do not choose the profession is beneficial when recruiting is the means of diversifying the teaching profession. The survey results indicated that students who were identified in the underrepresented group usually had had negative experiences in the educational system themselves (Flynn et al., 2015). The perception of the teaching profession by students in the survey was such that 47% believed the job was fulfilling by nature

(Flynn et al., 2015). The last concern was the financial aspect of the teaching profession. Forty three percent of the students surveyed reported that the salary was too low for the amount of work that was required in the profession.

To diversify the teaching program, university administrators had to attract students into the profession and make college affordable for students of color (Dilworth & Ardila-Rey, 2004; Flynn et al., 2015). The university states that lack of time and resources contribute to the obstacles to attract diverse teacher candidates. The coordinators that were interviewed noted they had an important role and responsibility to diversify the candidates, but nine of the 10 program coordinators in the study communicated that limited funds for scholarship and financial aid awards were a barrier to diversify teacher candidacy (Flynn et al., 2015). Survey findings also indicated that student loan forgiveness and scholarships would be ideal for students in these underrepresented groups.

Concerns about the homogeneity of the teacher preparation program were evident in the focus groups. Students of color expressed their concerns with the predominantly White student body and faculty (Flynn et al., 2015). The study results indicated that typically first-generation students felt they were isolated because of their family's financial background (Flynn et al., 2015). Findings also indicated that more than 80% of the students did not know about the supports and enrichment services available on campus for them to use at their own will, such as tutoring and workshops (Flynn et al., 2015).

The study indicates a need for advocacy for the profession to attract and retain teachers of color in public school classrooms. Sources for recruiting teachers of color must be intentional and aggressive. Tuition reimbursement programs and even alternate certificate programs could

help support the credentialing of teachers of color in the field (Dilworth & Ardila-Rey, 2004; Irvine, 2003). Revamping the teacher education programs would contribute to significant changes in terms of whom they are recruiting and retaining on campus. Irvine (2003) asked, "How can schools of education become legitimate voices of solutions to the minority teacher shortage problem if they are not able to recruit and retain faculty of color on their own campuses?" (Irvine, 2003). In addition to hiring faculty of color, the university should ensure the curriculum and emphasis of the program is centered on providing new teachers with a culturally proficient lens and strategies to best service students in urban communities. These issues are significant to ensuring that teacher education programs are making changes to diversify the teaching profession (Dilworth & Ardila-Rey, 2004). There is an urgent call for teacher education programs to recruit and prepare teachers of color for all schools. Thomas and Ivey-Soto (2015) termed this "the democratic imperative" to increase this action for teachers of color in the classroom.

Homegrown Teachers and Mentoring

Homegrown teachers encourage students to enter the teaching workforce by supporting how to begin to work in schools and how to navigate the hiring process (Bonner, Pacino, & Hardcastle Stanford, 2011). Serving as a role model for students is inherited by the cultural connection allowing students to relate to one another and helping them understand the options that could be attainable after school. To the student, this means the adult that looks and speaks similarly has reached professional goals to which they can aspire (Bonner et al., 2011). Connecting to students of color through consistent messaging of hope and providing the resources to support their schooling experience to survive in urban schools—mentor

relationships strongly influence urban youth. The impact of Grow Your Own Programs in urban communities is also what will make a difference in urban public schools.

Mentors Matter

Mentor relationships have great potential to facilitate career advancement and knowledge of a future career (Kram, 1983). Allen-Sommerville (1994) stated, "Through mentoring, the mentor uses skills and wisdom to provide decision making opportunities and enrichment, inspire dreams, and help students develop well-defined, realistic goals" (p. 18). Mentoring includes, but is not limited to, tutoring, teaching, coaching, advising, counseling, guiding, role modeling, and inspiring. DuBois and Rhodes (2006) have informed us that, for a mentoring program to be effective, there should be frequent contact and sufficient time together for the protégé to achieve their objectives.

Mentoring paraprofessionals. Bonner et al. (2011) conducted a study examining the paraprofessional's transition to becoming a future bilingual teacher through a mentoring program. The participants selected were based on the criteria that included being bilingual paraprofessional in their current district, having 2 years of undergraduate course work, having been nominated for the program by a superintendent or designee, and being interviewed and selected by faculty (Bonner et al., 2011). Fifteen scholars were selected originally, and 13 were available for the study. Of the 13 in the program, 11 completed the requirements to become credentialed bilingual teachers in their local schools. The findings revealed that the program had an impact on the participant's professional and personal lives, and supported them to complete their degree to enter the teaching profession.

Through the mentorship program, they specifically highlighted (a) the high quality of their preparation to teach, (b) the substantial financial aid support, and (c) the role the support, structure, and guidance played in them to be able to navigate the educational system of higher education (Bonner et al., 2011). The participants indicated that this mentoring program supported them to becoming caring teachers who value education for themselves, their students, and their own children (Bonner et al., 2011).

Providing a true focus on increasing the number of teachers of color to enter the profession requires early intervention that is intentional about the desired outcome that can be achieved through mentorship. Identifying high quality veteran teachers to serve as mentors is another issue that contributes to the success of teacher education programs (Holloway, 2002; Torres-Guzman & Goodwin, 1995) Because teaching is so complex, teacher candidates must have opportunities to struggle in their teacher education program while they have supports in place. For this reason, mentors support their protégées to encourage reflection, application of pedagogy, and change in practice (Marshall, 2013).

Mentoring adolescents. Mentoring serves the needs of students who do not have access to adult contact to support with socialization and individual development (Ference & Rhodes, 2002). Mentoring is defined as the positive relationship with and contribution by a nonparental adult to the life of a young person (Baker & McGuire, 2005; DuBois & Rhodes, 2006). "Mentoring can have positive results for all students but is especially effective for middle school students because they are in a critical stage of developing attitudes toward school and perception of self" (Ference & Rhodes, 2002, p. 42). This impact in developing a sense of attitudes and perception of self can lead to various positive gains in their future life. Tierney and Grossman

(1995) reported that students with mentors have higher grades, better attendance, and less discipline referrals than their nonmentored peers. Adolescences with mentors are also less likely to participate in inappropriate behavior.

Mentoring in middle schools. Ference and Rhodes (2002) shared the inception of a mentoring program for middle school students. This program was developed in Georgia, at a diverse middle school located four miles from Berry College (Ference & Rhodes, 2002). The goal of the program was to establish an ongoing mentoring network to support both future teachers and middle school students. The role developed in the school was to be a partner with local colleges to provide opportunities for future teachers and students. The program was developed by using preservice teachers with aspirations of teaching in middle school. "The college students experience firsthand the positive influence they have on the students there by reinforcing the idealism that brought them to teaching" (Ference & Rhodes, 2002, p. 42). The potential result of the mentorship program was positive for mentors, protégées, and the middle school culture. The preservice teachers were able to learn how to apply real world knowledge to curriculum, which required that they modify and scaffold curriculum to meet individual student needs (Ference & Rhodes, 2002). This application of theory to practice was supportive of the growth of future teachers.

Mentoring in high schools. Providing role models and informal mentoring programs has also become a strategy to increase high school students' graduation rates (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009). In a study by Schwartz et al. (2016), students were recruited to participate in a workshop their last semester of their senior year in high school. This workshop was designed as an afterschool and summer program serving low-income, racial or ethnic students, and/or first-

generation college bound students. Twelve students participated, and 50% of them were female. The intervention was designed for eight weeks of support, for 1.5 hours a week. Pre- and postinterviews were conducted with the participants. The results of the study support the powerful relationships that can develop through mentorship. Participants described “an increase understanding of the ways in which relationships with non-parental adults could be beneficial to them and the types of support that can be provided through such relationships” (Schwartz et al., 2016, p. 55). They also reported an ability to initiate relationships with adults, “particularly with potential academic or career mentors, as well as increasing their self-efficacy interacting with adults” (Schwartz et al., 2016, p. 55). These results contribute to understanding the benefits of mentoring relationships and how they contribute to future success through networks and social capital development. This study highlights the benefits of mentorship with students who are underrepresented in colleges to develop skills crucial for college and career success (Schwartz et al., 2016).

Homegrown Teacher Projects

The teacher turnover rate is twice as high in schools with over 50% students of color (Bonner et al., 2011). As the country responds to teacher of color recruitment and retention, some states have begun to focus on homegrown teacher projects to support urban schools and the dense population of students of color served in the schools. Urban schools are seeking teaching professionals who will not be intimidated by urban school challenges. Homegrown initiatives have been created for urban communities. As Bonner et al. (2011) stated, “Unaccustomed to the area’s mix of poverty, ever changing ethnicity, and low educational preparation levels, teacher recruits from outside the area often don’t last a year” (p. 2). Programs that do not focus on

utilizing the community as a resource usually tend to have the teachers leave after 3 years. This number increases if a student-teacher cultural mismatch is evident (Bartow et al., 2015). In the following section, current homegrown teacher programs serving urban communities will be discussed as they address how to recruit and retain teachers of color to serve urban schools.

Urban Teacher Academy Program. In Fort Lauderdale, Florida, high school students participate in a program known as the Urban Teacher Academy Program (UTAP; Bonner et al., 2011). The initiative guides and supports high school students through college and guarantees participants a teaching job in Broward County School District once they graduate and receive their teaching credential. This program represents hope for Broward County to reach its goal of diversifying and retaining teachers in urban schools. Broward County has a high poverty rate and a high number of students of color in their schools.

The UTAP program is unique because of the support it offers the participants after graduation. During the program, participants attend partnering colleges to study education and the students intern at local schools. The participants are offered full scholarships to study and complete the program. Once the participants graduate from college and receive their credentials, they are guaranteed first pick of the districts available jobs (Bonner et al., 2011). The goal of the program is to be replicable to see the value and impact a program like this could have in urban communities.

Teach Tomorrow in Oakland. In Oakland, California, the Teach Tomorrow Oakland (TTO) Program supports the Oakland community with a resource for residents of Oakland to have a place for information and support to become teachers. The goal of the program is to recruit teachers of color to serve in urban schools through assistance with recruitment, test

preparation, test fee assistance, and retention support for teachers in the classroom (Rogers-Ard & Lynch, 2015). The program was developed to support the revolving door of other recruiting efforts in urban schools. The TTO program requires a 5-year commitment, which is intended to mitigate the high turnover rate. The TTO partners with local colleges to support the credentialing process for participants (Rogers-Ard & Lynch, 2015).

Grow Your Own Teachers. The Grow Your Own Teacher (GYO) initiative in Illinois invests in paraprofessionals, community leaders, or parents who cannot afford college (Bartow et al., 2015). Illinois is in the top three states in the demographic gap between the number of students of color and teachers of color (Boser, 2011). The program offers the financial support to attend college and stipends for participants once they are student teaching. The GYO has three essential elements that support their participants to teach in urban communities: (a) financial aid is provided through grants or other measures for participants to afford books and tuition; (b) academic and social support is given through the GYO coordinator and GYO academic liaison, and the coordinator and liaison support and monitor the academic progress of the participant through a mentoring relationship and providing the social capital to navigate thee school environment; and (c) relationships are the last element that supports the GYO program to success.

Pathways2Teaching. Pathways 2Teaching is a high school program in Colorado designed to engage high school students of color to give back to the community and consider teaching as a career (Tandon, Bianco, & Zion, 2015). Pathways2Teaching has a goal of developing students' critical consciousness and sociopolitical understanding behind diversifying the teaching profession (Tandon et al., 2015). This class serves to inspire students to see teaching

as a way to impact change for their community (Tandon et al., 2015). The goal of this Pathways2Teaching class is to create allies as future teachers of color to enter the profession. Duncan-Andrade (2007) called these allies, “Ridas”—a reference to a popular hip-hop term describing someone’s loyalty and commitment to their people. Pathways2Teaching program strives to produce “ridas” through an academically rigorous course in high school to diversify the future teaching profession through a social justice platform (Tandon et al., 2015).

Pathways2Teaching has been successful for 3 years, since its inception in 2013, with plans to continue expansion. The program faces typical urban school challenges that do not supported the expansion; technology, resources, and Internet access create obstacles for the students to research and produce their projects (Tandon et al., 2015). An expansion goal of the program is to create on-line resources so teachers and other districts can replicate the program (Tandon et al., 2015). The goal of the program is also to create a pipeline to education, as the pipeline for students of color is in crisis (Tandon et al., 2015). Patway2Teaching is an example of a program purposely is working to diversify the teaching profession not only by inspiring youth to enter the teaching force but also by educating them about the urban school challenges they will encounter as homegrown teachers of color.

Roses in Concrete Community Elementary School. The apprentice program at Roses in Concrete Community School in Oakland, California was founded by Dr. Jeff Duncan Andrade, who supports the notion of contributing the teacher education pipeline as early as elementary school. At Roses, they have begun an apprentice program for students that exemplify teacher characteristics at an early age. As early as third grade, specific students who are referred by their teachers are part of the teacher education path at this elementary school. There are three

phases to the program. The program begins by assigning the future teacher a one-on-one student in the younger grades, eventually moving to a supporting a small group; the last phase, is designing and leading lessons. The goal of the school is for them to become instructional assistants at Roses or to teach in Oakland. (Duncan-Andrade, personal connection, November 1, 2017).

The pipeline for teaching for students of color is in crisis (Tandon et al., 2015). For many reasons discussed in the literature review, students of color struggle with the idea of attending college and pursuing a career in education. Homegrown Teaching Programs such as the ones discussed above create opportunities for students of color and adults to become future teachers of color. The programs encourage and support students to navigate higher education and bureaucratic obstacles and also to provide participants with mentors or a network to develop their social and human capital.

Best in Education 2016 Award

Every other year, the *Best in Education* award recognizes one teacher on a national platform. The tag line to this prestigious award is teachers who do "more with less, overcame obstacles, boosted achievement levels, and raised the standard of excellence for their schools and districts" (The Best Schools, 2016). This award presents 10 stellar teacher finalists, and the first-, second- and third- place teachers are presented on the website. When reviewing these 10 finalists, the power of their stories is evident in their passion and commitment to their community. The winner of the national award in 2016 was Anthony Yom. This recognition is given to the top 0.000285% of teachers out of the 3.5 million in the nation, in conjunction with the other nine finalists (The Best Schools, 2016). Anthony Yom was a homegrown teacher,

servicing an urban community in Los Angeles, California. His biography on the website communicated that he identifies himself as a social justice educator. Yom is an immigrant to the United States, who grew up in the inner city and identifies with his students. He teaches at Lincoln High School, where the 91% poverty rate does not stop his advance placement Calculus class from passing the AP Test with a 100% rate. This honor has gained him recognition from the White House and President Obama. “Yom has developed a firm belief that any students, regardless of academic, cultural, and social struggles, can learn and succeed when passion and collaboration are met with the right support system” (The Best Schools, 2016, p.1).

From the 10 finalists presented on the website, not only is the winner Anthony Yom, a homegrown teacher, as indicated in the on-line biography, but also Socorro Ament, Tammy DeVries, Jose Octavio Rivas, Jr., and Mitchell Smith. Their biographies state they are teaching in the communities in which they were raised and educated, and have a passion to teach in urban schools. Fifty percent of the teachers recognized on this platform were homegrown teachers. These data support that many teachers of color intentionally choose to enter teaching to serve as role models and change agents, and to contribute to transforming education (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011).

Although this is a national award, the organization made no attempt to connect the similar characteristics of the teacher finalists to the students they serve. If a critical eye were to look at the teacher background and similarities, the award could be used to highlight the importance of homegrown teachers to the broader educational community. The organization is not capitalizing on the platform it has to create informational networks for practitioners who honor and respect the award. Because no attempt to name and feature the social phenomenon of

homegrown teachers in their list of finalists was found, it can be inferred that a lack of information on homegrown teachers is pervasive in education as a whole.

Humanistic Calling of Teachers of Color to Serve in Education

The personal background and histories of the teachers of color shape a *humanistic* commitment to enhancing educational opportunities for students of color (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011). Continual attention to transforming urban schools and recruiting and retaining teachers of color will support the changes needed to address the challenges of urban education.

Believing in equal opportunities for students of color is the foundation for cultivating homegrown teachers (Irizarry, 2007; Partee, 2014). Teachers of color support diversity within urban schools (Irizarry, 2007; Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012). Partee (2014) stated,

> We must make sure that all students especially this new stream of diverse learners from different cultural and language background, have access to not only high quality education opportunities but also a high quality and an equally diverse teaching force (p. 1).

Urban schools need teachers of color who are willing to support and encourage success. The importance of teachers of color with a social justice educational philosophy, who value educational diversity and equity, is imperative to the transformation of urban schools. These teachers must clearly understand poverty in schools and the conditions students face. Nieto (2010) cited problems as unemployment, and a lack of adequate housing and other necessities that are taken for granted by middle class families but are just a reality for a majority of students of color who attend urban schools.

Homegrown teachers understand common urban school circumstances because many have faced the same situations in their personal life, or have had other family members experience the common hardships that come with growing up in urban communities (Irvine,

2003; Nieto 2010). By developing an early intervention pipeline with a critical pedagogy framework foundation to influence and support future teachers of color, Kathy Kram's (1983) mentoring framework will support the relationships and support system to be successful in diversifying the teaching profession. This support is known as *social capital* (Stanton-Salazar, 1997) which is the gift mentors share with their protégées.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The practitioner who interacts in the educational environment and uses this knowledge to identify a structural problem is the catalyst that drives action research. This action is possible because of how data is available in its natural environment. The data will drive the action research study because its central focus is to provide an understanding of a social setting as viewed from the perspective of the participants (Flick, 2014; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Action research works well with critical pedagogy—the framework of the current study—as it gives voice to the participants involved in the research process. Action research encourages dialogue, praxis, and critical consciousness in the research environment. Action research is inquiry with the community, a process of co-learning through participation—a process that Freire (1970) believes is essential when working with oppressed communities (as cited in Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Action research is a methodology used for improving conditions in practitioner-based environments (Craig, 2009). Lewin (1951) was one of the first researchers to use the term action research. He suggested that in an effective community of practice, where the co-learning is visible, research could take place (Craig, 2009). Action research examines the conditions for social action in a spiral and cyclical research processes that lead to action and improvement (Craig, 2009). Practitioners use their expertise and their knowledge of the environment to create systematic inquiry and create an action plan to support the problem of study (Craig, 2009).

This action research study documented the unique mentoring experiences of homegrown teachers with urban school students at Miranda Elementary. The goal of the mentorship was to

promote, retain, and inspire urban sixth-grade students to enter the teaching profession through the development of a mentoring relationship. The protégées, who have expressed interest in teaching through an existing College Week program at Miranda Elementary School, were given support through the Homegrown Teacher Project, to see themselves as future urban school teachers. The action research methodology will document the voices and experiences of the mentors and protégées. The protégées worked together with a mentor to understand what the teaching profession entails in urban schools. Through the Homegrown Teacher Project, students learned what it means to plan for their future career, understand the requirements to pursue a 4-year college, and how to enter a teaching credential program. This chapter describes why an action research methodology approach best supports the research questions, guided by the theoretical frameworks of critical pedagogy, mentoring, and social capital as the foundation of the study.

Research Questions

This study focused on the experiences of the participants in The Homegrown Teacher Project, an early intervention teacher pipeline project grounded in critical mentoring between teachers and six grade girls at Miranda Elementary School. The notion of a "homegrown teacher" was the foundation for this intervention program or critical pipeline, where students of color interested in a future career as a teacher, were paired with a teacher of color, who is teaching in the community they were born and raised in. In order to understand the challenges and opportunities with creating a homegrown teaching pipeline, the following questions were the focus of the study.

1. How do homegrown Latina teachers, who are mentoring students to become future teachers, and their protégées conceptualize the challenges and opportunities of this early intervention pipeline?
2. How does The Homegrown Teacher Project provide experiences to prepare sixth-graders for their future career as teachers?

Research Design

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology supports the ability to capture the voice and experience of the participants in the field. Qualitative methodologies allow for validation of reflection by becoming an "explicit part of the knowledge instead of deeming it an intervening variable" (Flick, 2014, p. 17). In action research, qualitative approaches to inquiry require multiple forms of data collection to support triangulation which leads to relevancy when examining the data (Craig, 2009). Qualitative research locates the researcher/observer in the world and allows the study to happen in the participants' natural settings, attempting to make sense of a problem (Mayer, 2015). Qualitative research is flexible and allows the researcher to reflect and evaluate throughout the study (Mayer, 2015). Van Maanen (1979) defines qualitative methods as a term encompassing over 40 techniques of qualitative inquiry that describe, decode, and translate while coming to terms with meaning (Mayer, 2015). This study utilized one approach to qualitative research known as action research.

Action Research

Action research requires an initial reflection of an everyday social problem. The goal of action research design is to address a problem within the community and find a solution by practitioners. Herr and Anderson (2015) wrote:

> Action research is inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organization or community, but is never to or on them. It is a reflective process, but is different from isolated, spontaneous reflection in that is deliberately and systematically undertaken, and generally requires that some form of evidence be presented to support assertions. (p. 3)

Craig (2009) best defines action research as: (a) focus on a social problem in the practitioners' environment, (b) collaborative in nature with other practitioners who have identified the same structural problem, (c) a cyclical process to improve the data collection process, (d) reflection in practice through the action research cycle, and (e) develops an action plan to support the problem being investigated in the field.

Action research focuses on a problem. Action research methodology allows commitment to change an evident social issue with other practitioners by blurring the lines of the defined roles created in research, such as the expert, participant, and researcher (Hendricks, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2015). Herr and Anderson (2015) wrote, "We seek authentic collaborations with others invested in constructing knowledge valued by various constituencies but with a particular aim of knowledge that is generative for the community from which it is derived" (p. 150). Action research has a socially just foundation as the researcher thrives from working with others in the community to solve a problem. Because of this collaborative nature in solving an evident social issue, action research is considered messy, but appropriate when working in the researcher's community. This collaborative role allows for action to a specific social problem (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

One of the major strengths of action research is its ability to produce local knowledge about the problem being studied (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Local knowledge is acquired within the community, addressing the needs of the people in a specific setting; it is mostly shared with the immediate community of practitioners or community members (Herr & Anderson, 2015). For this reason, the ultimate goal of action research is for it to transcend and apply the findings to other settings, so other practitioners can use the knowledge acquired in the study. This is referred to as the transferability of the findings in qualitative studies. Collaboration and support of the practitioners is what leads to the most reflective inquiry to promote trustworthy data.

The most progressive concept of the research is that it is not only research to understand a problem, but most importantly, to solve a problem from within. The goal is to develop realistic solutions for dealing with the problem investigated through a collective effort. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) validated that the reason urban school practitioners desire to undertake action research as their methodology is due to experiencing or witnessing injustices in the field, so action research is motivating as they could potentially improve their own conditions or system.

Action research is collaborative. The collaborative quality of the research empowers the participants because they feel that change is possible from their contributions in action research (Craig, 2009). In action research, a practitioner in an organization initiates research with other insiders. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2007) shared that tension is inevitable as knowledge is produced, interrupted, exchanged, and used by those positioned throughout the collaborative research process. Herr and Anderson (2015) discussed that these unnatural boundaries are due to the fact that most academic researchers struggle with action research methodology because it does not follow social rules and leads to academia struggling with ethical issues. This

collaboration is critical because of the ability to search together for solutions and improvements (Craig, 2009). When implementing the conditions to better support the problem from the research findings, change occurs (Hendricks, 2017). This action research process involves participants that would usually be excluded from the research process (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Duncan-Andrade and Morrell (2008) stated the goal of why the collaboration and inquiry is purposeful in nature. Action research allows for questioning and working towards change within the community (Craig, 2009). This experience allows for the interaction and experience of the practitioners to inform the data collection. Because of this, action research is considered a field intensive process (Craig, 2009).

Action research is cyclical. Action research is cyclical and it spirals, leading to action and improvement in the field (Craig, 2009). Practitioners create a plan, act, and observe that which leads to reflection and follow-up based on findings (Hendricks, 2017). Stringer (2014) identified the collaborative approach for action research inquiry as a routine process. In action research, the cycle of inquiry allows for reflection and action throughout the study. This perspective allows the research facilitator to informally problem solve and document across time. Most importantly, the action research allows the participants in the study to become co-researchers, a role that involves the discussion of the complexity of diversifying the teaching profession to best service urban schools with teachers that are living and witnessing the social problem daily in their own lives.

The cyclical method of action research is also recursive (Craig, 2009). The recursive or cyclical nature indicates that it moves through steps over and over again. Craig (2009) shares that the cycle of inquiry does not end when conclusions are made; the process just begins again. The

process begins with the problem being identified, which then leads to the research questions and the data collection (Hendricks, 2017). The main idea behind the cycle of inquiry is to illustrate the concept of continual reflection throughout the study (Hendricks, 2006, 2017; Stinger, 2014). This process can be illustrated as a spiral to allow decision making to be an action derived from reflection and evaluation. This notion illustrates that action research is an ongoing process used to improve practice (Hendricks, 2006, 2017). The practitioner understands that, after evaluation, the process will continue with the same spiral of reflection, action, and evaluation (Hendricks, 2017).

Action research is reflective. Action research is an ethical inquiry that allows reflection for actions to support values (Hendricks, 2017). The inquiry process encourages the collaboration and educational purpose of the work (Hendricks, 2017). Reflecting supports the continual understanding of one's own biases and assumptions that are discovered through deep reflection (Hendricks, 2017). Reflection is important to understand how one's actions mirror personal beliefs or biases in practice and remove them from the findings. In action research, reflecting takes place at the beginning and throughout the process of conducting the study (Hendricks, 2006). The type of reflection matters when summarizing findings. Schön (1987) described two types of reflection that are often seen in action research. There is *reflection-on-action* that occurs when actions and observations have taken place. Another type of reflection is *reflection-in-action*, which is the reflection that is happening when the action is taking place (as cited in Hendricks, 2006). This methodology allowed the researcher to be self-reflective during the research process with the co-collaborators and with the community.

Action research develops an action plan. Action research encourages the researcher to consider the interconnectedness of the environment and the community with the goal of developing an action plan once the data is analyzed. For this reason, the methodology is one that requires the research facilitator to take an active part in the study for the data collection. The researcher facilitator will collect and analyze the data and use the findings to design an action plan (Craig, 2009). The action plan will communicate the findings of the study to other researchers. The action plan serves as a guide to improve practice and the conditions of environments similar to the one being studied (Craig, 2009). For this reason, action research methodology supports practitioners in the field by validating their environment or immediate community and to produce knowledge to drive others in the field.

Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) conceptualized how data collection and activities contribute to the continuous action research spiral. The inquiry process that the research facilitator will undergo during the study can be visualized in Figure 1. Figure 1 illustrates Kemmis and Wilkinson's visual with the steps of action research process within the Homegrown Teacher Project.

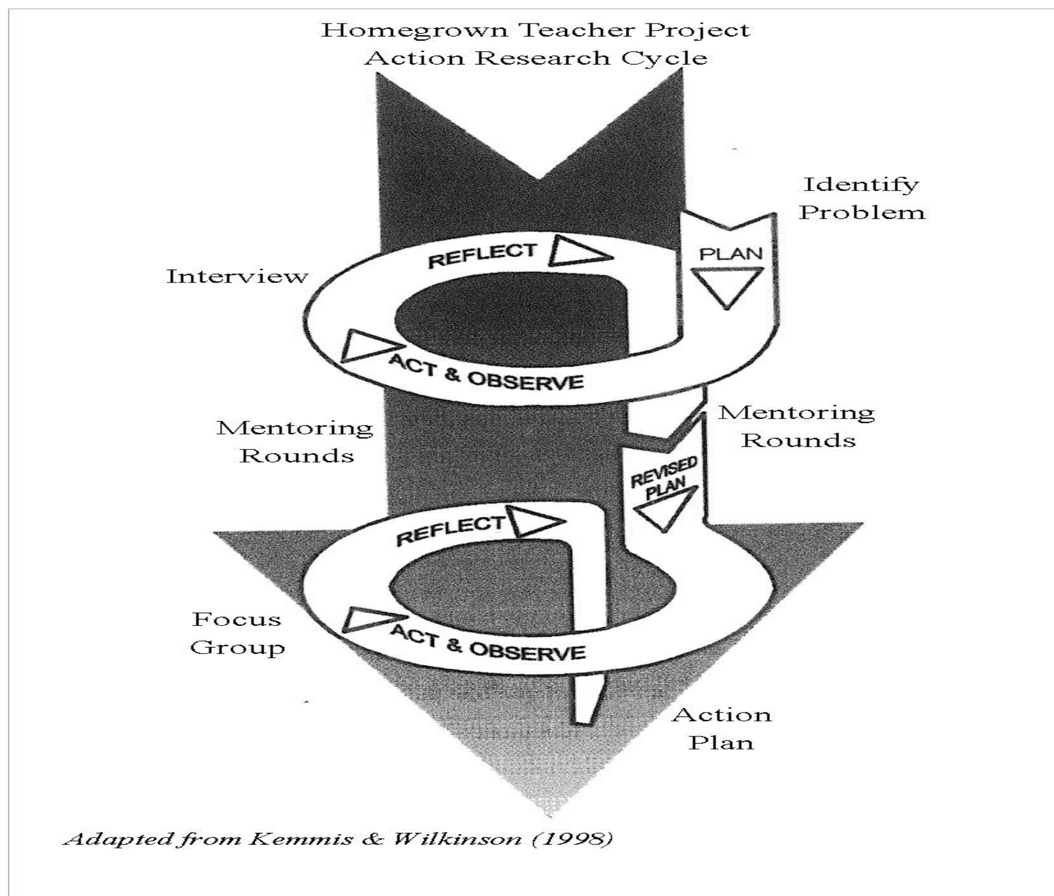


Figure 1. Homegrown Teacher Project action research cycle. Adapted from " Participatory Action Research and the Study of Practice" Kemmis, S. & Wilkinson, M. (1998)

Research Setting

More than six million students are enrolled in California public schools from transitional kindergarten to 12th grade (California Language Arts Framework, 2015). More than 70% are students of color who come from diverse backgrounds. Nearly half of the students in California have a home language other than English (California Language Arts Framework, 2015). Many students are not progressing academically, and California has a significant number of students who are not college and career ready, also known as not being A-G eligible to apply to 4-year

universities (California Language Arts Framework, 2015). A-G eligibility indicates that the student has not had the proper classes in high school to satisfy the minimum requirements of core classes when applying to college. This statistic is alarming; particularly when the goal of diversifying the teaching profession requires eligible students to attend 4-year universities in order to pursue a teaching credential program. Closing the persistent opportunity gaps is crucial for opportunities in post-secondary education.

Mina County

Mina County (a pseudonym) is the third largest county in California. Mina County is racially and ethnically diverse. The 2010 census estimated that Mina County's population composed of 42.9% Whites, 34% Hispanic or Latinos, 18.6% Asians, 1.6% Black, and 2.9% other races or ethnicities (U.S. Census, 2010). Interestingly enough, for children, the number of Hispanic or Latina/o children is higher at 47.2% compared to White children at 30.7%. The diversity of Mina County is evident noting 30% are foreign born and 45.5% of residents over 5 years old can speak a language other than English; Spanish dominates foreign languages at 26.3% (American Community Survey, 2014). In Mina County, poverty has increased in the last several years. As of 2014, 17.6% of children in Mina County ages 0 to 17 live in poverty and 49.1% of Mina County public school children are eligible for free and reduced lunch, which indicates their family of four income is equal to or less than $24,300.

For this action research study, it is important to highlight the low number college readiness in specific districts within Mina County. The percentage of high school graduates who are academically eligible to apply to a 4-year university in the school district of the current study

is 37.5% compared to the Mina County average of 50.4% (California Department of Education, 2015).

Toribio Elementary School District

Toribio Elementary School District (a pseudonym) educates 18,300 students in the TK-6 grade. The school district educates mostly Latino/a students in the downtown area of the city, which typically serves first-generation immigrants. Due to the centralized location of the city, many immigrants choose to locate to the city because of the high availability of jobs in such a concentrated area. Seventy-eight percent of Toribio Elementary School District's students qualify for the free and reduced lunch program. Seventy-four percent are English language learners, with 94% of them speaking Spanish as their home language. Nine percent of the students are identified as homeless (California Department of Education, 2016).

Miranda Elementary School. Miranda Elementary School (a pseudonym) is a pre-school through sixth-grade elementary school servicing over 1,060 students. This elementary school is the largest of 24 schools in the Toribio School District. Miranda Elementary is on a five-track year-round school calendar with 40 classroom teachers. The students are 91% Hispanic or Latino. Eighty-six percent of the students in TK-6 are classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, and 92% of the students are on the free and reduced lunch program. Eighty-five percent of the students in TK-6 are English language learners, and 96% of the English language learners speak Spanish at home. The poverty rate is evident, as 16% of the students are identified as homeless (California Department of Education, 2016). Compared to other similar schools in Mina County, Miranda Elementary is unique due to the racial composition of the teachers at the school site. In Mina County, 76% of the teachers are White

and 12% are Hispanic (California Department of Education, 2016). At Miranda Elementary School, 46% of the teachers are White, and 43% of the teachers are Hispanic. The high percentage of teachers of color at Miranda Elementary facilitated the idea behind The Homegrown Teacher Project.

Participants

Study participants were five Latina elementary teachers, who served as mentors; and five sixth-grade girls from Miranda Elementary School who were the selected protégées due to their interest in teaching. Table 1 indicates the teachers who participated in the study. The table shares how the participants were born and raised in the same community, while Penelope grew up in the neighboring city, with similar urban demographics.

Table 1

Homegrown Teacher Participants

NAME	POSITION	DEGREES	YEARS IN EDUCATION	ETHNICITY	GENDER	HG DISTRICT	HG COUNTY
Iveth	6th Grade	B.A. M.Ed.	7	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female	X	
Isabella	6th Grade	B.A. M. Ed.	8	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female	X	
Kimberly	4th Grade	B.A. M.Ed.	8	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female	X	
Penelope	4th Grade	B.A. M.Ed.	6	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female		X
Diana	4th Grade	B.A.	3	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female	X	

Key: B.A. = Bachelor's Degree M.Ed.= Master of Education HG = Homegrown

The protégées are found in Table 2. The term protégée is used to honor the relationship as a critical mentoring relationship (that is based in gender, race, and ethnic affinity between mentor and advisee), and removes deficit language typically associated with the word mentee, which usually carries a patronizing or condescending connotation (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Pseudonyms have been given to protect the participants and ensure they are not identifiable to anyone but the research facilitator. Names were chosen by the participants.

Table 2

Protégé Participants

NAME	AGE	GRADE	ETHNICITY	GENDER
Melissa	12	6	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female
Sol	12	6	Argentinian immigrant at Age 8	Female
Clarissa	12	6	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female
Leslie	12	6	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female
Emily	12	6	First-Generation Mexican-American	Female

Sampling Criteria and Procedures for Recruitment

Through informal collaboration and analyzation of school dynamics during the 2016-2017 academic year, a group of homegrown Latina teachers and myself, the principal, became cognizant of the fact that our school has a large number of Latina homegrown teachers who play the role of cultural translators (Irvine, 2003). Over the course of the year through on-going discussion, these particular Latina teachers expressed interest in nurturing some of the elementary school students who aspire to be future teachers. A review of the literature on homegrown teachers led me to acknowledge the ripe environmental factors available to us to explore the possible impact these particular teachers could have on aspiring educators in our school. As a group, we identified a problem and I was asked me to become the research

facilitator. This problem is the focus of the proposal. An action plan was submitted and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. The IRB approval formalized their participation as research collaborators in The Homegrown Teacher Project.

Homegrown teachers. The action research project utilized a purposeful sampling criterion. The criteria for the teachers in the Homegrown Teacher Project included: (a) identify as a first-generation female Latina teacher, (b) attended an urban school in Mina County as an elementary student, and (c) have been teaching for at least two years at Miranda Elementary and (d) the teachers proposed and volunteered free of coercion or pressure, to become mentors and part of the research study. This unique sample is based on the research findings of the positive impact that homegrown teachers have in urban classrooms (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Irizarry, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2010).

Protégées. The protégées were also chosen using a purposeful sampling, like the teachers. The criteria for the protégé selection included (a) sixth-grade Latina female student; (b) interested in the teaching profession as indicated in the open-ended sentence frame during the college week activity (Appendix E); (c) ability to write to the prompt, “I want to be a teacher because…” from their classroom assignment (Appendix E); (d) currently attending Miranda Elementary School;(e) parent or guardian permission formal consent at the informational meeting with the research facilitator and (f) student assented to participate in the study.

Recruitment of protégées. During College Week at Miranda Elementary, in the Fall of 2017, all students completed a college day cap activity (Appendix E). All students answer the sentence frame that read, “When I grow up I want to be a __”. In addition to the prompt, sixth-grade students who indicated teaching as a future career wrote to the prompt, “I want to be a

teacher because….” With this prompt, the students communicated the reason for choosing teaching as a desired career through a brief narrative. College week activities have been in place at Miranda Elementary since the 2013-2014 school year. Once the caps were turned into the office to be displayed for the community, the research facilitator sorted the sixth-grade caps that had "teacher" written as their future career choice. Their writing prompt was also collected for the selection criteria. The research facilitator met with the potential participants to explain the opportunity they have to be a potential participant in The Homegrown Teacher Project.

Mentor matching. As the research facilitator, I contacted the teachers to secure their participation in the study. The first meeting was used to acquire consent for the participants and begin the mentor matching. The participants learned about time commitment and participation expectations in their roles as co-researchers. They understood the documentation process of the data and the types of data that would be collected throughout the study. The research facilitator and mentors reviewed the potential protégées by reading the written prompts they had submitted for the College Week assignment. Each mentor chose a protégé based on their written work and the knowledge the teacher had about them as students. Four of the five mentors had a previous connection to their chosen protégé. Only one mentor, Iveth cultivated a completely new relationship with a protégé.

Gender. The data of the students who were interested in teaching as a career during College Week yielded only female students. From the sixth-grade class at Miranda Elementary School, not one male student chose teaching as a future career. Common chosen careers for boys were police officers, YouTubers, and engineers. Miranda Elementary was a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) School, emphasizing engineering in the core

curriculum. Although this feature is later discussed as a limitation to the study, this data sample created gender-like mentoring relationships without manipulating the data. The lack of interest in teaching as a career for boys is statistically accurate and correlates with the numbers of males represented nationally within the teaching profession.

Table 3

Homegrown Teacher Project Mentoring Relationships

Mentor/Protégé	Current 6th-grade student	Previous 4th-Grade Student	New relationship
Iveth & Melissa			X
Isabella & Sol	X		
Kimberly & Clarissa		X	
Penelope & Leslie		X	
Diana & Emily		X	

According to Kram (1983) all mentoring relationships begin in the initiation stage. The relationships allow the mentors and protégées to have positive expectations from the developing relationship. The events of the first years transform in positive interactions and expectations, creating opportunities for the protégé (Kram, 1983). The initiation stage sets the relationship in motion to begin to flourish. Because of the conditions of the mentoring relationships, controlling for gender, cultural experience, and community upbringing, including sharing the commonality of interest in the teaching profession, the relationship can be termed a critical mentoring relationship according to Weiston-Serdan (2017). Critical mentoring encourages adults and youth to share similar characteristics to enhance the mentoring relationship and support the growth through time, or what Kram (1983) shares as stages of the mentoring relationship. The

mentoring relationships flourished during the time they spent in their mentoring sessions. The participants shared conversations about teaching, college, family, and dreams. These conversations support the critical mentoring component, because of the comfort and encouragement the protégées received from their mentors. The mentoring stages continue to evolve with time. The stages transition from initiation, to cultivation, separation and redefinition (Kram, 1983). The time is unique to each relationship. All mentors were in the cultivation stages in The Homegrown Teacher Project.

Initial contact with protégées. Once the mentors selected their desired protégé from the narratives, the research facilitator contacted the parents of the future protégées to acquire permission to invite their child to be a part of the study. All parents attended a forty five minute meeting with the research facilitator where the inform consent was explained, signed, and permission was granted to contact the protégé. After the parent consent, a meeting with the protégées was scheduled after school to inform them of the action research methodology process within The Homegrown Teacher Project. The student participants, like the teachers were explained the procedures, their commitment, and the nature of the weekly mentoring sessions and how it could support their future teaching career. All protégées were excited to begin the experience and assent was collected.

Students not selected for study. During the recruitment process, three more students than mentors indicated an interest in becoming a future teacher. As the principal and research facilitator, I met with these three protégées who were interested in the teaching profession. These students were not turned away from the experience of the project and were nurtured in a similar environment.

The students met with me in triads, where we discussed teaching and learning. These three students learned the same themes and objectives as the participants of The Homegrown Teacher Project. We met every two weeks, and visited different classrooms to use for discussions about classroom management and classroom environment. These students attended the College Workshop, and the celebration provided for the protégées at the end of the data collection process. The other mentors and protégées knew they were part of the project, but did not fully participate because they were not observed. The primary difference between the selected protégées and nonselected participants was that data were not collected on the latter participants; because I served as the study's research facilitator and their mentor.

Although some of the mentors were interested in having more than one protégé, the ideal mentor matching for the study was one-to-one to maximize the depth of connection and relationships between mentors and protégées.

Methods of Data Collection

To provide an accurate collection of the perceived challenges and opportunities of The Homegrown Teacher Project, the need for multiple data sets must be clarified since the environment is rich with naturally occurring data (Craig, 2009). To document the launch of The Homegrown Teacher Project, the research facilitator administered qualitative data collection through observations within the mentoring sessions, semi-interviews, and a mentor focus group to understand the perceptions and thoughts of the participants. The three forms of data supported triangulation and validity. Triangulation occurs when multiple forms of data are examined and yield the same results (Craig, 2009). When data shows the same results, it confirms the research findings. The findings ensure transparency of data throughout the study.

Contextualizing the Data Collection

Data for the Homegrown Teacher Project was collected through mentoring sessions, observations, researcher's reflective notes, semi structured interviews, and a mentor focus group. The data was collected over a period of three months. The interviews and focus group were completed at the end of the data period, while the mentoring sessions were scheduled weekly throughout the study. The table below provides a snapshot summary of the data collect for the action research project.

Table 4

Homegrown Teacher Project Data Collection Summary

Participants	Number of observations	Duration of observations	Number of researcher reflection notes	Number of mentor/ protégé interviews	Duration of mentor/ protégé interviews	Duration of mentor focus group
Iveth & Melissa	3	115 Minutes	3	2	61 minutes	80 minutes
Isabella & Sol	3	110 Minutes	3	2	69 minutes	80 minutes
Kimberly & Clarissa	6	278 Minutes	6	2	78 minutes	80 minutes
Penelope & Leslie	3	102 Minutes	3	2	66 minutes	80 minutes
Diana & Emily	3	105 Minutes	3	2	64 minutes	80 minutes

Mentoring relationships undergo stages of development as Kram (1983) communicates. The stages are a result of movement through the relationships unfolding. The relationship stages, initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition do not have a set time frame; each relationship is unique based on the participant's growth and support for one another. Critical mentoring (Weiston-Serdan, 2017) is a new way revisiting the traditional hierarchical mentoring relationships that were detailed in Kram's (1983) framework. Critical mentoring has been described as a strategy to help support urban youth through a well-developed relationship in their immediate environment. This strategy shared by Torie Weiston-Serdan (2017) discusses that by

infusing critical theories in traditional mentoring practices, the protégé learns how social networks, relationships, and power can be examined in order to support their future success. Her strategy is specifically driven to support students of color in addressing their marginalization so that mentors work with youth to interrupt the status quo (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Through this acknowledgement of critical mentoring, The Homegrown Teacher Project was able to create similar cultural relationships for the protégées. The Homegrown Teacher Project relationships would be defined as critical mentoring relationships according to Weiston-Serdan (2017). The following section outlines the context for each data collection source.

Observations and Researcher's Reflection Notes

Observations during the mentoring sessions allowed for a firsthand account of the mentor-protégé relationships. Observations allowed for analysis of interactions, conversations, and possibly how relationships develop over time. Observations are methods of data collection that involve all the senses (Flick, 2014). The collection of data consisted of The Homegrown Teacher Observation Protocol (Appendix A). The observations were collected during the mentor and protégé weekly sessions. The mentoring sessions took place after-school, and consisted of a time scheduled between the participants. As the research facilitator, I documented at least three sessions for each mentoring relationship. Calendars were used to schedule the mentoring sessions with the mentor and protégé.

Weekly mentoring session. The Homegrown Teacher Project had participants actively engage in weekly mentoring sessions for a period of three months. The mentoring session consisted of at least a thirty minute after-school meeting between the mentor and protégé. The participants engaged in themed activities based on the California Teaching Standards. The

research facilitator observed the mentoring sessions for data collection purpose. The themes were grounded on the following goals (a) educational vision, (b) classroom organization, (c) classroom management, and (d) curriculum and lesson planning. Each theme's objective and task supported the mentor teacher to guide the learning in the sessions to have discussions about the teaching profession. This was helpful to solidify their goals around the profession while at the same time growing in their relationship.

The mentors were given pacing calendars and task and objectives based on the mentoring themes to support their weekly sessions. The tasks and objectives were as follows:

Theme 1: Educational Vision

Objective: The mentor will share their educational vision/purpose in education

Task: Create a vision board (paper/electronic) together with protégé

Theme 2: Classroom Organization

Objective: The mentor will share with protégé why classroom organization supports students

Task: Create a classroom map with instructional materials, expectations, and seating arrangements for their future class

Theme 3: Classroom Management

Objective: The mentor will share the benefits of positive reinforcement with students

Task: Create a classroom management system to support a classroom

Theme 4: Curriculum and Lesson Planning

Objective: The mentor will share how the teacher uses standards and curriculum

Task: Create a lesson that could support a small group in a grade of protégé's choice

Through these tasks and objectives the mentors were able to share the uniqueness of the teaching profession with their protégées.

Data collection. In order to understand the context of a mentoring session, as the research facilitator I observed three mentoring sessions for each of the five relationships. In the observations, I engaged as a participant observer (Hatch, 2002). In this role, I would act as a participant at times, depending on the context of the session. The mentoring sessions had monthly themes and learning objectives for the mentor and protégé. The four topics of the teaching workshops were a) educational vision b) classroom organization c) classroom management and d) curriculum and lesson planning. The weekly sessions ranged from thirty minutes to an hour, depending on the session. Through the observations, an understanding of the uniqueness of each relationship was observable. As the research facilitator in the field, I would record their discussions and activities using my observation protocol form and journal. I attempted to see as Hatch (2002) states, the world through the participants' eyes, in order to record an accurate view of the participants' knowledge and experience in the Homegrown Teacher Project. At times, I was included in the sessions when I would be asked a question or opinion about the topic or objective being discussed. During my recordings, I would pay close attention to the language and conversation the mentors and protégées would have in their dialogue. An observation is the best technique when an event can be observed first hand (Merriam, 2009).

Three observations were completed for each of the five mentoring relationships. With Kimberly and Clarissa six sessions were observed, three more sessions than the average, due to

their planning style of the last topic. Overall, 18 mentoring sessions were observed approximately fifteen hours. Observation protocols and researcher's reflection notes were organized by mentoring relationship and placed in a master binder. The observations were read various times and coded into categories and emerging themes. All observations were conducted in the teacher's classroom except when other classrooms were used for discussion or activity.

Data analysis. All mentoring sessions were separated by mentoring relationship. This allowed the documentation and reflection to be organized by participants. The researcher's reflective notes were also kept by mentoring relationship to allow for validity and ensuring each relationship observation was recorded precisely under the specific mentoring relationship for accuracy. After reading and coding the observations various times, it was evident that the mentoring sessions provided the skilled first-hand account of the codes later discussed through the interview and focus group data collection.

College workshop. The protégées attended a college workshop organized by the research facilitator. The workshop was presented by a high school counselor from the local district. Her presentation was centered on the requirements needed to attend a four year university after their high school graduation. The counselor, homegrown herself, has worked with the research facilitator during previous college weeks at Miranda Elementary School. The workshop gave the protégées information about planning for college and they received a workbook to track their junior high and high school classes to become academically eligible to apply for college. The counselor compared and contrasted two high school students' schedules and had the protégées identify required classes and recommended classes in high school using real life examples. The

goal was to support the protégées to identify and understand a competitive college applicant. All protégées and mentors attended the workshop. The mentors were there to support the protégées.

Reflection notes. Action research consists of reflection (Hendricks, 2006). It is recommended to condense and reflect thoughts after an observation immediately following the role of the observer. This way, field notes will contain two types of information as needed for qualitative data (Flick, 2014; Gay et al., 2012). These two types of field notes observations will be (a) during the observation of the mentoring relationship using an observation tool, and (b) a reflection of the interactions between mentors and protégées after the observations. Hendricks (2006) refers to these two types of field notes as reflection-in-action or reflection-on-action. The observation protocol was similar to the one recommended by Gay et al. (2012), with descriptive and reflective notes clearly delineated within the observation tool. Field notes were analyzed for findings since month one of the study. Observations involved a self-understanding mantra for the research facilitator, and an understanding that entering the area being observed involved a complete process of locating self within the research (Flick, 2014). The researcher ensured professionalism and recorded accurately to support validity and triangulation.

Researcher reflection notes. During the mentoring sessions, as the researcher facilitator I would reflect freely on the session once I would leave the classroom. This helped to initially reflect and document without thinking of the observation protocol form. The researcher's reflection notes were also coded and used for the emerging codes.

Semistructured Interviews

Interviews were conducted with all participants, mentors and protégées. In action research, the primary data is acquired from interviews with the key participants (Stringer, 2014).

Interviews provided the opportunities for the participants to describe the participation in their own terms. The interviews served as a reflective process of the research study. According to Stringer (2014), “The interview process not only provides a record of participant’ views and perspectives but also symbolically recognize the legitimacy of their experience” (p. 105). The research facilitator interviewed all ten participants in of the study during the last month of the study.

The interviews were semi structured and used a guide for questions (Appendix B). The questions were open-ended (Craig, 2009). Interviews are common when the research facilitator is able to gain the trust of participants in the action research setting (Craig, 2009). Merriam (1998) states interviews allow the research facilitator to investigate experiences, opinions and feelings. Through the relationship of the research facilitator and the participants, the interviews provide valuable information for the inquiry process. Interviews consisted of an open-ended conversation guided by a set of questions. The questions were posed in a conversational manner. Audio recording was used to encourage the conversational nature of the interview (Craig, 2009). The questions were recorded to allow for transcription and coding at a later time. Questioning procedures elicit information from the participants to ensure a reflection and an accurate account of the practitioner perspective collected. The goal captured the information from participants in their own voice and avoided leading questions that could include the research facilitator’s own biases and thoughts (Stringer, 2014).

The questions were centered on collecting information about the challenges and opportunities of The Homegrown Teacher Project. The interviews were information to measure

the findings in order to make recommendations that can be transferred to other school districts. Interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Data collection. The interviews were conducted in the last month of the study. This allowed the mentors and protégées to be interviewed after their participation in the mentoring sessions.

Mentors. The five mentors were interviewed. All interviews were conducted one week before the mentors participated in the focus group. The interviews took place after hours at Miranda Elementary School. The interviews were about 45-60 minutes long. The interview protocol was utilized to guide the conversation, but I also asked them to expand and clarify throughout the interview process. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a professional company.

Protégées. The five protégées were interviewed. All interviews were conducted in the school library. All interviews ranged from 20 to 40 minutes. The interview protocol was used to guide the interview. Consistently the protégées were asked to expand their answer and answer in a complete sentence. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by a professional company.

Data analysis. From the initial analysis of the mentoring sessions and interviews, an inductive analysis was used to code excerpts of raw data. Through the various units of meaning, code emerged to categories by analyzing the relationships and patterns. These patterns and categories resulted into emerging themes.

Mentor Focus Group

The focus group allowed the sharing of ideas between the mentors and research facilitator about the challenges and opportunities of the homegrown teacher pipeline. As collaborators in the research, the focus group ensured flexibility and objectivity. The focus group questions consisted of themes from the literature review (Appendix C). Although the questions were open-ended, questions were followed to allow for consistency across participants (Craig, 2009). Flick (2014) shares that objectivity through a focus group is the mediation between the participants; this way there is not one person who is dominating the conversation and the entire group is contributing their thoughts about the social problem. Focus groups support the checks and balances of data, allowing diverse views to be discussed with all the participants (Flick, 2014).

In the focus group, I served as the moderator. As the moderator, the questions for the focus group were created in advance to support the desired outcomes of the focus group. Flick (2014) recommends ensuring there is: (a) formal direction within the group, ensuring a beginning, middle, and end of the discussion; (b) topical steering; and (c) steering the dynamics. In steering the dynamics, Flick (2014) argues the goal is to ensure interactions from all members and to purposely invite more reserved members to comment in order to capture the voice of all participants. The goal of the moderator was to create an open space for dialogue and not interrupt the natural flow of conversation by focusing on the participants' own initiative to discuss and interject one another (Flick, 2014).

The researcher supported the validity of the focus group by having it audio recorded to ensure all verbal data was captured. I kept notes of what the participants were stating, to ensure I captured everything in the moment. The goal of an action research focus group is to end with

collaboration of the participants to discuss the experience in the study. Stringer (2014) suggests that it is important to identify the common issues and perspectives that emerge in the focus group during the protocol. This resulted in showing the importance of the emerging themes. As the research facilitator, I asked questions about the participants mentoring experience in an effort to identify common experiences for the homegrown teachers.

Data collection. The focus group was conducted one week after the individual interviews with the mentors. The focus group began after a late lunch. Due to the established relationships in the room and the mentors knowing each other for at least three years, allowed the comfort and ease during the focus group conversation. The focus group was a little over 80 minutes of audio and the entire collaboration time spent together that early afternoon was over four hours. The comfort and enjoyment of the focus group could be measured by the participants asking if we could get together more often to have more discussions about teaching and learning.

Data analysis. The focus group was professionally transcribed. Once the focus group was coded, it resulted in the same procedure as the interviews. The codes were analyzed to capture relationships and patterns. The emerging themes were analyzed and used to continue to compare all other emerging data sets from the mentoring sessions and the interviews.

Once all the individual data pieces were collected, all the codes from the mentoring sessions, semistructured interviews, and focus group were compiled together to go through the inductive analysis for triangulation. Through this process, the repeating codes and patterns were identified and organized under the following themes. The findings from the study are action research organized around six major themes: (1) Culture and language shapes the mentoring relationship; (2) Homegrown teachers are essential to mentor students of color; (3) For Latinos,

education is a family journey; (4) Socializing students of color into career aspirations; (5) Acculturation into the teaching profession- Learning to become a teacher; and (6) Time and gender were the major constraints; Redefining future mentoring relationships.

Methods of Data Analysis

"Look, Think, Act" – (Stringer, 2014)

Methods of data analysis for action research involve inductive analysis of the data to extract the themes necessary for the findings. Data must be analyzed throughout the research process as data is collected (Hendricks, 2017). The analysis of data is ongoing, occurring throughout the research instead of at the traditional end of a study. This is known as an interim analysis (as cited in Hendricks, 2017). Stringer (2014) refers to this process as the "think phase" of the action research cycle of inquiry. By understanding the information and identifying the features and elements that seem to have a significant influence, it allows for the organization of ideas and concepts (Stringer, 2014). By reflecting on the data throughout the study, it allows changes to be made to support the action research (Hendricks, 2017). The more structured data analysis occurs at the end of the study. This includes reducing data, interpreting data, and studying the data to find themes and patterns (Hendricks, 2017).

In qualitative findings, data must be converted into text. Although the field notes and reflective journals were produced in the form of text, the interviews and focus groups were transcribed to produce text. This action supported the coding process for a thematic analysis of the data (Hendricks, 2017). The goal was to become immersed in the data to create an awareness of patterns. This provided a holistic analysis in order to find information on the problem investigated (Stringer, 2014). There are five phases of data interpretation that supports an

analysis of qualitative data. Yin (2015) has shared the five phases of data analysis: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding. By going through this process, categories, codes, and notes can be analyzed to determine patterns.

A code book was created to maintain accurate and organized data analysis. The code book consisted of the code used in the analysis, a description of patterns or themes that emerge, and a quote or example to support the pattern (Hendricks, 2017). The codes were tied to the literature review to gather themes that support the research. Through this coding process, smaller chunks of information emerged and used as an organizational tool.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

Validity is the degree of qualitative data that makes meaning of the research (Craig, 2009; Gay et al., 2014). The research facilitator served as the data collector for the research. In qualitative data collection, reliability is the consistent use of techniques throughout the study. This process supports the gathering of data in a reliable matter (Gay et al., 2014). In action research, the collaborative process engages the participants (Stringer, 2014). Due to my role as the principal and the research facilitator of the study, it was important to outline the different procedures I used to analyze the data in the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as the criteria to establish trustworthiness within a study.

Credibility

Credibility is fundamental for the participants to trust the process of data collection. This trust is invaluable to action research because of the collaborative nature of the research process. Stringer states, “Unless participants are able to trust the integrity of the processes, they are

unlikely to make the personal commitments essential to a well-founded inquiry" (p. 92). There are many strategies to increase credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of research results (Hendricks, 2017). Stringer (2014) shares strategies to support the credibility and validity, such as prolonged engagements to develop trust and member checking throughout the data collection period to have participants look at the raw data to ensure it captures their true interactions. Stringer (2014) writes that the credibility of the research increases through persistent observation when participants are continuously observed throughout the period of time The goal is to consistently observe the interactions of the mentors and their activities over a period of time. Stringer (2014) also clarifies that by debriefing with the participants, they will reflect and analyze the data during the collection period. This process will be evident through the check-ins within the mentoring cycle the mentors and protégées will have with the research facilitator.

Transferability

Action research is a unique qualitative research process because the findings are not generally transferred to another environment. For this reason, it is imperative to give a detailed account of the research setting and participants so that other people can determine if the research situation is similar enough for them to apply to their own setting (Stringer, 2014). Explicit details of action research are vital for this analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1986) describe that the criteria for external validity is transferability. The findings have the ability to be transferred to various schools and districts serving urban students who mirror the same population as Miranda Elementary School. With California being diverse and serving a large Latino/a population, many

schools will have a similar description as Miranda Elementary School and Toribio School District. This will support the research finding transferability.

Dependability

Dependability is created when reliability is evident in the research process. This is how to ensure that the detailed description of the research process and data analysis has been followed, also known as an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Procedures were confirmed and followed throughout the study. It created the understanding of confirmability in The Homegrown Teacher Project. The frequent check-ins during the mentoring cycle supported confirmability of procedures and the inquiry audit of information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This ensured the research could possibly be replicated with similar participants, in a similar school setting will yield the same findings (Hendricks, 2017).

Confirmability

In action research, there must be a way to confirm that procedures described for method collection have been followed and can be traced back for confirmability of the study. For this reason, the observation protocol (Appendix A) and field notes allowed for evidence to confirm the research facilitator's reflective notes and support the data collection throughout the study. The observations, interviews, and focus group transcripts served as artifacts of the study. The coding has been completed with codes. A coding sheet was used to guide the organization of the codes.

Triangulation

Designing qualitative research involves the planning of triangulation. (Flick, 2014). The goal of triangulation is that it should produce knowledge at different levels, which promotes

quality within the qualitative research process (Flick, 2014). To collect the various perspectives from the participants, multiple data sources were used to observe and understand the social phenomenon. The mentoring sessions, semi-structured interviews, and focus group allowed for triangulation of qualitative data.

Positionality and Reflexivity

Positionality is important in research. As a researcher, the most important question to ask is the influence you have over the participants and the setting of the study (Herr & Anderson, 2015). What is unique to action research is the positionality of the research facilitator and the relationship established with the participants. Herr and Anderson (2015) state that positionality can change throughout the research. Understanding positionality, the research facilitator contributed the validity of the data collection through reflection on positionality because of research ethics.

Positionality

The ability to understand positionality with the participants is an essential component in gathering data that is transferable and creditable. As the principal of Miranda Elementary and an insider to the action research study, my positionality could have shifted due to the complications of the research. Positionality can contain elements of both the insider and outsider and can change during the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Understanding that a change in positionality can occur during the study was important to acknowledge as the research facilitator. Throughout the study, my positionality did not switch. I was at the mentoring sessions as an observer and the interview and focus group were powerful with no dynamics of discomfort. As a homegrown teacher and principal in the same community that Miranda Elementary is located, I

was able to self-reflect about the process throughout the study. For this reason, I fit the profile of the homegrown teachers and the profile of the protégées.

Insider researching with other insiders. I researched homegrown teachers at Miranda Elementary where I serve as the principal. The teachers and I have worked together ranging from two to five years. I have worked with two of the participants for a longer period of time at other elementary schools within the school district. This positionality gave me insight to the school community and the school culture. This positionality also acknowledged the degree of knowledge the participants have of the research environment. In education, these groups are often referred to as teacher inquiry groups or critical friends groups (Herr & Anderson, 2015). These groups have several benefits. Herr and Anderson (2015) indicate that the inquiry in this capacity can lead to work as a collaborative community, seeking to engage members, influence the organization, and offer opportunities for transformational growth of the institution through collaborative inquiry.

In my role as the research facilitator of the study, I consistently communicated and wrote down to the connections and experiences I observed with the participants in my field notes. I knew my position as the principal gave me insight and could influence my interactions with the participants. I have been a member of the Miranda Elementary school community for almost four years. This is my seventh year as a principal and 10th year as an administrator in the school district. Through my administration experience, I have witnessed various teacher and student relationships, both organic and those developed through formal organizations. I understood my authority as the research facilitator could inhibit participants to change their behaviors, practices, or comments during the research process. I reflected on my dialogue and actions to make sure I

provided the most comfortable environment during the study. My background as a homegrown teacher has contributed to my approach to this study. Reflection in the field notes prevented forms of bias I brought as an insider.

The participants, as collaborators of researchers in the action research methodology, contributed their voice to communicate the experience of having someone support their dream of becoming a teacher. The teachers communicated the challenges and reflection of the experiences of the mentorship process. Their voice bridged the ability this program has to be replicated in urban schools.

Reflexivity

Through reflexivity, a qualitative researcher reflects on biases one might have because the research connects to their personal lives and professional careers (Hendricks, 2006). Based on this understanding, reflective practice can provide a framework to understand the research and where it is going based on the research facilitator's background (Hendricks, 2006). By understanding this concept, reflection is crucial to data collection in action research.

As a homegrown teacher and principal, understanding my positionality continuously was imperative to maintaining accurate field notes. My comments or thoughts were recorded in the protocol form and then recorded in the field notes to avoid my thoughts from the observations in action (Hendricks, 2006). I maintained accurate field notes to increase the validity of the research. My positionality as a homegrown educator and current principal of Miranda Elementary School allowed the collection of trustworthy data to remove bias and not interfere with my analysis of the data. By ensuring these practices are in place, I continued to reflect and

analyze throughout the look, think, act routine in the cycle of inquiry in action research (Stringer, 2014).

Conclusion

By using a qualitative methodology, with an action research design, it allowed the problem of the community to be studied with other participants in the field. This social phenomenon of homegrown teachers and their contribution to the field will illustrate how The Homegrown Teacher Project will be perceived within the community. Collecting data over a period of three months allowed for validity of the information and findings presented in Chapter 4. I disclosed my positionality as the principal at Miranda Elementary School, reflecting on my biases and implications when collecting data. Chapter 5 will include the discussion of the findings and the action plan, which will be the recommendations to public school leaders on how to influence the future teaching force through the opportunities critical mentoring could bring to a school setting.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the action research study was to document the launching of The Homegrown Teacher Project and to examine the mentoring relationships that were formed between teachers of color and sixth-grade Latina girls at Miranda Elementary School. Through this project, data emerged on how an early intervention pipeline by teachers of color can impact the future of urban schools. The project created mentoring relationships between teachers and students interested in becoming teachers and supported these sixth-grade girls in gaining access to information regarding their future career goals as teachers. Specifically, 5 sixth-grade girls were paired with a homegrown teacher. The participants met weekly to explore four teaching topics to introduce and induct the protégées to the teaching profession. The themes were: (a) educational vision, (b) classroom management, (c) classroom organization, and (d) curriculum and lesson planning. Academic advisement was also offered through a college workshop, to ensure the protégées made connections on how high school course placement and scheduling are the gateway to college entry.

To examine the implementation of The Homegrown Teacher Project, the voices of the mentors and protégées were documented through observations and researcher reflection notes, semi structured interviews, and a mentor focus group. The data collection captured the experiences of the participants throughout the action research study. The participants shared their perceptions of the opportunities and challenges they experienced as part of their participation in the Homegrown Teacher Project.

The findings from the study are action research organized around six major themes: (a) culture and language shaped the mentoring relationship, (b) homegrown teachers were essential to mentoring students of color, (c) for Latinos, education was a family journey, (d) socializing students of color into career aspirations, (e) acculturation into the teaching profession—learning to become a teacher, and (f) time and gender were the major constraints; redefining future mentoring relationships.

This study shed light on the benefits of critical mentoring and how the relationships between a mentor and a protégé will impact the future of the next teaching generation. The Homegrown Teacher Project aims to support and guide Latina girls to teach in urban schools in the near future.

Research Questions

This study focused on the experiences of the participants in The Homegrown Teacher Project, an early intervention teacher pipeline project grounded in the principles of critical mentoring, aimed at pairing elementary Latina teachers and six-grade girls at Miranda Elementary School. The notion of a "homegrown teacher" was the foundation for this intervention program, or critical pipeline, in which students of color interested in a future career as a teacher were paired with a Latina homegrown teacher who is teaching in the community in which they were born, raised, and educated. In order to understand the challenges and opportunities with creating a homegrown teaching pipeline, the following questions were the focus of the study:

1. How do homegrown Latina teachers, who are mentoring students to become future teachers, and their protégées conceptualize the challenges and opportunities of this early intervention pipeline?
2. How does The Homegrown Teacher Project provide experiences to prepare sixth-graders for their future career as teachers?

Context of the Study

The Homegrown Teacher Project emerged at Miranda Elementary School out of informal discussions among five Latinas homegrown teachers and myself, the school principal and research facilitator, about helping students become teachers. We realized that mentoring sixth-grade Latina girls to become teachers could be the way to give back to the community. The Homegrown Teacher Project identified students who had declared teaching as their future profession during the school's traditional college week by having a one-on-one mentor. This Homegrown Teacher Project used action research methodology to implement an early intervention teacher pipeline aimed at pairing five Latina students to initiate them into the teaching profession. Through the mentoring relationship and, specifically, through teacher workshops, the protégées learned about the teaching profession. The goal of this action research study was to document the experiences of first-generation Latina teachers and their protégées, as they came to terms with the challenges and opportunities that this research study provided the participants.

Summary of the Key Findings

Throughout the action research data, several themes and patterns emerged from the on-going data collection. The mentoring sessions and researcher's reflection notes, semistructured

interviews and mentor focus group led to rich qualitative data analysis emerging into patterns, trends, and emerging themes. The themes that emerged from the inductive analysis of the data collection are: (a) culture and language shaped the mentoring relationship, (b) homegrown teachers were essential to mentoring students of color, (c) for Latinos, education was a family journey; (d) socializing students of color into career aspirations, (d) acculturation into the teaching profession—learning to become a teacher, and (e) time and gender were the major constraints; redefining future mentoring relationships.

- *Culture and language shaped the mentoring relationship.* Culture and language supported the socialization process of the protégées. Throughout the study, it was evident that culture and language supported a mentoring relationship to further develop because of the knowledge of the Latino shared experiences. These experiences of culture, language, and family connectedness of the participants were evident throughout the data. Language was the key component to creating cultural bonds that supported mentors and protégées to create lasting relationships within their community. Language, like culture, helped to unify the mentoring relationship. Throughout the study, Spanish language was used to affirm the cultural bonds within the relationships and support comprehension and understanding of one another.
- *Homegrown Teachers were essential to mentoring students of color.* The role of commitment in homegrown teachers within their own community was evident in their passion, actions, and relationships with urban youth. Research findings indicate that urban schools have shown a positive correlation with the

value that teachers of color bring to urban youth in the classrooms or in mentoring relationships. This study documents homegrown teachers as they mentored a protégé who dreamed of becoming a teacher in her own community. The commonalities between mentor and protégé, and how the mentors saw themselves in their students—because of the cultural and shared experiences as first-generation Latinas—was the drive that allowed participants to make a difference in the lives of Latina youth and community.

- *For Latinos, education was a family journey.* Throughout the study, the appreciation and acknowledgement the participants had for their families' sacrifices in hope of a better life ("the American Dream") was evident. Participants shared their families' experiences and how it shaped who they are today. Through the interviews and focus group, the protégées and mentors articulated how the work ethic, hope, and sacrifices of their parents leads to success. The participants understood, even witnessed, their parents' journey to America, and that the value they placed on education was the key to changing their trajectory in order to have a better life.
- *Socializing students of color into career aspirations.* The Homegrown Teacher Project contributed to the socialization process of Latina first-generation protégées to see themselves in the future as teachers. Through the mentoring relationship, the mentors helped their respective protégé discuss, model, and experience their future as elementary teachers. Through this exposure, their seed of hope was planted in order for them to understand college applications

and teacher goals. The mentors helped their protégées develop their social networks and identify their support systems to succeed in the future. With time, this mentoring relationship will be vital for them to continue to dream bigger.

- *Acculturation into the profession—learning to become a teacher.* Throughout the mentoring sessions of the study, the mentors shared with the protégées a glimpse into the teaching profession through the power of an early intervention teaching pipeline. The Homegrown Teacher Project topics guided the mentoring sessions to have rich conversations and experiences about teaching. The topics included (a) educational vision, (b) classroom organization, (c) classroom management, and (d) curriculum and lessons as the aims of the mentoring sessions. Each mentor had her own lessons for the topics, but all protégées mastered the conversations around the subjects. This experience showcased their potential future and acculturation to the teaching profession through experience and dialogue with their mentor.
- *Time and gender were the major constraints; redefining future mentoring relationships.* During the three-month data-collection period for The Homegrown Teacher Project, the main challenge of the mentoring program was the issue of time, due to the uncertainty of mentors' after-school schedules as teachers. Even though their sessions were scheduled, parent conversations or meetings would arise, causing them to have to reschedule. Some protégées also had this issue because of their involvement in extracurricular activities. Recommendations to prevent this challenge included cohort mentoring

sessions after the first trimester in order to network and support each other through scheduling emergencies. The mentors and protégées were able to successfully complete the topics and experiences of The Homegrown Teacher Project.

The Mentoring Relationships

Once the protégées were selected and discussed with the mentors, the launch of The Homegrown Teacher Project was in effect. Taking a closer look at the mentoring relationships revealed that three had a previous student/teacher relationship history, meaning the mentors chose their fourth-grade student from 2 years prior. Isabella chose a current student in her sixth-grade. Iveth was the only mentor who chose a student whom she did not have an established history with prior to the Homegrown Teaching Project. Once the relationships were determined, the mentors began their mentoring sessions. Table 3 shows the mentoring relationships formed as part of the Homegrown Teacher Project.

Table 3

Homegrown Teacher Project Mentoring Relationships

Mentor/Protégé	Current 6th-grade student	Previous 4th-Grade Student	New Relationship
Iveth & Melissa			X
Isabella & Sol	X		
Kimberly & Clarissa		X	
Penelope & Leslie		X	
Diana & Emily		X	

Mentoring Relationship: Iveth and Melissa

Iveth. Iveth was in her sixth year in education, having taught sixth grade for her entire career. She had been a Teacher of the Year Finalist at Miranda Elementary School from 2015–2017. Although she had been in the profession formally for this time, her teaching experience began as a ninth-grader when she began to volunteer at the elementary school around the corner from her house. She shared that she had walked her cousin to the classroom and the teacher asked her to stay and help. From that day forward, she volunteered all summer. In her interview, Iveth stated:

> I ended up helping and falling in love with the classroom more. I happened to work at the same district that I grew up in, so it felt like home. There was really no question that I wanted to teach after that experience.

She continued to share that during the summer, when she would volunteer, the teacher would involve her in the lessons. Her experience with volunteering and helping in the classroom helped her gained confidence that one day she could become a teacher. Iveth commented, “I felt power and confidence being in the classroom and helping students even though I was only 15 or 16.” She believed this confidence was from the teacher continuously placing her in roles that allowed her to teach the kindergartners. Iveth continued to reminisce what the classroom teacher would tell her when she would teach the kindergartners, “Okay, you are a teacher too. You can do it.” These experiences early in her childhood helped shape the confident teacher she had become in the classroom.

Iveth had lived in Rey her entire life. She used the word “home” to describe living and teaching in the same city. She was proud of her ability to teach in the school district she had attended. Iveth shared:

> I went to Reynoso School, which is one of our schools in our district. I feel proud of that. I feel even prouder when I run into teachers that I had in the past that inspired me to get to where I am today.

She described the sense of fulfillment she received for giving back to her community. Iveth voiced during her interview, "It gives you more of an inspiration to give back to future generations, and hopefully inspire other people to come from our schools to become teachers too."

Iveth's parents had immigrated to the city in their teenage years, similar to all the other mentors. Uniquely, her entire family worked for the school district. Her father was a custodian; her mother a retired lunch clerk; her brothers were both special education assistants for students; and her little sister was a playground supervisor. She was the oldest sibling. Their family supported the school district in various capacities.

When choosing her protégé, Iveth was drawn to Melissa's essay, which communicated why she wanted to be a teacher. Iveth shared:

> I compared my reasons to her reasons, and there are very similar, even though they are more naïve and dreamlike, she goes down to what is most important, and that is her ability to help people and how helping people would make her happy as well.

She had an instant connection to her protégé's writing piece. At the end of the relationship, Iveth shared that mentoring Melissa inspired her because it reminded her of her own journey to become a teacher:

> It just inspired me again. It reminded me where I came from, the little girl who began volunteering in a kindergarten classroom, and it just came down to remembering why I chose teaching and why I think teaching chose me.

Iveth stated that teaching is an honor and that it is a privilege to serve others. She exemplified this both in the classroom and in the community.

Melissa. Melissa was an articulate 12-year-old Latina who had been placed in the GATE (Gifted and Talented Education) program at Miranda Elementary. Melissa was a sixth-grader who had not met Iveth before the mentorship program began, even though she was in the classroom next door. Melissa's essay shared her optimism about teaching and how she wanted to teach to get to know "amazing kids." Melissa enjoyed writing, drawing, and reading. She also shared about how she loved her city but hoped to explore the world in the future. During her interview, she shared "Even though I love my city, I would love to travel to other places, cause you know I'm Mexican and would love to see Day of the Dead stuff."

Melissa was an only child. She shared her parents were proud of her for being a participant in The Homegrown Teacher Project and getting support for her future career. She stated, "They're very proud of me for doing this program and wanting to choose a nice career for me."

Melissa's parents had a sixth-grade education. She aimed to make her parents proud; this was communicated in the mentor sessions and interview. She was bilingual, and spoke Spanish at home since her parents did not speak English. Her parents had immigrated to California when they were in their teens. Melissa was aware of her mother's immigration journey, but not her father's. She knew her mother had journeyed to America to find better work. Melissa shared, "My grandfather brought my mom over here when she was about 16, 15- something like that. And I'm not 100 percent sure how my dad came here, but he's an immigrant."

Melissa was special. Her awareness and appreciation of diversity was impressive and was not observed or documented with the other protégées. She actually had conversations about language, world cultures, and accommodating the needs of students. Her sense of fulfilment was

to give back to the community. This was captured through her conversations with her mentor, Iveth. She understood the concept behind valuing diversity and how it supports all students' needs. She commented, "Right now the world is very diverse. There is a bunch of other kids who speak different languages." This statement was voiced after she acknowledged her desire to educate students who are learning English when she becomes a teacher. The desire to learn strategies to support language acquisition indicated that she understood the urban school realities. Miranda Elementary had many late entries to the American educational system—meaning that Melissa had witnessed fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders enroll and understood their quest to dominate the English language. Melissa was aware of these students who enter after kindergarten from other countries educational system. Her personal goal was to be able to travel the world in order to learn about different cultural rituals around the world.

Melissa's awareness of the teaching profession was evident in her questions, observations, and comments during the mentoring sessions. When she worked with her mentor on her vision board during the mentoring session, Melissa stated, "You want to make sure students feel safe so that are okay in the classroom." When given tasks to complete about her future classroom, she confidently shared her thoughts about teaching. She shared with her mentor Iveth, "Every classroom needs to have a caring and loving teacher and amazing and unique students." Her optimism for teaching leads to her goal of making a difference in the community. She stated, "I have always wanted to be a teacher, and help someone, to repay this lovely community I live in."

Melissa concluded her interview by praising her mentor. During her interview, she communicated, “I already think of her as a best friend, an adult best friend that I could just talk to…you know?” Their relationship flourished through the stages of development.

Mentoring Relationship: Isabella and Sol

Isabella. Isabella selected Sol from the list of potential protégées since she was her current student in her sixth-grade classroom. The school year had begun in July for these participants, so they had an established relationship for about 8 weeks before they began their mentoring sessions for The Homegrown Teacher Project. Isabella had been teaching for 8 years, all in a sixth-grade classroom. Isabella received accolades in 2016 as a Top 100 finalist for the Best in Education Award, an award given nationally to educators making a difference in the life of Latino students. She was also named Miranda Elementary School Teacher of the Year in 2016.

Isabella had decided to be a teacher in sixth grade, through the influence of her sixth-grade teacher. In her interview, she shared:

> I saw the relationship she established with everybody else, I knew from that moment that’s the kind of classroom environment and relationships I wanted to have with my students. She would open her door after school for a period of 45 to 60 minutes and we were allowed to go in there, spend time with her, do our homework, and just help her. She nurtured my love of teaching.

Isabella’s parents had lived in the Rey city her whole life. She attended district schools and she made a conscious effort to stay in the city that raised her. Isabella stated, “I knew that the community needs people, models, role models that they can look up too.” Isabella also continued to share how much she valued the community. She understood immigrant parents because of her upbringing and experience. Isabella stated:

> I think getting to know the parents on a more personal level and letting them know and see that we're just one other person in the community, a role model that wants to help their child, I think they really gravitate towards that.

Isabella saw herself as an asset in the school and community.

Isabella shared that her relationship grew with time. Isabella knew Sol had recently immigrated so she had to build her confidence to continue to persevere. Isabella believed that Sol's recent confidence and academic progress gains were due to their mentoring relationship. Isabella stated, "I lead by example." She explained that she models work ethic, rigor, and academic language. Sol had been able to use her examples to flourish, along with the positive praise. Isabella consistently praised Sol during their mentoring sessions. The praise was complimentary in both her personal characteristics and her teacher-like characteristics. The compliments would help her think about her future classroom, the words were intentionally in support of her protégé, and Isabella's compliments helped Sol shine throughout her sessions.

Sol. Sol was a vibrant 12-year-old immigrant from Argentina. She came to the United States, and to the city of Rey, at the age of nine. She liked to dance and was active. Sol was the youngest in her family and had an older sister. Sol desired to be a fifth-grade teacher. Sol stayed after school every day with her mentor, Isabella. This contributed to the development of their relationship. Her relationship with her mentor consisted of spending about seven hours together daily. On average, she spent five hours with her in a classroom setting and about two hours after school in an informal setting. As an immigrant from Argentina, Sol had been in the United States for a little over 2 years. Sol enrolled at Miranda Elementary School as a student in fourth grade. In 2 years, she had excelled in her English acquisition, a prime example of her perseverance and personal drive. She shared that her parents had come here for "a better life."

Sol shared that her family had migrated to California because her dad had found a better job. Her father had moved to America a year before the rest of the family transitioned. Sol discussed her parents' continuous support of her academically in their interview. She expressed that her parents are her role models who supported her success.

Sol disliked school before coming to America. Her parents and Sol shared that education in Argentina had been difficult for her. Multigrade-level classrooms, rundown buildings, and teachers who demonstrated a lack of knowledge or love was their constant struggle with schools in Argentina. She recalled that she would have more hours of playing in Argentina than hours to learn. "The teachers they did teach us, but not that much. They taught the same thing for three days and then they change. So we did not learn that much as we learn here." Miranda Elementary was transformational for Sol, she shared in the interview. This change was the reason why she decided to be a teacher. She communicated,

> When I was little I did not care about my education, but when I came to California my 4th grade teacher inspired me to do good, and when I started to try, I liked it a lot and since that day I wanted to be a teacher.

Isabella shared various times that Sol was special and unique. They both had an appreciation and admiration for one another. Isabella and Sol were similar because they were hard workers and thrived from each other's work ethic. The desire to "give back" was evident in both Isabella and Sol. Sol stated that she wanted to impact the community in the same way as her role models had. She was determined to change the narrative of teachers who do not teach, support, or care, like the teachers she described in Argentina. Sol shared, "I decided I wanted to be a teacher because in Argentina, they aren't the best teachers, they don't really care. Here they support you a lot." She continued, "I want to work with kids who do not have much support, I want to support them

so they can keep going and they can go to college." This personal calling to give back to the community was something Sol already acknowledged and gave value in her life.

Mentoring Relationship: Kimberly and Clarissa

Kimberly. Kimberly had recently transitioned to an instructional coach at Miranda Elementary School. She had been a teacher for 8 years and served both primary and upper grade classrooms. Most recently, she was a fourth grade teacher for a period of 4 years. As a fourth grade teacher she earned Teacher of the Year for Miranda Elementary in 2017. She completed her Administration Credential and her second Master's Degree this past year. Kimberly had a younger brother who also aspired to be a teacher. Kimberly was his mentor, and supported him through his educational journey. She had a passion for civil rights and understands the direct effects that politics and legislation have on our schooling experiences. Kimberly served as a delegate for the local assemblyman. She is involved outside of the education field in the political arena. She has volunteered for political campaigns, collaborated with elected officials, and involved herself with several organizations, fighting for systematic changes in an inequitable society. She understood the power of policy to support the education of others.

Kimberly had grown up in the city and shared that she wanted to work with kids and give back to her community. Her first job in high school involved being around children and coordinating birthday celebrations. Her first experience formally teaching students was not until college, where she was assigned to support high school students to pass the standardized high school exit exam. This experience affirmed her desire to become a teacher. Kimberly recalled,

> So the more experience I got in education, the more I fell in love with it and I always knew I wanted to come back to the city to teach because this was home and this is the community that gave so much to me so I waved to give back.

Kimberly began teaching in a neighboring urban school district. She taught there for 2 years until she was able to get a substitute contract with Toribio School District, which led to her transition back to her home school district. These experiences prior to returning to her city to teach shaped her commitment and appreciation she had to return to her home. Kimberly stated, “It didn’t feel the same, it didn’t feel like home.”

Kimberly’s parents had immigrated to California as teenagers. Kimberly mother attended high school in the surrounding city and was able to learn English in her late teen years. Her father, with the support of her mother, was encouraged to take English classes at a local community college. Kimberly’s personal upbringing allowed her to support the parents at Miranda Elementary School.

Kimberly’s family moved into Rey city when she was of kindergarten age. They lived in a surrounding city, a couple miles away before their transition to the city they call home. She started Toribio School District as a first-grader. Kimberly shared her cultural shock she experienced going to school and not having her teachers speak Spanish. In her previous city, she was in a dual language classroom where the teacher and academic instruction was in Spanish. Moving had been difficult because none of the teachers spoke Spanish. During her interview, Kimberly recalled, “I remember feeling like an outsider.” This experienced prompted Kimberly’s passion to give back to her city. She voiced her determination to support similar families. Kimberly shared, “My community is the Latino population here or the English Language Learners, the immigrant families, the immigrant parents that we service.”

As a mentor, Kimberly observed the positive effect of having a specific time set aside to meet with her protégé. Kimberly met about an hour a week with Clarissa, her protégé. The time

frame was twice as long as required for the action research project. This allowed their relationship to develop through the mentoring stages at a much faster pace. Kimberly and Clarissa had a prior developed relationship, as Kimberly had been Clarissa's teacher in fourth grade. Their connection was successful because of the established relationship they had with one another. Kimberly shared, "It's a special bond that I have with her aside from the academic and helping to guide her through the process of reaching her goals and dreams."

Clarissa. Clarissa was a 12-year-old, mature protégé who loved to draw. Her maturity stemmed from having older sisters in their twenties and being the youngest of three. Clarissa felt very close to Kimberly. She voiced she had a connection with Kimberly and could speak and identify her entire family in pictures and conversations. Her mentor was her fourth-grade teacher 2 years previously, which led to great conversations during their mentoring sessions as they recalled their classroom.

Clarissa decided to be a teacher when she was 5-years-old. She consistently spoke to her mom about her future plans. Her mother recalled and reminded her of the conversations they had had in the past. Clarissa also discussed her future career choice with her friends at recess. She stated, "I like teaching kids, like my friend's little siblings." Her commitment to the community was showcased as she taught kids in the neighborhood at least twice a week. When she communicated about her time with the students in the neighborhood and how she taught them at her house she referenced teaching strategies she observed or learned about during her mentoring sessions. Clarissa used her knowledge from the mentoring sessions from The Homegrown Teacher program and applied them in a real-life context.

When they discussed the profession, Clarissa shared with her mentor, Kimberly, her mother's excitement with her career choice. Clarissa communicated that having a mentor to achieve her dream made her feel special. She knew a lot of kids who did not have mentors, so she acknowledged "what a special education I have at school."

Clarissa volunteered at Miranda Elementary when she was on vacation from her school calendar. She spent 4 hours a day in the kindergarten dual language Spanish immersion classroom, where instruction was in Spanish. Kimberly and Clarissa completed their lesson planning and lesson delivery in Spanish. This was a proud moment for Clarissa's mother, as she continuously reminded Clarissa to practice her Spanish language.

Clarissa was a first-generation student. Her parents spoke "a little" English, but always spoke Spanish at home. She looked forward to being a future fifth-grade teacher. She stated that she was excited about "creating a little family in her classroom year after year." During her interview, she offered the example of being able to teach siblings when you are in a grade for various years. By connecting with families and teaching siblings you have prior information on the family. Clarissa was determined to come back to teach at Miranda Elementary School in the future. She stated to her mentor, «My goal is the first teacher that was a student at this school."

Clarissa enjoyed her experienced in the Homegrown Teacher Project, and realized that her experience allowed her to see herself as a "mini-teacher," the title she preferred to describe herself.

Mentoring Relationship: Penelope and Leslie

Penelope. Penelope had taught for 6 years. She began her career in sixth grade, and now was a fourth-grade teacher. She gained her "teaching experience" by volunteering at church

when she was 18 years old. She worked with various groups of children in a teacher capacity. After high school, she was approached by her mentor, an elementary school principal, to work in an afterschool setting at an urban elementary school in a neighboring city. She valued that it was her own community where she would work. She stated in her interview, “The journey began there; it also took place in the same community that I grew up in, so it was just perfect.” She continued this work for 6 years, teaching primary students until she graduated from her credential and master’s program.

Penelope’s connection to the community stemmed from her desire to provide the community with positive role models. She communicated in her interview that, growing up, she wanted to see positive role models, but would see more violence and crime, and was determined to change the narrative. Penelope had her parents as positive role models, and knew that was not the same story for all children. Penelope voiced, “They [parents] tried to protect us from being another statistic number in our community. They really empowered us through our faith and their hard work, and they really always encouraged me to work hard.” She continued to share that her parents had instilled this work ethic in her as she grew up. She always felt a strong commitment to the community. She stated, “I always felt this sense of responsibility to be the change that I didn’t see in some people.”

Penelope’s parents had immigrated to the country in their late 20s. They married in Mexico and came to the country with their first born, her brother. She shared the story of the difficulties of crossing the border with a 2-year-old. She recalled their sense of urgency was to provide their children with better opportunities. Her parents’ values were passed down to her through their actions and love. Penelope shared, “I knew that my parents instilled so many

important values in my life that those values allowed me to succeed, and be that positive change in my school community." Penelope knew she desired to build bridges and support systems for the community. She discussed how the community did not have access to information to place them in the position to succeed. She continued, "Our school community would benefit greatly from positive role models who understand the culture, the need of the community."

Penelope was a positive role model everyday on the Miranda campus. Penelope's passion and commitment to her community was evident in the conversations after the mentoring sessions. She consistently worried about the resources and guidance she provided her students in her classroom. Her personal drive and commitment to transformational changes in urban schools was communicated through her sense of urgency. She voiced, "My biggest fear is that I am not doing enough" This commitment to transformational change was modeled in her actions to her students, community, protégé and her family.

Leslie. Leslie was a quiet 11-year-old protégé. Penelope was Leslie's fourth-grade teacher. Penelope worked well to support her in developing her confidence. One of her mentoring sessions I observed, Penelope addressed Leslie's strengths and weakness. Penelope shared with me that the purpose for this lesson was to encourage confidence and address her shyness. Leslie wanted to be a fifth-grade teacher. She had three siblings, an older brother and two younger siblings. She enjoyed soccer and attended soccer practice during The Homegrown Teacher Project. Leslie loved sharing about her future goal of teaching with her friends. She stated that she had shared with all her friends how she wanted to grow up and be a teacher.

Mentor Penelope knew Leslie's family from when she was her student, which created a relationship that allowed Penelope to check in on her family. At the end of the mentoring

sessions, Penelope reminded Leslie to say hello to her mother and father. She was intentional about the communication and would also hug her good-bye. This was the only relationship in which I observed a hug as an exchange of affection. Penelope was aware of her role in her protégé's life. Penelope stated she wanted to "Guide her in her interest of becoming a teacher." Penelope continued with her statement of how she desired to be a positive role model for her and her family and encouraged her to believe in herself.

Leslie spoke about her parents working hard and how they believed in her to succeed in school. During Leslie's interview, she stated she had shared with her friends and family that she wanted to be a teacher. She communicated that she liked talking about her future as a teacher. She also mentioned her gratitude for having a mentor at school, as she thought of her mentor as a gateway to her teaching career.

Leslie's parents had immigrated from Mexico. She identified her parents as her role models and was grateful to have a mentor at school to help guide her in her education and help her understand the teaching career. She valued the conversations and communicated that if it were not for her mentor "I wouldn't think of teaching." Leslie was grateful and appreciative of the mentoring process. She stated that now she knew what she is going to do as a future teacher because of the time and information she gained from the mentor. Most importantly, Leslie described her relationship with her mentor, "We care about each other, and we help each other."

Mentoring Relationship: Diana and Emily

Diana. Diana was in her third year as a teacher at Miranda Elementary School. Diana had been Emily's fourth-grade teacher 2 years ago. Diana was the first in her family to go to college

even though she had an older sister who had opted out of attending college. With this accomplishment, her sister and parents were extremely proud of her being a teacher.

Like Kimberly, one of the other mentors, Diana grew up in a neighboring city and had moved to the area in second grade. She was also in a dual language, Spanish immersion classroom and the transition had been difficult for her as she came from an environment in which she was understood in her first language, Spanish. "When I moved here, it was a shock to me having to go from where everyone understands me to no one understands what I say." She recalled the language barrier between the teachers and her and the negative memories it left her about school. Diana shared, "There was a lot of crying early on, but I always liked school so I persevered."

Diana's main reason to become a teacher was to help students like her sister. Her sister struggled in school and did not like going to classes. Diana stated, "She [her sister] knew that it was just not her thing. So that's when I started to feeling like I wanted to help people feel like they were good in school even though they might not like it." This drove her to support students like her sister as her motivation her to apply to college.

Her parents had "humble beginnings," as Diana shared, mainly because they had worked in their teenage years because of the loss of their parents. Both her mom and dad, with big families to take care of, sacrificed their education and used their relentless work ethic to keep food on the table.

She spoke about her parents' support as she had gone through the credentialing and student teaching process. This support helped her when she was ready to begin her teaching career. Diana did not begin her teaching experience until her later years through college

fieldwork requirements and during her student teaching. Unlike the other mentors, who early jobs were with students; Diana's exposure to teaching and students was first experienced through course requirements. She finally understood that she wanted to teach in her own community, as she was placed in other school districts where she had not had the best experiences. Diana recalled:

> I was once a kid sitting in one of these chairs, learning the curriculum. So being a part of the district I grew up in and be able to come back and teach in it, it just makes me so proud and just come full circle.

Diana experienced the value she provided urban youth. Her language and culture became an identified asset to Miranda Elementary School.

Emily. Emily was an extremely quiet protégé. Although she was Diana's student 2 years ago, Diana struggled with her relationship with her protégé. One struggle was having a consistent time to meet, as they were on different school calendars. Because Emily was very quiet, at times she would not communicate with her mentor about her schedule. Most of the communication of schedules went through texting her mother, even though it was not guaranteed Emily would show up to the session.

Although she was quiet, when focused, she would express herself and her hopes for the future. Emily liked soccer, and soccer was the bond she shared with her father. During The Homegrown Teacher Project, Emily had not seen her father for a period of three months due to arguments with her mother. This personal situation caused her to worry and consistently think of her father. She received comfort through conversation from her mentor and from me, as the research facilitator.

During her interview, she shared with me when she told her grandmother she wanted to be a teacher. She stated that she was happy for her, but her grandmother said she should be a lawyer instead to "fix her papers." Emily thought her grandmother was joking when she told her to become a lawyer, but then she realized she was serious, and she should really consider becoming a lawyer. This understanding that she could change her family's status for citizenship was a deep realization that Emily thinks about during her school day. She appreciated Diana and how she helped her understand the teaching profession.

At home, Emily shared in her interview that she helps her cousins, who support her effort to practice teaching. Emily's goal is to be a kindergarten teacher. She stated that she learned about the responsibilities of teaching through The Homegrown Teacher Project. She discussed how learning about college would help her in the future.

Themes Emerging in the Data

Theme 1: Culture and Language Shaped the Mentoring Relationship

The process of protégé socialization and integration into mainstream society included culture and language. Throughout the study, it was evident that the shared Latino culture allowed the mentoring relationships to develop strongly because of the common experiences. In this case, the shared experiences of culture, language, and family intersecting with the values of education were evident throughout the data.

Having a shared culture supported the socialization process of first-generation Latina sixth-graders with their first-generation Latina teachers to become part of social networks as career professionals. It was evident throughout the mentoring sessions that understanding each other's culture and background helped to bring the mentoring relationship closer in order to build

a solid foundation. The appreciation and understanding of one another's background allowed the connections to be grounded in a personal context. For the mentors and protégées, the Latino experience was connected to the immigrant experience, which will be discussed later. Isabella, one of the mentors, confirmed the commonalities held,

> All of our parents have similar backgrounds. They come from a less fortunate background- they didn't have the same opportunities we had but at the same time, they we're willing to work hard and they always check up on us to make sure that we maintain the same expectations for ourselves.

This shared belief is what the mentors referred to as the "Latino immigrant experience." The mentors acknowledged that, coupled with growing up in the same community and being homegrown teachers, culture—or the Latino experience—is the glue that motivated them to pay it forward to the community. "You immediately connect with people who grew up in the same community," shared mentor Kimberly. These factors were the driving force that encouraged them to mentor and support the protégé because of their personal experience growing up. The mentors understood that parents were working and making ends meet for their families, as they experienced this story when they were young. Their sense of urgency stemmed from their memories as first-generation Latina teachers who share the similar background not only as the participants but also the entire school community. They understand their value to the community and being a resource to the community. Mentor Isabella stated in the focus group, "Maintaining the humility, knowing that we are there to serve the students, serve the families and help in the best way, we become one—we are a resource for these families that are struggling on a daily basis." This value added emotional connection to their words in their interviews and actions during the mentoring sessions with the protégées. They identified with their protégé, they

understood their story, and used it as leverage to motivate and persevere. Kimberly, one of the mentors expressed,

> We all have similar families. We are family. We represent a culture. We represent each other. We work for each other. We help each other in what you are trying to do in the community. I know for them, it allows me to build a stronger relationship with them because they have someone that understands them.

The connection to one another and to the community and culture was the reason that the mentors' passion and commitment supported the commonalities with their protégées.

The mentors valued sharing with the students how alike they were because of their culture and similar upbringing, which created meaningful relationships. During her interview, Mentor Iveth shared how she uses culture to support her relationship with the protégé and all her students in her classroom,

> I tell my kids, I eat the same food you guys eat. My parents speak the same language you speak. We have the same traditions. Many of us have the same traditions. I mean my community is like my family.

This awareness of their background, community, and culture helped develop the stages of relationships.

The mentors and protégées shared cultural views of education as a vehicle for social mobility. Mentor Penelope shared that, growing up, she was consistently reminded by her teachers that education was the key to freedom. In the focus group, she stated that, throughout her school experience, she had been told to stay in school and do well in school to access a better life. Penelope connected this experience to her teaching, voicing,

> I made it my little mission so my students can also see, Hey, if you want to have greater opportunities, education is the key to freedom. That's how I got here. That's how you know my teacher friends and coworkers got here, so it possible.

She summarized by concluding that all the mentors saw and believed that they could make a difference in the life of their respective protégées. They believed this was the mission as homegrown teachers. This is later discussed in Theme 2 and Theme 4, where the connection of homegrown teachers to their community is a driving force to make a difference in the lives of others.

Latino immigrant experience. Throughout the mentoring sessions, the mentors and protégées recalled specific educational topics to support understanding of the teaching profession; some of these demonstrated how the shared cultural view of education as liberating influenced the mentoring relationship. For example, in one session, Mentor Kimberly and protégé Clarissa discussed the purpose of discovering her educational vision. Clarissa specifically wanted to add the phrase, “Help students learn English.” The mentor asked her about her comment and why she wanted to emphasize it in her vision board. Clarissa responded, “I want to help students who have the same experience as I did.” The protégé as well as the mentor made a connection to the mindfulness exhibited when they prepared to serve as career professionals in communities where they are predominately of one race due to race segregation found in urban school communities. Kimberly shared about her special cultural bond throughout their interactions in the mentoring sessions. Kimberly communicated that because both of them come from immigrant parents, they made various connections throughout the months. Kimberly shared,

> The little personal touches that make her even more comfortable with opening up because I understand her when she says to me things in Spanish- I use my Spanish all the time. So I think it’s a sense of comfort a sense of belonging…It’s the non-judgmental and sharing of background…It influences the relationship a lot because we share the Latino experience.

The mentors and protégées connected to each other throughout the study. In one particular mentoring session, mentor Diana and protégé Emily wrote about their similarities and differences. Through their dialogue, they discovered that they were both Latinas, bilingual, had attended Toribio Elementary School District, grew up and lived in the same city, and had passion for teaching. They differed in the number of siblings and their preferred colleges. The mentor listed the college she had attended, and the protégé listed her aspirational college as a California State University. They noticed how similar both mentor and protégé were at this time. Their conversation focused on their similarities and how the protégé story could evolve with the same ending for Emily. The goal of becoming a teacher seemed attainable when protégé Emily realized how alike she was to her mentor Diana. Emily was developing a relationship with her mentor, which helped her see her mentor as role model.

Spanish language supports instruction. Language was also one of the key components to the cultural bonds that supported parents, students, and teachers. Teachers used their language to support relationships within their community. Throughout the study, Spanish was used to bond relationships and support knowledge and awareness both inside and outside the classroom.

Language, like culture, helped to unify the mentoring relationships in The Homegrown Teacher Project. All participants were bilingual, and all protégées spoke Spanish at home with their parents, as Spanish continued to be the dominant language in their home. Four of the five sets of parents spoke only Spanish. Many of the protégées' parents were working toward learning English. Conversations about language can be seen throughout the interviews. Protégé Melissa shared, "Every day I speak Spanish, because my parents only know Spanish. My mom is very close to knowing a couple words in English. So is my dad. So yes, they're learning since

they hear a lot of English." Knowing this was the reality of the mentors and protégées, I could hear their language choice come into play during the mentoring sessions. The mentors and protégées would speak Spanish without even thinking about the change of English to Spanish language. Bilingualism was observable during the mentoring sessions.

Isabella's unique relationship with protégé Sol would allow them to spend many hours together because she was her classroom teacher. Isabella would use Spanish to praise her while they worked together during their mentoring sessions. For example, Isabella and Sol were working on the educational vision theme. As they worked together and giggled, Isabella tells Sol "Me caes bien" translating to "I like you," while looking for quotes for the vision board. The fact that Isabella chose to use Spanish versus the English language is an indication of trust and comfort in the mentoring relationship.

During another session, mentor Isabella and protégé Sol prepared themselves with their materials. The mentor noticed Isabella had a pouch, pens, and a calendar just like Sol. The items were almost identical. Isabella began with another Spanish saying, "Eres mi media naranja" translating to "You are my other half," referring to their similar organizational skills they both exhibited. The mentor shared with me that she stayed after school with her every day. This mentoring relationship shared over 40 hours a week together, in the capacity of a classroom teacher, after school support teacher, and mentor. Sol was happy and loved every minute of it. Their connection was evident when the mentor showed her a family picture when they discussed inspiration. Sol could identify everyone in Isabella's family picture. As they continued to create her vision board, Isabella read the quote aloud that Isabella had chosen as one of her favorites. The quote read was, "I want to inspire people. I want someone to look at me and say because of

you, I didn't give up." While protégé Sol read the quote, mentor Isabella teared up and Sol, of course, smiled. She knew this was meaningful. They continued to identify role models and support one another in this way. Their bond was evident through their conversation and use of language.

During the mentoring sessions, mentors would use Spanish when sharing about their parents or situations that had originally happened in Spanish. Mentor Kimberly was sharing with protégé Clarissa about her conversations with her mom once she would leave school because no one spoke Spanish when she was in elementary school. She would come home and cry and say, "Mami la maestra no me entiende," translating to "Mom the teacher doesn't understand me." By sharing the words in Spanish, it helped Clarissa and me, as a participant observer visualize Kimberly at 5-years-old. Kimberly spoke in detail of the culture shock at school. Kimberly shared that one reason she became a teacher was to help kids who felt like her growing up. Mentor Kimberly claimed,

> Seeing how I struggled with the culture shock of the language and I wanted to be that teacher that helped those kids that felt the way I did back then. I wanted them to feel comfortable and feel like they could identify with me, so they wouldn't feel so alone.

Kimberly also shared that her personal story inspired classroom parents, who, as a first generation, believed that they could use her story to motivate their child at home. Kimberly shared,

> Many parents have said, I tell my daughter or my son, é*chale ganas* translating to "*work for it,* you know Kimberly was just like you. So they would use me as an example because I shared that part of myself with them."

Sharing her personal educational journey allowed parents to visualize their kids choosing a successful educational path.

Language and culture as a teaching strategy. Clarissa was the protégé who volunteered in a dual language Spanish classroom. In this experience, she was able to listen to Spanish instruction throughout the day. Kimberly and Clarissa also acknowledged their appreciation for culture and language during their last mentoring session. This session's focus was curriculum, which facilitated the mentor and protégé to plan a lesson. Clarissa had volunteered in the kindergarten dual language classroom for a little over two weeks before they began their lesson planning. In the dual language kindergarten classroom, the students spoke Spanish 90% of day. All instruction and conversations with the students were in Spanish. During the planning, the protégé and mentor discussed instruction. The first conversations the mentor had with the protégé was if she was comfortable teaching a small group in Spanish or English. The protégé responded, "Spanish is fine, I can ask my mom to help me practice in Spanish and learn more words." The mentor responded with praise and stated, "Your mother is going to be happy because she wanted you to practice your Spanish."

During the lesson planning, the mentor and protégé became engaged. They discussed the objective of the lesson. They identified the focus sound "N," and planned for accessing prior knowledge of the sound and setting the purpose of the lesson for the students. The mentor continued with a simple lesson design of – "I do" – "You do" – "We do" to support Clarissa in delivering the lesson. Throughout the planning conversation, the awareness of the kindergarten student's language and knowledge of Spanish words were discussed and planned. For example, during the lesson planning portion of the lesson the protégé stated, "I can use the hand signals of "*nido, nido…N…N…N [Spanish letter chant]*." Protégé Clarissa knew that when planning the lesson she could use the Spanish chant *"nest, nest…N…N…N*" to support the lesson delivery of

the letter N for the kinder students. She had this lesson planning conversation with her mentor as the protégé cupped her hands to represent a nest for the students.

During her interview, Clarissa was proud of the connection she had made to her culture and how she could support others with her Spanish language. Clarissa stated, "I think bilingualism is pretty cool." She continued to give an example on how she helped the vice principal translate for a playground supervisor because the supervisor did not understand English. So, Clarissa was asked, "Can you explain to her what I am saying?" by the vice principal. She continued as a translator for adults, using Spanish as an asset. The experience led to Spanish appreciation or, in her words, believing that Spanish was "cool."

During the focus group, the mentors discussed parent's appreciation of their bilingualism and use of Spanish at school. "When you are able to communicate with them directly, as opposed through a translator, they express their appreciation to the ninth degree," shared Diana. They continued to discuss the trust that parents voiced because of the similarity in culture and language. Parents acknowledged their appreciation of their children. Iveth shared, "Other teacher's in the past, I wasn't able to communicate with them" and the parents would state to the homegrown teachers, "There's something different about you. I feel comfortable with you." The homegrown teachers acknowledged Spanish as the gift they bring to their community and classroom. They summarized it by stating, "The parents just easily gravitate towards you and trust you."

Theme 2: Homegrown Teachers Were Essential to Mentoring Students of Color

Homegrown teachers were an asset in the community because of their understanding of the students' cultural and community background. By bridging their stories in the classroom,

they contributed not only to academic success, but also to the social and emotional needs of the students. Throughout the study, it was evident that the cultural connection between mentors and protégées influenced their conversations about teaching and learning. One of the benefits of The Homegrown Teacher Project is the homegrown teachers' passion to want to change and inspire within their own community.

Commitment to change. The connection to the students and their development of academic skills in the classroom is powerful for a homegrown teacher of color. Homegrown teachers' awareness of students' needs is birthed from their personal educational journey. Homegrown teachers knew the difficulty of language development and what it is to be an English Language Learner specifically in Toribo Elementary School District. The mentors agreed when Iveth stated,

> I sat in the same seat. I was an English language learner. You know, my parents worked all day and I know that experience and the expectations I set for my classroom are much easier achieved once they figure out, hey she did it, so I have no excuse.

Through the focus group, the mentors were able to discuss how their responsibility and commitment to the community grounds them in their passion to educate others. Iveth discussed how, as a homegrown teacher, she sees the teaching profession as an honor and a privilege. She discussed how teaching in the community is illustrated through an act of love. The other mentors agreed when Iveth voiced,

> I think all of us kind of understand that we have that relationship with the community and that we need to keep cultivating it and remember that we're lucky, we are in a profession we chose. We are in a profession that is always giving us- giving back to us and that's why I feel like it's an honor and a privilege.

Mentor Penelope agreed and continued to elaborate, sharing how homegrown teachers have a special commitment to the community. She stated, "So I feel like in all of us, we always have

that little mission in us. Every day, we—we can make a difference in whatever way and whatever context and whatever setting." This commitment to the community and to students of color stemmed from the ties they had to the community and to each other. Observations were made about their own experience. Kimberly made the comment that she had never had a Latina, bilingual teacher. She commented, "Growing up, I don't think I ever had a teacher of color in elementary school. Just being someone that you can identify with, speak Spanish to their parents fluently, is a big deal to our kids." The mentors agreed to this statement, shaking their heads in validation.

For the mentors, it was evident that personal ties to the school environment supported their relationships with the community. During the focus group, they shared how collectively they saw the value they brought to their school community. Kimberly summarized, "I think the positivity just stems from us being homegrown teachers and understanding the community. You know? We don't judge the community because we are a part of the community." The connection they brought stemmed from their connection to the people they serve. The mentors also wanted to give because of the lack of role models when they were growing up. Both mentors, Isabella and Penelope, during their personal interview, stated that they felt a calling for service to the city because they understood the importance of positive role models for students. Penelope observed,

> Well I am thinking about my community and how it shaped me, I always wanted to grow in a community where I would see a lot of positive role models. I would in school settings, and church settings, but I feel in general there was a lot of violence and crime in the community, and I wanted to change that. So I wanted to be part of the change because I feel like everyone should have positive role models in their lives.

Such a connection was evident in their commitment to serving their urban community.

The protégées also served the community and volunteered in their neighborhood or at school. Kimberly's protégé, Clarissa, at age 11 had already demonstrated her commitment and desire to support others. During her vacation, protégé Clarissa volunteered in the kindergarten Dual Language classroom, for approximately four hours a day. She completed over 90 hours of community service to kindergarten students at Miranda Elementary. When asked about this experience protégé, Melissa responded, "It's pretty cool, since you are like a mini-teacher." During her interview, she shared that her role within the community was tutoring her friend's siblings in learning skills. She stated, "They come over and knock on the door – and say I want her to teach me the alphabet or teach me how to read." She then described what she was doing with all the kids in the neighborhood at least two times a week. She described the strategies she used with them and how she continuously said things like, "Reread this…" to ensure they understood the concept they were working on. This story is exactly like mentor Iveth's personal journey into teaching, which she shared during her interview. She recalled that she began volunteering in kindergarten when she was in junior high. She would support a kindergarten teacher. She shared, "She would give me the curriculum, and she'd give me the lesson I would teach, but I basically I felt like a teacher, a mini teacher in the classroom." Both mentor and protégé used the same terminology on the opportunity that volunteering gave to them. They both saw themselves as "mini-teachers," a term both used to refer to themselves when sharing their journey into teaching.

Cultural translators. As first-generation homegrown teachers, the mentors expressed a sense of being a part of two worlds. Mentor Kimberly voiced,

> I feel like as a person of color and an educated person of color, we kind of have this double identity we're part of the privileged but also still very much part of those that are still in need and we're able to transition between those two worlds so fluidly.

Diana validated Kimberly's expression on dual identity using parents as an example of their actions. During the focus group, she stated that most parents in the community saw teachers and though, "She will not understand me," referring to most teachers being White, middle-class women, according to research. She instead noticed that when they saw someone like her, they thought, "I am a reflection of them- and they are more willing to come up to you. Therefore, they're willing to come to these events because they do not feel intimidated or out of place." Being able to communicate with parents in Spanish supports the students' academic and social-emotional progress.

The benefits of homegrown teachers was being able to bridge gaps between the two worlds, the dual identity, the mentors described during the focus group. The teachers commented that their ability to make academic connections to real-life urban scenarios for students made a difference in the classroom. Kimberly shared:

> So sometimes just when we're reading, you know, building context, because our kids don't have it, they'll ask questions about things that, to the privileged, is common sense, but to us, we understand why they are not aware of it.

They continued to share their connection to context and curriculum in the classroom. Isabella expressed how she ensured her lesson delivery supported bridging conceptual gaps through prior knowledge to help make meaning of concepts. She communicated how English language learners need background for particular topics, so examples helped give information for students. Diana shared in her interview how her way of bridging gaps was by giving students what she did not receive growing up. So, her goal was to have strong parent relationships because of her

bilingualism this structure supported the parents' understanding of what is going on in the classroom. Diana confirmed, "It makes me proud that I am bilingual, so just bringing it full circle."

Role models. Homegrown teachers are aware of how their similar background to the students in the same school district led them to be seen as role models for their community. They acknowledged the urban schools struggle of not having adults to support the achievement and motivation of students within urban communities. Mentor Isabella clearly indicated the lack of role models in urban schools by saying, "I knew the community needs people, models, role models, that they can look up to, saying, hey you know, she looks like me, so therefore if she did it, why can't I?" Mentor Penelope connected to the comment Isabella stated by making a connection to her role in the community as well. In her individual interview, Penelope shared the commitment required to serve your own community with a similar statement to Isabella's. Penelope became emotional and began to tear up as she shared,

> I feel very close to my community, and I love working with the Latino community- so I can be that change, or that little light that they can say, Hey, I can be like that person. I can succeed like her. If she can do it, I can do it too.

At the same time, mentor Penelope acknowledged that her role in the mentoring relationship is to be a role model, and guide her protégé in her journey. Mentor Diana shared how she wanted to be the role model for her protégé as well. She wanted to take on that role, "I just want to be that person for my protégé, being an extra resource, an extra set of ears, an advocate."

Mentor Kimberly and protégé Clarissa confirmed how teachers of color are models for students of color. When they completed the vision board during their mentoring session, Clarissa, the protégé, looked on-line for pictures of her current and past two teachers to be placed

on her vision board. Two of the three teachers on the vision board were current participants of The Homegrown Teacher Project. All three teachers on the vision board were Latinas. Protégé Clarissa knew her role models needed to be on the vision board. She wrote under the picture, “I’ve been inspired by my teachers.”

Collaboration was evident with the homegrown teachers as they supported and took care of one another in their career setting. The ties began when they realized they held the same expectations for students and themselves as professionals. Mentor Penelope validated this statement, “We’re all role models for each other, really. Our kids see us as their role models but I feel like we see each other as each other’s role model.” The mentors discussed how their connection was instant when they knew they came from the same community. Kimberly observed the changes that happened when they knew each other’s background; they began to realize the high schools attended and relationships they had in common. She voiced, “You immediately connect with people when you grow up in the same community.”

Hard-to-Staff school. Miranda Elementary School, statistically speaking, for California, would be labeled as a hard to staff school. Research coined this label to apply to urban schools with similar demographics. Kimberly commented during the focus group that the mentors were aware of this challenge at the school level. She continued to acknowledge how they counteracted the negative stereotypes through the support networks they had formed with one another through relationships. She voiced,

> When we serve a community as our own, it’s really easy for us as teachers to get overwhelmed too or get burnt out. So having this support system of likeminded, passionate teachers, who like said, have the same background as you, it help reinvigorate you on those days when you are having a hard time, you know who is going to lift you right back up because we’re going through it together.

The commitment to the community was discussed and evident in the sessions. While the protégées developed their educational vision, they quickly were able to identify how valuable it was to serve the community and be a role model for future students. Protégé Melissa, when working with her mentor, Iveth, discussed that she was determined to inspire. While Melissa created her education vision board activity, she cut the word *inspire* from a magazine to add it to the collage she expressed, "I want to inspire my kids, and I want them to inspire each other." This statement was from an 11-year-old sixth-grader excited to think of herself as a future teacher in the classroom. She was determined to make a difference.

Mentor Isabella shared that homegrown teachers have a different presence, one that supported one other in the classroom; she referred to this presence as a special "vibe." During the focus group, she described mentors Penelope and Iveth, and the transition to having a professional relationship with them as they joined Miranda Elementary School's sixth-grade team. She observed,

> I saw them come in and you could immediately see the vibe and their presence. They had presence about them. So every time they walked into the classroom, you knew that those children, the children in their classroom were in good hands.

She continued to describe their relationship as it flourished in the same grade-level as colleagues. Since both of them were new and shared so many commonalities, she continued to describe, "You guys made each other stronger." Iveth agreed with Isabella and affirmed her statement by sharing how Isabella was their motivation because of her commitment to the community. "She [Isabella] challenged us, like let's keep expectations high for the kids for our scholars and just observing her work ethic and following her lead was helpful to have someone so committed to

the community." This piece of the data collection was evidence of their support and acknowledgment of their role within the school.

As homegrown teachers, they expressed their commitment to supporting the protégées to learn and grow. This passing of knowledge was a commitment made to support their shared knowledge. Iveth voiced how this shared passion would support students and the schools they served. Iveth stated, "I work with individuals who also share a vision of empowering kids and giving them the opportunity to experiment with their dreams."

Pay it forward. As teachers and mentors in their same community, the mentors felt encouraged to become a part of The Homegrown Teacher Project to pay it forward. Penelope shared during the focus group,

> It's like we are invested in our future. Our future is our kids as cliché as that sounds. So we want to put in a little grain of sand, so we have touched lives at some point. So, maybe they will remember us along the way. Like, my teacher believed in me, so, they can get that motivation to keep pushing forward. You know, like paying it forward basically.

This idea to pay it forward, which can be defined as the success they felt privileged to have received from their own community, was expressed in the mentors and protégé interviews.

During mentor Iveth's interview, she made the connection of how being a mentor would eventually support her protégé to witness the power of giving back and paying it forward. Iveth stated, "As a teacher you're always dreaming of inspiring, and you're always dreaming of keeping that inspiration going. So I knew, essentially that, If I do this, I am inspiring Melissa, and in the future Melissa will inspire somebody else." Melissa was able to articulate this herself in her one-on-one interview. Melissa commented, "I've always wanted to be a teacher, and maybe, help someone, like repay – repay this lovely community that I live in." Melissa, as an 11-

year-old sixth-grader, already knew how her commitment to others could help support the future of her community. Iveth and Melissa's relationship was based on the same value. They supported each other's individual goals to inspire and give back to others and their community.

The connection between mentor Isabella and protégé Sol was similar to that of mentor Iveth and protégé Melissa, where the goal the mentor had to make a difference and leave their mark in the teaching profession was accepted by their protégé. Isabella shared that by having a protégé she was inspiring someone to have the same positive outlook and great teaching strategies in the future. "I feel like when she gets older and she has her classroom, she going to apply a lot of the same strategies that I use in the classroom. It will be like seeing another teacher that is similar to me." This desire to support a teacher with great methodology would help Sol accomplish her personal goal. Sol's reason to want to make a difference had to do with her negative experiences in school in Argentina. She was determined to change the narrative for other students.

> I decided that I wanted to be a teacher because in Argentina, they aren't the best teachers, they don't really support you and here they support you a lot and that what I want to do with kids that don't have much support I want support them so they can keep going and they can go to college.

Both mentoring relationships articulated their desire to change and influence the future of students in their own community. They supported each other's personal goals and work toward this change.

Mentor Kimberly shared that The Homegrown Teacher Project made teaching a reality for the protégé. "The main thing with the mentoring process is that it makes teaching real and possible. It's attainable. Even if they are the first ones in their family and graduating, they come back to the community to pay it forward." This statement was one of the reasons Clarissa

appreciated her mentor, because she saw her commitment to motivate and support her to pay it forward and influence future teachers. Clarissa shared, “I am thankful for her. She’s taking her time, while she could be doing something else. Like she’s, she’s helping other kids have a better life.”

Mentor Penelope continued to make connections to the ability to influence others. She shared with her protégé, Leslie, her advice about becoming a teacher in her own community. Penelope emphatically stated, “You’re always busy, and it’s not an easy job, but it’s so valuable. It’s so rewarding. At the end of the day you’re helping kids believe in themselves.” Mentor Diana also shared how influencing the next generation was important to her educational goals. She shared that her goal is to provide for the families in the community what she did not receive from the educational system and would have desired. Diana shared, “I apply it now that I am the adult and I’m the teacher now, so that’s what I look forward to.” This awareness of the benefits they provide their students and community is the participants’ way to continue to pay it forward in order to shape a better community.

Praise. Language was consistently used to message and encourage the teaching career. The mentors consistently made comments during the observations about their classrooms and their practices as a teacher. Throughout the mentoring sessions, all the mentors would support the mindset of the protégées by praising them throughout their time together. The praise varied based on their actions, but all mentors referenced their future as a teacher. When the mentors and protégées would work on the tasks, they would discuss various conversations. An example of this praise happened with Iveth and Melissa. While they discussed classroom organization, Iveth asked Melissa, “As a future teacher what would you do to set up your classroom?” Iveth

concluded, “You are already a teacher Melissa, you know what to do!” It continued with planning for her classroom, and Iveth had her write Miss. Melissa’s Classroom as the title of the activity. Simple references to language like this would have the protégées smile and beam with pride. Teaching was visualized through the words of their mentors.

When Isabella and Sol worked together, their comments and praise involved their relationship continuing to support each other as future colleagues when Sol was actually a teacher. Isabella chose to let Sol know how excited she was to support her with her future classroom. Isabella shared with Sol, “I cannot wait to help you decorate your classroom.” When Kimberly and Clarissa worked together, their unique conversation always tied back to teaching and learning. One of the days, Clarissa had a tough day explaining to her mentor all the obstacles that her class had to overcome for various reasons. Kimberly connected her day to something a teacher would experience. “Remember as a teacher we have to be flexible. You always have to be prepared for the day because you never know what will happen.” Kimberly would also consistently compliment her characteristics that will support her in the classroom, “You are very observant, you know a lot about lesson planning!” Penelope for Leslie used this same concept of praise. She would tell her, “You are not a follower, you are a leader. These strengths will help you grow up and be a teacher.” During their conversation for classroom organization, Leslie was able to remind Penelope of some items in the classroom. She then stated, “You are going to be a very organized teacher, way more than me.” Penelope continued as Leslie completed the organization of her classroom, “Thank you for being responsible, this is the first thing of being a great teacher” stated Penelope.

Parent connections. The mentors communicated how they shared their cultural experiences with parents at Miranda Elementary. This discussion was voiced during both their interview and acknowledged collaboratively during the focus group. All mentors discussed how they shared their personal story during Back to School night or Parent Conferences in order to share their teaching journey as first-generation Latinas. All stories were very similar in that all the mentors' parents immigrated to the United States at a young adult age, ranging from 18–25 years. The mentors were also the first in their family to attend college. By sharing these stories during Back to School Night with the community, they all agreed that it sparked the growth of personal relationships. Kimberly noted, "I would see a change in my parents. After that, they felt more comfortable coming to me and asking me questions." Kimberly recalled a story in particular of how parents shared their appreciation for knowing her personal educational journey. The parents connected to her life and used her journey as an example with their children.

Mentor Penelope observed how each other's story was motivation to support one another through the educational journey and used for guidance in the mentoring process. She shared what she would tell protégé Leslie in order to believe a college education was possible. Penelope stated, "Because again, we are part of the same culture, similar backgrounds, and overall just encouraging her to trust in herself and believe in herself in spite of her hardships or her upbringing." The mentors created the connection for the protégé to see their similarities in culture and upbringing.

The mentors continued to dialogue about instructional practices and indicated the power of culturally relevant curriculum and how the students were able to relate to the experiences of the book characters, just like they could relate to the mentors' stories. Isabella continued, "I

always tell myself, if I can bridge and make connections between what they know and don't know, that is what is going to make learning meaningful. And at the end of the day, that's all that matters." The focus group provided the space for the mentors to discuss the affirmation of culture as a learning tool. Culture connected prior knowledge to new knowledge for the students.

Theme 3: For Latinos, Education was a Family Journey

Throughout the study, the appreciation and acknowledgement the participants had for their families' sacrifices and hopes for a better life were evident. The participants shared their experiences growing up as first-generation Latinas and the desire to keep their parents' goals at the forefront of their lives in order to achieve the "American Dream."

Immigrants extraordinarily value education. The belief that education is the pathway to social mobility was seen in the mentors and protégées' communication about the focus on their educational goals. Mentor Penelope summarized this concept by her statement, "You know, they gave me all the tools. Like, now, let me show them that I can do it. And it's kind of like, reaching their goals for them that they couldn't [parents]." Protégé Melissa, at 11-years-old, had conversations with her parents about her future as a teacher. The protégé shared during her interview how she knew seeking a career was the route to make her parents proud. Melissa claimed, "They're very proud of me for doing this program and wanting to, like, have a better career." As a single child, she was mature and aware of her parent's needs and feelings. Protégé Clarissa shared a similar situation when she told her mom she wanted to be a teacher. Her mother smiled at her and said, "You been telling me since you were 5 years old." These discussions validated the power of education with their family on their side to inspire hope and a vision of the future.

Protégé Sol's outlook was unique because she witnessed her parents' sacrifices first hand. As an immigrant herself, she had journeyed with her parents less than 2 years ago from Argentina to California. At such a young age, she already valued education and believed how it could lead to opportunities that could mean less financial stress. She shared a conversation between her father and herself during her interview. She shared that she was always encouraging her father to go to college. She stated that her father asked the reason behind her request, and she suggested, "Because it's important and then you could work and have a bit more money to buy more food and stuff." She continued to share her constant messaging about wanting to be a teacher for her family to support their well-being as they continued to get settled in the United States. Sol stated, "I really want to make them proud and I wanna make them happy because I know they're going through problems and I wanna get their minds out of there." Sol's awareness of educational opportunities was a result of her work ethic and responsibility.

Protégé Leslie's parents also placed an extremely high value on education. She shared in her interview that her mother consistently told her to focus on education and not her friends. Her response, as a typical sixth-grader was to answer thusly, "I try to do that, but it's hard sometimes." Protégé Emily observed the same commonality as protégé Leslie, but for Leslie her grandmother encouraged her to continue to go to school. She told her she was happy that she wanted to be a teacher, but like many family members that needed legal support for immigration purposes, she suggested that she become a lawyer. Leslie recalled her grandma's words, "You should be a lawyer so you can fix my papers." Education is always a way to continue to meet goals and the hope for the future for mentors and protégé. They valued and continued to see education as a means to better opportunities.

Key ingredients to success; work ethic, hope, and sacrifice. The discussion about what immigrant parents do for their children led to various sentimental moments during the participant's interviews and mentor's focus group. It was evident that key events were a driving force in what mentors and protégées did to ensure they acknowledged education as a family journey. Penelope, the mentor, summarized these feelings when she stated,

> I feel that's what links us [mentors] together. The love and the hard work that our parents did for us. That's why we are here. That's why we are successful. We can think of a million different scenarios but, going back to our life and how our parents are our main role models.

An overall agreement about the positive journey was justified by the mentors. They discussed their parents, heroic like, through acknowledging the sacrifices of leaving their entire life in Mexico in search of opportunity and hope for their unborn children.

During their individual interviews, the discussion of the awareness of their parents' journey for mentors and protégées was motivation and encouragement for them to be better teachers or students. Mentor Isabella claimed how she saw herself as an advocate for parents at Miranda Elementary because she saw the connections of her story to that of her students. She shared, "I am able to reach out to them through my experiences, I let them know that my dad worked in the fields in Bakersfield, and many parents have too because this is the only jobs available to them." She connected to parents on a personal level, resulting in relationships that matter and support the students.

Both mentors, Penelope and Isabella, felt this connection to the students at Miranda Elementary because of their personal family journeys. Penelope expressed,

> I feel very close to my community, and I love working with the Latino community, so I can be that change, or that little light that they can say, Hey, I can be like that person. I can succeed like her, if she did it, I can too!

Mentor Diana communicated this same message of connection to the students at Miranda Elementary through the historical journey. Diana communicated, “We share the same traditions, and the way our parents are raising us, so I can relate to that and it lets me communicate I’d say more efficiently with the parents, because I went through that.” They gave tribute to the struggle to make the American Dream a reality.

As a protégé, Leslie very clearly shared how her mom motivated her to think about how she could pursue a career. Leslie commented that her mom supported her to accomplish her career goals. She stated, “She tells me to work hard so that I can have a better life and not work at a fast food place, because you do not get paid that much. She wants me to get a career.” In addition, the protégées communicated the value of education, what it meant to their family, and how proud they were to share with their families that they aspired to be teachers.

Appreciation of family was discussed throughout the data collection period. Through the mentoring sessions, semistructured interviews, and mentor focus group, the data revealed an appreciation of family. This appreciation was voiced through their actions and dialogue. It was evident that mentors and protégées consistently valued and acknowledged the sacrifices immigrant parents made in search of a better life. For first-generation mentors and protégées, their voice indicated love and reflection of their parents’ selfless actions for them to be able to thrive in the United States. The understanding of the sacrifices that came with the search of the American Dream was evident and valued through the voices of the participants. During the focus group, they agreed that what brought them together, besides their strong work ethic, was family background, and appreciation of their parents as their own role models. During the focus group, mentors Iveth, Isabella, and Diana acknowledged their role models in society, such as teachers or

other adults, but would quickly attribute their parents as role models in their life, too. They voiced their growth with other adults, but would never undermine the hard work of their parents. Comments such as, "My teachers were my role models, besides my parents, they were amazing role models…" were heard in the mentors and protégées' dialogue. It was evident that the mentors always had their parents' triumphs as stepping stones, regardless who else opened doors along the way.

Work ethic. A common trait of first-generation parents was the exemplarily work ethic they displayed in their jobs through commitment and hard work. Mentor Isabella shared a *dicho*, a Spanish word for a common saying, which her mother used to communicate with her as motivation to persevere. She would tell her, "*Nada cae del cielo*," translating to *nothing falls from the sky,* meaning nothing will ever be handed to you. With this perspective, Isabella shared that they always had food, shelter and love—the essential ingredients to be successful. Mentor Penelope shared that her parents were similar with the "no excuses" motto. She recalled that they would work 12-hour shifts and would still sit with her to make sure her homework was complete. The reflections led to an appreciation of the work her parents exemplified. Making connections to the Spanish dichos added to the conversation and acknowledgment of their journey for the mentors. Diana shared that her parents would use emotional words to motivate her to continue to strive for more, "You are going to be better than us. That's why we came here." These words, full of hope, led to the determination that their children have a better life, and was drive that kept the mentors and protégées fighting toward their goals.

Leslie, at 11-years-old, when asked about her family clearly recalled, "My dad works hard and my mom is trying to make me have a better life." She communicated their work ethic and awareness of their family goals for her future, even at such a young age.

Hope. The mentors shared their thoughts about the *hope* that their parents had for them to succeed in the future. Iveth explained, "There was this positive energy about them, a hope for the better, a hope for their children to succeed." She went on to explain that they had the goal of having a "good life." Isabella agreed that this hope led to their desire to continue with their education, and wondered, "Maybe this is why we all have our Master's Degree." The mentors pondered and acknowledged that their personal success stories had also come with hope, sacrifice, and encouragement from their parents. They noted that their success could not be measured or compared to leaving one's country in search for hope of a better life.

Penelope recalled how her parents' hope was evident in their selfless actions to come to America for a better life. Penelope became emotional as she shared the following,

> My father was 28, and my mother was 25 at the time. They got married in Mexico, and had my brother. So they crossed the border with my brother, and my brother was two when they arrived. They came to this unknown place, so a foreign place, and they came with that urgency to find a better place, a better home for their children and myself. I mean, I wasn't born at the time, but they knew that they wanted to provide for us a different life that they couldn't have. Their struggle is something that I always think about because my life could have been so different growing up in Mexico. My parents allowed me to have those opportunities they didn't have through their struggles and hard work.

The mentors and protégées acknowledged hope for opportunity by sharing their voice about their families' journey.

Even at a young age, the protégées shared this awareness of hope and sacrifice for opportunities in the interviews. The protégé Melissa also shared this hope for a better life that

she had for herself. She saw teaching as a way to support her parents for the sacrifices they made for her as an only child. Protégé Melissa shared:

> I've always wanted to get this job [referring to a future teacher], to also help my parents, because they're the one who were a part of this that helped and supported me to come here. I always wanted to repay them.

The protégé Sol, as an Argentinian immigrant herself, identified how hopeful her parents were for her to become a teacher. She shared how proud her parents were of her being in The Homegrown Teacher Project so she could have a career. Sol shared, "They're always telling me that I have to keep trying if I want to do what I want to do. To keep trying and never give up." Hope was in every conversation and data collection piece when parents were discussed in the action research study.

Sacrifice. It was evident that the mentors were aware of their parents' sacrifices for their hope for social mobility for their children. Mentor Kimberly made a connection to another mentor's comment. Penelope stated that their parents had already completed the difficult tasks for them to succeed. Mentor Diana verbalized the same idea behind Kimberly and Penelope. She shared during the focus group, "They're the ones that left everything behind to come to a new country where they didn't know anyone. So now, we have the easy part." Leaving everything behind just left for them to have humble beginnings in the United States was huge.

The mentors connected to the sacrifices parents made at Miranda Elementary School for their own students because of their personal family story. Immigration is cyclical, so the mentors understood the sacrifice parents made in order for their children to succeed. Their stories had many commonalities. Iveth reflected,

> I know that, like my parents, they sacrifice for their children. And I know that it's relatively hard financially, sometimes we want to see our community more directly involved, but the challenges are there because of the lack of time or resources. But, I think they give it their all. Just like my parents had to do.

Through this awareness and understanding, homegrown teachers had special connections with students. They related to each other's stories. This acknowledgement forged connections to culture and family sacrifice. This allowed encouragement for parents to get involved in creative ways at school, because of the relationship they felt to the teacher and school community.

Theme 4: Socializing Students of Color into Career Aspirations

The Homegrown Teacher Project supported the protégées through mentoring relationships that encouraged them to build relationships with their mentor. The mentors contributed to the visualization of the future and encouraged the protégées to build relationships and social networks to be able to become a teaching professional.

Helping protégées develop their educational vision. Throughout the duration of The Homegrown Teacher Project, the mentoring sessions allowed the mentors to be intentional about the tasks and objectives they completed with their protégées. The mentors worked to have dialogue and create actions for them to visualize the future so they can make teaching a reality. Each relationship uniquely empowered the protégées to see themselves as teachers in the future. Iveth, one of the mentors, stated, "Mentoring helped solidify what teaching is, I think Melissa [her protégé] was able to see what it takes to be a teacher and what are the big, important components that it truly involves." Melissa shared that she started to think as a teacher and visualized her role in empowering others. Iveth shared in her interview that she remembered when her protégé stated that she wanted her "students to be able to come to her and feel comfortable and happy in her classroom." She realized her personal classroom environment was

coming to life in her thoughts and reflections. Most importantly, she accepted her role in being capable to empower others in a teacher capacity. Melissa's transformation was evident when she acknowledged her personal growth in her interview. Melissa, a 12-year-old protégé, shared,

> It's definitely got me thinking about teaching more, you know? Like, she told me some stuff about it. I started thinking about it more throughout the day, instead of just like, Oh, when I grow up, I wanna be a teacher and not knowing anything about it. So it's helped me, learn a little bit more about it, now.

Melissa continued to express during the interview how her role of "playing teacher" had evolved with her cousin at home. She expressed how she played teacher a lot more at home. She continued to share more details about her transformation.

> We used to both play teacher and be students with an imaginary teacher, but now, I am the teacher teaching my cousin. Since she is younger than me, I know a little bit more stuff, so I can teach her, you know?

Melissa articulated her change, seeing herself as a future teacher.

Through conversations, mentors and protégées discussed connections to classroom instruction valuing diversity. Isabella, the mentor, was intentional in her planning for dialogue with Sol, her protégé, about culture and diversity during their task on the objective of educational vision. The mentor provided the vision board background for the protégé. It was a large black scrapbook paper with multiple colored hearts. Each heart contained pieces of a world map within the hearts. No two hearts illustrated the same location on the maps. The mentor explicitly asked Sol, "Do you know why I chose this paper for your educational vision?" Sol glanced at her mentor and commented, "Because we are all different." The mentor concluded, "Everyone in a classroom is different, but at the end of the day, we are all family." The world hearts and maps indicated that the world is bigger than the immediate community of Miranda Elementary School. Sol, as an immigrant herself, understood the diversity of the world.

As they continued to work together on Sol's education vision, Isabella, the mentor, shared with her protégé her personal story of when she immigrated. The conversation was about family and validating differences. She described her personal journey to America from Mexico. She stated that she had not received "her papers" until she was in eighth grade, and they both connected on not speaking English. Sol had immigrated less than 2 years previously, and began her English education in California in fourth grade. The awareness of culture and valuing diversity was something Sol, at 12-years-of-age, affirmed by stating, "If we were all the same the world would be boring." Isabella, her mentor, concluded the session as she stated, "We are all puzzle pieces, all different, but when we come together we create a beautiful masterpiece."

During protégé Melissa's interview, her statements were similar to Sol's. She observed how culture and diversity played a significant role in the classroom. She shared how she wanted to learn many languages to support her future students. She shared, "I also wanna learn different languages. That's why I wanna travel, you know, to hopefully help me learn different languages to help me with the kids that I may have." Melissa's awareness was evident that she was making connections to her educational vision. She discussed how she could help others learn English because it is important to understand other languages.

Identifying social networks and support systems. Most of the mentors knew the families from when they had had the protégé as a student. Only Iveth and Melissa were truly developing a new relationship. Building relationships looked different in each relationship. Mentor Kimberly discussed how her relationship from teacher to mentor developed with time. During her interview, Kimberly stated about her growth with protégé Clarissa,

> I’ve developed this more personal relationship with her where her mom will ask about me or I’m able to ask about her siblings, her sister or parents. So I guess that’s just another branch of becoming a mentor. When you are a true mentor, then it’s a personal relationship. So with Clarissa . . . I don’t know . . . It’s just a special connection. It’s a special bond that I have with her aside from the academics and helping to guide her through the process of reaching her goals and dreams.

As the only new relationship in The Homegrown Teacher Project, Iveth and Melissa took more time to develop their comfort level. As Kram (1983) argued, mentoring relationships begins in the initiation phase of mentorship. In their first mentoring session, protégé Melissa let mentor Iveth know what she needed to build a solid foundation with her as her mentor. She stated to her mentor she was shy, and that usually took time for her to open up. Articulating this information at the beginning allowed Iveth to develop a plan to ask questions to encourage future dialogue. With time, it was evident their relationship was powerful, as protégé Melissa shared in her interview that she was like an adult best friend. Melissa, in her interview, acknowledged Iveth and her growth. Melissa proudly captured their growth in the relationship by her statement describing their relationship. She informed me that they were, “Like you know, like a couple normal best friends.” Melissa continued to share that the best part of having a mentor was learning about her personally. Melissa continued to share:

> I really liked learning about her, you know since she tells me a bit, whenever we go there, since it is mostly about teaching. But then she tells me about herself, and it’s nice to know a little bit about her since she’s helping me.

Protégé Melissa shared how important it was to have a relationship to support and nurture her through her future career.

Similarly, mentors Kimberly and Iveth commented on the same growth in their protégé as mentor Isabella had expressed about protégé Sol. She stated that Sol had grown throughout her mentoring relationship. She noticed that her confidence had grew both inside and outside of the

classroom. Isabella stated, “She blossomed and came out of her shell.” Isabella knew Sol was confident in dancing, and connected her ability and confidence in dance as motivating her to socialize to make new friends in order for her English language to improve. “Her confidence is improving. She is more confident and having conversations with girls from different classrooms, whereas before she would shy away because she lacked those basic English skills.” Sol mentioned that what she loved about her mentor was how positive she was with her. Sol stated, “She supports me, she is strong and has positive energy every time!” Their relationship was unique because of their time together as student/teacher and protégé/mentor. Isabella had so much pride in Sol because of her determination and perseverance as a fourth-grade immigrant. Isabella praised Sol when I was observing them during a mentoring session as they worked on her teaching vision board, she told her “Every so often you have a student that comes into your life that you know will accomplish great things, this is you!” Sol smiled from ear to ear. Penelope, like the other mentors, felt that Leslie was similar to Sol in terms of growth and confidence through their relationship. She shared, “I’ve seen her come out of her shell. Allowing me to really talk to her one-on-one and giving her advice and support, and just providing that confidence in her, creating that confidence in her that she can succeed.”

The mentors appreciated the growth and enthusiasm that their protégées modeled through their mentoring sessions. Each one of them felt that having time set aside for them to build a relationship supported the relationship throughout the months. Their commitment to building relationships and supporting their protégé was clearly articulated in the focus group. “I feel like in all of us, we always have that little mission in us. Every day we can make a difference in

whatever way and whatever context and whatever setting," shared Iveth within the discussion. The mentors agreed with Iveth, each day they were determined to inspire students.

The focus group set the tone for how the mentors viewed each other as a strong support system. The homegrown teachers supported one another as they often connected in fighting the same battles in urban schools. Diane shared during the focus group, "It doesn't matter what kind of day we have had. Regardless of the situation we're going through, any time we come together or we collaborate, it always a positive point of view." Support systems were acknowledged through the mentors and protégé throughout the mentoring sessions. Penelope was proud of the support system she had cultivated for her protégé and support systems she could identify for her within her own network. Penelope clearly described during her interview how she had guided Leslie. "I told her we can continue connecting and being part of each other's lives even after she leaves, so she knows she has a lifetime mentor in me."

The mentoring sessions began by identifying the support systems for the protégées. Mentor Isabella helped Sol identify her support network at Miranda Elementary School. Isabella had Sol identify her role models she had to support her success. She gave credit to her current and previous two teachers. She placed the teachers on the vision board as a reminder of who she could find when she needed to access her support network. This approach was completed with Clarissa, as Kimberly gave her the task to identify her support system. Clarissa chose pictures of teachers who were her role models and of support networks. Both protégées identified teachers and family in this capacity. These adults supported and developed their confidence in achieving their dreams of becoming a teacher.

The protégées discussed how their mentors had become their support, not only to understand the teaching profession, but also as motivation to do well in school. Protégé Sol, in her personal interview, shared why she was not successful in Argentina as a student. She recalled vividly never doing her homework or trying to the best of her ability. She said change happened when she realized that Penelope was making the effort to keep her after school to complete her homework. Sol realized that Penelope, her teacher, was supportive of her needs. She remembered, “She made it easier for me, just a little bit, like she got me a Math book in Spanish so that made it easier. And when she thought I was ready, she gave me an English book.” As soon as Sol could identify the support systems she had acquired at Miranda Elementary School, her outlook on education and school completely changed.

Theme 5: Acculturation into the Profession—Learning to Become a Teacher

Through The Homegrown Teacher Project, there were unspoken elements that promoted the socialization of students of color into the teaching profession. Through the mentoring relationships, the protégées not only had access to a mentor for emotional support, but also had the ability to take a glimpse into the world of teaching. This exposure to teaching allowed formal experience through the action research project. The themes created windows to the profession, specifically for the protégées to experience the world of teaching. Through conversations and experiences, the protégées gained teaching experience through the following themes: (a) setting an education vision, (b) classroom organization, (c) classroom management, and (d) curriculum and lesson planning of the action research project.

Educational vision. The educational vision theme allowed the protégées to self-reflect and acknowledge their reasons to be a teacher. This reflection session allowed them to verbalize

their goal of their future career. The mentors discovered the protégées' philosophy of teaching for the future. This theme allowed for them to connect based on their passion and hope for the future as teachers in their community.

Iveth and Melissa created a collage with words that Melissa had chosen from a magazine to represent her vision. Her words valued diversity. She found cut-outs of five students and captioned the pictures with, "All students are unique" on the vision board. Melissa conveyed through conversations with Iveth that various student needs are represented in urban school classrooms. Iveth supported Melissa to address her need to create a safe classroom for her students knowing the challenges that could arise. Melissa chose words such as welcoming, perspective, innovate, reflect, California, and courage. Melissa was aware of how she envisioned her future as a teacher in an urban setting. Iveth supported her vision of the future. The mentor encouraged her to think of creating a classroom that cares; she shared with her, "Creating a community is important, that cares, just like what you wrote in your essay." Iveth was aware of protégé Melissa's vision from what she had first said in her written statement.

Mentor Kimberly and protégé Clarissa discussed their educational vision, which was similarly that of Iveth and Melissa. Kimberly began by using a vision statement she had written down a year ago for a college course. To support her understanding of vision, Kimberly read to Clarissa, "I am committed to maintaining high expectations and advocating for instructional approaches that will ensure that the diverse needs of the whole child are met." This was the foundational piece to begin conversation for Clarissa to create and voice her dreams of teaching. Her vision board was created on a cork board and had statements and pictures. Her vision board had the following statements below the pictures, "I have been inspired by my teachers; help kids

learn a different language; Help kids have a good education; Watch the lightbulb turn on; Building a new family each year; I find it fun to teach!" These statements proudly showcased Clarissa's purpose in education. The vision emphasis, guided by her mentor, allowed her to articulate and visualize it, a result of a teacher pipeline.

Classroom organization. The theme that focused on classroom organization prompted discussions of various types of classroom environments that contribute to conversations about teacher organization. Mentors decided to address this theme by taking their protégées to look at various classrooms and grade levels at Miranda Elementary School. Leslie discussed how this time she spent with her mentor and visiting classrooms was positive for her understanding of different ways to organize classrooms. Leslie stated, "I liked going to different classes and seeing the differences. They had different rules, and the desks were different!" The mentor and protégé walked through various classrooms at Miranda Elementary School. This step allowed them to compare and contrast classrooms.

Mentor Diana and protégé Emily completed classroom observation that were similar to those of protégé Leslie and mentor Penelope. Diana walked Emily through three classrooms. She was able to visit a multigrade-level classroom, a third grade and a kindergarten classroom. Diana gave Emily a clip board so she could take notes if she needed during the observations. The paper had the following headings for notetaking: *classroom library*, *student desks*, *bulletin boards*, *white board*, and *technology.* The areas would create discussions in each classroom. Diana used frames such as, "What did you notice?" and would also help her make connections with questions, "So you notice the desks in this area?" This allowed Emily to make connections to traditional classroom settings like her current sixth-grade class. While they continued to walk

around and explore, Diana was intentional about her questions so that Emily would think critically about the teaching profession. For example, when they walked into the kindergarten classroom, Emily made a connection to the tables being long tables versus regular desks. Emily asked, “So if they do not have desks, where do they keep their belongings?” Diana looked around, and pointed to shelves of boxes and said with a smile, “Cubbies.” She was able to identify the modification of desks in kindergarten versus that in the other grade levels. Similar dialogue happened with the areas the mentor had emphasized throughout the worksheet. The overall sharing of knowledge in this capacity and identifying practices to meet the needs of students in classroom excited the protégé to be a part of the observation and conversation.

Iveth and Melissa did not participate in the compare-and-contrast classroom environment activity, instead, Iveth shared with Melissa the essential components of a classroom design and the choice that teachers have when creating their classroom environment. Melissa spoke about this in her interview; she shared, “I got to design my own classroom on a piece of paper. Since I really like drawing and getting creative, this allowed me to write about what I would like in my classroom.” She stated this as her favorite project.

Classroom management. The classroom management theme promoted discussion of classroom management and behavior expectations for students. The mentor’s goal was for the protégé to understand how management would support instruction in the classroom. I was able to observe two relationships working on this topic. Iveth and Melissa had a discussion using Iveth’s classroom as evidence for management, but quickly encouraged Melissa to think of her own goals for her classroom management. Melissa shared with the mentor how she planned on developing her expectations. Melissa stated, “I will let then help me, because if the students

make them, then they will know they rules." The mentor shared that strategy is powerful for students because ownership is important for them to have buy-in and voice. She reminded Melissa that the purpose of having expectations is for students to be emotionally and physically safe at school. She then shared the expectations she created for this purpose and had Melissa read them—they were posted on the wall. She read four expectations. The mentor shared the purpose of having these expectations as she concluded her reflection for Melissa.

> You will have to think about it, how you want your classroom. When I first started teaching another teacher gave me an idea about classroom management. And sometimes this works in upper grade, because they can think deeply and infer. But maybe you will need different rules if you are a primary teacher.

Iveth's purpose was for Melissa to think of how expectations supported learning environment in the classrooms. She continued to ask her to think of her classroom management plan. "In order to teach, we need to have a plan this plan is called the classroom management plan," stated Iveth. During the mentoring session, the reflection and anticipation of a classroom was evident in their conversation. They both discussed the purpose behind the expectations and the importance of student voice.

Curriculum and lesson planning. The theme of curriculum and lesson allowed the mentor to encourage protégées to understand how lesson delivery planning begins. Kimberly and Clarissa had three sessions on curriculum and lesson planning. Kimberly defined curriculum. "Curriculum is what teachers used to teach." In order to start thinking of lesson planning, she had Clarissa reflect on her sixth-grade teacher's delivery of a lesson. She asked her to think about the order and instructional sequence in the delivery of a lesson. Clarissa recalled, "Yes, she always starts with a question. Oh, and she tries to get us involved." Kimberly stated, "Yes, so there is a lesson sequence!" Kimberly continued to move down the lesson sequence by asking Clarissa

questions to scaffold her thinking. Kimberly stated, “A lesson always starts with an objective, do you know what an objective is?” Clarissa stated, “Yes, it is what we are going to do in the lesson.” Throughout the session, the conversation between Kimberly and Clarissa focused on identifying instructional words and teaching strategies. This conversation went back and forth as Kimberly continued to scaffold what Clarissa knew from observation and participation as a student. Clarissa’s personal awareness was powerful. Her reflection included, “Well I once saw the teacher print a paper that said, I do, we do, and you do,” referring to a lesson sequence the teacher had shared with the students. Kimberly then proceeded to ask, “So after guided practice what comes next?” and Clarissa responded with, “Independent practice.” Their continued conversation supported teaching and learning. Kimberly continued to make statements to support Clarissa with reflection on teaching instruction. Kimberly stated, “You want to make sure the students get it or you do not have to move on- like why would you want them to do independent practice when they had a hard time with the guided?” Throughout this conversation, Clarissa continued to reflect on what she saw in her classroom as a student participating in a lesson sequence. The connection allowed the mentor and protégé to identify all parts of a lesson sequence. The mentor did not know her protégé had so much awareness and significant knowledge of lesson planning because of student observation.

During the interview, mentor Kimberly shared how her original plan for the theme was something very simple, in order to not overwhelm her protégé. Kimberly shared, “I would always start with an open-ended questions. I never wanted her to go in a certain direction. I wanted to gauge what she knew.” Through this discovery the final product was insightful in what protégé Clarissa knew about lesson planning. Kimberly stated, “But she already knew what

lesson planning was and what the usual flow of a lesson would be. She didn't have the terminology yet." The gains from this session are what led Clarissa to have the confidence to later teach an instructional phonemic awareness lesson in a kindergarten classroom This exposure to teaching and learning supported the need for a critical pipeline.

College workshop. The college workshop communicated information so the protégées would understand that preparation for college begins as early as seventh grade. For them, this was about six months away. Knowledge about requirements and college planning is essential to begin to focus on college goals. The protégées participated in a two-hour college information workshop. The workshop provided a planning guide in order to know what classes are required and tips about how to advocate for your personal needs in junior high and high school. The protégées remembered specific information that they referenced in their interview. Protégé Melissa shared:

> She told us we need to take our language classes, like Spanish I, II, III. But I really said to myself, she really helped me, because she made me think that next year. If you don't know this information it could be difficult.

Protégé Sol also shared a recap about learning that colleges required A-G courses to apply.

> She gave us a sheet that says how many years you had to take it. I actually didn't know why you had to take them certain years, but then she told us you need the years to apply to college and do what you wanna do. So now, I know how many years I need to take each class.

Protégées Clarissa, Leslie, and Emily made the same connection as Melissa and Sol had. They referenced the road map of college courses, and their appreciation for knowing what classes to take when they entered junior high and high school. Being prepared to apply to college required intentional planning for the future teachers.

The Homegrown Teacher Project encouraged protégées to become familiar with the teaching profession. Through the mentoring sessions, the mentors and protégées approached themes to support dialogue and experience around teacher practices. Through the focus group, mentors discussed how beginning the acculturation process supports the protégées' goal of becoming a teacher. Iveth began the discussion as she shared that access to a teacher in this capacity supports the protégées understanding of the profession to go from dream to reality. Iveth shared in the focus group, "I think that when you actually expose your strategies and your reasoning and give them justification to why you do certain things in the classroom, I think it really cement their interest in teaching." She continued to share that teaching is about learning from one another. Iveth stated she gave her protégé many examples of how she learned from other teachers on campus. This was to encourage her to continue to be observant in order know how she could access information about the teaching profession. Iveth's advised Melissa, "Keep your eyes open like you have them open now and you're just going to collect a wealth of strategies. You get to pick from all those teachers that you observed, the dos and don'ts."

Mentor Diana, who was the most recent out of the credential program, made a connection between the acculturation process of The Homegrown Teacher Project and her experience in the credential program. Diana shared,

> I feel like my protégé is doing a lot of what I did in the credential program. I felt like the experiences we are giving them now and exposing them, is what I did when I was preparing to be a teacher. So they have the upper hand.

Due to the uniqueness of the school calendar at Miranda Elementary School, two of the protégées were off track, resulting in having a month off of school, which allowed them to be volunteers in the primary grade levels. Sol and Clarissa both spent their vacation time at school

supporting teachers. This experienced allowed them to bridge concepts they were learning about in The Homegrown Teacher Project and apply the information or observe in their designated classrooms. Isabella shared that Sol had participated in a first-grade classroom. She acknowledged that the teacher that Sol supported had come up to her and shared how great she was doing with the first-graders. Isabella noted, “So the fact that we are the bridge between, ourselves and other teachers, that allows them to learn and not stay in one place. They can go learn from other teachers.” The teaching opportunities on campus supported their growth as future teachers.

Acculturation

The Homegrown Teacher Project supported the socialization of the protégées to envision themselves as future teachers in their own community. Mentor Kimberly shared her commitment to mentoring long term. During her interview she stated, “I would definitely be interested in mentoring long term because I see the impact that it has on Clarissa and I think about the impact that mentoring would have had if I would have had it.” The program allowed the protégées to spend time with a practicing teacher in the field, learning about the profession, including the pathway needed to apply to college, as the first step toward a teaching credential.

The acculturation of the teaching profession gave the protégées the ability to experience day-to-day teaching practices and culture. Through these experiences, the protégées’ reflection and voice shared the excitement and gratitude for the acculturation they experienced through The Homegrown Teacher Project themes and practices. The mentors shared with the protégées their educational vision, classroom organization and management, including how to design lessons. The sharing of the profession gave the protégées the ability to visualize themselves within the

teaching profession and see themselves as professionals. Each teaching experience was voiced by the protégé during the interview. They shared their actions and how they could see themselves educating students. Although the protégées all had different experiences/activities in their individual sessions, the full potential of their experiences can be measured by the gratitude and knowledge of the teaching profession the protégées voiced during their individual interviews.

The Homegrown Teacher Project gave the protégées access to authentic fieldwork. The protégées were able to experience more than just activities, but dialogue around practices in the profession. For one, meeting with the mentor in their actual classroom gave them access to a learning lab. The discussion around classrooms procedures, routines, and visible artifacts led to authentic conversations about the profession. Two of the protégées were also teaching small groups by the end of the three-month study. This gave them the ability to experience the privilege of educating the future generation. Overall, their reflections and interactions with the fostered a mentoring relationship that will continue to flourish under the existing conditions. The mentors created windows into the teaching profession, which allowed for experiences that led to the acculturation of the teaching profession for the protégées in the study.

Theme 6: Time and Gender Were the Major Constraints; Redefining Future Mentoring Relationships

The data revealed challenges and opportunities from the perspective of the protégées and mentors in The Homegrown Teacher Project. Being able to identify the challenges helped to identify next steps and future implications. The greatest challenge discussed by the mentors was time. For the mentors, they communicated that time is always needed in order to make a difference, so even though the process is rewarding and benefits from the protégées are

invaluable to their future success, scheduling will always continue to be difficult in a mentoring program.

The issue of time. In the one-on one interview, the mentors were specifically asked the challenges of the program. Mentor Iveth stated,

> I mean we are all a little shy at the beginning. I do not think that was a huge problem. I think mostly it would be just the time and maybe having more of it- more time for them to observe you and watch you as you teach.

Similar to Iveth, mentor Isabella communicated that scheduling mentoring sessions was their same challenge. She clarified by sharing that even though she had challenges she still was able to accomplish her tasks and objectives of The Homegrown Teacher Project. Isabella stated, "Perhaps scheduling time where they [protégées] could stay after school for a certain amount of time. I mean just scheduling issues, but other than that, everything else was not much of an obstacle I would say."

Mentor Kimberly validated her fellow mentors by sharing that the time required to schedule the sessions was difficult and required extra effort. She was able to share the perspective of how teachers felt with time in general as public-school teachers. Kimberly reflected, "I guess time. That seems to be a very common challenge. In education in general, we always feel like we don't have enough time. Just the feeling of I need to get through so many themes done in this period of time." She referenced the tasks and objectives aligned from The Homegrown Teacher Project's monthly goals not just session times.

Mentor Penelope continued to share in her interview how scheduling and rescheduling both were difficult due to time constraints caused by rescheduling. The perspective she

communicated served as a reminder of the daily unexpected interruptions that teachers can have in their lives after school. An example of this would be unplanned meetings on campus.

> As an educator you are always constantly multi-tasking the day-to-day things that come up in the classroom, the random parent conferences that you have or the random meetings that come up. Sometimes scheduling and rescheduling my sessions was the challenge.

Teaching is a profession where many unpredictable actions can happen, regardless of what is on the calendar as a task for the day. It is the flexibility of the teacher that contributes to the gifts that teachers possess to multitask and handle many situations.

Gender matters. Mentor Isabella questioned why there were no boys interested in the teaching profession from the data collected during college week. Her observation led to the following comment, “It would be nice to see maybe have some male role models that can inspire the younger boys to want to be teachers in the future.” She continued by reflecting,

> I know that teaching right now is very female dominant. But it would be nice to perhaps, in the future see you know, I wonder what would be the contrast if we did the same cohort but now with male teachers.

One protégé brought up the same observation as mentor Isabella during a mentoring session early on in the data collection timeline. While we waited for the mentor to come back from dismissing the students, protégé Melissa asked me, “Are you going to do this project for the boys?” It was evident that, as a participant, she was worried about only having females in the program. The bigger challenge was that, out of the entire sixth-grade class, approximately 145 students, there were no interested boys in the teaching profession. Most of the boys aspired to be YouTubers, gamers, or law enforcement as indicated by their responses during college week.

Modifications to support relationships. The Homegrown Teacher Project began mentoring the sixth-grade girls at the beginning of their sixth-grade year. Mentor Kimberly

suggested that starting the mentoring relationship earlier, like fourth or fifth grade, might find students as protégées less motivated, as they would not be leaving the school as they do for middle school after their sixth-grade year. Kimberly continued to voice that this adjustment to the mentoring timeline could support or facilitate the challenges with time. Kimberly reflected,

> A suggestion for the program moving forward would probably be having more group sessions where the mentees get to come together and the mentors as well to share what they've been doing. That would be really cool because that would, again, expand their social network and give them the time to do it, like in a formal time and space.

Kimberly continued to state that this would help with the challenge of time because it would become a cohort experience too. Kimberly clarified, "So it would allow for more flexibility if we created those formal whole group meetings. And that might address that challenge of not having the time." The cohort experience would be a one-on-one mentoring experience at the beginning of the mentoring project, and possibly during the second or third trimester would lead into group/cohort meetings to support teachers who did not have the date available and would not have time to reschedule. Kimberly's suggestion was also to support the unexpected meetings in school buildings, such as parents that need to meet, student activities, or calendar/track issues.

Calendar or track issues. The unanimous challenge for mentors and protégées participating in The Homegrown Teacher Project was time. For the mentors, the challenge of having the pressure of another work commitment happening during their prescheduled mentoring sessions and, for the protégées, was the mentors changing the meeting time or being on a different calendar. The mentors shared their personal challenges through their interviews.

The challenge for mentor Diana was a little different because her protégé was on a different track. Being on a different track resulted in Diana's calendar not being similar to when

Emily was on campus. Diana shared that there were more than two times that she was ready for her protégé and she did not come to the session. Diana concluded:

> I was putting in my effort and I don't know what was going on with her. I don't know if it was lack of interest, if it was struggles at home, but it was tough meeting up or following through with the meeting times.

Diana would also text Emily's mother to remind her to send her to campus when she was off-track. So, the efforts were made, but the execution was difficult. Diana even suggested email, since all students on campus had personal emails, but that was also a failed execution. The positive side, through, is that Diana knew that once Emily was present, the sessions were of value. Diana shared, "When she was there, though, it was easy. It was easy to talk to her, she responded well."

Protégé Melissa also commented that her challenge was due to her mentor being on a different track. Melissa was on vacation in September and her mentor, Iveth, was on vacation in November. This required an extra level of commitment from Melissa, who was not scheduled to attend school. This issue was similar to that of Diana and Emily. The different calendars created a challenge in order to continue conversations and dialogue about the objectives. Melissa recalled:

> We were starting to talk about the lesson, the lesson that I would get to write [Theme 4- Curriculum and Lesson Planning]. So then, she [mentor Iveth] was off-track, so I couldn't really talk to her about the idea that I had.

Protégé Sol also described her experience with scheduling mentoring sessions when asked about challenges. She stated, "The challenges were to figure out when to meet, because sometimes we could meet one day, but one of us could not go, so that was one of the challenges at times." Sol continued and described how issues would arise leading to reschedule sessions.

Sol was active in dance so she stated that sometimes dance practices or competitions were the reasons she rescheduled with her mentor Isabella. Sol also stated, “Sometimes she [mentor Isabella] had to tutor and sometimes my mom would pick me up early to go to the doctor or to the psychologist.” Sol expressed that it was never intentional—it was part of the work to be flexible and open to rescheduling.

Protégé Leslie had the same experience with some of the sessions. “Sometimes she wasn’t there [mentor Penelope] and sometimes I cannot go because sometimes my mom goes to work or my brother comes at 3:30pm.” Both Sol and Leslie shared that their mentors and their own personal schedules led to scheduling conflicts. Protégé Emily shared that her challenge was remembering the day she had to meet her mentor. She was on a different track, like Iveth and Melissa. Emily stated, “When I was off-track it was hard to remember what my mentor would say about when we meet.”

Pressure from friends. Protégé Melissa shared that the main challenge she faced did not have to do with time or schedule. Melissa’s challenge had to do what she would share with her friends on campus about The Homegrown Teacher Project. Protégé Melissa stated,

> I guess, since a lot of my other friends don’t want to be teachers, they find it a little bit unfair that its only us, who want to be teachers, that get to have that head start and get to start thinking about it. Like one of my friends wants to be a police woman and she said, well – what help would I get to aim for that dream she has.

Melissa was the only protégé who discussed the pressure of other students knowing about their privilege of having a one-on-one mentor.

Protégé Clarissa had a unique situation whereby she did not experience any challenges during her participation in The Homegrown Teacher Project. We discussed communication and scheduling sessions, and she stated it wasn’t a problem for her and her mentor Kimberly. She

stated, “I used to meet her, I would go upstairs and meet her or she would come to my classroom and talk.” She stated it was never an issue to talk or meet with her mentor. Out of the 10 participants, Protégé Clarissa was the only one who could not identify a challenge. Overwhelmingly, the challenge of The Homegrown Teacher Project was similar to the common struggle of every teacher who works in a hard-to-staff school. Their common cry, more time, is evident in any urban school classroom or afterschool program.

Recommendations for the Future

During the focus group, the mentors were able to give recommendations for future mentors to The Homegrown Teacher Project. The question was asked in order to gather their thoughts about how to continue a similar mentoring program at others schools across the school district or other similar urban school districts. Their recommendations were positive in implementing a similar program that would support future teachers of color in urban schools.

Networking

The focus group allowed the mentor participants to discuss future recommendations to support the continuous development of The Homegrown Teacher Project. These recommendations came from mentors who had spent three months with the protégées, supporting them through the task and objectives. Kimberly suggested more sessions together, and used the college workshop as the example. Kimberly stated,

> Having more sessions together, where all of the mentors worked together but also with our mentees to again, teach them the value of networking. By having those sessions they build trust in all of us so you don’t always feel you have to go to only one specific mentor.

The mentors agreed that having sessions together would support and build the rapport of their protégées to confide and support one another, similar to the relationship that had developed with the mentors. Iveth shared,

> It is a good opportunity to – for them to work together with other students who want to be teachers, because like how we serve as each other's role models and we keep each other on our toes and we cheer each other on. I think that is important for them to have that kind of relationship with likeminded people and you stay more inspired when you're around people that feel like you have the same vision.

Such collaboration and support would help with different perspectives. Penelope stated, "It helps to get different perspectives." Their recommendation was to support their collaboration in working together in the spring semester, in order to help them develop their support system before they leave to middle school.

Isabella supported this idea by suggesting that they develop their own Professional Learning Communities. Penelope continued by stating, "Just teaching them – like to work together and work smarter not harder." This idea of networking aligns with the principle of serving as institutional agents for youth.

Conclusion

Through themes and analysis discovered from mentoring sessions, interviews, and the focus group, this chapter presented the data from the action research project. The findings and analysis were organized under six themes: (a) culture and language shapes the mentoring relationship; (b) homegrown teachers are essential to mentor students of color; (c) for Latinos, education is a family journey; (d) socializing students of color into career aspirations; (d) acculturation into the teaching profession- learning to become a teacher; and (e) time and gender were the major constraints; redefining future mentoring relationships.

Findings identified a strong commitment homegrown mentors had to support first-generation sixth-grade Latinas to enter the teaching profession. Mentors consistently discussed their role as stemming from their journey as young scholars and that the commitment to pay it forward for others was the honor and privilege. The next chapter provides a summary of the study and answers to the research questions, and discusses the finding, implications, and recommendations for future research in order to influence the early intervention teacher pipeline to support teachers of color to enter the teaching profession. The chapter concludes with a reflection and conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The single biggest protective factor in the lives of young people who experience toxic stress is a caring adult.

-- Duncan-Andrade, 2018 (personal connection)

Using action research methodology, The Homegrown Teacher Project examined the opportunities and challenges of five 6th-grade Latinas participating in an early intervention teacher pipeline. Through the support of a homegrown one-on-one Latina mentor, the sixth-grade students were introduced to objectives and tasks centered on the teaching profession. These experiences allowed them to begin to develop a critical mentoring relationship and begin to understand facets of the teaching profession.

The purpose of the study was to document the voices and experiences of the participants during the three-month action research study. By documenting the experiences and voice of the participants, the findings provided proof that an early intervention pipeline to recruit future homegrown teachers can be possible in urban school districts.

Research Questions

This study focused on the experiences of the participants in The Homegrown Teacher Project. The project was an early intervention teacher pipeline project grounded in the principles of critical mentoring aimed at pairing elementary Latina teachers and sixth-grade girls at Miranda Elementary School. The notion of a "homegrown teacher" was the foundation for this intervention program or critical pipeline, where students of color interested in a future career as a teacher were paired with a Latina homegrown teacher who was teaching in the community in which they were born, raised, and schooled. In order to understand the challenges and

opportunities in creating a homegrown teaching pipeline, the following questions were the focus of the study:

1. How do homegrown Latina teachers who are mentoring students to become future teachers and their protégées conceptualize the challenges and opportunities of this early intervention pipeline?
2. How does The Homegrown Teacher Project provide experiences to prepare sixth-graders for their future career as teachers?

Findings

The action research methodology allowed the participants to engage in teacher-like objectives and tasks over a period of a three-month calendar. Through critical mentoring, the mentoring relationships are developed at different stages. Kram (1983) stated in the mentoring framework, all mentoring relationships transcend through the following stages: (a) initiation, (b) cultivation, (c) separation, and (d) redefinition. The homegrown mentors took on the role of critical mentors. This role, through the stages of mentoring, allowed the mentor to addresses race, ethnicity, and culture (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Because the mentors and protégées had similar personal characteristics and shared experiences, such as race, gender, culture, and family history, the bond that developed between mentor and protégé supported the developed relationship. In urban school settings, mentoring relationships have the ability to change education goals and even life trajectories of urban youth (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Several themes emerged from the data, which were verified from the mentoring sessions, interviews, and the focus group. The themes that emerged from the data analysis were: (a) culture and language shapes the mentoring relationship, (b) homegrown teachers are essential to mentoring students of

color, (c) for Latinos, education is a family journey, (d) socializing students of color into career aspirations, (e) acculturation into the teaching profession- learning to become a teacher, and (f) time and gender were the major constraints; redefining future mentoring relationships.

Mentors and protégées experienced a mentoring relationship as sixth-grade Latinas learned about the teaching profession through a one-on-one mentor. This finding revealed that the experiences created as part of the early intervention teacher pipeline were more than simply learning about the teaching profession. The participants learned to share cultural spaces to support their growth. In a critical mentoring relationship, both mentor and protégé supported each other's needs, and are assets to one another. In The Homegrown Teacher Project, the mentors were able to give back to the community, a passion they all clearly have as homegrown teachers, and the protégées were able to learn about the teaching profession from teachers they can relate to and admire as role models in the community.

Summary of the Key Findings

Throughout the action research data, several themes and patterns emerged from the on-going data collection. The mentoring sessions and researcher's reflection notes, semistructured interviews, and mentor focus group led to rich qualitative data analysis emerging into patterns, trends, and emerging themes. The themes that emerged from the inductive analysis of the data collection are: (a) culture and language shaped the mentoring relationship; (b) homegrown teachers were essential to mentoring students of color; (c) for Latinos, education was a family journey; (d) socializing students of color into career aspirations; (d) acculturation into the teaching profession—learning to become a teacher; and (e) time and gender were the major constraints; redefining future mentoring relationships.

- *Culture and language shaped the mentoring relationship.* Culture and language supported the socialization process of the protégées. Throughout the study, it was evident that culture and language supported a mentoring relationship to further develop because of the knowledge of the Latino shared experiences. These experiences of culture, language, and family connectedness of the participants were evident throughout the data. Language was the key component to creating cultural bonds that supported mentors and protégées to create lasting relationships within their community. Language, like culture, helped to unify the mentoring relationship. Throughout the study, Spanish was used to affirm the cultural bonds within the relationships and support comprehension and understanding of one another.
- *Homegrown teachers were essential to mentoring students of color.* The role of commitment in homegrown teachers within their own community was evident in their passion, actions, and relationships with urban youth. Research findings indicate that urban schools have shown a positive correlation with the value that teachers of color bring to urban youth in the classrooms or in mentoring relationships. This study documents homegrown teachers as they mentored a protégé who dreamed of becoming a teacher in her own community. The commonalities between mentor and protégé, and how the mentors saw themselves in their students—because of the cultural and shared experiences as first-generation Latinas—was the drive that allowed participants to make a difference in the lives of Latina youth and community.

- *For Latinos, education was a family journey.* Throughout the study, the appreciation and acknowledgement the participants had for their families' sacrifices in hope of a better life ("the American Dream") was evident. Participants shared their families' experiences and how it shaped who they are today. Through the interviews and focus group, the protégées and mentors articulated how the work ethic, hope, and sacrifices of their parents leads to success. The participants understood, even witnessed, their parents' journey to America, and that the value they placed on education was key to changing their trajectory in order to have a better life.
- *Socializing students of color into career aspirations.* The Homegrown Teacher Project contributed to the socialization process of Latina first-generation protégées to see themselves in the future as teachers. Through the mentoring relationship, the mentors helped their respective protégées discuss, model, and experience their future as elementary teachers. Through this exposure, their seed of hope was planted in order for them to understand college applications and teacher goals. The mentors helped their protégées develop their social networks and identify their support systems to succeed in the future. With time, this mentoring relationship will be vital for them to continue to dream bigger.
- *Acculturation into the profession—learning to become a teacher.* Throughout the mentoring sessions of the study, the mentors shared with the protégées a glimpse into the teaching profession through the power of an early intervention teaching pipeline. The Homegrown Teacher Project topics guided the

mentoring sessions to have rich conversations and experiences about teaching. The topics included (a) educational vision, (b) classroom organization, (c) classroom management, and (d) curriculum and lessons as the aims of the mentoring sessions. Each mentor had her own lessons for the topics, but all protégées mastered the conversations around the subjects. This experience showcased their potential future and acculturation to the teaching profession through experience and dialogue with their mentor.

- *Time and gender were the major constraints; redefining future mentoring relationships.* During the three-month data-collection period for The Homegrown Teacher Project, the main challenge of the mentoring program was the issue of time, due to the uncertainty of mentors' after-school schedules as teachers. Even though their sessions were scheduled, parent conversations or meetings would arise, causing them to have to reschedule. Some protégées also had this issue because of their involvement in extracurricular activities. Recommendations to prevent this challenge included cohort mentoring sessions after the first trimester in order to network and support each other through scheduling emergencies. The mentors and protégées were able to successfully complete the topics and experiences of The Homegrown Teacher Project.

The following is a discussion of the findings in relation to the two research questions of the action research study.

Question 1: How do homegrown Latina teachers, who are mentoring students to become future teachers, and their protégé, conceptualize the challenges and opportunities of this early intervention pipeline?

Challenges of The Homegrown Teacher Project. The Homegrown Teacher Project enabled participants to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of the action research study. The main challenge identified by all the participants was scheduling and time, as presented in the previous chapter in theme six. They communicated that time to schedule mentoring sessions, time to reschedule mentoring sessions, and time to meet was challenging for the mentors and the protégées. In schools, the schedules of stakeholders, teachers, and students were consistently interrupted by parents, teachers, or others students that needed immediate support. Attending to more urgent issues caused some sessions to begin later or get rescheduled. For the protégées, it was attending afterschool events that caused them to reschedule or leave early from their session. Extracurricular activities either on or off campus are examples of what caused time issues to be present during the data collection period.

The calendar at Miranda Elementary School added the extra layer of challenge for all participants. The multitrack calendar naturally created the mentors and protégées to be on different schedules. In addition, the participants were "off track" for periods of three consecutive weeks. Only two relationships, Isabella and Sol and Penelope and Emily, were on the same track schedule. For the other three relationships, the participants had to be in constant communication to support each other when they were not expected to be on campus. The participants were diligent about ensuring their requirements and mentoring sessions were completed, but as a

system The Homegrown Teacher Project could facilitate the calendar piece to ensure mentors and protégées focus on building a relationship instead of on the logistics of calendaring sessions.

For the mentors, their ability to see The Homegrown Teacher Project being replicated in other school sites came with the recommendation of reformatting the sessions to group mentoring after they met with their protégé in a one-on-one setting for a couple months. Kram (1983) explained that the stages of mentoring are essential to developing the relationship. She stated, “An individual carries some notion of who he or she wants to become; this notion is expressed in goals and aspirations related to an identity” (p. 70). This notion is in the initiation phase, indicating that the protégées want to make the time and modifications in order for them to be able to meet their own personal goals. The problem was that the calendar system in place made it much more difficult for the participants to meet. Controlling for this factor during the mentor matching meeting could have been a significant change to the data collection.

According to Kram (1983), the initiation phase lasts at least six months to a year, indicating that the relationship becomes important to both participants. The Homegrown Teacher Project was only a three-month data collection period. Even though some of the participants knew each other from a teacher/student role, the mentoring relationship is much different. “A mutual attraction develops and as time passes, both individuals develop positive expectations for the relationship based on those early encounters which suggest that fantasy will become reality” (p. 52). Maybe with time, the relationships that had difficulty with communication for scheduling sessions had to do with their comfort and confidence in being around one another.

Kram (1983) shared that the second stage, the cultivation stage, which allows the mentors and protégées to continue to benefit from one another, can last 2 to 5 years. Opportunities for

meaningful and more frequent interactions increase. Kram stated that, during the cultivation stage, “The relationship is far richer than anticipated, and the interpersonal bond is far more intimate and meaningful” (p. 56). For most of the relationships, this moment of bliss was reached. Mentors and protégées communicated their love and admiration for each other. Kram (1983) stated, that during the cultivation stage, emotional bonds deepen in their development of their relationship. This appreciation and emotional bonds were articulated by the mentors and protégées interviews and during the mentoring session observations. Isabella, who complimented her protégé, Sol, in Spanish calling her “mi media naranja”—an expression in Spanish that translates to “my other half” and indicates the admiration the mentor had for the protégé as she identified similar characteristics or traits they had in common through her actions. During this mentoring session, Sol had taken out color pens to write in her agenda when their next mentoring session was scheduled. Isabella used colored pens to schedule her events in her calendar, and Sol began to use that same strategy for organization. The mentor noticed her influence on her protégé in such a short amount of time.

The challenge of the length of the study did not allow the participants to enter the final stages of the mentoring relationship. The mentors and protégées could not enter the period that Kram (1983) referred to as separation and redefinition, the final two stages of the mentoring relationships according to her framework. Separation and redefinition take place after a period of 2 to 7 years, depending on the individual relationships. The three-month data-collection period did not allow these stages to be observed at this time.

Need for male students. The participants were aware that the study focused on future female teachers. The mentors, for the most part, understood that just like teachers of color are

needed in the classroom, the crisis of lack of male teachers as role models for students in elementary schools is significant. Mentor Isabella shared during her interview that The Homegrown Teacher Project could also be an avenue to explore a pipeline for male teachers in urban schools. Isabella shared:

> It would be nice to have some male role models that can inspire the younger boys who want to be teachers in the future. And that way they can become role models for other young men who are going through our school system.

Isabella brought forth the second statistical issue, the demand for male teachers in elementary schools. One of the protégées, Melissa, also brought this up to me in a mentoring session. She asked me if I could create a program similar to The Homegrown Teacher Project but with a focus on boys who desire to be future teachers. It was insightful to see the protégé identify the role of gender in the program. She believed the boys could benefit from a similar opportunity.

Protégées' challenges. For the protégées, the challenges were much more naïve. Three of the protégées did address time, but for the most part they were okay with the rescheduling that had to happen in order for them to have access to their mentor. Time was addressed but not necessarily discussed or seen as a challenge. The protégées were flexible with their schedule and were extremely grateful for the time they shared with their mentor.

Protégé Melissa shared a greater systematic challenge during her interview. She shared that other students in the grade level were asking about why they were not offered a mentor for their future career if it was something other than a teacher. This brings awareness that students in urban schools desire to have adult mentors to support them through mentoring relationships and to gain experience to achieve their future dreams. Melissa shared her friend wanted to go into law enforcement, and no mentor was available for her to begin to prepare for the future. She

shared that it wasn't "fair" that only girls who wanted to be teachers were the ones to receive a mentor. This self-advocacy from students of color is why educators need to ensure more programs and opportunities are offered to students of color in urban schools. When students bring awareness to their personal needs in order to succeed, adults in educational settings must be responsive.

Opportunities of The Homegrown Teacher Project. The opportunities in The Homegrown Teacher Project were different for the mentors and protégées. For the mentors, it was an emotional opportunity to give back to the community and give a student such a deliberately meaningful experience. For the protégées, it opened their world to the teaching profession through the lens of a mentor to guide and discuss the profession through topics and objectives. Although each opportunity was different, both had the same positive experience throughout the data collection.

Each mentoring relationship was personal and cultivated throughout the months in various relationship stages. Kram's (1983) research communicated relationship growth as contingent to the connection of the participants. Each relationship was structured differently with unique characteristics based on their personalities. Each mentor was diligent in delivering the themes of The Homegrown Teacher Project to encourage sixth-grade girls to become exposed to the teaching profession. Kram (1983) emphasized stages of development, while in a mentoring relationship, while Weiston-Serdan (2017) shared true cultivation of a relationship, is contingent on controlling for race, class, and gender. Through this process, the mentor and protégé are comfortable developing each other's social networks and confidence.

Critical mentoring relationship. Through The Homegrown Teacher Project, mentors and protégées engaged in what Weiston-Serdan (2017) labeled a critical mentoring relationship. Because the participants had many characteristics in common such as race, gender, awareness of socioeconomic experience, community, and immigrant experience, it allowed the teacher and student to form a relationship with some of the most complex barriers removed. This relationship is "remixed," a term Torie Weiston-Serdan (2017) used to ensure youth today are connected to similar adults to support authentic relationships. In a critical mentoring relationship, the goal is to decentralize the adult as the only one who holds power or knowledge—the mentors consistently acknowledged the protégées' knowledge through open-ended, knowledge-seeking questions throughout their discussions about teaching. The mentors, like any great teachers, would scaffold and support their prior knowledge of the teaching profession. During the focus group, they shared that they validated the mentors' knowledge by asking questions. Diana stated, "Whenever my protégé has a question, I never just give her the answer. I always try to guide her to the answer through questions." She continued to share her strategy to build her confidence and for the protégé to know her wisdom of teaching as an art, adding, "So I feel if you ask questions and you get their perspective, then you kind of mold them into going the right path of the right answer." Kimberly agreed with the strategy, stating, "They take more ownership and internalized the information."

Another essential component of critical mentoring is cultural competency. The mentors were culturally competent because their experiences were similar to those of their protégées. Being culturally competent is an essential component of critical mentoring. Weiston-Serdan (2017) shared, "More important, research that claims race does not matter in mentoring

undermines the needs of those being served and knowingly or unknowingly functions as support for the colonization of culturally relevant mentoring practices" (p.12). The Homegrown Teacher Project addresses this need by matching homegrown teachers with young Latinas in their own community. The factors are simple: they shared the same community—they shared a similar experience. This constraint of the study, to ensure that homegrown teachers are supporting future teachers in their own community, addresses the plea of Weiston-Serdan (2017) in which she urged that the mentoring field respond in ways that are transformative and emancipatory for urban youth.

According to Weiston-Serdan (2017), critical mentoring should "first understand the complexities and nuances of marginalization and then explicitly moving forward to address and change them" (p.15). The Homegrown Teacher Project addresses the teacher of color shortage by providing an early intervention pipeline for students of color to learn about the teaching profession through the support of a mentoring relationship. The dream to become teachers becomes attainable with the support of a critical mentor to guide them in understanding the teaching profession and the educational system to accomplish the dream of a future teaching credential.

Protégées' opportunities. The protégées gained access to and information about the teaching profession through the early intervention pipeline for the protégé participants. Through mentoring sessions, each mentor gave the protégé an awareness of four teaching themes throughout the three months. These themes ensured that the protégées would get a glimpse of the teaching profession through a special connection with a homegrown mentor. Mentor Kimberly stated during the focus group,

> I think that when you actually expose your strategies and reasoning and give them justification to why you do certain things in the classroom, I think that it – I think that a lot of time, it really cements their interest in teaching, like, "Oh, that's what you do!"

Creating opportunities for the transfer of knowledge from mentor to protégé supports the building of relationships and creating opportunities for future urban teachers. Mentor Iveth concluded, "I feel that giving them [protégées] this information, giving them access to this information at such a young age it's gonna prepare them even more." This preparation can lead to the feeling of developing social capital.

Social capital. The protégées began to develop and understand the concept of social capital. Social capital supports communities of color by becoming the link to information (Coleman, 1988; Kao, 2004; Nieto, 2010). The opportunity for individuals to gain access to resources supports the idea that social capital exists within communities of color and the developed relationships (Coleman, 1988). During the focus group, the mentors shared that their discussions with their protégées were deep and rooted in the teaching profession's goals. They discussed teacher practices and the science behind teacher practice. Diana continued, "I felt like the experiences we are giving them now and exposing them to this is what I did when I was preparing to be a teaching. So they've got an upper hand." This upper hand is what Stanton-Salazar (1997) defines as social capital. Salazar (1997) argued that academic achievement and a student's success is tied to networks and social capital. Through The Homegrown Teacher Project, the protégées began to build their networks and experience social capital. For one, the program provided the platform for the protégées begin to think about college and the course work needed before the average student in the community would begin to consider such information.

College workshop. The protégées were able to attend a two-hour information session with a homegrown college counselor for the local school district. Her presentation concerned her immigration story, arriving as a late entry in eighth grade, and her focus and sacrifices to learn the language and attend a 4-year university to become a high school counselor. During her presentation, the counselor supported the protégées by articulating the need to be college ready and to satisfy college course requirements. The counselor led the protégées to compare and contrast the activity of current high school students' schedules to determine which one of the students was academically competitive to apply to college. The presenter had the protégées use the course work schedule that she brought to the students to graph the courses on the infographic. This activity helped the protégé visualize her future middle and high school course work in a real-life scenario.

The mentors attended this college workshop, even though it was not a requirement of the mentoring relationship. All mentors came by and shared the event with their respective protégées. The protégées were given specific information about how taking classes in the summer could be a way of clearing their master schedule for another, required class during the school year. Protégé Sol explained her experience, "I remember that there are certain classes that you absolutely have to take and there is one class, health class, that you can take in the summer." She continued with her statement:

> I actually didn't know why you had to take them [core classes] certain years, but then she [presenter] told us the years we need to take them to be able to go to college and do what you wanna do in the future. So then now, I know how many years I have to take each class.

The college workshop solidified that preparing for your college career begins as early as middle school with the selection of eligible coursework. This access to social capital was developed thorough the opportunities of The Homegrown Teacher Project.

Mentor opportunities – The power of a pipeline. The mentors discussed the privilege of serving as a one-on-one mentor. Iveth continued to share the benefits of a mentoring relationship, stating:

> The privilege it is to do something like that right [the mentoring relationship]. How influential you are if you do it the right way and you put your heart into it. Just remembering the fact that you are in a privileged position is what gives you that extra little enthusiasm.

The mentoring relationship allowed the mentors to reflect in a positive way. “It just inspired me again,” is how Iveth described her mentoring experience. Isabella also reflected on the power behind a critical mentoring relationship. She believed The Homegrown Teacher Program addressed what the protégées needed to see teaching as a reality. Isabella reflected:

> I can’t wait to see what becomes of them [the protégées], to be honest with you. It’s a validation of what we are doing right now. It’s just amazing. It amazes me how much someone can do in such a short period of time with the right support. It’s like, I’m telling you, anything is possible.

Isabella commented on the progress she witnessed with her protégé, Sol, and her capacity to understand the teaching profession. Mentors shared with their protégées how everything teachers do is intentional for student learning. They were asked reflection questions around teacher practices. For example, mentor Kimberly discussed classroom organization with Clarissa. Kimberly asked, “Why do you think the teacher made that decision?” This type of probing to think critically about teaching is what supported the mentors to have opportunities for self-reflection and discovery alongside their protégé. As Kimberly shared in her interview, the

mentoring process helped her with reflecting on why she wanted to teach in her community. Kimberly reflected:

> So it just reminded me of my own goals as a teacher of always wanting to come back and serve my community. So she's [protégé Clarissa] already set on that goal in her mind and it's not just her community. It's her specific school that she wants to come back and teach in. So that is just really special and I think because she's able to verbalize it she's made it a reality in her head already.

The mentors experienced the overwhelming love and commitment to the teaching profession through their protégées' lens. This reinvigorated their purpose as homegrown teachers and the commitment they made when they chose to come back to the community to pay it forward. Kimberly communicated:

> I just think the whole process was inspirational. Not just for the protégées but also for the mentors as well. And it's something that I would definitely be interested in doing long term because I see the impact that it has and I think about the impact that it would have had if I would have had it.

The mentors shared that one of the memorable experiences and positive opportunities about participating in The Homegrown Teacher Project was the awareness and understanding of how much the protégées already knew about the teaching profession. Because of their desire to be teachers, the protégées communicated through their mentoring sessions how much they knew about the profession and teachers' goals from being an active observer. Iveth communicated:

> I think they [protégées] do understand us, and I think they observe a lot more, and I think they know how teaching is. It is truly a big job, and I think they understand that we play a lot of roles as a teacher. I think we forget that kids are always watching us. Students are always watching us, and they do understand us. They know what teaching is and they do find it important.

Experiencing the benefits as a mentor and seeing the positive impact they made with their protégées was rewarding and unexpected. Mentor Penelope raised awareness about her personal future dream.

She stated:

> It has encouraged me to believe in my purpose. Continue believing in my purpose and how there is no end point to everything I do, or that we do as educators really. So the opportunity to continue my educational path

Being a mentor gave Penelope the space to reflect on her next educational goal. Penelope shared that it encouraged her to think about her purpose and the changes she can make to support the needs of the community. This sense of urgency to support and build the community is evident in the all the mentors.

The opportunities of The Homegrown Teacher Program impacted the life of both mentors and protégées. The challenge of time will always exist within an urban school building. There is never enough time to address the needs of students of color, who need positive role models and critical mentors to support their future dreams of becoming a teacher. Question two addresses the experiences The Homegrown Teacher Program provided the protégées, and communicated the invaluable experiences gained from their mentor.

Question 2: How does The Homegrown Teacher Project provide experiences to prepare sixth-graders for their future career as teachers?

The action research study provided experiences to the protégées by giving them opportunities to prepare them to think critically about the teaching profession. Through specific themes, task, and objectives, the mentors discussed the teaching profession in a one-on-one setting over the course of the three-month data collection. The themes discussed were: (a) setting an education vision, (b) classroom organization, (c) classroom management, and (d) curriculum and lesson planning. The themes promoted the socialization of students of color to experience the teaching profession first hand through the guidance of a mentor. The Homegrown Teacher

Project created a safe space for protégées to learn, question, and think critically about teaching in a mentoring relationship.

The Homegrown Teacher Project created a space for dialogue between the mentor and her protégé. Through dialogue, mentors and protégées were able to discuss the teaching profession through a critical lens. The lenses allowed the protégées to explore their own feeling about their desire to enter the teaching profession, and they were able to question and learn about teachers' practices at the same time. Each mentor created different learning opportunities for her protégé, but they all mastered the same objectives. Mentors were able to complete all four themes in the three months of mentoring sessions with their protégé.

Dialogue supports critical thinking. The mentors purposely would question their protégé and require them to think critically about why teachers create, organize, or plan lessons with certain strategies or objectives. The mentoring sessions created space for dialogue and exploration of teaching and learning strategies. The mentors would also use the entire Miranda Elementary School as a lab to explore and discuss other teachers' classrooms in their dialogue or exploration of themes.

The mentors used open-ended sentence frames for protégées to reflect on the purpose of a teaching strategy. In the mentoring sessions, the dialogue would be captured once the mentor made statements like "What do you notice?", "What is the purpose?", or "What do you see?" This phrasing would allow the mentor and protégé to engage in a conversation about teaching and learning. When exploring classroom organization, the mentors led the protégées to compare and contrast the classroom set-up of various grades. This experience allowed the exploration of various classrooms on campus. In the classrooms, mentors and protégées would dialogue about

differences of size or shape of the desks, learning tools, and other classroom equipment. This process of learning and discussing together is a component of a critical mentoring relationship. When in dialogue, both mentor and protégé benefit from the conversations. During the mentoring sessions, you could hear the gratitude from the mentors as they were learning and taking away information to apply to content. Phrases such as, "I never thought of that," or "I am going to use that in my classroom," and "Great idea!" encouraged the protégées to keep discussing their knowledge and experience of the teaching profession.

The mentors intentionally used certain vocabulary during their sessions for the protégées to begin to understand the language of teaching. For example, during the mentoring session, while discussing the curriculum and lesson design theme, mentor Kimberly stated, "A lesson always starts with an objective, do you what an objective is?" Protégé Clarissa reflected and stated, "Yes, it's what we are going to do in the lesson, it's the learning objective." The mentors encouraged their protégées to use their prior knowledge and experience in the classroom to guide their reflection and think about teaching as a profession throughout all the themes. This allowed the protégées to feel the value their knowledge had in the discussion and dialogue. As students, because of their observations and experience, they communicated their knowledge to their mentors.

Teaching opportunities. The Homegrown Teacher Project allowed the protégées to engage in teaching opportunities in small groups and one-on-one settings with students. Three of the five protégées were able to spend their time on campus supporting other teachers as "tutors" during their off-track months. Due to the unique calendar at Miranda Elementary School, the three students who had a month off during the study decided to engage in volunteering in a

kinder or first-grade classroom. Melissa, Sol, and Clarissa averaged about four hours a day volunteering and gaining teacher experience. This three-week experience allowed the protégées to help students learn phonics in kindergarten and first grade. During this time, they saw themselves as a "mini-teacher," the term Melissa used to describe the experience.

The protégées also used this setting for discussion in the mentoring sessions. They would discuss what they noticed students say or do in the classroom during the lessons. The mentor would explain or guide them to understand the actions of the students. The protégées were using the classrooms as laboratories for learning. The mentors would use the protégées' experiences for reflecting and learning in context. In a conversation with mentor Kimberly and protégé Clarissa during their lesson design for kindergarten, Clarissa shared with her mentor that the classroom teacher she was volunteering with during her vacation used her arm to segment sounds and blend for the kindergartners to have a visual representation. By observing this strategy in action, the mentor and protégé were able to use it in their lesson planning and curriculum design. Information gained in context was applied in another teacher setting.

Confidence. The protégées discussed how proud they were to be able to have a one-on-one mentor to support their goal to become future teachers. They also shared that they felt special to have a mentoring relationship with a teacher on campus. For the protégées, they knew they had an adult on campus who cared for them and purposely held themselves accountable for them to attain their future goals. Much of the confidence gained was through their one-on-one sessions. The mentors would praise the protégées for their actions and characteristics throughout the sessions. Many of the compliments had to do with characteristics that would help them as a

future teacher. Their compliments focused on their organization or their positive attitude when discussing or thinking about the teaching profession.

The experiences of The Homegrown Teacher Project stem from the mentors taking on the role of institutional agents for the protégées. Institutional agents (Salazar, 1997) are adults who are crucial for the success of students of color. Salazar (2004) discussed how developed relationships between adults and youth create connectedness. This is an invaluable resource for Latina/o students. The mentors are positioned to provide key forms of social and institutional support for the protégées (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The mentors continuously shared resources and opportunities. Through this type of direct personal support for the protégées, mentoring is the key to disrupting social inequalities and the unbalance of power in educational systems (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

Stanton-Salazar (2011) has labelled mentors as direct support institutional agents. The direct support from mentors comes in the form of providing resources, sharing knowledge, being career and personal advisors, and most importantly being advocates for the protégées. The mentoring relationships enhanced the protégées' social capital and supported them to thrive in school and future career settings (Stanton- Salazar, 1997). Their interviews and personal interactions in the mentoring sessions showcased their boost in confidence and their gratitude for the knowledge they received from their mentors/institutional agents.

As homegrown first-generation Latina teachers, the mentors clearly agreed that the educational system tends to work for some students, while leaving many others behind. As mentors, they were determined to contribute and become the support system for more students of color. Nieto (2010) shared that teachers of color have a sense of urgency to give back to the

community and become support systems for students of color. The data clearly reveal the urgency the mentors have to give back to the community and their gratitude to have a formalized mentoring program that allows them to share the space with a future, homegrown teacher. Their experience and articulation of their self-reflection as mentors in their own community has proven to be rewarding and invaluable. This opportunity gives first-generation Latina students the opportunity to understand and gain personal networks and social capital. The development of social capital is due to the sharing of information from mentor to protégé. By creating these opportunities for students of color, Stanton-Salazar (1997) has shared, social order rewards students who have networks as a resource.

Significance of the Findings

"Our young people spend the majority of their time in school, so it's the responsibility of our schools to foster critical mentorships so that youth are fully supported from the time they first enter school to the time they leave." – Weinston-Serdan, 2017

This action research study revealed that, with appropriate preparation, students of color were more likely to feel successful to become a future teacher and return to teach in their community as professionals (Clewell & Villegas, 1998). The positive impact of an early intervention pipeline for future teachers of color was evident through the support of a mentoring relationship with a homegrown teacher. The data share that a critical mentoring relationship developed with time is beneficial for mentors and protégées. Weinston-Serdan (2017) stated that mentoring relationships are formed through understanding, openness, and respect. She stated:

> To do critical mentoring work in schools means to renegotiate spaces so that protégées can speak openly about their experiences, be vulnerable enough to ask for help, and feel free to challenge what they think is wrong without being chastised. (p. 87)

The goal of the relationships ties back to the theoretical framework: critical consciousness. In order to gain critical consciousness and be aware of the world around them, relationships need to be centered and understand each other in order to make transformational change. The study created the platforms for transformational change, supporting the homegrown teachers at Miranda Elementary to fulfill their sense of urgency to pay it forward and give back to their community by mentoring urban youth with a similar cultural background and upbringing as they experienced as first-generation Latinas.

The Homegrown Teacher Program ensured same race, culture, and gender matching for the protégées. Weiston-Serdan (2017) called for mentoring programs to reflect on how race, ethnicity, and culture influence mentoring relationships. Sanchez et al. (2014) voiced that matching youth to a strong mentor in which they can see themselves will positively alter the way youth see themselves, leading to an improved sense of self-worth and self-esteem. Gender matching supports the partnership to grow and develop throughout the sessions by being comfortable with your mentoring relationship (Kram, 1983).

The mentors were essential in bridging networking and social capital for the protégées. Through the nurturing of the mentoring relationship, support systems created relationships to support the protégées. The Homegrown Teacher Project helped to inspire youth to follow their passion as they learned about their future career. Through this firsthand experience, protégées learned about teaching and how to get into college, the first step before entering a teaching credential program. The study served as a realistic solution to inspire and support urban youth to achieve their dreams (Duncan-Andrade & Morell, 2008).

As homegrown teachers in the study, they understood their role as cultural translators and role models not only for their protégées, but for the entire community they served (Irvine, 2003; Irvine & Villegas, 2010; Rogers-Ard et al., 2012). Together, the homegrown teachers created networks and social capital within themselves to be able to serve. Service went beyond teaching and mentoring, extending to serving as resources for the entire community. Weiston-Serdan (2017) used the phrase "opportunity brokers" to describe how critical mentors support young people by using their resources and extending their networks.

The study captured how homegrown mentors saw their value in transforming the urban school community. They hoped to support their protégées for years to come so they, too, could come back to support the community as positive role models for the future generations. The Homegrown Teacher Project was essential in inspiring passion in little girls who dream of becoming teachers through educational topics, dialogue, and experience. The study voiced how homegrown mentors became role models and mentors who influenced future thinking for their protégées. The goal of the study was to acculturate the protégées to see themselves as confident future teachers in their own community. This was accomplished through the mentoring sessions, mentoring relationship, and volunteer experience gained from The Homegrown Teacher Project.

The study validates the research indicating that diversifying the teaching profession is a positive attribute to districts and schools educating students of color in public schools (Duncan-Andrade, 2008; Irizarry, 2016; Irvine, 2003; Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009; Nieto, 2010). The study was crucial in illustrating that, through a critical mentoring relationship, social capital, networking, and confidence can lead young Latina students to believe in their dreams as attainable and within reach (Weiston-Serdan, 2017).

Methodological Reflection

This research advances the notion of the ability to mentor and support first-generation Latino/a youth to acculturate to the teaching profession and navigate the educational system. Mentoring can be a critical component for the success of students in urban school communities (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). In an action research study, the goal is for the researcher to develop an action plan (Craig, 2009) by presenting the findings in a design that will support the immediate community of the study. The Homegrown Teacher Project was the first iteration of the action research cycle of the study. This study observed mentors and protégées as they developed critical mentoring relationships. Through the mentoring process, the protégées gained access to the teaching career and began creating social networks and social capital with peers and other teachers.

The action plan guides the improvement practice and the conditions needed to support critical mentoring in urban school communities (Craig, 2009). It also addressed the barriers in the first implementation cycle, evincing the necessary modifications to the second phase of The Homegrown Teacher Project. The second phase of the action research begins in the last trimester of the protégées sixth-grade year when they will reconvene biweekly with their mentors before their transition to middle school. The meetings will include all the modifications voiced by the mentors in the focus group to have all participants together for the mentoring sessions in order to build their network across all mentors and protégées. During the second phase, the word protégé will also be introduced and defined to the protégées to showcase how their relationship is mutually beneficial by creating learning opportunities for both mentors and protégées. Furthermore, protégé was selected as the term to refer to participants rather than mentee as it

derives from a positive rather than deficit perspective (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Upon the conclusion of the third trimester, a summer internship before entering middle school will be offered to the protégées with the aim of helping them gain experience in the classroom with their mentors.

The third phase of the action research cycle will begin once the protégées enter middle school. The goal of the program will be for the protégées to volunteer in classrooms with their mentor or other mentors in a different grade level. Mentors will communicate with protégées' middle school teachers to support them in their transition to a new school and learning environment. Once they enter high school, progress monitoring of their academic attainment and course selection will ensure they meet the baseline college entrance requirements which will be crucial for their transition to college and eventual entry into the teaching profession.

This action research serves as a call to action for social justice leaders who lead urban schools and urban school districts; it offers actionable next steps and a discussion of the limitations of the study in order to encourage others to implement The Homegrown Teacher Project within their community to diversify the teaching profession. Recruiting more homegrown teachers to share their passion and expertise with future students who dream of becoming teachers would result in more participants in the project.

By including the voice of the participants in future cycles, The Homegrown Teacher Project will further cultivate the early intervention pipeline for future teachers of color. In this iteration, participants' voice resulted in changes to the action plan. The modifications will continue to advocate for growth in collaboration, and development of social capital among and

between mentors and protégées. These changes will continue guiding participants, further encouraging their ambitions to enter the teaching profession in urban schools.

Implications for Social Justice Educational Leaders

Social justice leaders are found within educational school buildings not only across California, but nationwide. These individuals see the potential in urban school areas, where others do not. A call to social justice leaders to examine how they can implement critical mentoring programs to support not only future teachers but other professions as well. The cycle of sustainability to support and mentor future teachers of color in urban schools is simply one person away from organization and support to be life changing for students in the school building. For one, social justice leaders can create critical mentoring programs within their schools or school district. Homegrown teachers and other individuals desire to make a difference and follow their calling and personal passion to mentor. Educational leaders can promote the structure to match students who desire to be teachers to receive support and experience through mentoring relationships. The teaching profession can create its own internships/apprentice programs in a capacity of learning and growing their own future teachers. The study revealed that the future workforce is in the school building. With nurturing and mentoring, providing real life teaching experience will support them to become successful future, homegrown teachers in their own community.

Implications for Urban School Districts

Urban school districts could implement "Growing Your Own Programs" to motivate and support students from the community who desire to be teachers. Many urban school districts have launched credentialing programs for classified staff within their schools. A recent shift to

support paraprofessionals or adults working in schools who have the desire to teach has been implemented by offering financial incentives, such as a percentage of school being paid for by the school district in order to return to the same community to teach.

Through this same expectation, offering incentive programs for young students who desire to be teachers begins by supporting them through the layers of red tape encountered in public schools. These hurdles include, but are not limited to, A-G requirements, college applications, and the planning and commitment needed to enter a teacher credential program. This journey requires experts in the field who have experience with these obstacles to support first-generation immigrants or first-generation college students to succeed. A commitment from the human resources department of urban school districts could have significant potential in changing the narrative for urban school students who dream of becoming future teachers in their community. Promise letters that can guarantee a future interview within their community could be the life-changing social capital and network needed to motivate and support their future in an urban school classroom. This incentivizing of the profession supports the future teacher and the school district. For the school district, having teachers that understand urban school struggles is invaluable, while the teacher also serves as an inspiration and a mirror of hope for the young minds they will inspire by sharing a similar background and upbringing from the community and cultural experiences.

As a result of the data collection, elementary school students are recognizing the power of mentorship. In this study, they were able to witness firsthand how relationships and networks can lead to the development of social capital. With this awareness, student dialogue around the

potential gift of mentorship from various fields is underserved. Partnering with community organizations can help support mentoring, commitment to youth, and networking.

Furthermore, this commitment to supporting urban school students to navigate existing systems can be addressed through critical mentoring of all professions. Careers such as doctors, lawyers, firefighters, and police officers that have specific criteria before entering the field can be learned through partnerships with urban districts and individual schools. Tapping into alumni from urban school districts who have been able to successfully enter a career in their chosen field would be resources to bring to the elementary school platform to mentor, support, and inspire youth.

Implications for Homegrown Teacher Recruitment

Urban school administrators have a responsibility to purposely recruit and hire homegrown teachers. The cultural connections homegrown teachers bring to classrooms have been documented through research and through this action research study. Recommendations for finding homegrown teachers can be as simple as using filters to prioritize interviews. Ed Join, a population education employment website commonly used by districts asks the applicant to identify the high school he or she graduated from, which is typically not found on resumes. This allows the administrator to look for local high schools in the surrounding school districts, as an indication of the applicant growing up within their school community.

Recruiting efforts can increase by partnering with colleges and schools of education. Teacher education programs that focus on social justice or serving diverse students are more likely to have more teachers of color as graduates. Developing relationships and collaboration

opportunities can result in having student teacher relationships. Student teachers support administrators to recruit early and vet candidates for hire before they graduate.

Tara Yosso (2005) described community cultural wealth as mixing of forms of capital. Teachers of color experience various forms of capital, and these experiences serve as their drive to motivate and inspire students of color in urban schools. Yosso, who posited that Latinos have specific forms of capital, suggested that navigational capital, an element of community cultural wealth, acknowledges and connects the social capital of Latinos, validating the experiences they bring to schools. The study presents various examples of aspirational capital from the mentors and the protégées. Yosso stated that aspirational capital, the ability to have hope when operating in structures of inequality, is the driving force of the mentors' passion to give back to the community. The protégées also communicated this desire to give back to their community for others to have opportunities and success.

The history and experiences of homegrown teachers is what makes them a resource in the classroom. Homegrown teachers inspire students to have aspiration cultural wealth, which is defined as the drive that is necessary to inspire others (Yosso, 2005). Recruitment and purposeful hiring can have positive influences for students of color in classroom. Rethinking recruitment can create dynamic changes for student achievement.

Implications for Urban School Homegrown Teachers

For teachers of color that serve their own community as a way to give back and pay it forward, a sustainable incentive plan needs to motivate and encourage more future teachers of color to choose to return to their community to teach. Thinking of the national loan forgiveness programs for urban school teachers, a stipend or incentive needs to be shared with teachers who

serve their own community. The knowledge they bring to their students and the parents they serve was not quantifiable through the action research project. The time and energy they save others for their social capital, and the networks they bring to the table is an untapped resource for school districts. Homegrown teachers support education both in and outside the classroom. They provide hope for both students and families. Homegrown teachers inspire not only through their words but also their actions. Homegrown teachers inspire their colleagues to provide opportunities in their classroom to support urban school students with resources and opportunities. This study continues to validate the research that homegrown teachers are a positive influence on students of color (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Irizarry, 2007; Irvine, 2003; Lindsey et al., 2009; Nieto, 2010).

Implications for Urban Youth

The action research study revealed that urban school buildings are educating students who are willing to participate in mentoring relationships and need support from caring adults to help them achieve their professional goals. For the protégées, their communication in their interview revealed that if they did not have a mentor, they would have difficult time learning about the teaching profession. By knowing this data, urban school leaders need to create spaces for mentoring and outreach support for youth in their schools. Finding ways for urban school youth to gain firsthand information from others about teaching careers and other potential careers could be life changing for the students.

Limitations of the Study

The action research study had limitations that were part of The Homegrown Teacher Project. The applicability of replicating this program would be subject to the conditions of

having first-generation Latina homegrown teachers within an urban elementary school. The five mentors had a relentless passion and commitment to urban education and inspiring future teachers to pursue their goals. This passion was evident in their voices, and the awards they had received for various personal achievements solidify these data. As a limitation to qualitative studies, my role as a principal and research facilitator of the action research study could have altered the data collection of interviews and the focus group. Also, the data collection tool for the mentoring sessions had not been tested or used in other studies. It was created under the assumptions of valid qualitative data.

Gender

Current study findings revealed an overall disinterest by male students in the teaching profession, which was identified as a gender limitation. The natural manifestation of this disinterest is evident in the disproportionate ration of male-to-female teachers within the profession. Currently, females make-up 76% of the teaching profession. In elementary schools, the percent increases to 89% of teachers being female (Goldring et al., 2013). The gender issue is a result of the feminization of the teaching profession (Blount, 1999; Goldstein, 2014, Mertz, 2006).

Society plays a significant role in the feminization of the teaching profession. Goldstein (2014) shared that the overrepresentation of females is due to socially constructed views of women as caretakers and historically promoting females as “the cornerstone of a cheap labor force” (27). Horace Mann depicted women in the classroom as cost savers for the state, costing less than half of a male teacher. Goldstein (2014) communicated, “Teaching, Mann argued, was women’s true calling, one that would take advantage of all natural, God-given talents as a

nurturer, whether or not she had biological children of her own" (p.26). Identifying the teaching profession as a caretaker profession promotes women as the gender of choice for the teaching role.

Recruitment of male teachers is necessary to the teaching profession. Hansen and Mulholland (2005) cited several reasons why the recruitment of men into elementary teaching should be approached with urgency. For one, restoring gender balance and diversity would reflect society and offer students the experience of male and female teachers, which breaks down traditional gender stereotypes for students in the classroom. Factors that can influence men to opt out of teaching include the low starting salaries, perception of teaching being a woman's job, and the negative perception of men being elementary school teachers (Hansen & Mulholland, 2005). Essentially, men are facing gender bias in a woman-dominated profession (Coulter & McNay, 1993). Male teachers often report that they face prejudice for breaking traditional gender stereotypes (Anliak & Beyazkurk, 2008; Sumsion, 2000)

Cushman (2010) argued that seeking men to enter the teaching profession is crucial to creating schools as change agents. Recruitment and mentoring are critical as men who do teach elementary schools often leave after a few years due to low pay, or society's negative perceptions of grown men wanting to work with children (Sumsion, 2005). Koenig and Eagly (2014) articulated that social role theory theorizes social norms are what keep men from entering elementary school classroom. This gender division of roles falsely suggests that there is something inherent in women and men that allows them to perform certain jobs or roles better (Jost & Banaji, 1994). These characteristics cause society to question when men or women take

on different roles traditionally not fitting of the social norm or expectation. The data present the reasons why boys are not commonly interested in the teaching profession.

Length of Study

Overall, a longer study could produce richer data and track the development of the mentoring relationships over time. Mentoring relationships require opportunities and time to develop authentic personal relationships to continue to enhance their relationships. In the three-month study, the mentoring relationships went through the initiation and cultivation stages, according to Kram (1983). With time, as the participants continue to support each other and protégées will see their role as future teachers increase. The critical mentoring relationship (Weinston-Serdan, 2017) will continue to acculturate the protégées to the teaching profession and validate the mentors; passion of paying it forward within the community.

Future Research

Homegrown Teacher Data in Urban Schools

The action research study established an understanding of the benefits of mentoring relationships for students of color by teachers who, like them, were born and raised in the community they served. Through the action research study, homegrown teachers shared their passion and commitment to their students, school, and community. These data validate the benefits of homegrown teachers (Duncan-Andrade, 2005; Irizarry, 2007; Irvine, 2003). Future research that would be beneficial to urban schools is to interview homegrown teachers across the district and create case studies or narratives to measure their personal characteristics to see how homegrown teachers in the classroom are similar in teaching strategies. Does the passion and commitment of the mentors in the study transcend homegrown teachers across the district?

Collecting qualitative data on their characteristics with students in the classroom could help create best practices for teachers who do not have the social capital, networks, or cultural competency in serving students of color in urban schools. The data can support academic achievement and a positive school culture for all students. Homegrown teachers excel in relationships and empathy. Furthering the research can bring forth teaching strategies or actions to promote in urban school settings.

Homegrown teachers remain an untapped resource in educational settings. Little research is available for educational practitioners who look for commonalities among educators, including the teaching styles of those who serve communities of color. It is evident that there is no deliberate attempt to highlight homegrown teachers. By being aware of the resources and contributions to the field of education and classrooms across communities of color, leaders can begin to support recognition of homegrown teachers in their communities.

Mentoring Relationships and Their Benefits for Students of Color

This study was a glimpse of possibilities for Latina sixth-grade girls acculturating to their dream and accessing information about their future career. Future research could include a two-part study of the participants. This second part of the study could reveal the journey of mentorship in 6 years when the protégées are in their senior year of high school and applying for college. It would be validating to capture the development of their goals and how the mentoring relationship would undergo the stages of development (Kram, 1983) over time. Mentoring relationships are critical support systems for urban youth. The second data set would result in knowing how their relationship helped them in high school, grades, and applying to college.

Protégées in the study are recognizing the value of social capital, and their peers are observing the opportunity they experienced. A longitudinal study could help educational communities understand the importance of policy change and creating mentoring programs within urban school communities. These results could help secure the validation needed for the educational research communities and school districts to implement sustainable mentoring programs over time.

Policy Action

With local control funding, the urgency to incentivize mentors to carve time and resources to mentor urban youth is essential to the wellbeing and the future of urban students. Funding specifically designated to address marginalized youth can support the wraparound services needed for youth to succeed (Weiston-Serdan, 2017). This call to action supports a transformational change in the way schools serve their urban youth. "Critical mentoring requires we work alongside young people, that we create youth-centric spaces" (Weinstein-Serdan, 2017, p. 86). Youth space will lead to youth empowerment and foster understanding and learning to use networks to be able to visualize better opportunities.

Creating an early intervention pipeline to diversify the teaching profession will be the beginning to supporting the needs of students of color to have one-on-one support to think of their future. Supporting and inspiring future teachers of color is critical to the teaching profession, which struggles to connect with students in various capacities. Goals and actions could be written in school plans both at the site and district level in order to allocate funds for mentoring programs within urban school districts. These actions would be the beginning of equitable decision making to support the most vulnerable youth within our public-school

systems. Urban communities need mentors and role models for students to feel connected and encouraged about the possibilities of the future. By creating afterschool programs to expose students with positive role models or creating critical mentoring relationships can help to encourage, support, and promote positive practices for urban youth.

Policy makers need to be aware of the need to diversify the teacher workforce and why recruiting and supporting interested students requires an early intervention pipeline in urban schools. A recommendation can be to remove the barriers to enter the teaching profession. The bottom line is that policy makers should consider policies to increase the diversity of the teacher workforce as one strategy to close racial and ethnic gaps in public schools.

Researcher's Reflection

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has." – Margaret Mead

I have been in urban schools for the past 30 years serving in various capacities. My titles have included, but are not limited to, volunteer, substitute teacher, classroom teacher, mentor, curriculum coach, vice principal, and my current position, the privilege of serving as a principal. Each role has been critical in developing who I am today as an advocate for all students, as I approach my eighth year as a principal. Witnessing the power a teacher has to influence, motivate, teach, and inspire future generations is the most powerful partnership I have as a principal. When hiring, I always find myself looking for teachers that look like my students and speak Spanish so they can communicate with parents and community. I have quickly realized that Spanish and teachers of color are not easy to find. As a doctoral student, I became aware of the statistics of teachers of color in education, and realized this would be my charge to influence the future of public education. This reflection gave birth to The Homegrown Teacher Project.

The action research study allowed the goal to inspire future teachers of color become a reality. Mentoring allowed the participants and I to realize the potential we have as Latinas in education to mentor and support future Latina youth through an early intervention teacher pipeline. The rhetorical question consistently in my head is what are we doing as current educators to attract, retain, and inspire youth to enter a profession that can transform urban schools? After the action research study, it has given me the ability to encourage others to begin critical mentoring at other school sites that have potential homegrown teachers. This call to action recommends that urban school districts examine existing practices to identify internally how they are supporting future teaching generations through already-existing resources.

The study validated that critical mentoring is essential to developing an early intervention teacher pipeline. Critical mentoring revealed the need for support, networking, and educational information students of color need to understand the social rules of the educational game. Mentoring should be a priority for all urban school districts servicing a large number of vulnerable youth to create pipelines of innovation. Schools and districts need to be aware of changes they can critically support for students to be successful. Critical mentoring could be the beginning to ensure students of color begin to network and receive information from institutional agents and cultural translators that are already within the school. These adults are waiting for the right opportunities to pay it forward, as the mentors voiced in The Homegrown Teacher Project. All teachers and students need is a forum to be able lay the foundation to give back to the community and inspire the next generation of teachers of color.

Homegrown teachers contradict the trend that most Millennials leave their communities upon graduation from high school. According to DeBard (2014) and Howe and Strauss (2000),

Millennials are typically described as special, confident, and conventional. They also feel pressured to perform, primarily as a result of their experiences with zero-tolerance policies, standardized education, and the consistent over-scheduling of their entire lives by their parents.

Through The Homegrown Teacher Project findings, it became evident that the study participants who served as mentors and were currently teaching at Miranda Elementary returned to their community, thereby countering the brain drain and departure from their community typified by Millennials. Due to homegrown teachers in the study being first-generation Latinas, they did not follow the patterns and characteristics of most Millennials described in the research. The findings of the study uncovered participants' commitment to remaining in their community, which stemmed from their individual experiences. During the focus group, the mentors indicated that their community provided comfort and acceptance for them when they needed reassurance of being able to have a successful future and enter their career as teachers. The participants in the study used their personal drive, as their way of navigating their career and teaching in their own community.

Although research states that most millennials leave their community, DeBard (2004) wrote of the many cases in which Millennials do not fit traditional roles. DeBard (2004) stated, "these characteristics do not capture all Millennials, particularly those who can be described as 'at risk' or nontraditional students" (p. 39). Like other generations, Millennials remain divided and challenged with social inequalities (Brownstein, 2000). This would be the research applicable to the mentors in the study as they all identified themselves as first-generation Latinas.

The homegrown teacher participants in the study did not leave their neighborhoods. By remaining in their communities, homegrown teachers were driven by their commitment and passion for serving students and parents within their community. As extensively detailed in the findings of this study, the mentors' "pay it forward" mentality is the passion that guides their work. For this reason, the participants in the study continue to be a unique group of teachers with very similar backgrounds; because they identify with their students, they are great assets in urban schools.

Conclusion

The action research study revealed the need for critical mentoring relationships in urban schools. Mentoring relationships allow opportunities for urban school students to have support and to develop their social networks and capital through an adult resource who has had similar experiences as first-generation Latina teachers. The Homegrown Teacher Project, allowed for documentation of the voices and experiences of the participants during the three-month study. It was evident that an early intervention teacher pipeline could be a direct way of directing future teachers of color to the workforce.

The action research questions reveal that the opportunities of The Homegrown Teacher Project contribute to urban school buildings. The critical mentoring relationships allowed the protégées to develop their social capital and understand college preparedness, and revealed the early intervention pipeline. The Homegrown Teacher Project gives opportunities for the protégées to learn about the teaching profession through dialogue, critical mentorship, and teaching opportunities.

The Homegrown Teacher Project revealed that, with appropriate supports, students of color are more likely to feel successful to become a teacher and teach in their own community. The Homegrown Teacher Project ensured same race, culture, and gender matching was natural for the protégées. This dissertation recommends further research on the influences of homegrown teachers of color and their natural contributions to an urban school building because of their experience in urban schools themselves. Their dual identity leads mentors to feel "I am a reflection of them." This reflection is the uniqueness of teachers of color, a worth that is not quantifiable through research.

APPENDIX A

Homegrown Teacher Project- Mentoring Observation Protocol

Observation #	Date:	Participants:
Start: End:	Theme: Educational Vision_______ Classroom Organization__________ Classroom Management__________ Curriculum & Lesson Planning_____	
Mentoring Stage (Kram, 1983) Initiation Cultivation Separation Redefinition		

Time	*Observation In-Action (Hendricks, 2006)*	*Reflection On-Action (Hendricks, 2006)*	***Themes Based on Theoretical Framework*** *Critical Pedagogy & Social Capital*
			Commitment to Diversity and Equity (Irizarry, 2007; Nieto, 2010)
			Cultural Translators (Irvine, 2003; Villegas & Irvine, 2010)
			Role Model (Irvine, 2003; Irizarry, 2007)
			Institutional Agent (Stanton-Salazar, 1997)

APPENDIX B
Interview with Mentors

Critical Pedagogy

Can you share with me your journey in becoming a teacher?
Tell me about your ties to your community as a homegrown teacher?
Share with me what you know about your school community?
How do you think your participation in the Homegrown Teacher Project helps your protégé view teaching?
What is your understanding of the role you play in your protégé life?

Kram (1983) & Weiston- Serdan (2017)

What can you share about how your relationship changed with your protégé throughout your sessions?
When we discussed the idea of The Homegrown Teacher Project, tell me why did you want to be a mentor?
How does your relationship with your protégé advance their understanding of the teaching profession?
What did guidance and support look like for your protégé through your mentoring sessions?
Tell me about a session that surpassed your expectations?
Something that makes you proud about your protégé?
In what ways did identifying as a Latina woman influence your mentoring relationship?

Stanton-Salazar (1997)

Tell me how you see your role in furthering your protégé's understanding about becoming a teacher?
In what ways have you become a part of your protégé's social network?
In what ways have you developed your protégé's social network?
How do you create cultural bonds with students? Parents? The broader community?

Homegrown Teacher Project:

What are the opportunities The Homegrown Teacher Project provides?
What are some of the challenges of The Homegrown Teacher Project?
What should we do differently next year

APPENDIX C
Interview with Protégées

Opening questions to support comfort of protégées with principal investigator:

-Tell me a little bit about yourself? What grade are you in? What is your favorite food?

-Do you speak another language? What language do you speak at home?

Critical Pedagogy

Share a time with me when you have told a friend or a family member what you wanted to be a teacher?

Share with me how it feels to have a mentor at your elementary school?

What was the best part about working with your mentor?

Tell me about a project that you worked with your mentor?

Kram (1983)

Tell me about your relationship with your mentor?

How do you think meeting with your mentor has helped you to think about teaching?

Stanton-Salazar (1997)

If your mentor teacher was not in your life, how would you learn about becoming a teacher?

Have you talked to other people about wanting to become a teacher?

In what ways has your mentor teacher helped you understand the responsibilities of becoming a teacher?

What was your favorite thing you learned with your mentor?

What was the best thing you learning about teaching?

Tell me about the college workshop- did you learn something new?

What suggestions do you have for me to continue this project with other students?

APPENDIX D

Focus Group Protocol

Commitment to Diversity and Equity

What benefits to the school and/or community do you see in each other as homegrown teachers?
All of you share a sense of pride in teaching; I would even say a sense of pride in each other as teachers, why do you believe you share these feelings…

Cultural Bonds

Irvine (2007) states, teachers of color serve as "cultural translators" in urban schools. Share moments within your mentoring sessions or classroom instruction where you have seen evidence of being a cultural translator?

In what ways do you see or experience culture to support instruction? Culture to support school goals? How does culture make a difference to students' academic achievement?

Role Model

Share a moment when others have told you – they look up to you or admire a practice you model or participate in- you can share about a colleague in the focus group – in you have heard in within the school…

Did you have a role model as a young adult?

Institutional Agents

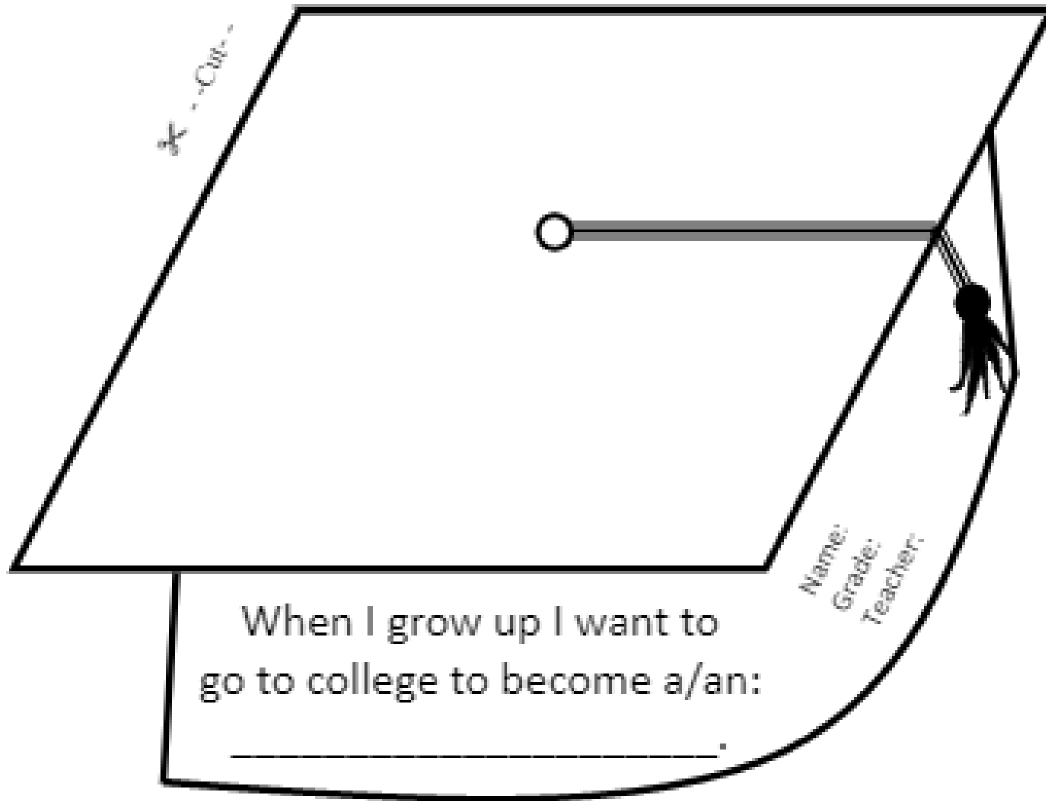
Sociologist Ricardo Stanton-Salazar (1997) discusses the role institutional agents play in helping urban youth access networks of information. In what ways do you think you have served as a bridge for your protégées in order to facilitate the sharing or access to information?

Homegrown Teacher Project

What recommendations would you have for us to continue to enhance The Homegrown Teacher Project?
What recommendations would you have for other schools that would like to implement a similar mentoring program?
Tell me about the challenges you experienced as a mentor with your protégé?

APPENDIX E
Protégé Selection Documents

College Week Activity



Name: ________________________________

When I grow up, I want to become a teacher because…

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