COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING FORMAL FACULTY-STUDENT MENTORING

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DEDICATION

With a hopeful heart, I dedicate this work to my family. Payton and Sophia, may you follow your heart, achieve your dreams, and continue to let your lights shine. Rob, may the years ahead outshine our expectations. I love you all, unconditionally.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Beginning their contemporary life as a character in Homer's *Odyssey*, mentors have served to guide the development and advancement of others within the cultural contexts in which they function. Since the inception of American higher education, faculty members have served as mentors to their students, guiding their personal, professional, and academic progress (Rudolph, 1968). During the past 30 years interest in the dynamics of mentoring gained momentum as scholars explored the concept, theory, practice, and implications of mentoring processes (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Barnett, 2007; Kram, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Levinson, Kelin, & McKee, 1978). Researchers have investigated the phenomenon of mentoring relative to business sectors (Kram, 1980, 1983, 1985; Kram & Raggins, 2007), educational sectors (Bess, 2000; Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Galbraith, 2001; Jacobi, 1999), and psychosocial aspects of personal development (Duck, 1994; Hezlett, 2005; Levinson, Darrow, Levinson, Kelin, & McKee, 1978) within North American society including employer-employee, teacher-student, and peer-peer relations. Respected for its transformational impact and practical application, researchers know mentoring works, yet they grapple with why, when, and how it works (Raggins & Kram, 2007). It is to this body of knowledge that the associated research study contributes.

Serving over 11 million students, community colleges are a gateway to post-secondary education (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008; Roman, 2007). Nationally, the community college systems serve students with low persistence and graduation rates (Pascarella & Terenzin, 2005), including the majority of ethnic minority, low-income, first-generation, part-time, non-traditional, and academically under-prepared students seeking post-secondary education (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008; Roman 2007; Townsend, Donaldson, & Wilson, 2005), Structured faculty-student mentoring programs are one strategy that community colleges implement to increase persistence and graduation rates among their students. Researchers purport that faculty-student mentoring programs are associated with student reports of validation (Pope, 2002; Rendon, 1994), increased engagement (Tinto 2006, 2004), and academic persistence through graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The abovementioned outcomes of increased student validation, engagement, and persistence are desired among community colleges and are most likely to result when institutions attend to faculty members' perceptions regarding what they need to facilitate productive student mentoring relationships (Galbraith, 2001; Galbraith & James, 2004; Scandura, 1998; Simon & Eby, 2003; Spencer, 2007). Recognizing that community college students are least likely among all post-secondary education students to persist through graduation (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), one way that community colleges have responded is to implement faculty-student mentoring as a retention strategy. This research study focused on community college faculty members' perceptions regarding their mentoring experiences with students and the tactics they perceive to be associated with the development of

productive student mentoring processes. For the purpose of this study, productive mentoring processes include actions in which community college faculty members intentionally engage with community college students in manners intended to develop continued relationships which may result in the desired outcomes of increased student validation, engagement, and persistence through graduation rates. Additional definitions of terms related to the purpose of this study are provided below.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined relative to their purpose and meaning for the associated study.

- Community College Faculty: individuals who teach at least one course at a two-year degree granting institution. Within the confines of this study individuals who teach at least one course as an adjunct instructor, who function in an administrative or support staff capacity yet also teaches a course at the community college, or full-time instructors are considered community college faculty members.
- Engagement: sometimes referenced as involvement, engagement refers to a student's interactions with their campus community (Tinto, 2006). Interactions in the classroom as well as co-curricular and extracurricular environments that foster connections between the student and the college culture matter in the persistence rates of students (Tinto, 2006, Upcraft, gardner, & Barefood, 2005).
- Formal Mentoring: formal mentoring is coordinated by a third party within the institution and initiated within a defined structure. The third party assigns the

mentee to a mentor based upon predetermined characteristics or interests (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004).

- Mentee: specifically for this study mentees are the community college student with whom a community college instructor intentionally interacts in order to contribute to the student's collegiate experience.
- Mentor: specifically for this study mentors are community college faculty members who intentionally interact with community college students in order to contribute to the student's collegiate experience and success. Traditionally, a mentor is defined as a wiser, older, more established professional contributing to the psychosocial development and status advancement of a younger, less mature and less experienced individual (Kram, 1983).
- Mentoring: definitions for mentoring vary (Jacobi, 1981; Roberts, 1994); however, for the purpose of this study mentoring is an interaction through which a community college faculty member serving as a mentor intentionally contributes to the collegiate experience of a community college student mentee. Furthermore, aspects of the traditional definition including the component of interpersonal interactions (Kram, 1983) which are subject to the dynamic nature of positive and negative experiences (Duck, 1994; Eby, 2000) and are relevant to this study. Mertz (2004) expresses that mentoring is comprised of two primary components, intent and involvement.
- Mentoring Episodes: any single interaction between a mentor and mentee (Raggins & Kram, 2007). Including but not limited to an email correspondence and office visit, as well as verbal interactions relating to curricular, co-curricular,

or extra-curricular activities, mentoring episodes include any brief or lengthy interaction between student and faculty member.

- Persistence: a measure indicative of an individual student's continued enrollment from one semester, or term, to the next (Hagedorn, 2006).
- Retention: the rate at which institutions retain students from one academic year to the next (Hagedorn, 2006).
- Validation: resulting from a process through which students receive feedback that they perceive to authenticate their abilities and contributions within the academic arena, validation is critical to the persistence of community college students (Rendon, 1994 & 2002). Relative to the literature review and purposes of this study validation represents student interactions that are initiated by faculty or others in the campus community - specifically interactions that foster the community college students' feelings of self-worth and a belief in their ability to succeed in the community college environment (Barnett, 2007; Rendon, 1994 & 2002)

Problem Statement

Community colleges have low retention and graduation rates with a mere 36 percent of students earning a certificate, degree, or transfer to complete a bachelor's degree within six years of initial enrollment (Bailey, Alfonso, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2004). One strategy that community colleges have employed to increase retention and graduation rates is formal student-faculty mentoring programs (Galbraith, & James, 2004; Pope, 2002; Rendon, 2002). Empirical research conducted during the past four decades reports that formal faculty-student mentoring processes may foster increased student engagement, validation, and enhanced perceptions of mattering which may lead to increased persistence and graduation rates (Endo & Harpel, 1982; Nora &

Crisp, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979, 2005; Rayle & Chung, 2007; Santos & Reigadas, 2005; Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006; Stromei, 2000; Thomas, 2000). Furthermore, reports consistently indicate the positive associations among formal faculty-student mentoring programs and minority populations (Pope, 2002; Rendon, 1994; Santos & Reigadas, 2005;& Stromei, 2000), as well as first-generation (Ramon, 2007) and academically under-prepared students (Cambell & Cambell, 1997; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Hafeez & Mardel, 2007).

While mentoring has been touted as an effective means to increase retention and graduation rates, data resulting from various studies investigation mentoring outcomes are equivocal regarding the association between mentoring programs and their benefits (Eby & Allen, 2000; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russe, 2000; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Long, 1997; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979, 2005; Raggins & Kram, 2007; Rayle & Chung, 2007; Santos & Reigadas, 2005; Scandura, 1998; Simon & Eby, 2003; Spencer, 2007; Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006; Stromei, 2000; Thomas, 2000). Recently researchers have expressed that formal mentoring has a dark side (Long, 1997). Potentially leading to undesirable outcomes such as reduced motivation and engagement (Scandura, 1997; Spencer, 2007), negative formal student mentoring experiences results may decrease the community college students' persistence through graduation.

Conflicts within data related to formal mentoring outcomes may be better understood by investigating the mentors' perspectives. Specifically, factors impacting the outcomes associated with formal faculty-student mentoring processes at community colleges may include tactics faculty employ to develop productive student mentoring

interactions (Galbraith, 2001), tactics faculty employ to overcome negative student mentoring interactions (Scandura 1998; Spencer 2007), and various aspects of campus culture (Fletcher & Raggins, 2007). Gathering community college faculty perspectives via open-ended semi-structured in-depth interviews regarding their perceptions and experiences related to formal faculty-student mentoring provided insight into the conflicting results reported regarding outcomes associated with formal mentoring processes.

Community College Focus

This research focused specifically on community college faculty as opposed to faculty at four-year institutions because community colleges enroll the greatest percentages of minority student populations, first-generation, and academically under-prepared students attending American higher education institutions (American Association of Community Colleges, 2009), as well as other student populations less likely to attend and succeed academically in higher education settings (Bailey, Alfonso, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2004; Roman, 2007). Because, as expressed above, formal faculty-student mentoring programs are associated with increased retention among minority, first-generation, and academically under-prepared students it was suggested that faculty-student mentoring programs at community colleges serve to promote retention among community college student populations. Furthermore, this research answered a call for additional research that focuses on issues within community college settings (e.g. Bailey, Alfonso, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Pope, 2002; Roman, 2007).

Because the majority of community college students commute to their classes, work at least half-time, and have extensive family responsibilities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), interactions with faculty may serve as the primary element of engagement for community college students. Faculty-student mentoring programs foster increased persistence and graduation rates in part because, "… the more time faculty give to their students…the more likely are students to complete their educations." (Tinto, 1982, p. 687). Therefore, considering the nature of the American community college as a technical and associate degree granting institution, a place where faculty are expected to carry heavy teaching loads, formal faculty- student mentoring programs provide opportunity for faculty-student engagement between constituencies that are burdened with little time (Galbraith, 2004).

Additionally, it is critical to note that research regarding retention theory and mentoring in higher education is void of faculty perspectives (Ruddock, Hanson, & Moss, 2000; Tinto, 2006). Specifically, there is a paucity of data regarding community college faculty perspectives of student mentoring processes; therefore, it is imperative to better understand community college faculty perspectives regarding student mentoring, especially because mentoring programs are being implemented to mitigate low persistence and graduation rates.

If community colleges want to enhance student persistence and graduation rates through formal faculty-student mentoring programs then it is necessary to better understand the faculty members' perspectives regarding their formal student mentoring experiences. Specifically, investigating the faculty's perspective regarding their ability to successfully navigate the dynamic relationship processes of mentoring in order to

cultivate productive mentoring and desired outcomes will be beneficial. More research is needed to understand the experiences and perspectives of community college faculty members who serve as formal student mentors. It is essential to explore the community college faculty members' perspective regarding the knowledge and skills that they perceive necessary to engage in productive mentoring processes (Galbraith & James, 2004), as well as their ability overcome mentoring processes that may evolve into negative experiences, or result in negative outcomes. Therefore, once faculty members who serve as mentors to community college students express the skills and knowledge they employ when engaging in productive mentoring processes, it is critical to share these perceptions with other mentors (Bess, 2000; Zachary, 2002) in order to support the development of meaningful and productive formal faculty-student mentoring programs.

Positive and Negative Mentoring

While volumes of literature tout the benefits of mentoring (Endo & Harpel, 1982; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979, 2005; Raggins & Kram, 2007; Rayle & Chung, 2007; Santos & Reigadas, 2005; Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006; Stromei, 2000; Thomas, 2000), there is a growing body of research investigating the dark side of mentoring (Eby & Allen, 2000; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russe, 2000; Long, 1997; Scandura, 1998; Simon & Eby, 2003; and Spencer, 2007). By definition mentoring is an interpersonal relationship (Kram, 1983); thus, it is subject to the dynamic nature of positive and negative experiences (Duck, 1994; Eby, 2000). Even though not one comprehensive and consistent definition of mentoring exists within the business or academic literature (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Galbraith, 2001; Jacobi, 1991; Roberts, 2000), there is a general consensus with Kram's groundbreaking work that

mentoring involves human relationships that support the advancement and psychosocial development of the diversities of peoples via an array of processes. Duck (1994) and Scandura (1998) express that within human relations the opportunities for negative outcomes are just as great as positive outcomes.

A growing body of literature warns of the potential pitfalls associated with mentoring programs (Eby & Allen, 2000; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russe, 2000; Long, 1997; Scandura, 1998; Simon & Eby, 2003; and Spencer, 2007). Researchers have attributed such pitfalls to a variety of factors. First, Spencer (2007) and Scandura (1998) suggest that not all faculty members are trained or supported in manners that they perceive as necessary to foster positive mentoring relationships with students. Second, untrained or ill intended faculty members assigned to serve as mentors to students may derail the students' successes. Third, submissive students may not take initiative or may become dependent upon the faculty mentor (Scandura, 1997). Considering the complex psychosocial characteristics of the community college student including first-generation college student status, academic under-preparedness, or students struggling to overcome academic suspension from other colleges, negative mentoring experiences may contribute to devastation resulting in student attrition - the antithesis of the desired faculty-student mentoring outcomes.

Considered collectively, the aforementioned research indicates that mentoring relationships may result in both positive as well as negative outcomes. One factor that may impact the mixed outcomes associated with faculty-student mentoring processes includes tactics faculty members employ during the student mentoring process (Galbraith, 2001; Scandura 1998; Spencer 2007) - tactics associated with the

development of productive mentoring interactions as well as tactics employed to overcome negative mentoring interactions. Faculty may employ a variety of tactics that they associate with student mentoring processes intended to result in trusting relationships, promote productive episodic interactions, or to overcome negative mentoring experiences.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was nested in basic research as described by Patton (2002). Expressly, the purpose of this research was to contribute to the fundamental knowledge of formal faculty-student mentoring at community colleges. Investigating the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their experiences mentoring community college students also contributes to applied research efforts designed to provide insight to a specific cultural issue (Patton, 2002); in this case the research highlights the critical issue of community college student retention.

Specifically, this research explored community college faculty members' perceptions of tactics they perceive to foster productive mentoring process as well as tactics that mitigate negative mentoring experiences. Included in this inquiry were the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding what tactics individuals and institutions may employ to support their engagement in the community college student mentoring processes.

Research Questions

1. What mentoring processes are in place at this community college?

    1a. What tactics do community college faculty members employ to engage in productive mentoring processes?

1b. What tactics do community college faculty members employ to mitigate negative mentoring experiences?

1c. What factors within the community college culture support faculty members' attempts to foster student mentoring processes?

2. What are community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their mentoring experiences with students?
3. What is the efficacy of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory as a framework for looking at community college mentoring processes?

Theoretical Perspective

The Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) was the theoretical perspective that guided the development of this study's design, data collection, and analysis processes. The RCT emphasizes the roles that interpersonal connections and social contexts play in human development and growth (Fletcher & Ragens, 2007). Epistemologically nested in social constructionism, which embraces the notion that within a culture people create their own reality (Crotty, 2003; Geertz, 1973), RCT was the chosen theory because of its relevance to the purpose of this study. RCT provided a framework to collect, analyze, interpret, and report the data collected with the intent to contribute to the knowledge regarding the perceived reality that community college faculty construct relative to developing productive student mentoring processes.

Encompassing a holistic approach that incorporates social aspects of context and environment RCT provided a theoretical grounding upon which to develop a narrative portrait of the research site and it relevance to the associated research findings. Three discrete principles of RCT grounded this study of formal community college faculty-

student mentoring processes: (1) social contexts are integral to relational interactions, (2) members of a mentoring dyad are mutually responsible for the skills, outcomes, and conditions of the relational processes, and (3) systemic powers influence relational interactions and the developmental progress of the relationships of participants (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

The first principle mentioned above illustrates the appropriateness of RCT as a theoretical lens for this study due to the focus on the community college as a unique context within the overall structure of higher educations. Furthermore, the RCT principle that suggested mutual responsibility within a mentoring dyad was thought to be a critical factor in identifying an efficacious theory relative to formal faculty-student mentoring processes within the specific context of the community college. Finally, because community college environments differ from other institutions of higher education, especially relative to the commuter based first-generation, academically under-prepared, and minority student populations, RCT was chosen as the theoretical perspective for this study because it incorporates the influence that systemic powers play within the development of mentoring relational processes. Additional information elaborating each of the aforementioned grounding factors, as well as the guiding principles of RCT, relative to their appropriateness for this study is provided in Chapter Two within a section on the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory. Details regarding the manners that RCT guided this research study's design, data collection, and analysis for this study are expressed in Chapter Three within the Theoretical Groundings section.

Significance of the Study

Recognizing that community colleges enroll nearly half of the undergraduate students in the American higher education system (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008) the success of these students is critical to community colleges and the academy. The implications of this study to practice, research, and theory as they relate to the critical issues of persistence and graduation are expressed below.

Practice

Results gathered regarding faculty perspectives about the skills, knowledge, and actions required to develop productive mentoring relationships with students may facilitate the development and implementation of practical and purposeful training for future faculty who serve in mentoring roles. Findings from this study provide suggestions regarding tactics that faculty perceive to increase the efficacy of formal faculty-student mentoring programs in community colleges, ultimately increasing persistence and graduation rates among community college students. Furthermore, data may also be referenced to develop supportive environments within community college culture such that productive formal faculty-student mentoring relations may flourish.

Research

As expected from basic research projects as expressed by Patton (2002), results from this study contributed to the literature base relating to community college faculty-student mentoring processes. While there is an abundance of research relating to mentoring in the workplace (i.e. Eby & Allen, 2000; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000; Kram, 1980, 1983, 1985; Kram & Raggins, 2007; Levinson, Darrow, Levinson, Kelin, & McKee, 1978; Scandura, 1998) and a growing number of inquiries related to

mentoring in educational settings (i.e. Barnett, 2007; Bess, 2000; Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Galbraith 1994, 2002, 2004; Jacobi, 1999, Pope, 2002; Zachary, 2004), there is a paucity of information related to the community college setting, and even less regarding community college faculty members' perspectives. Data from this study not only enhanced the general literature base relative to faculty-student mentoring processes in community colleges, it also identified areas for continued research relative to faculty members' desires for relational skill development, perceived barriers of productive mentoring relationships, and the potential for episodic mentoring interactions.

Theory

Applying the RCT to mentoring relationships within the educational culture of the community college contributed to the theoretical literature base relative to mentoring. Specifically, episodic interactions were identified as an integral process of formal faculty-student mentoring processes within the community college culture which prompted the advancement of RCT mentoring theory relative to community college environments.

Methodology

Based upon the purpose and research questions described above, data for this research were collected using qualitative research methods (Cresswell, 2002; Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling procedures as described by Patton (2002) and semi-structured, open ended interviews were utilized to gather community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their experiences mentoring students. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Community college faculty members who have participated in formal faculty-student mentoring processes for a minimum of three

consecutive semesters served as the participants. Furthermore, to investigate the social and cultural contexts in which the mentoring interactions transpire, documents related to the mentoring practices and policies of the community college at which this study takes place were analyzed. Field notes were also incorporated into analysis processes in order to develop a narrative description of the context in which the study transpired.

One of the strengths of qualitative methodology is its flexibility in design based upon emergent data (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Patton, 2002); therefore, additional data sources were incorporated, including artifacts, institutional documents, community data, field notes, and observations. Open and thematic coding processes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) were applied to all written data including interview transcripts. Both deductive and inductive analysis procedures were employed to examine data collected. RCT served as a framework upon which the data was collected and analyzed; however, in the spirit of naturalistic inquiry emergent and emic themes received investigative attention during data collection and analysis processes.

Arrangement of the Study

Articulating the need for additional research to be conducted regarding community college faculty perspectives regarding formal student mentoring processes, Chapter Two delineates the connections among student engagement, mattering, validation, and formal mentoring processes. Additionally, Chapter Two reviews the literature and data that report benefits and pitfalls associated with mentoring. Chapter two concludes by expressing the appropriateness of employing RCT as a theoretical lens to investigate formal faculty-student mentoring processes within the community colleges culture. Initially Chapter Three reiterates the purpose and research questions of this study

and then provides information regarding data collection, analysis, and reporting processes. Chapter Four provides a thick narrative portrait of Northeast Community College (NECC), aspects of NECC's campus culture, and the study participants. Chapter Five reports the study findings and analysis procedures, and Chapter Six discusses the implications of the noted findings relative to practice, theory development, and future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research purports that mentoring supports the progress of academic and personal development among community college students (Pope, 2002; Rendon, 2004). However, even though there is a growing body of literature purporting the benefits of mentoring (Endo & Harpel, 1982; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979, 2005; Raggins & Kram, 2007; Rayle & Chung, 2007; Santos & Reigadas, 2005; Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006; Stromei, 2000; Thomas, 2000) and another body of literature expressing the downsides of mentoring (Duck, 1994; Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby et al, 2000; Kram, 1980, 1983, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Lenson, Kelin, & McDee, 1978; and Scandura, 1998), few of these inquiries investigate mentoring within the American community college setting. Within the reports about mentoring processes in academia, especially those that focus on the dark side (Johnson & Huwe, 2002; Simon & Eby, 2003; Spencer, 2007), undergraduate faculty-student mentoring processes, specifically at the community college, are not prevalent. Furthermore, there is a little data describing faculty members' perspectives of student mentoring processes (Ehrich, Hansfor, & Tennent, 2004), especially among community college faculty (Rendon, 2002).

This literature review assumes the continuation of the definitions of conceptual terms critical to the associated study that were provided in chapter I. Foundational

concepts of mattering, engagement and validation which serve to connect mentoring with student persistence will be discussed in order to ground the associated review of literature, and to reiterate the need for research to explore faculty members' perspectives regarding formal student mentoring processes. Next, the discussion expresses the ostensible benefits and potential pitfalls associated with mentoring and the potential impact these may have on community college students, faculty, and institutions. Recognizing that productive mentoring processes rely on interpersonal interactions between both the mentor and the mentee, the importance of investigating the mentors' perspectives is reiterated. Concluding with an overview of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), this literature review highlights the interconnection between mentors' self-perceived actions and the productivity of mentoring processes. Likewise, it provides evidence for the need of this study and its place in contributing to mentoring theory, knowledge, and practice.

Mentoring and Persistence: The Engagement, Mattering, and Validation Connection

As previously expressed, persistence is a measure of continued enrollment patterns from one semester to another, and it is a precursory component of institutional retention and graduation rates (Hagedorn, 2006). Four decades of research substantiate the positive correlations between institutional practices which encourage the development of connection between students and the academy with student persistence through graduation (Astin, 1975, 1984, 1993; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Kuh, 2001; Noble, Flynn, Lee, & Hinton, 2008; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini, Lorange, & Pascarella, 1981; Thomas, 2000; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 1998, 1999, 2006). Specifically, mentoring episodes involving interactions between faculty and

students yield increased levels of student engagement, as well as enhanced student perceptions of mattering and validation (Laden, 1999; Rendon, 1994, 2002; Schlossberg, 1989). Rendon (2002) expressly depicts community college students' perceptions regarding the association between their interactions with faculty as validation measures and their expressed intentions to persist through graduation. Similarly, as Schlossberg (1989) discusses, students who believe that they, or their successes, matter to another person, report a greater sense of connection to their environment. However, data are absent regarding the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding these factors; investigating their experiences and reflections about faculty-student interactions via formal mentoring processes provides researchers, practitioners, and theorist with additional insights into potential associates.

Astin's (1984) theory of involvement and Tinto's (1975, 2006) student retention model conceptualize the associations among faculty-student interactions relative to student academic success and persistence. Positive mentoring episodes are one avenue through which faculty members foster student engagement with their institutions (Campbell & Campbell 1997; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Pascarella, 1980). Students who perceive that they are supported, either by the interest of the faculty member or by the institutional service which the faculty members guides, report greater intentions to succeed, display greater levels of integration into the institutional community, and higher rates of persistence as compared to their counterparts who do not report perceptions of support (Tinto, 1975, 1998, 2006); therefore, positive mentoring episodes have the potential to contribute to students' perceptions of support. Investigating the faculty members perspectives regarding the importance of mentoring episodes and

tactics for developing productive interactions contributes to the literature regarding student engagement and success.

Studies overwhelmingly concur that increased student engagement is positively related to retention and persistence (e.g. Astin, 1984; Berger & Braxton, 1998; Braxton, 1999; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Hendel, 2007; Pascarella, 2006). Redon (1994, 2002) further contends that student validation, the process through which students receive feedback that they perceive authenticates their academic abilities, plays a critical role in student persistence. Productive mentoring episodes provide a forum in which faculty may validate students' academic abilities. Rendon's theory of validation compliments Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality, and together they contribute to the premise that students who perceive themselves as valued members of an educational community are more likely to engage in that community; thus validation and perceptions of mattering which result from mentoring experiences (Barnett, 2007; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Rendon, 2002) enhance engagement patterns which are respected as key factors in student persistence (Kodema, 2002; Rayle & Chung, 2007). However, as expressed by Bess (2000) and Zachary (2002) most faculty members are not adequately trained to engage in productive student mentoring processes. Therefore, gathering community college faculty members' perspectives regarding the tactics and skills that they employ to engage in productive student mentoring, and sharing these with other faculty was a practical way to enhance the efficacy of productive faculty-student mentoring interactions.

Mentoring is Interactive

Traditionally mentoring has been defined as a relationship in which a wiser, older, more established individual contributes to the psychosocial development and status

advancement of the mentee (Kram, 1985). Kram's (1980; 1983) seminal studies primarily focused on the long-term career development components of the mentoring phenomenon. Therefore, it is critical to recognize that much of the research discussed within this literature review defines mentoring according to a traditional perspective. Additionally, it is important to note that definitions of mentoring vary (Cambell & Campbell, 1997; Jacobi, 1991; Roberts, 2000). However, for the purposes of this study mentoring will be defined as an interaction through which a mentor intentionally contributes to the collegiate experience of a mentee. Whereas productive mentoring refers to processes through which a mentor contributes to the development and advancement of a mentee. Specifically, mentors in this study will be community college instructors and mentees will refer to the community college students with whom the instructors interact.

Conventionally, mentoring has been viewed as a relationship that develops over time (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1983). Thus, much of the literature within this review relates to relationships that have developed over time. However, this conceptual definition of mentoring is grounded primarily in research associated with workplace and career development, as well as recent inquiries in education at baccalaureate or graduate degree granting institutions. Community college settings differ greatly from corporate and senior academic institutions and there is a need to investigate mentoring processes within this specific culture. Community colleges experience sporadic enrollment patterns with most students enrolling in less than full-time credit hours per semester (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008). Furthermore, many community college student characteristics relative to family and work responsibilities reduce the likelihood that students develop uninterrupted relations with

faculty members. Therefore, this study will contribute to the scholastic literature regarding mentoring processes due to its focus on the community college environment, an environment where traditional long term relationships develop within often interrupted periods of time via episodic interactions.

Expanding upon the traditional concept that mentoring requires consistent interactions over time, recently scholars suggested that mentoring processes span a continuum (Mertz, 2004). Scholars express that productive mentoring processes include informal mentoring relationships that develop organically over an extended period of time, as well as formal mentoring episodes coordinated by a third party outside the mentoring relationship (Campbell & Campbell, 2000; Mertz, 2004; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). However, within higher education, especially within post-baccalaureate programs, informal mentoring customarily has been encouraged so that relationships develop organically based upon the interests, goals, and personalities between the mentor and mentee (Campbell & Campbell, 1997).

In addition to the traditions associated with informal mentoring within academia, faculty purport strong preferences to developing mentoring relationships informally rather than via formal mentoring programs (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). While formal mentoring programs coordinated by an institution may provide oversight and sometimes support to individuals who participate in mentoring processes (Ragins & Kram, 2007), research purports that formal mentoring programs are susceptible to a variety of challenges including mismatched dyads such that a productive relationship never evolves, scheduling difficulties, and geographic distances between mentor and mentee (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). Furthermore, data indicate that individuals who participate in formal

mentoring programs with mechanisms for mentor behavior accountability are less motivated to engage in mentoring processes in the future (Eby, Lockwood, Butts, 2006).

Even though formal mentoring processes are affiliated with specific challenges, and mentors report strong affinities for developing informal mentorship via organic relationship processes, the structure they provide are most appropriate for the ephemeral and sporadic enrollment patterns among community college students. Providing structure and guidance for both the faculty mentor and the student mentee, formal mentoring programs serve to support the development of productive mentoring processes not intuitively associated with the community college educational context (Bess, 2000; Zachary, 2002) considering sporadic enrollment patterns and personal responsibilities of community college students. Moreover, considering the high teaching loads, institutional committee requirements among faculty members, and the increasing proportion of adjunct faculty teaching within the institutions, community college faculty and students have little time to commit to developing informal mentoring relations (Galbraith & James, 2004). Therefore, gathering data regarding community college faculty members' perspectives of formal student mentoring processes contributes to the development, or expansion of, mentoring theory relative to intentional episodic developmental interactions within the community college setting.

Bozeman & Feeney (2007) summarize and analyze various ways in which mentoring has been defined in order to illuminate the conceptual complexities and assorted representations of mentoring relationships and mentoring processes. Most mentoring processes, regardless of their foundation as formal or informal, are composed of mentoring episodes. Mentoring episodes are short term developmental interaction

between a mentor and a mentee (Raggins & Kram, 2007) and typify the community college faculty-student interactions patterns and mentoring experience. Just as mentoring relationships are inherently interpersonal (Kram, 1983), so are mentoring episodes (Raggins& Kram, 2007), requiring the interaction of both the mentor and the mentee; thus, they are just as susceptible to positive and negative experiences as any other human interaction (Duck, 1994). Therefore, gathering data regarding the community college faculty members' perspectives related to productive student mentoring interactions may contributes to the development of more productive formal mentoring training programs within community colleges.

Furthermore, from the theoretical perspective of constructionism, the productivity of a mentoring episode is subject to the interpretation of the participants within their particular environment. Mertz (2004) expresses that foundational to mentoring processes are components of social exchange theory such that the benefits, or negative aspects of interpersonal interactions, are based upon the participants' perceived value. It is with this understanding that the associated research explores an aspect of mentoring that has received little attention (Mertz, 2004), the community college mentors' perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes. Specifically this study explores community college faculty perspectives regarding the tactics that they employ to engage in productive mentoring processes, as well as tactics they use to mitigate negative mentoring interactions.

When considering that mentoring episodes within a formal faculty-student mentoring program at a community college require intentional interactions between the mentor and the mentee, it follows that these mentoring episodes result in increased

connection between students and the institution. Furthermore, increased perceptions of support, validations, mattering, and connections among students are positively correlated with increased students' intentions to persist through graduation; thus, mentoring is thought to increase student persistence. Increased perceptions of support, validation, mattering and connections, as well as enhanced intentions to persist through graduation are only two of the benefits positively correlated with mentoring processes. Below is a discussion of literature which reports additional benefits associated with mentoring processes, as well of potential pitfalls associated with unproductive mentoring. Exploring community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their experiences serving as mentors to community college students via a formal faculty-student mentoring program expands the applicability of current mentoring research, practice, and theory to the understudied community college environment. This study also contributes to the development of new theory and practice of formal mentoring within the community college environment.

Benefits of Mentoring

Many scholars purport that mentoring processes are potentially beneficial for mentees (Bard & Moore, 2000; Dollarhide, 1997; Gailbraith & James, 2004; Hezlett, 2005; Howard & Grosset, 1992; Jalomo, 2000; Laden 1999; Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006; Santos & Reigadas, 2002; Stromei, 2007; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006), and mentors (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragains, 2006; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennet, 2004; Kram, 1985), specifically within institutions of higher education (Eby, Druley, Evans, Ragains, 2006; Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003). Comprised of two primary components, intent and involvement, mentoring interactions foster the greatest benefits to

each of the aforementioned partners when they commit adequate time and resources to mentoring processes (Mertz, 2004), two commodities that are scarce among community college faculty and students (Galbraith & James, 2004). The discourse below expresses the desired outcomes resulting from productive mentoring processes for mentees, mentors, and institutions separately as they relate to the desired outcome of student persistence through graduation. While much of the literature discussed represents mentoring processes evolving within baccalaureate degree granting institutions, as well as the work force arena, the theoretical basis for the reported research provides a foundation from which the findings may be applicable to the community college setting.

Student Mentee Benefits

Research reports associations among productive mentoring experiences with factors that serve to benefit the community college student (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Howard & Grosset, 1992; Jalomo, 2000; Pope, 2002; Rendon, 2002). Generally, mentoring processes have been positively associated with increased knowledge and skills needed for mentees to identify their academic and professional goals (Bard & Moore, 2000; Laden 1999), take the necessary steps to reach their goals (Dollarhide, 1997; Howard & Grosset, 1992; Jalomo, 2000), enjoy the journey associated with reaching their goals (Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006), and garner skills applicable for success after school (Hezlett, 2005); all of which contribute to the long term improved quality of life (Gailbraith & James, 2004; Santos & Reigadas, 2002).

Knowledge that mentees acquire from mentoring episodes may be tacit, cognitive, and affective. Learning strategies that assist students to balance the stresses associated with the college process, including time management skills and prioritizing are tacit

organizational socialization processes to which mentoring contributes (Laden, 1999; Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006; Stromei, 2007; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006). Cognitively students learn the meaning of educational lingo, organizational structures, and studying tactics (Hezlet, 2005; Laden, 1999). These cognitive skills may be instrumental in assisting community college students, many who are first-generation or adult/non-traditional students, to navigate the higher education systems. Increased affective knowledge measures of academic self-confidence (Jalomo, 2000), identity development (Dollarhide, 1997; Pope, 2002), and perceived learning (Hezlett, 2005) are significantly correlated with participation in formal faculty-student mentoring. Furthermore, these affective knowledge factors serve to empower student mentees and increase their motivation to persist towards graduation and degree completion (Dollarhide, 1997; Laden, 1990; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006).

In addition to knowledge acquisition, researchers suggest that skill development progresses more quickly among students who participate in formal mentoring experiences as compared to their non-participating peers (Hezlett, 2005). Specifically, Hezlett expresses that interactions with mentors is associated with increased acquisition of technical skills needed to succeed. Technical skills for first-generation community college students may include reading a course schedule, enrolling in classes, or requesting a tutor. Increases in interpersonal skills among mentees such as expressed self-direction, applying critical thinking, making decisions, and engaging in reflective learning exemplify additional skills associated with participation in formal faculty-student mentoring processes (Bard & Moore, 2000; Campbell & Campbell, 2006); skills that are critical for academic success, expressly among community college students

(Gailbraith & James, 2004). Gathering the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their experiences mentoring students and developing productive student mentoring interactions contributes to training programs designed to promote the aforementioned benefits of formal student mentoring programs.

Collectively, the abovementioned skills and knowledge benefits associated with mentoring experiences support the mentees' ability and desire to integrate into their campus (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2001). Students who engage in mentoring episodes with faculty report stronger levels of academic and social integration (Dollarhide, 1997; Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003; Santos & Reigadas, 2004). Nora (1993) defined academic integration as the student's association to the academic culture in and out of the classroom, and social integration as an affiliation with the social aspects of the campus environment. By its nature, faculty-student mentoring interactions serve as acts of social and academic integration. Social and academic integration have, for decades, been associated with desired academic outcomes (Astin, 1975, 1984, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2004; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 1999, 2006) with few recent studies investigating aspects of this phenomenon among community college students (Pope, 2002; Rendon, 2002).

While due to the association between these factors and retention rates social and academic integration among community college students are desired outcomes of productive mentoring episodes in their own right, they are only two of the noted potential benefits of faculty-student mentoring programs. Participation in faculty-student mentoring interactions correlates in a positive direction with class attendance (Ehrich, Hansford, Tennent, 2004), grade point average (Ehrich, Hansford, Tennent, 2004;

Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006), student satisfaction (Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006), degree attainment (Campbell & Campbell, 2006), and overall quality of life (Gailbraith & James, 2004). The recursive nature of student engagement, satisfaction, academic success, and motivation to persist through graduation is a phenomenon foundational to the effectiveness and beneficial nature of mentoring as a means of retention, a practice gaining popularity among community colleges. One of the purposes of this study was to explore the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding tactics that they employ during mentoring episodes to develop social and academic integration via productive mentoring. Data collected was interpreted to contribute to theory and practice related to community college student integration and formal faculty-student mentoring processes.

Faculty Benefits

In addition to the above noted benefits that mentees may experience from mentoring processes, research indicates that mentors also associate the mentoring process with positive outcomes. Reports consistently express that mentors benefit professionally and personally from their engagement in mentoring processes (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennet, 2004). Personal satisfaction is a commonly reported factor associated with mentoring experiences from the mentors' perspectives (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragains, 2006; Kram, 1985). In addition to appreciating the opportunity to support the success of others, mentors express gratitude for the networks that they gain from other mentors with whom they associate due to mentoring processes (Ehrich, Hansford, Tennent, 2004; Laden, 1999). Overall, mentors report that they experience a greater quality of life as it relates to peer relations and work productivity (Ehrich, Hansfor, Tennent, 2004; Laden

1999) as well as an enhanced sense of fulfilling their purpose (Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006) as a result of engaging in mentoring processes. Researching community college faculty members' perceptions regarding their formal student mentoring experiences may uncover what mentors at community colleges perceive as the most beneficial aspects of the mentoring process.

Measures of perceived social capital, and the associated increased base of support perceived from engaging in mentoring processes, are correlated with perceptions of enhanced quality of life among mentors within business sectors (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2006; Laden, 1999). Some mentors within baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate education environments also report that mentoring provides them with increased professional development and leadership skill attainment (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Finally, some research shows that individuals who serve as mentors receive organizational recognition more frequently, earn higher incomes, and receive promotions faster than their peers who do not mentor (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragains, 2006). However, there is a paucity of data indicating what community college faculty members who serve as formal mentors to community college students perceive as the benefits of productive mentoring processes.

Institutional Benefits

Faculty-student mentoring programs serve more than the individuals involved in the mentoring interactions; they also benefit the hosting institutions. Reports of increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, willingness to mentor others, and favorable work attitudes among mentors (Eby, Druley, Evans, Ragains, 2006), are also associated with increased productivity of workers (Murray & Owen, 1991). Research also indicates

that happier, loyal employees contribute to a desirable culture for future recruitment and retention, not only of employees, but in the case of education, students as well (Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003).

Increased recruitment and retention of students is a critical issue to higher education relative to fiscal matters as well as institutional prestige (Yeager, Nelson, Potter, Weidman, & Zullo, 2001). As expressed previously, faculty-student mentoring processes are associated with increased student academic success, academic and social integration, persistence, and degree attainment (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2004). Enhanced student persistence, retention, and graduation rates positively impact the fiscal stability of institutions through tuition, fees, and other student payments, as well as performance based state-funding procedures (McGuinness, 2005). However, it is not enough to know that mentoring processes are beneficial to the institution, it is critical to understand the perspectives of the individual serving as mentors. Therefore, this research investigated community college faculty members' perspectives regarding the tactics they employ in order to facilitate productive mentoring interactions and their overall experiences.

Pitfalls of Mentoring

As previously expressed, the primary components of mentoring are intent and interactions (Mertz, 2004); however, not all intentions are good and not all interactions are positive (Duck, 1994; Kram, 1985; Ragins & Scandura, 1997; Scandura, 1998). Recognizing the potential pitfalls associated with mentoring, Duck (1994) outlines four destructive mentoring experiences by developing a two-by-two typology grid of intentions, good and bad, with inherent and emergent behaviors. When considering the advancement and psychosocial functions of mentoring processes, modifications of

Duck's destructive relationship result in four potential dysfunctional mentoring processes, including negative relations, sabotage, difficulty, and spoiling (Scandura, 1998).

Combined with submissive, deceptive, and harassing behaviors, the aforementioned dysfunctional mentoring processes may yield negative outcomes (Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000; Scandura, 1997, 1998; Spencer, 2007); outcomes antithetical to the reasons community colleges implement faculty-student mentoring programs for retention purposes. Critical to the purposes of this research is the recognition that the research considering negative mentoring experiences is based upon data gathered primarily from the business sector (Eby & Allen, 2000; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000; Scandura, 1998; Simon & Eby, 2003) with little attention focused on mentoring in higher education within graduate programs (Johnson & Huwe, 2002). Therefore, there is a need to expand the current understanding of potential negative aspects of mentoring experiences as perceived by community college faculty members who participate in formal faculty-student mentoring processes. To date no research has been located that discusses the pitfalls of mentoring in association with formal faculty-student mentoring at community colleges; thus, the associated study contributes to the literature of mentoring within the community college environment.

Behaviors Associated with Negative Mentoring Experiences

The dyadic nature of mentoring implicates that both the mentor and the mentee have responsibilities for the outcomes associated with their interactions (Ragins & Kram, 2007); therefore, dysfunction occurs when the interactions, or outcomes from the interactions, are not working for either party, or if either party experiences distress from

the interactions (Scandura, 1998). Research expresses that mentors reduce the psychosocial benefits of mentoring when they intimidate and invoke fears among their mentees (Eby, 2002). Furthermore, excessive criticism, controlling the release of information, and exploiting mentees by requiring inappropriate workload (Kram, 1985) are associated with manipulative behaviors of mentors (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). Jealous mentors who become resentful of mentees' successes may betray the mentee by taking credit for their work (Scandura, 1998), abandon the mentee (Spencer, 2007), or sabotage the mentees' progress (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000) for their own political gain and career advancement (Ragins & Scandura 1997 & 1999). Each of these scenarios illustrates dysfunction within mentoring experiences resulting from perceived ill intended behaviors of mentors.

Mentoring processes may also be tainted by the intents and behaviors of the mentee. Submissive behaviors on the part of the mentee are associated with overdependence. Deception and flattery when mentees pretend to agree with their mentor when in actuality they do not (Scandura, 1998) also illustrates insincere behaviors among mentees. Some mentees also report politicking; that is regulating their interactions such that they engage with their mentor only when the mentor is in a good mood with the intentions of advancing their position and ideas quickly (Scandura, 1998; Tepper, 1995). Lack of motivation for engagement often leads to the mentees' abandonment of the mentoring processes (Spencer, 2007), which leaves no opportunity for desired outcomes for either participant.

Research also indicates that mentors and mentees often enter the mentoring processes with unrealistic expectations (Spencer, 2007), which in turn impact the

perceived functionability of mentoring interactions. Within the research focused on mentoring in higher education, faculty mentors express time constraints associated with the diversity of overwhelming responsibility as one factor that negatively impacts their commitment to, and interactions with, their mentees (Galbraith & James, 2004). Considering characteristics of the community college student including part-time enrollment, work, and family responsibilities (American Association of Community Colleges, 2008), it is understandable that lack of time for interactions may negatively impact desired mentoring outcomes among formal faculty-student programs at community colleges. Additionally, heavy teaching loads and administrative responsibilities may impede community college faculty members' abilities to engage in productive mentoring interactions (Galbraith & James, 2004).

Finally, additional factors associated with dysfunctional mentoring that are not associated with ill intent, primarily noted within formal mentoring programs, include personal differences between the mentor and mentee. Differences in political, social, and work-style views may interrupt the dyad's ability to communicate and relate effectively (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). This same research indicates that lack of previous experience in mentoring interactions such that participants are not aware of their roles may result in discouraging interactions and confusion regarding expectations. Personal problems that detract the attention of either participant may also impede the dyad's ability to interact in productive mentoring processes (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). Investigating community college faculty perceptions regarding formal student mentoring processes relative to negative mentoring contributes to the associated literature which was void of such discussions.

Undesirable Outcomes Associated with Dysfunctional Mentoring

By definition, dysfunctional mentoring experiences incorporate aspects of undesirable psychosocial outcomes including exposure to stress (Eby & Allen, 2002; Scandura, 1998). Mentoring processes that result in undesirable outcomes may impact mentors, mentees, and the institutions in which they work. Mentees express that dysfunctional mentoring experiences are associated with reduced self-esteem, decreased job satisfaction, and a desire to seek new employment (Eby & Allen, 2002; Scandura, 1998). Scholars express that while the stresses associated with dysfunctional mentoring varies (Simon & Eby, 2003) mentees who experience negative mentoring interactions are less likely to seek mentoring relationships in the future (Scandura, 1998).

Similarly, mentors who report experiences with dysfunctional mentoring processes express a lower desire to serve as a mentor in the future as compared to their peers who have not (Scandura, 1998). Reduced levels of job satisfaction among mentors within dysfunctional mentoring relationships negatively impact the productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness of all members within that environment; thus environmental stability is negatively impacted. Undesirable work environments, increased absenteeism, and low institutional loyalty are associated with dysfunctional mentoring experiences and negatively impact the corresponding organization. Dysfunctional dyads engaged in mentoring interactions may negatively impact the professional development and advancement of the mentor and the mentee, as well as reduce the productivity of the organization in which they function. For the purposes of this research, exploring the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding tactics they employ to

overcome negative mentoring experiences contributes to the literature related mentoring theory and practice relative to the American community college.

Also imperative to the associated study is the recognition that research indicates up to fifty percent of mentees report negative aspects of mentoring within their experiences (Kalbfleisch, 1997; Spencer, 2007); however, among these dyads some express that their overall experiences are positive. Therefore, while individual mentoring episodes may be perceived as negative experiences, the overall perception of the mentoring process among some individuals who experience negative interactions is positive. Therefore, one of the purposes of this study is to investigate what tactics mentors report employing in order to move beyond negative mentoring episodes and ultimately develop productive student mentoring processes. The associated study investigated the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their experiences serving as mentors in a formal faculty-student mentoring program and provided insights into these mentors' perceptions of related benefits, potential pitfalls, and how to navigate these issues.

Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory

In addition to analyzing and reporting data relative to the literature expressed above, data collection, analysis, and reporting processes for this study have been influenced by the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT). Mentoring interactions exist within a continuum ranging from brief informal interactions, such as individual mentoring episodes, to prolonged high quality mentoring relationships (Campbell & Campbell, 2000; Mertz, 2004; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). One of the strengths of the RCT, especially in relation to the associated study, is its recognition of mentoring

micro-processes, including the role of mentoring episodes. Therefore among theories developed to explain the phenomena of mentoring, RCT is most appropriate to use when investigating mentoring relationships within the community college setting due to the reliance upon episodic interactions among community college faculty and students as previously discussed.

Additionally the three principles of the RCT that ground this study of formal community college faculty-student mentoring processes include: (1) social contexts are integral to relational interactions, (2) members of a mentoring dyad are mutually responsible for the skills, outcomes, and conditions of the relational processes, and (3) that systemic powers influence relational interactions and the developmental progress of relationship participants (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Each of the aforementioned guiding principles provided structure to this study's methodological data collection, analysis, presentation, and re-presentation processes. Details regarding the role that RCT plays in this study are expressed in Chapter Three within the Theoretical Groundings section, while explanations of each of the associated guiding principles relative to the community college setting are expressed below.

Social Cultural Contexts

RCT proposes that individuals are not independent; rather, they ought to be considered selves-in-relation. Furthermore, RCT expresses that social contexts are integral to relational interactions. Therefore, because this study focused on expanding mentoring research within the specific environment of community college, it was critical to incorporate a theory that recognizes social context as a critical factor related to mentoring processes. Additionally, RCT is critical to the exploration of mentoring

processes within the community college setting because it infers that mentoring interactions are bilateral, and recognizes that mentors are experiencing development throughout mentoring processes within a perceived social context. This grounding principle of the RCT further suggests that social context influences the degree to which faculty members recognize their selves-in-relation to the students they mentor, which in turn serves to influence the quality of their mentoring experiences. Various factors associated with the community college setting and community college student characteristics including their maturation, age, work-load, and family responsibilities may contribute to the community college faculty members' ability to recognize their selves-in-relation to their students.

Mutually Beneficial Process

In addition to expressing the importance of considering environmental culture and contextual factors in which mentoring processes transpire, RCT considers mentoring as a mutually beneficial process through which mentors and mentees both acquire skills, knowledge, and experience (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). RCT embraces relational mentoring as an evolutionary process (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Miller, 1976) rather than traditional unilateral definitions of mentoring. As previously expressed, traditionally mentoring has been expressed as a process through which a wiser, more experienced person imparts their knowledge, wisdom, and skills upon a younger worker (Kram, 1985). Conversely, RCT supports relational mentoring processes as a means through with mentors and mentees experience growth, learning, and development (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Ragins, 2005). It is the recognition of the importance of the perceptions and experienced of the mentor that provides a foundation

for the importance of this study which explored the community college faculty members' perceptions regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes.

Secondly, and most critical to this study, is the RCT guiding principle that skills, outcomes, and conditions of the relational processes are mutual responsibilities among the relational participants (Fletcher & Ragens, 2007). This guiding principle suggests that single interactions, referenced within this study as a mentoring episode, may be analyzed separately in order to categorize one micro-process of relation development as developmental or not. Research currently recognizes that mentoring processes transpire along a spectrum including single interactions (mentoring episodes), formally assigned "supervisors", and naturally occurring relationships (Campbell & Campbell, 2000; Mertz, 2004; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Due to the social and cultural context of the community college campus, the commuter student characteristics, and the extensive faculty teaching load, it is critical to incorporate mentoring episodes within the associated study.

Defined as an interaction through which a mentor intentionally contributes to the development of a mentee, examples of mentoring episodes within the community college setting include a student's visit to a faculty member's office, email exchanges between student and faculty member regarding an assignment, or the process through which a faculty member connects a student with academic support services on campus. Thus, RCT provides a framework to discuss specific tactics that community college faculty members employ to develop productive mentoring processes as well as to reconcile or mitigate negative mentoring interactions with community college students.

Specifically, the second guiding principle of the RCT contains a component suggesting that relational skills of the mentor serve as predictive factors in the productivity of mentoring processes which Bess (2000) and Zachary (2004) purport as integral to productive mentoring. This second guiding principle further indicates that the culture in which the interactions transpire influences the degree to which mentoring processes may result in positive or negative outcomes. Therefore, this study inquired about, and data were analyzed with, an intentional focus on the faculty mentors' perspectives relative to their mentoring experiences with students and the tactics they employ to engage in productive processes and to alleviate negative experiences as they related to the community college culture. This study relied upon the second guiding principle of RCT related to mutual responsibilities, when inquiring and analyzing skills that community college faculty perceive as critical to the mentoring processes of community college students. Furthermore, the faculty members' perspectives related to the community college's institutional roles relative to their engagement in productive mentoring processes were investigated because RCT indicates that culture impacts interactions and outcomes.

Systemic Power

Finally, RCT addresses the potential impact that systemic power has on developing productive mentoring relations. Because community colleges enroll students of color and other under-represented student populations, this study would be negligent if it ignored the impact that systemic power may have on the development of productive faculty-student mentoring programs. Analyzing the data in manners that allow for the

identification of covert issues related to systemic power strengthened the pragmatic implications of this study.

It is reasonable to suggest that social aspects of the community college environment maintain influential systems of power that come into play during mentoring episodes between students and faculty. As suggested by RCT, environmental factors and systemic power structures mediate mentoring episodes. Consequently the mentoring episodes yield the development of self-in-relation for both members of the dyad within the environment in which they interact. RCT provides the theoretical grounding to investigate micro-processes of mentoring episodes within a specific environmental setting in which systemic power influences are well established (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Therefore, because a purpose of this research was to explore the micro-processes and tactic that community college faculty self-identify as being important relative to their engagement in student mentoring processes, RCT serves as a theoretical foundation upon which this study's methodology was composed.

Grounding the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes for this research study within the theoretical foundation of RCT provided this study with a stable starting place to investigate community college faculty perspectives regarding their mentoring experiences, and the tactics they employ to engage in productive student mentoring processes. However, in keeping with the exploratory purpose of qualitative research, it was expected that some data gathered may not support or fit into the guiding principles of RCT. Therefore, while components of RCT provided grounding for this study of mentoring within the community college environment, findings from this study

serve to enhance its theoretical foundation relative to formal faculty-student mentoring processes at the community college.

Recognizing that faculty member participants for this proposed research experience the student mentoring process within their constructed reality and culture of their environment -- the community college -- RCT served as a springboard to investigate the faculty student mentoring phenomenon within the community college setting. Respecting the episodic nature of community college faculty-student interactions, RCT provided the theoretic structure upon which this phenomenon was investigate, while at the same time it allowed for the flexibility of the emergent research designs associated with qualitative research methodologies required by the purpose of this research.

Summary

Four decades of research substantiate the positive correlations between student engagement and persistence through graduation (Astin, 1975, 1984, 1993; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Kuh, 2001; Noble, Flynn, Lee, & Hinton, 2008; Pascarella & Chapman, 1983; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Terenzini, Lorange, & Pascarella, 1981; Thomas, 2000; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 1998, 1999, 2006). Specifically, mentoring episodes involving interactions between faculty and students yield increased levels of student engagement, as well as enhanced student perceptions of mattering and validation (Laden, 1999; Rendon, 1994, 2002; Schlossberg, 1989). Scholars purport that mentoring processes are potentially beneficial to not only to mentees (Bard & Moore, 2000; Dollarhide, 1997; Gailbraith & James, 2004; Hezlett, 2005; Howard & Grosset, 1992; Jalomo, 2000; Laden 1999; Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006; Santos & Reigadas, 2002; Stromei, 2007; Zalaquett & Lopez, 2006), but mentors (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragains, 2006; Ehrich,

Hansford, & Tennet, 2004; Kram, 1985), and specifically within higher education, institutions as well (Eby, Druley, Evans, Ragains, 2006; Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003). However, there is a growing body of literature expressing the downsides of mentoring (Duck, 1994; Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby et al, 2000; Kram, 1980, 1983, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Lenson, Kelin, & McDee, 1978; and Scandura, 1998). Yet, even though there is a substantial body of literature investigating mentoring processes, there is a void in data related to mentoring within the community college environment. Grounded in the RCT, data were collected and analyzed with findings and implications discussed relative to the culturally specific relational aspects of formal faculty-student mentoring processes within a community college environment.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Epistemologically grounded in constructionism, this study employed qualitative research approaches to investigate community college faculty members' perspectives regarding student mentoring processes within a specific social context. Driven by the purpose and the theoretical foundations of RCT both deductive and inductive processes were employed to analyze data collected. Qualitative methods provide the structures and flexibility needed to engage in exploratory research. Therefore, because the purpose of this research was to discover community college faculty members' perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes, as well as the tactics that they perceive to be associated with the development of productive mentoring episodes, this study required the application of qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2002; Patton, 2002). It was the investigator's intent, as Patton (2002) describes, to the best of her intellectual ability to fully and "fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study" (p. 433).

Researcher Investments

As an administrative employee at a Midwestern community college, the

researcher was personally interested in the faculty-student mentoring processes. It is important to note that the researcher did not have any established relationship with the community college site chosen or any of the individuals on that campus. It is the passion for student success, and the recognition that faculty-student mentoring processes may contribute to retention through graduation among community college students, that drove the researcher to investigate community college faculty perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes. Recognizing that the researcher was the primary tool for analysis, and that she has a passion for issues of retention among community college students, care was taken to document process and content reflections associated with this research in a reflection journal throughout the study.

Theoretical Groundings

As previously expressed, the Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) provided a theoretic foundation for the associated investigation of community college faculty members' perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes. Three guiding principles of RCT were integral in the development of this study, and guided the data collection and analysis procedures: (1) social contexts are integral to relational interactions, (2) members of a mentoring dyad are mutually responsible for the skills, outcomes, and conditions of the relational processes, and (3) that systemic powers influence relational interactions and the developmental progress of relationship participants (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). All of the abovementioned guiding principles of RCT influenced this study's design, and guided data collection and analysis procedures.

Study Design

Nested in constructionism, it follows that the associated study developed upon the foundations of RCT employed qualitative naturalistic research methodology – methodology that provided guiding structure yet respected the importance that perceptions and cultural context contribute to human interaction and relational processes. Additionally, the guiding principle of RCT expressed above and related to mutual responsibility among mentoring dyad participants suggests the importance of investigating both members of a faculty-student mentoring dyad. While research regarding student perspectives relative to their perceived mentoring experiences is numerous, there is a paucity of similar data for community college faculty members who participate in formal student mentoring programs. Therefore, this study focused on investigating the community college faculty members' perceptions related to formal faculty-student mentoring processes within a specific community college setting.

RCT recognizes the importance of social context relative to mentoring processes; therefore, naturalistic inquiry methods were enacted to support the development of a narrative portrait of the community college setting in which this research transpired. Similarly, all three guiding principles of RCT that contributed to the design of this study influenced the research questions, interview questions, data sources, and data analysis procedures. For example the aforementioned methodological considerations incorporated the intent to explore the associated perceived social context within which an understudied member of a mentoring dyad (faculty), who systematically has influence over the other member the dyad (student) interact. Additionally, the recognition that RCT provides regarding mentoring processes include episodic interactions is a critical theoretical

component upon which to explore formal faculty-student mentoring processes within the social and cultural contexts of the community college environment.

Data Collection

In addition to guiding the methodological design of this study, RCT contributed to the data collection procedures. Individual semi-structured open ended interviews allowed for the investigator to follow the participants' perceptions of what was culturally and contextually important related to mentoring experiences and processes – an underlying assumption associated with RCT. Specifically, interviewing the faculty themselves provided an under-represented, yet influential member of a mentoring dyad with a voice. Furthermore, culturally and contextually specific artifacts also contributed to the study, providing additional insight into institutional culture and context.

Similarly, observations including a routine mentoring interaction between a formal faculty-student mentoring dyad as well as a monthly steering committee meeting contributed to the naturalistic methods employed to develop a narrative portrait of the context in which these mentors' participated in formal faculty-student mentoring processes. Additional field notes regarding the campus and the surrounding community in which the campus rests contributed data related to observed contextual interactions, as well as the participants' perceptions of such interactions. Finally, the researcher's field log and journals were integral in the data collections procedures as RCT theory expresses the relevance of self-in-relation, and systemic influence. Noting her responses, thoughts, observations, and perceptions of others was an important aspect of the incorporation of RCT because the researcher is an individual-in-relation to the participants of the study, and the role of researcher may have had systemic influence among some participants.

Data Analysis

Initial data analysis procedures were inductive in nature allowing for natural patterns within the data to emerge. Once inductive analytical processes were completed deductive processes guided by RCT were employed. RCT guided data analysis processes such that all data collected were reviewed to identify how it related to underlying assumptions of the theory including micro-processes of mentoring interactions (specifically mentoring episodes), faculty perceptions relating to the importance of social context and their formal student mentoring interactions, faculty perceptions regarding their self-in-relation to the students they mentor, and faculty perceptions relating to factors of systemic power or influence as they relate to their student mentoring interactions. Additionally, the data were analyzed to identify patterns that support RCT regardless of the participants' awareness of such factors. Once data were analyzed through the RCT lens, the data was examined for additional themes that were not in alignment with, or contradicted the theory. Providing a basis upon which study design, data collection, and data analysis were conducted, RCT, in conjunction with the purpose of this study, served to guide the researcher as she sought to contribute to mentoring research, practice, and theory.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was nested in basic research as described by Patton (2002). Expressly, the purpose of this research was to contribute to the fundamental knowledge of formal faculty-student mentoring at community colleges. Investigating the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their experiences mentoring community college students also contributed to applied research efforts designed to

provide insight to a specific cultural issue (Patton, 2002); in this case the research highlights the critical issue of community college student retention.

Specifically, this research explored community college faculty members' perceptions of tactics they perceived to foster productive mentoring processes, as well as tactics that they perceive to mitigate negative mentoring experiences within a particular community college setting. Included in this inquiry were the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding what tactics individuals and institutions may employ to support their engagement in the community college student mentoring processes. Underlying the purpose of this study was the recognition that formal faculty-student mentoring may contribute to community college students' persistence through graduation.

Research Questions

1. What mentoring processes are in place at this community college?
    - 1a. What tactics do community college faculty members employ to engage in productive mentoring processes?
    - 1b. What tactics do community college faculty members employ to mitigate negative mentoring experiences?
    - 1c. What factors within the community college culture support faculty members' attempts to foster student mentoring processes?
2. What are community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their mentoring experiences with students?
3. What is the efficacy of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory as a framework for looking at community college mentoring processes?

Site Selection

The site from which participants were recruited was chosen based upon its status as a community college and its commitment to increasing student persistence through graduation. Their commitment to increasing student persistence was indicated via expressed institutional goals within written documents, as well as verbal expressions from members of its enrollment management team. A school dedicated to the processes of persistence and retention of community college students was chosen because persistence, retention, and graduation rates are critical issue in higher education, specifically to community colleges, and these issues were foundational to this study. Coordinating a formal faculty-student mentoring program is one practice that this school employed as a part of their retention strategies. Furthermore, the college had comprehensive records of faculty who have participated in the faculty-student mentoring program. Finally, the site was chosen because the researcher had access to the site, and was confident that administrators of this community college's formal faculty-student mentoring program would reference this research for future practice.

Participants

Prior to recruiting participants, personal contact was made via telephone and electronic mail communications with executive personnel at the community college to explain the current study and request written permission to recruit participants among the college's faculty. Written notification was received from the institution in the form of an electronic file attached to an email and a facsimile within 48 hours of requesting the documentation. An original copy of the letter from the institution signed by president

providing the researcher open access to the community for research purposes was received five working days after the request for permission was made.

With executive leadership approval and the support of the administrator who coordinates the formal faculty-student mentoring program, faculty were invited to participate in this study via email correspondences. Additional faculty members were recruited to participate in the study during the researcher's visit to the campus. Written and verbal invitations to participate in the study expressed that the purpose of the study was to investigate the faculty members' perspectives regarding faculty-student mentoring interactions. A letter of invitation to participate in this study may be reviewed in Appendix A.

Purposive sampling was used to identify fifteen community college faculty members who voluntarily participated in formal faculty-student mentoring initiatives at this community college for a minimum of three consecutive semesters prior to the semester in which the study transpired. Potential participants were identified based upon institutional records depicting a commitment to faculty-student mentoring processes as well as suggestions made by initial participants. Criteria for selection included documentation of participation in student mentoring processes at this community college for a minimum three consecutive semesters prior to the semester in which the study transpired - Fall 2008. Three prior semester in addition to the Fall 2008 semester was chosen as a criterion for selection because it encompassed enough time for these faculty members to have reflected and changed their tactics, if they so perceived necessary, in order to engage in productive mentoring interactions.

During the processes of confirming their intent to participate in the study, participants also expressed to the researcher their inclination to continue engaging in student mentoring processes. Intent to continue participating in formal faculty-student mentoring at this community college was reiterated to the researcher via verbal or written communication, depending upon the participants' preferred method of communication through which the recruitment process was completed. Participants were recruited from a variety of academic divisions including humanities, business, mathematics and science, and developmental education, as well as professional and administrative personnel who teach courses in an overload or adjunct capacity on this community college campus.

The criteria for documentation of participants' prior engagement in student mentoring practices was established in order to increase the likelihood that these participants had engaged in mentoring interactions for a minimum of four semesters with the likelihood that they had experienced a full range of interpersonal dynamics, including some negative interactions. As previously expressed, mentoring episodes are inherently interpersonal (Kram, 1983), requiring the interaction of both the mentor and the mentee; thus, they are susceptible to positive and negative experiences (Duck, 1994). Therefore, the additional criteria of verbal commitment to continued participation indicated that the participants perceived that they had the ability to contribute to productive mentoring interactions, even after they may have encountered negative mentoring experiences. Furthermore, participants were recruited from a variety of institutional divisions to gather perspectives from faculty with diversified academic training profiles throughout the institution's culture.

Participants were invited to participate in this study via personal invitations routed through the college office that coordinates formal faculty-student mentoring processes. Personal invitations followed electronic invitations, followed by phone calls in order to increase participation rates (Appendix A). All participant recruitment processes were approved for use by the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix B). Individual participants completed an informed consent document prior to partaking in the study processes (Appendix C). Participants, executive leadership, and supportive administrative personnel involved in any and all aspects of this research project received hand written notes of appreciation after the completion of data collection processes.

Data Collection

Sources of data from which results were generated, as well as the manner in which data were protected to protect confidentiality, are described below. As expressed by Patton (2002), emergent flexibility is one of the strengths of qualitative research. Therefore, the data sources as well as methods of data representation presented below are diverse, representing the researcher's intent to capture as much of the cultural context as possible via a variety of means in order to re-present the true environment in a most comprehensive, meaningful, and valid manner.

Sources of Data

Data for this research project were collected via participant survey, individual interviews, field notes collected during interviews, the transcriptions of these interactions, observation sessions, and the researcher's field log. Additional sources of data to explore the cultural context in which the mentoring interactions studied transpire included,

institutional documents associated with faculty-student mentoring processes, email correspondences between faculty and students, and noted impacts associated with these mentoring interactions, as expressed by the faculty member mentors interviewed.

The researcher also engaged in various activities experienced by sub-populations of students at this community college including use of public transportation to commute to the school, introduction to the school via a campus tour sanctioned by the campus Admission's Office, lunch at the cafeteria, a dining experience presented by the Culinary students provided to faculty on a weekly basis, informal interactions with student clubs including the radio station, members of the school newspaper, and a meeting of the executive officers for the student government. With the exception of consent forms, all data collected for this research were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office. Participant consent forms were stored in a separate locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office. The researcher's office was secured by a lock different from those of the filing cabinets, reinforcing the security of the data and personal identity. The researcher was the only person with a copy of the key for the locked cabinet.

Observations

Planned observation sessions included a planned mentoring episode that transpired between a formal faculty-student mentoring dyad. The mentor and mentee met and engaged in what they described after the episode as a routine mentoring session. Additionally, the researcher observed a regularly scheduled meeting of the formal mentoring program's steering committee. Further observation sessions surfaced due to the emergent and naturalistic research processes associated with this research study including informal mentoring episodes between faculty and students, informal mentoring

and training among peer faculty members who serve as formal mentors for students, interactions among executive level administrators, faculty, staff, students, and at large community members of the community college.

Interviews

Once a participant completed the informed consent form (Appendix C) the researcher commenced a semi-structured interview process through which open-ended questions were posed as described by Patton (2002). Data were gathered from 19 community college faculty members and one community college student who knowingly permitted the researcher to observe a planned mentoring episode. Interview protocol and questions are provided in Appendix E. All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim by the primary researcher. The interviews took place in a location chosen by the participating faculty members and ranged from 45 to 90 minutes in length. All data sources, including the individual interviews which were transcribed by the primary researcher were protected and respected with the explicit desire to protect confidentiality as expresses in the above paragraphs.

Each participant was invited to request a follow-up interview to allow either party to explore a particular concept at a later late. Member checks were performed by providing each participant with opportunities to review and comment on the content and interpretation of transcripts incorporated in data representations. After verification of the accuracy of the transcription and interpretation process, as well as the successful completion of this dissertation, original audio-tapes will be destroyed.

Participant Survey

Individuals who participated in the Steering Committee group interview/observation session completed the participant survey as it was originally intended to be done, by writing their responses on the survey. The purpose of the survey was to gather general characteristics of the participant and their experiences with the community college setting. Originally, it was expected that all participants would complete this survey at the beginning of the interview processes; however, the researcher decided to incorporate the questions into the verbal interview processes as this method emerged as a most appropriate manner through which to gather the data while maintaining a personal connection with the participants. Factors discussed may be viewed in Appendix D. Confidentiality of the survey data was maintained via a coding system that incorporates participants' pseudonyms.

Artifacts

As expected, due to the emergent flexible design of naturalistic inquiry (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen 1993), the diversity of artifacts collected as data sources continued to unfold throughout the research processes. Institutional documents were gathered for reference in relation to processes of investigating the campus culture; documents that related to the associated formal faculty-student mentoring processes such as training manuals, written evaluations, registration forms, and advertisements for related events were gathered. Additionally, one faculty mentor provided a sample of an electronic correspondence between a faculty member and her student mentee. Various community-related documents were also gathered. Additional artifacts included photos of the campus, interview spaces, and community spaces that provided contextually

meaningful representations of objects identified as part of mentoring, or the environment in which they mentored, from the participants' indigenous perspectives.

Field Notes

Rich and thick descriptive accounts of observations including the physical setting, non-verbal communications, interactions between and among participants, and activities which transpired in association with data collection processes were made during the researcher's time spent in the selected site. The field note format is provided in Appendix F. In addition to the field note page, the researcher kept a Mead notebook available at all times during her visit to the campus in order to note observations in detail in the least intrusive manner possible. The purpose of the field notes was to provide the researcher with the ability to recall the context in which the observations and interviews transpire (Patton, 2002), as well as to provide you, the reader, with the rich, thick description that allows you to determine the transferability of data and findings to other sites.

Field Log and Reflexive Journaling

As immediately as possible, the researcher logged additional details and complete representation of interactions observed. Care was taken to differentiate among the perceived interactions, communications exchanged, and activities that transpired with the researcher's interpretation of these events (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). A sample field log entry format may be viewed in Appendix G. However, much like the field note processes, the researcher recognized that it was most beneficial to keep field log notes and reflexive journal entries in a Mead notebook that was readily available as opposed to the formatted log provided in Appendix G. Regardless of the paper upon which entries were made, each entry included the date, time, and location description.

In addition to expanded representations of field work interactions and experiences, the field log served as a place for the researcher to engage in reflexive journaling processes. Entries served to document the researcher's reflection upon, and noted her reactions to, field experiences, documenting her continued exploration of faculty-student mentoring literature, relevant professional experiences, and other associated practices, experiences, or knowledge that emerged during the data collection and analysis processes. Field log entries were organized such that within the binder containing the entries there were blank photocopies of the format for log entries which served as analysis and data sources. Additionally, photocopies of entries made in the Mead journal, as well as entries made using the researcher's laptop computer were printed off and organized in the Field Log binder. All original entries, hand written as well as type written, were filed in chronological order. Once content analysis procedures commenced, the original field log was maintained and secured in the researcher's office and photocopies of entries were utilized for coding and other analysis processes.

Quantifiable Factors

Numeric representations of overall program evaluation were incorporated into the thick description of the site as one manner through which to represent the program. The manner and the extent to which the administrators of the associated faculty-student mentor processes integrated quantitative data in decision making processes contributed to the contextual understanding of this constructionist study.

Confidentiality

Participants' identities were protected for confidentiality. All recorded interviews, as well as their associated transcripts, were coded using pseudonym identifiers. Any

publications or reports resulting from the associated data, including this dissertation, will refrain from identifying any of the participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

As with all other aspects of this study, the purpose of investigating community college faculty members' perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring interactions served as the researcher's guide for data analysis. RCT guided deductive analysis of data sources, while inductive analysis via data displays, data memos, and other analytic procedures met the study's exploratory purpose. Furthermore, flexible and emergent aspects of naturalistic research complicated analysis processes as interpretations are inherent to qualitative data collection processes (Patton, 2002; Wolcott 2001). Wolcott's distinction between interpretation and data analysis assisted in the development of the data organization and representation plan described below for this study.

Documentation of the researcher's role and investments have previously been noted; however, it is important to reiterate that the researcher serves as the primary analysis tool and her reflective journaling entries served as data that was referenced during analysis processes. Analysis of reflexive journaling data contributed to emergent themes related to RCT's grounding concepts of self-in-relation and micro-processes. Furthermore, reflexive journaling provided additional insight into the cultural context in which the faculty members' perceived interactions transpire. Finally, exploring the researcher's reflexive journaling data allowed for the researcher to explore how her personal perceptions, beliefs, or development through the research process may have impacted the study, data collection processes, or reported results.

Detailed descriptions of the research site, the participants, and the settings in which data were collected were organized chronologically in a field log. Each of these aforementioned data sources, as well as observation notes, field log entries related to community based activities, field notes, and reflexive journaling data were referenced during the content analysis processes in order to develop a thorough rich, thick description (Geertz, 1973) and narrative portrait of the context constructed by the participants in this study. As data analysis is a recursive cycle in which data are collected, then analyzed, and result in conclusions or hypothesis which then are questioned, re-investigated, or verified via additional data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003; Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993), various aspects of the analysis processes expressed in this study reoccurred as appropriate to the study's purpose.

After reading all transcripts in their entirety (Wolcott, 2001) content analysis procedures began by performing open coding processes as described by Patten (2002). The purpose of this process was to identify emic themes that naturally emerge from the data. Next focused coding and analytic memo processes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) were followed comparing the guiding principles of RCT to the data. These deductive analysis procedures transpired such that all sources of data were explored to identify if and how the content related to RCT components expressed as: (1) social contexts are integral to relational interactions, (2) members of a mentoring dyad are mutually responsible for the skills, outcomes, and conditions of the relational processes, and (3) that systemic powers influence relational interactions and the developmental progress of relationship participants (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Each transcript was examined to

identify content that gleaned association with each of the aforementioned RCT guiding principles.

Beginning with the RCT guiding principle which expresses mentoring as a contextual interaction, each interview was read to identify areas within the transcript where participants made reference to the importance of the community college environment, or differentiated the associated campus from other environments in relation to their student mentoring experiences. Such explorations incorporated focused coding reads along with, analytic statements which kept the contextual relevant statements and stories organized thematically. Each transcript was examined to identify indigenous contrasts, as well as to explore the meaning of stories participants told in response to interview questions. Identifying points of indigenous contrasts and underlying meanings, potentially themes within participant stories contributed to the researcher's ability to re-present the participants' perspectives regarding the community college context and culture, as well as how these relate to the faculty members' perceived mentoring experiences.

In addition to chronicling indigenous contrasts and making meanings of stories, all transcripts were examined to identify text where participants reference their responsibilities and developmental experiences as they relate to their perceptions of outcomes associated with student mentoring processes. Similarly, the text was examined to identify if and how faculty members expressed perspectives regarding the role that systemic power structures had within formal faculty-student mentoring processes in the community college setting. Again, focused coding processes were employed during the

initial examination of transcript data, followed by the development of thematic analytic statements in order to organize potential interpretations and representations of meaning.

Next, institutional artifacts were analyzed with special attention to contextual, cultural, and systemic power inferences as RCT suggests. Focused coding and the development of analytic statements as expressed above contributed to the organization and representation of thematic developments. In addition to attending to overt statements related to RCT guiding principles, all of the aforementioned data sources were re-read and pondered with the intent to identify data themes that RCT suggests should be present yet were not identified easily within the data.

After the analysis transpired in which the focus was searching for the manners in which RCT was supported by the data, another round of analysis transpired to identify the ways in which the data collected contradicted the main guiding principles of RCT. Content analysis procedures including coding processes (Patton, 2002) provide the basis for identifying themes that associate with RCT, themes that contradict RCT, and emic themes expressed by the participants. Once themes and patterns were identified, the processes were repeated based upon questions that surface throughout the data collection processes and theoretical aspects of episodic mentoring. A step-by-step explanation of analytic processes is provided below.

Initial Read and Hook and Eye Technique

All verbatim interview transcripts were formatted such that there was a two inch right and left margin to provide space for researcher's notes, with continuous line numberings. Comments were noted within the researcher's field log as she transcribed each interview to document analytic processes as they transpired during data collection

processes. Additional notes were made in the margins of the transcripts regarding the data content during the initial and all subsequent reads (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Each transcript was re-read employing the hook and eye technique (Creswell, 2003) in which recurring and related terms were highlighted and linked together with lines. Multiple terms were identified and linked yet were easily recognized as different patterns through the use of a variety of color highlighters.

Unitizing Data

An additional content analysis process required the identification of significant data units or chunks. Initially, chunks of data, sometimes a paragraph or two or three consecutive and related sentences were identified by the researcher as representing a concept (Patton, 2003). Chunks of related content and contexts were then reduced to the smallest unit through which one specific idea was represented (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Using colored highlighters, data chunks were identified within electronic copies of all transcripts. Once identified, these data chunks were separated from their transcripts electronically within a Microsoft Word document. Chunks were identified based upon pseudonym and line numbers employed to code the data. Once separated from the completed transcripts, data chunks were analyzed to identify data units within the larger chunks that served to represent the idea.

Data units identified were printed individually, onto mailing labels. Each data unit was placed on a separate three by five index card. Once all units were identified, the cards were mixed up so that they were not in any predetermined order. The first card was read and set aside, facing up so that the content was legible. The next card was read, if it represented the same idea as first card, it was placed on top of that card to make a pile, if

the unit represents a different concept, it was set aside to start a separate pile. This process continued until all the unitized cards had been read and placed into associated piles (Earlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Once all cards had been sorted into piles, one or two descriptive terms were assigned to each pile. On the back of each card these descriptive terms were written, these terms were also noted on a separate Word document. Next, the cards were reshuffled and the process was repeated until no new descriptive terms emerged. These descriptive terms served as building blocks to determining content themes.

Deductive analytic coding processes transpired by comparing the emergent themes with components of RCT. Themes were mapped and data findings were recorded and discussed relative to the theoretical groundings of RCT, as well as previous literature. Based upon constructionism and the context specific factors within the community college environment, it was expected that the perceptions of the community college faculty members would vary from past reports regarding faculty-student mentoring experiences.

Quality Criteria

Serving as an indicator that this study was methodologically sound, the trustworthiness of the study was established by employing techniques that provide credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition to trustworthiness which serves to ensure that a study was methodologically sound, the researcher also attended to issues of authenticity. The following section will discuss how each aforementioned aspects of trustworthiness were addressed within this study, as well as indicators of authenticity.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree that reported findings accurately depict the participants' perspectives regarding the contextual investigative issue. Purposive participant sampling, member checking interview transcripts, and peer debriefing were processes that were employed to establish credibility within this study. Additionally, the researcher gathered artifacts, quantifiable data, and observations - "referential adequacy materials" (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993, p. 139) which allowed for triangulation of data during analysis processes and contribute to this study's credibility.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the data and reported finding may be generalized and applicable to other contexts, in this case community college formal faculty-student mentoring programs. While it is ultimately the responsibility of a reader to determine the transferability of findings, processes were employed in this study to provide adequate information to determine the appropriateness of transferability. Purposive sampling to recruit participants from every academic department, including humanities, social sciences, math and science, business, and developmental education was one manner in which this study sought to promote transferability. Additionally, providing thick, rich description of data and the context in which it was collected via narrative portrait of the institution culture and the formal mentoring program, this dissertation provided readers with adequate information to determine the transferability of findings. Finally, grounded in RCT this study referenced the theory during analytic processes to provide additional potential for transferability.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency and traceability of a research process. Keeping all data sources including reflexive journaling, field notes, artifacts, as well as data analysis processes and products organized provided an audit trail from which the dependability of this study may be determined.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the data and associated findings may be substantiated. Components of an audit trail including organized raw data, field notes, reflexive journaling as well as analytical processes and products served to support the neutrality and confirmability of this research.

Authenticity

Authenticity refers to the research's ability to recognize and re-present participants' perceived realities within the given context. Issues of fairness were addressed by inviting all faculty who participated in the associated formal faculty-student mentoring program with the opportunity to participate in the research, as well as confirming and re-confirming their consent at the beginning of each interaction. Additionally, all participants were made aware that that their identities would be protected for confidential and that they had the right to request a copy of the findings for personal use as well. No follow-up interviews were requested by any participant; however, all participants were provided opportunities to address any concerns regarding researcher interpretations via member check processes that transpired. The aforementioned actions attend to issues of ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity.

Summary

Epistemologically grounded in constructionism, this study employed *a priori* theoretical analysis incorporating the grounding concepts and guiding principles of RCT, as well as additional emergent thematic qualitative research approaches to investigate community college faculty members' perspectives regarding student mentoring processes. A community college served as the research site, and participants were faculty from the institution who had participated and intended to continue to participate in the college's formal faculty-student mentoring program. The researcher's passion for community college retention and her involvement in student success initiatives among community college students fostered her desire to collect data from the faculty participants via individual interview, observation, from programmatic artifacts, and associated quantifiable data. Additional sources of data, including field notes and reflexive journaling, the manner in which they were organized, and analysis procedures performed contributed to the study's trustworthiness and authenticity.

Thick rich descriptions of the participants within a narrative portrait of the context are provided in Chapter Four. Findings that resulted from the data and research processes are expressed in Chapter Five, while Chapter Six discusses the theoretical and practical implications, as well as the limitations of this study and projected areas of future research regarding formal faculty-student mentoring process within the community college.

CHAPTER IV

NARRATIVE PORTRAIT

Contributing to the fundamental knowledge of formal faculty-student mentoring at community colleges, the purpose of this study was to explore community college faculty members' perceptions of tactics they employed to foster productive mentoring processes as well as tactics that mitigated negative mentoring experiences. Included in this inquiry were the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding what tactics individuals and institutions employed to support their engagement in the community college student mentoring processes. Epistemologically grounded in social constructionism, which embraces the notion that people create reality within a culture (Crotty, 2003; Geertz, 1973), findings related to this research are best presented in association with a depiction of the data that illustrate the participants' created realities. Therefore, the focus of this chapter was to provide the reader with a detailed depiction of the environment in which this research occurred.

Intended to provide the reader with a glimpse into the social and cultural contexts of North East Community College (NECC), as perceived by the participants, this chapter incorporated data designed to portray the campus' mood, character, and geography. In order to re-present NECC's social and cultural context this narrative portrait includes

thick descriptions of research participants, detailed accounts of critical incidents, depictions of the campus' geography, as well as reveals specific factors within the surrounding community. Conceptually, the NECC campus culture depicted in this narrative refers to the activities, attitudes, shared sense of purpose, and systems of interactions collectively expressed by participants.

In addition to re-presenting the normative activities, attitudes, sense of purpose, and interactions participants expressed, the cultural context depicted below incorporates the researcher's perspectives regarding each of the aforementioned aspects of the social environment, collectively referred to as the campus' cultural context. Descriptions of interactions and observations, as well as details about the geographic, physical, and the décor of the space in which the participants perform daily activities are provided in order to portray the cultural context of NECC as perceived by the researcher. The associated narrative portrait is meant to provide you, the reader, with information to depict the belief systems and normative behaviors that contribute to the NECC campus culture.

Therefore, in addition to providing details that depict what community college faculty members who mentor students do, that is how they relate to the students they mentor, the narrative portrait is provided to illustrate aspects of the environment that lie beneath the perceived normative behaviors. Furthermore, as expressed by Patton (2002) there is both an NECC campus culture as well as an NECC mentoring program culture. Therefore, the detailed narrative portrait below serves to portray factors of the campus environment and culture, as well as NECC's formal mentoring program culture as depicted by observed and reported collective behavioral patterns and beliefs that form the

perceived norms of what is, what can be, how people feel about these norms, and what and how the collective group will do in response the perceived norms (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, incorporated as a separate chapter explicitly to express the cultural context in which this research transpired, the intent of this narrative portrait is to provide readers with information from which they may determine the transferability of results reported in Chapter Six.

Beginning with descriptions of the institutional setting, including the layout of the campus as depicted via Figure 1, a modified campus map, this narrative portrait re-presents culturally relevant geographic factors that contribute to the campus' mentoring context. Next thick descriptions of the participants and the spaces in which interviews transpired are expressed. Finally accounts of informal interactions with students and staff are presented to provide additional insight into NECC's social context. Portraying the context associated with the researcher's perception of the participants' constructed realities, the narrative portrait provides a milieu surrounding the associated community college formal faculty-student mentoring program.

The Institutional Setting

Tucked amongst the trees at the top of the hill on a winding two lane road the entrance to North East Community College (NECC) is easy to miss. A simple sign set off to the South East corner of the main road leading to campus blends into the cloudy overcast sky on a drizzly April morning. NECC is located in the center of 218 acres of rolling wooded hill approximately 30 miles northeast of a major metropolitan area in the northeastern United States. Serviced by a comprehensive public transportation system,

NECC is the largest educational institution in the county serving approximately 12,000 credit seeking students and 8,000 non-credit seeking students each semester.

At 6:12 am on a drizzly April morning, a local radio station's morning show reported the current temperature to be a damp 42 degrees, forecasting a 40 percent chance of rain with a high in the mid 50s. A city bus rolled up to a green metal bench and dropped off three individuals. A large framed Caucasian male with droopy shoulders clad in black jeans, black converse shoes, and black t-shirt over a dark grey long sleeve garment exited the buss first and immediately lit a cigarette as he began trudging, with his hands in his pockets and chin on his chest, up hill on a gravel path towards the center of campus. A petite African American female sporting dark blue jeans, bright white tennis shoes with thick pink laces that matched the puffy pink jacket embroidered with "babyphat" in satiny stitching on the back, pulled the oversized faux fur lined hood over her head as she briskly walked towards the center of campus, passing the passenger that got off the bus first. The final passengers emerged from the bus wearing grey slacks, a black fleece, worn white and light blue New Balance tennis shoes-- strands of her shoulder length brown hair peeked out from under a peach scarf as she walked with a steady pace, head held high, into the Classroom Building situated approximately 60 yards from the bus stop.

The Classroom Building is one of the more contemporary buildings among the eclectic assortment of campus buildings. Another contemporary building, the Learning Resource Center (LRC) which houses 110,000 volumes and 600 periodic titles, as well as a myriad of academic support services is nestled on the campus grounds between the Student Center and the Administration building. While there is a specific building

designated as the Student Center, the energy and activity within the LRC is indicative of the spirit of education and community on the NECC campus. At 9:00 am on a Friday morning locating a space to work among the 21computer stations in the LRC was a challenging task. An African-American female dressed in a red Babyphat sweat outfit with light brown Ugh boots removed an earphone connected to an ipod as she focused her attention to scanning for a space to work.

A librarian assisted a twenty something international student from an Eastern European country who was trying to learn how to save her work to a flashdrive, turned her attention to a student at a nearby computer station who answered a cell phone. Through conversations, and with the support of security personnel, the student who answered the cell phone – a violation of LRC policy – was escorted out of the interior of the building into the lounge area; three students who had been waiting for a work station vied to take over the space. Two female students, one Caucasian and one Black, shared earphones to a single ipod and were creating graphs using Microsoft excel workbook computer applications. A young Caucasian student with long straight black hair that framed her face wore a capped short-sleeve pink t-shirt and pressed jeans. She was surfing cnn.com and the drudge report when something caught her attention and she raised her left hand, upon which was a solitaire diamond; she bent her fingers creating a small wave and smiled a greeting to someone across the room. A man who looked of Asian descent with salt and pepper hair was consulting a thick “Salary Facts” book, as he examined a classified website he jotted notes into a spiral bound graphing notebook. The above descriptions exemplify the collection of individuals engaged in activity in the LRC’s first floor computer space. The random pattern of traffic, the variety of quiet

conversations, and the assortment of transactions that transpired suggested that the conglomeration of people was not a single class, rather it epitomized the business and diversity of LRC activity.

Adjacent to, but separated from, the LRC first floor computer labs and book stacks, on the other side of a wall made of glass doors, was a student lounge. In contrast to the quiet hum of learning, paper writing, and studying that transpired in the central LRC area, the atmosphere in the lounge was almost festive. Three male students were jamming - passing a bright red guitar, tan ukulele, and a worn hand-drum around to each other as they spontaneously developed lyrics, laughing and poking fun at each other.

> …this tired ganna be drop out sittn' next to me need to get it together if for no other reason, study for the grade who cares why, just don't stop… hey now hey now listen brotha I'll do it for me, not mamma, no girl, just me, just me me me… (fieldnotes)

While the three male musicians continued their antics, a slender bald black man wearing grey pants, a white oxford button up, and a red horizontal striped tie walked up to the snack cart, ordered a coffee and banana and sat down across from a women who was sewing. He leaned forward and engaged her in conversation. While she continued to keep her eyes focused on her craft at hand they chattered back and forth, animated enough to produce smiles on both parties, yet quiet enough that their conversation remained private under the dull humm of the fan and jamming session in the back ground. Reaching across the table to pat her arm, the man stood, the women who was sewing finally looked up from the fabric she clutched and stated "Have a good day professor."

As the professor left the lounge area, he raised his right hand that was holding the coffee cup, nodded, and smiled to a group of seven students clustered near the large windows that looked out to the center of campus. One student kicked the legs of another male student who was “making out” with another student and pointed to the exiting professor; there was an outburst of laughing - one student clapped his hands on his knees, stomped his feet, and let out a laugh as he tipped his head backwards. Another student covered her mouth as she squealed and exhaled a loud “you di-int”. The couple pushed away their friends’ intrusions and returned to their snogging session.

Outside the window and behind the cuddling couple and their peers, people were walking hurriedly with their hands in their pockets, or with their arms across their chest, as the grey sky began to release cold rain into the 43 degree air. The mother goose that had made a nest and was sitting upon eggs just outside the LRC lounge window tucked her beak into her feathers and shuddered, shaking off some of the raindrops. Five other students who sat in the plastic maroon chairs at various spaces around the six-foot white tables kept their eyes fixed upon the textbooks or notebooks that they were studying, apparently oblivious to the commotion within, as well as the weather outside, their immediate surroundings.

Down the hill from the LRC outside the Student Center a security guard, dressed in black pants, black shoes, and a black long sleeve shirt underneath a white short sleeve button up with a gold badge on the upper left pocket area, hoisted a green golf umbrella and trotted out to meet a student as the rain oscillations increased. Inside the Student Center, just outside the cafeteria, sat four feet square tables underneath a mural that had been painted by art students. Two students sat at these tables and were creating a poster

board that illustrated the plant life cycles. It was early in the day, yet there were three pairs of students eating brown bag lunches, another student sat by herself as she ate an oversized lemon poppy seed muffin and read a novel. Down one flight of grey cement stairs in an emergency exit corridor were clusters of students in various student organization offices.

Three male students, one Caucasian and two Latino, who were hanging out in the campus' radio station office, blankly stared and shrugged their shoulders when asked if they knew about any mentoring programs on campus. A black male student that sat across the room looked up from a computer and said "no but check out the counseling center on the third floor." In two offices down the hall four students were working on the semester's last edition of the campus newspaper, one Caucasian student expressed that she knew there was a mentoring program but that she was to busy to participate. An African American female student, who had bright red fingernails and a medium afro that sprung out from under a green bandana tied around her head, sat opposite the table upon which the paper layout sat. She looked up, stopped working, and said "go upstairs to the counseling office they can tell you about it, but hey - don't you wanna write for the paper – you get to know a lot of peeps that way if that's what you're looking for."

Across the hall in the Student Government Association office seven people sat around a table engaged in conversation as they marked all over a large post-it notes with a variety of bold colored markers. When asked if they knew anything about a student mentoring program the following interaction transpired.

> One student responded "jeez I'm so connected…not for me I don't have time." A few others laughed and nodded in agreement. They explained

> that they were “already so connected to campus” that they didn’t see a need for any mentoring program. One of the students pointed to an African American female, and retorted “we got her – what more could we want?” The woman playfully swatted the air in the students direction and laughed as another student chimed in “or really, what more could we handle?” The woman rolled her eyes, introduced herself as the SGA advisor, and provided directions to the third floor where members of the counseling office could provide more information about the faculty-student mentoring program. (Fieldnotes)

Across campus from the Student Center sat Historic Hall, an English Tudor manor that had been placed on the National Register for Historic Places. Historic Hall housed members of NECC’s executive leadership which included the President, the Dean of Academic Affairs and Personnel Services, College-Community Relations, and the NECC Foundation. This two-story, rock brick mansion allocated to NECC by the county, was part of the estate of one of the area’s prominent families, and was an iconic representation of the institutions connection with its community. Community connections were integral to the fiber of NECC’s mission and were expressed through actions such as those displayed by the College’s president.

> When the president came to this college one of the first things he did was to get rid of the walls around the campus. So we are an open campus, part of the community, everyone is welcome here on this campus. (Gina 687)

Between Historic Hall and the Student Center was the center area of campus, home to gaggles of Canadian geese, rolling terrain, mature trees, open lawn space and a mix of contemporary and historic architecture which provided a serene environment.

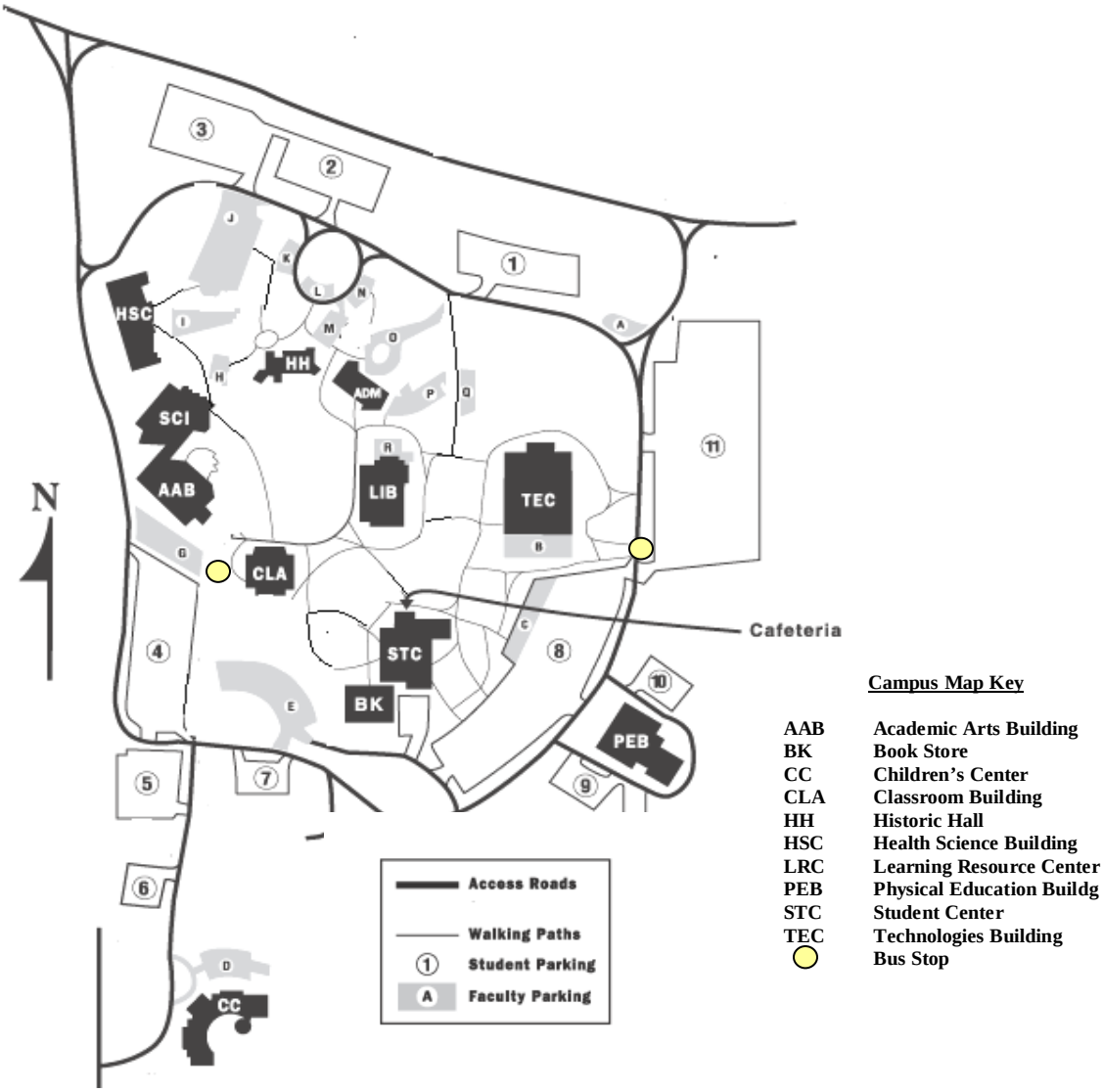

Figure 1. A modified map depicting the Northeastern Community College campus.

The People

Boasting the state's largest continuing education program and priding itself as a national leader in immigrant education, NECC's student body was as diverse as the architecture of the campus buildings. The institutional research office expressed that twenty-seven point five percent of the student body was born in a country other than the United States, 52.7 percent of the students were Caucasian, more than eighteen percent were Black, and more than sixteen percent were of Hispanic descent. Almost half of the students taking classes for credit were over the age of twenty-five, and 51 percent of students were enrolled in full-time courses.

While the ethnic and cultural diversity among the faculty and staff did not mirror that of the student populations, the institution was working to improve upon this measure. Committed to the success of community college students, NECC's faculty and staff have received the greatest number of state-wide awards for excellence in teaching and development when compared to all other 35 community college in the state system. The consensus among campus community members was that the campus' faculty and staff were dedicated to the success of their students.

> This campus is exceptional. The College is committed to the teaching process. At our school everybody, it does not matter who you are, everybody is committed to the learning process from the secretary, I think even the maintenance people you know, we all are very – we are committed to people learning. We want people to become educated and to do that well you know, you have to mentor people along. (Gina 460…467)

Henry, NECC's president embodied the institution's spirit of education and was among the 38 individuals actively engaged in the formal faculty-student mentoring program at NECC. Faculty and staff clearly articulated an institutional expectation regarding the role of mentoring within the campus' culture of education as they expressed their perceptions that "if you are not …. then you do not work here." "You are considered a substandard faculty member if you do not do it." While it was known among faculty that many of their peers mentor students through informal avenues, there still was recognition that the formal mentoring program earned "the President's seal of approval." (Wendy) Table 1 depicts the cohort of NECC faculty and staff members that served as formal mentors to 101 students during the Spring 2009 semester.

Table 1

Summary of NECC Faculty and Staff Members Serving as Formal Mentors

Position Held at NECC	Number
Full-Time Tenure Track Faculty Members	12
Librarians – some teach adjunct overload	7
Part-Time Adjunct Faculty Members	6
Counselors/Academic Advisors – some teach adjunct overload	5
Administrators – Division Dean or Executive Leadership	5
Curriculum Specialists – Professional Staff	3

Research Participants

Of the 38 faculty, staff, and administrators actively engaged in formal mentoring processes 19 participated in interviews and or observations sessions. As further

confirmation of the racial differences between faculty and administrator, and student, 100 percent of research participants described themselves racially as “White”; however, four of the 14 female participants were born outside of the United States. One of the 14 female participants held the position of Division Dean, the other female administrators who participated were directors of their respective departments. Conversely, two of the three men interviewed held full-time executive level administrative positions, including the College president, while the third was a full-time faculty member of English. The final male participant who engaged in the research during an observation session, a member of the Steering Committee, held a full-time professional staff position within the library’s information technology division. Two individuals scheduled to be interviewed were unable to participate due to weather that prevented a return to campus from a national conference and personal health concerns.

Additional summative descriptors of the 14 participants who engaged in interview processes are provided within Table 2. Details regarding the five additional participants who attended the Steering Committee meeting are not provided individually; rather, that meeting is described as one critical instance in a latter section of this chapter.

As desired, a combination of faculty, staff, and administrators representing various academic division and institutional offices participated in the interview process; thus a diversity of perspectives was gathered. Voices from individuals representing Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Business Affairs, Continued Education, and the Foundation Office were incorporated into the interviews and will be referenced throughout the remainder of this dissertation. Specifically, perspectives from various academic divisions including Arts and Humanities, Mathematics and Science, Social

Sciences, Health Sciences, and Developmental Education were captured via the interview process. Table 2 is provided as a quick reference guide to assist the reader as they continue to explore the cultural context of NECC by gaining insights into the personalities, values, and character of the NECC faculty, staff, and administrators who participated in individual interviews associated with this study.

Table 2

Descriptors of Participants who Engaged in Interview Processes

Pseudonym	Position Type	Years at NECC	Years as Mentor at NECC	NECC Alum
Shirley	Faculty	3	3	No
Dani	Staff	7	7	No
Erin	Staff	4	4	No
Seren	Staff + adjunct teach	19	12	Yes
Wendy	Admin	15	6	No
Misty	Faculty	19	19	Yes
Wonda	Admin + adjunct teach	12	12	No
Yancey	Admin + adjunct teach	7	7	No
Henry	Admin + adjunct teach	42	42	No
Meghan	Faculty	6.5	3	Yes
Gina	Admin + adjunct teach	17	17	No
Dianne	Faculty	17	17	No
Walter	Faculty	6	4	No
Saedi	Staff	31	31	No

Note. Admin is an abbreviation to represent that the associated participant served in a traditional administrative position.

A profile of each participant involved in a personal interview, and a description of the space in which the interview transpired, is provided in chronological order below. References to ethnicity, race, or cultural experiences and affiliations of the participants resulted from information that they personally shared with the researcher via the interview or the associated written demographic survey. Next, a description of the formal faculty-student mentoring Steering Committee is presented. Finally, as suggested by Erlandson et al (1993), critical incidents recorded through observation, candid interactions, and engagement in routine campus activities will be offered to contribute to this narrative portrait intended to depict the social context and campus culture in which NECC's formal faculty-student mentoring program subsists.

Shirley

Shirley was the first faculty member interviewed through which her willingness to "meet students where they are" and for the student to "take the lead" in setting the mentorship boundaries was evident. Shirley's regularly scheduled bi-weekly meeting with Kathryn at 6:30 a.m. in Shirley's office provided invaluable insights into a formal community college faculty-student mentoring exchange.

> The greatest challenge of doing this at a community college is getting a student to spend time here outside of class time. Because nine times out of 10, if they are not here at class they are out at work. One of the reasons I'm here at this time and day (6:17 a.m.), is I have a whole lot of students who do an eight o'clock class and a nine o'clock class and then they are

off to work the rest of the day. So if I am not here before that eight o'clock class they can never meet with me, and that is not fair. (742)

Setting her deep blue traditional coffee mug in which a fresh tea bag was steeping, Shirley got out of her black roller computer chair and greeted Kathryn with a hug. Shirley's petite runner's frame was dwarfed by Kathryn's tall stocky build, yet there was no sense of awkwardness between the two as they settled into seats that faced each other. After introductions the two opened their session with a lively conversation/commentary regarding a documentary that Kathryn had watched for a class. At 18 minutes into the mentoring session, Kathryn stopped fidgeting with her Dunkin Donuts coffee cup, uncrossed her legs that had been tightly clamped at the knees, settled back into her black plastic chair as she placed her right ankle atop her left knee. The energy in the room relaxed from a forced conversation to a calm ambiance with smooth transitory statements. Shirley leaned forward, crossed her ankles and tucked them under her chair, as she listened intently as Kathryn expressed some of the challenges she was facing, in her personal life as well as academically.

So I'm talking to my lawyer yesterday and he is saying 'well this is basically the end of the line, this is all that we can do – nothing.' and I'm like, 'dude like I just paid you like over $1,000 dollars to not have to do this and you are now telling me that.' So yesterday was a little bit of a rocky day you know there was some financial realities and what not. So that's the stuff that is going on on the outside. Ohhh and also work – goodness when it rains… uhm work… So that is what is going on. Umm it

is okay, but it has been very emotional, just a lot of stress, and that is on top of all of the papers that we are doing you know. (75….128)

The interchange between Kathryn and Shirley resembled a professional tennis match, meaningful volleys culminated with conclusive points. Backhand comments through which Kathryn would downplay her future, lead to tension filled moments in which Shirley served up support.

> But remember that your most solid ground is yourself – you always come through – ALWAYS. Look back you always come through. You can always depend on you. I know you think 'well that doesn't really stack up when they are asking me for two grand in two days,' and it doesn't stack up for when I have to decide when I'm gonna move, that it doesn't stack up when… but YOU are the strength in yourself. And your attitude of each day at a time will work it. (394)

Shirley highlighted Kathryn's academic and professional skills, and provided encouragement and direction to Kathryn when she stated

> it is NOT a footnote. Think how many hours you spend - make a list of the skills that you have to use to do that job. Okay you are not getting paid for it, it is all volunteer, but you organize, you communicate, you do PR, you direct members to do… you know That's how you have to build yourself. What are the skills that you have? In fact the next time we meet why don't you bring me how you would describe that and we will go over it. (268)

The mentoring episode concluded with well wishes and reiteration from Kathryn that she would bring a copy of her resume, information she received from her pending

meeting with the transfer advisor, and an update regarding her financial situation to there meeting in two weeks. As she hoisted her black purse upon her broad left shoulder Kathryn returned Shirley's one armed hug, thanked her for "another meaningful session," dropped her coffee cup into the trash can by the door, and headed out to get to work before her 8:00 a.m. shift at the hospital began.

Subsequently, Shirley described how Kathryn had grown, how satisfying it had been for her to be a part of this amazing student's progress.

> What you saw today is about a 360 degree turn from where she was last year. When I first met her she was very soft spoken and very little eye contact. She had not been in this section of the building before; everything about this was new to her. And because of this one goal that she had, that we worked together and we made it. She just keeps coming and growing. And becoming of who she is and what she is capable of doing and I am so lucky to have been able to see that – that is a good thing. She had no conception of what she could do. I mean none. (549)

In addition to serving as Kathryn's formal faculty mentor, Shirley taught 12 credit hours of English courses each semester, as well as coordinated a three credit scholarship program for future educators. Prior to her three year tenure at NECC Shirley spent twenty years teaching English within the public sector of secondary education, and held various adjunct teaching positions at comprehensive, regional, public and private colleges and universities. She had participated in the formal faculty-student mentoring program during all three years of her tenure at NECC and had served on its Steering Committee during the past two years.

Dani and Erin

The second interview originally scheduled with Dani alone, resulted in an opportunity to host a guided conversation with the purpose of exploring the unique collaborative relationship between Dani and Erin, which served to foreshadow the collaborative spirit throughout the NECC campus culture. Dani and Erin shared an office located in the Center of the Learning Resource Center, and collaborated in order to make the most of their three-quarter time support-staff positions, each coordinated specific mentoring programs as well as supported NECC's volunteer programs. Neither woman served as a formal faculty mentor to students; however, they were instrumental in coordinating formal mentoring opportunities through which the diverse student populations at NECC got connected for success.

> It really doesn't matter <u>how</u> they connect on campus but once they connect to something or someone they get connected to other things. So – that's the purpose of the whole thing. So you know that if they are having problems they're gonna get to the academic support center, they're gonna get into a club, they're gonna start to become connected. (194)

While they sought to meet mutual goals related to connecting students to resources they needed to succeed, Dani and Erin coordinated distinctly different mentoring programs from their own workspace within their shared office, and expressed divergent personal and professional experiences related to mentoring processes. Their shared office space, and collaborative spirit in which they supported each other's program reiterated college's dedication to mentoring processes as well as the personnel's commitment to the NECC student success.

Erin assisted with the coordination of a woman's mentoring program that connected female business students with successful female executives from local corporations. Dressed in a business casual pant suit, Erin explained that one of the complications of the formal faculty-student mentoring program that Dani coordinated was that

> Each one (student and faculty mentor) needs something different. Its not like you can bring a speaker, its not like the one that I do about business where you can talk about business culture and communications and all the skills that you need – every body is looking for something else, so it's, there's just no way to bring it together like that. (307)

Erin also expressed that while the faculty resisted formal training, the business women who serve as mentors within the program she supported relied upon structures of training and accountability.

> Because the faculty just didn't really want to be trained. {Dani nodded her head and muttered an agreement} They didn't want accountability and they did not want to have a set number of meetings that they had to have or whatever. Where as my other program is very accountable its like- this is what's expected. (133)

Prior to her four years of service at NECC, Erin worked in a for-profit business corporation and expressed that she had fond memories of her mentors.

> My mentors were in the business field – they have been there for years, for year and years. I have had mentors all along the way from my graduate program to now… Knowing how, they told me what the possibilities were,

always taught me both to develop personally as well as professionally. That was the most wonderful part. (809…819)

Conversely, Dani expressed that

> There is actually a professor in graduate school that I would have loved to have had as a mentor but she was very busy…There is always that situation when I wanted help. I'd try very hard to find somebody to get a relationship with but it was a really bizarre experience. (806…829)

However, regardless of the difference between the programs they coordinated or the divergent personal experiences with mentors, both of these professional staff members expressed their allegiance to mentoring. With a broad smile showing her perfectly straight naturally white teeth Erin closed the interview as she commented "Despite all the complications – we love it." Nodding in agreement while she ran her right hand through her short brown hair before she sat it down in her lap Dani chimed in "There is nothing like hearing a student come back to you and say 'thank you – you have changed my whole life.' And I have to tell you that it just is good." (906)

Seren

Seren, a petite woman agreed to participate in the third interview as a result of casual conversation regarding the purpose of the Academic Support Services Center and the bustling student activity surrounding her desk. Seren was the first participant interviewed that was foreign born and she was a NECC alumnus.

A stark contrast to the hushed studying that transpired above, the Academic Support Services Center located in the basement of the Learning Resource Center was buzzing with activity. Students of all ages and skin tones were mingling among

computers, tutors, faculty, and staff as they sought support regarding class assignments, or were simply fulfilling study hours required for specific courses. Seren sat near the far end of the hallway that led into the open tutorial area, behind an L-shaped desk. Seren was a veteran educator with more than 30 years' teaching experience in public common education schools that overlapped her nineteen years of service at NECC.

In addition to her full-time professional staff position as an Academic Support Services coordinator, Seren, an energetic petite framed women whose eyes smiled when she shared her experiences as a formal faculty-mentor, taught two evening courses every semester including English Composition and Literature as well as English as a Second Language. She explained that she was a first generation immigrant student born in Germany to Holocaust survivors. Seren expressed that she understood what it meant to be a commuting first generation student, balancing family and school responsibilities, and gaining confidence in her ability to succeed. Her right hand formed a loose fist in her left hand and her elbows sat on the desk top as Seren rocked her hands in front of her chest in the rhythm of the final words of her impassioned statement through which she illustrated her wish for students to identify their own sense of self-efficacy.

> I think our students are particularly afraid and hesitant and shy about being out there and making a mistake and once they learn they can, their comfort level changes and once they are comfortable – they can do anything and that's the real lesson. That they can do it! (307)

Personal life and educational experiences fostered the development of the mentoring relationships that Seren described as "individual" and "organic." Staring at the

ceiling, appearing to search for the most effective words, she expressed that to her mentoring interactions were personal and distinct.

> It is hard to describe because it is organic and it happens the way it happens. With different students in happens in different ways. In my case I think it is almost always an activity-based relationship that then expands into something more. So let's say it starts when someone who does not speak the language well, they come and need some more help with second language acquisition skills and then it evolves or in some cases if a desire to stay connected to academia and I'm the connections, or in other cases it may be that there is a genuine building of an honest relationship. So they're different people, different experiences for different reasons. I can't identify exactly how it happens. I would guess that they would all get started from some academic foundation. (403)

The interview was intermittently interrupted as Seren responded to a female African-American student's request for assistance locating a book in the main stacks, a male African-American student's request to borrow a mathematics book in order to complete a class assignment, three phone calls, a male Hispanic student who stopped by to return a yellow highlighter he had borrowed, and countless students who traversed through the open work space as they logged in and out of the center via a computerized system that scaned their student identification card. After she explained that her position loged over 10,000 students study hours each semester, Seren expressed how she had engaged in informal mentoring practices throughout her career in addition to participating in NECC's formal faculty-student mentoring program for the past twelve years.

> I think the college becomes more of a community because of mentoring and I think everyone benefits from mentoring program….. And I talk about it a lot…. Sometimes it's just a matter of identifying needs of students. But it's not always easy….But I just feel like if I can just save one – you know that is great. Save the world one student at a time. (253…466)

Wendy

The fourth interview and the second foreign born participant, Wendy had communicated with the researcher three times prior to the interview sharing her excitement to participate in the study. Strikingly elegant, Wendy sat behind her L-shaped cherry colored wood administrator desk. Her thin athletic five-feet-ten-inch frame was clothed in a matching black pencil skirt that fell just below the knees, three inch stiletto patent leather black heals, a black three-quarter sleeve blouse covered by a thin purple silk cardigan. She shared that she had spent two and one half years' teaching in the public secondary school setting, ten years of experience working at a comprehensive four-year college, and 15 years of service in administration at NECC. While she did not teach any for-credit courses, Wendy interacted daily with students and had participated in the formal faculty-student mentoring program for six years.

Sitting in a temporary office with sparse decoration and few books within the bookshelves, Wendy explained that her transitory bright white walled office within the center of Learning Resource Center had removed her physically from the student interactions of which she was accustomed and enjoyed. She continued and expressed that the formal faculty-student mentoring program provided her with opportunities to

maintain meaningful interactions with students. Transitioning from a more centralized office where student traffic had been abundant, to an obscurely located office had impacted her organic interactions with students; however, Wendy reported that her participation in, and the mentorship resulting from, the formal faculty-student mentoring program had not faltered.

> You know, the relationships are always as gratifying for me I think and I hope they are for the student. And one of the down sides of being [in this office] is that you often don't see the students once they get started. You know you sort of hand them off to other folks and so the mentoring program allows me sort of the latitude to of staying connected. And I stay connected, we all do to a lot of students but again this sort of legitimizes it to me. And that's always just really fulfilling so that parts been really great. (132)

As a Cuban American Wendy was dedicated to the success of immigrant students and had participated in administrative processes driven to enhance the support for students studying English as a second language so that they may succeed in post-secondary education opportunities. Working collaboratively with colleagues across NECC's campus she had been instrumental in receiving a grant that

> brought together 15 community colleges, the American Association for Community Colleges and some other advocacy groups, some other sort of non for profit think tanks, the migration policy institute is one that does a lot of data analysis and research on immigrants. We are working to do a few things. One is to raise to a national level awareness about the

> important work that community colleges do on immigrant education. Another is to create a frame work from which we can lend technical assistance and peer mentoring to other institutions, community colleges that might want to get involved in [immigrant education]. And also to sort of do some soft advocacy for issues that would break down some of the barriers to immigrants. Right now you know the DREAM Act has resurfaced; now it is in the Senate and how can we kind of push and urge other people – not that we want to become lobbyists, but can we rattle the cage a little bit. (23)

Maintaining contact with students she mentored a year ago, Wendy explained that intended to provide continued support for the success, professional, and personal development of native and foreign born Hispanic Americans. She expressed that her

> interest has always been to try to mentor Hispanic students. I guess there are two camps as to whether you should try to mentor like people and or that it does not matter…. I serve them initially as a trouble shooter, and I think that that is what sort of broke the ice for us because they really needed help navigating the system (94)

At the conclusion of the interview Wendy leaned forward placed her elbow on the desk top next to the clear class candy container full of mints. She brushed her short black hair off of her face, smiled, and stated "…it takes a real different animal to work at a community college. But you know I feel real strongly that we're the ones making a difference."

Misty

The fifth interview and the third foreign born participant, Misty related to the needs of international students. Misty was the second professional staff member interviewed who had graduated from NECC.

She explained that as foreign born first generation college student that graduated from NECC she related to many NECC students in a "special" way. The United States became her home when she was a teenager and she expressed that "I relate really well to students who are foreign born students who come here. And I understand how they feel and I think that sometimes helps our relationship." (198) She continued to express how she related to and supported the students she mentored.

> I think of who I was when I was their age and I put myself in their place and I think 'this is what I wanted to have from an adult that I was speaking to' and that's what I do I say 'what would you like me to try to help you with?' I don't try to tell them this is what you should do. I say 'where do you want to be and how do you think you can do that?' And all I want to do is kind of push them in the right direction. But I don't want to tell them this is what you got to do period because - I don't think that's the role that I want to have (168)

Beginning as a part-time tutor in the Academic Support Center, Misty had worked for NECC for nineteen years and at the time of the study served as a full-time coordinator for the Academic Support Center. In addition to her administrative duties, Misty taught at least one developmental math course in the evening each semester. Developmental math had provided her with opportunities to connect with a greater number of students; to "not

only learn the material [but] to help them build their confidence and feel that they can do it" (248). It was her "heart for these students" that energized her to offer continued support and guidance for semesters after they have completed her course.

> I'm always the shoulder to cry on – they know I'm always here and the doors always open. They want to do lunch – let's do lunch. We call each other once in a while. We email each other. If I don't hear from them for let's say in 2-weeks I'll email them and say 'how's it going? I haven't heard from you, are you okay?' And they will drop in fairly often instead of calling or emailing and say 'hey I am doing okay – I've been busy.' And that's what tends to happen sometimes during the semester. But I try to stay in touch with them because I do worry, and I want to make sure that they know that I am there, if they need to talk to someone. (130)

While she had engaged in mentoring activities informally for more than 12 years, Misty also participated in the formal faculty-student mentoring program during four consecutive semesters prior to this study.

Wonda

Wonda participated in the sixth interview and was the fourth self-stated foreign-born female who engaged in this research. After 20 years of teaching and administrative experience in various national and international institutions of higher education, Wonda began her tenure at NECC where she served as the dean of an academic division. For the past 12 years Wonda taught one-three credit hour course each semester and participated in the formal faculty-student mentoring program in order to "keep connected to the

students she served". With a smile on her face, her chocolate brown eyes lit up as she shared

> I feel very - not only just rewarding, its quite uplifting for the day – as an administrator our days are not always full of positive things, more times we have headaches and I always like to see my mentee. One time was really funny. I was to see a student and I was in the middle of addressing a kind of a crisis kind of situation and I was really getting frustrated talking to the person I was really, really trying so hard to help. I guess my voice was getting louder – or unusually high and it was enough for the student to notice and the student said to the secretary 'should I come back because Wonda is really upset right now – should I come back later?" And so then the secretary came in and asked if he should go and then come back. And I said 'no – he is my good – send him right in. You know I need him more than anything else' (347).

Wonda sat up in her black leather computer desk chair that she had rolled out from behind her uncluttered executive desk when she crossed her legs covered in thick white nylons at the knees. Her simple strand of pearls and pear and diamond earrings elegantly accessorized the professional white sleeveless dress with matching three-quarter sleeve waist length suit jacket, and anklet boots. Her enthusiasm for mentoring and students brightened the room similarly to the sunlight that streamed in from the windows that lined the upper third of the wall behind her.

Just above a cherry oak working table around which eight matching chairs sat there were three holiday cards, a small rock electric water fall, and a rock with the

Chinese symbol for teacher – all mementos associated with meaningful relationships. Above the credenza upon which sat a computer were three frames containing the words teamwork, leadership, and attitude while across the desktop next to the phone was a large vase full of fresh flowers. Crisp, motivational, and feminine described Wonda and her office; it was impossible to disregard the positive energy surrounding and running through Wonda as she described how mentoring made her feel.

> It makes you feel really close to the person you know and I think that being a teacher is such a great… I wouldn't even call it a job – its not a job its really a calling you know. You've been given, you've been blessed to be given the opportunity to support others in a way that no one else can. (458)

Wonda shared that she would not be where she is today without the support of mentors, she was committed to mentoring processes and expressed the intentions to participate in NECC's formal faculty-student mentoring program for the entirety of her career.

Yancey

The seventh interview, and the first male participant, Yancey agreed to participate in the study during a personal face-to-face contact with the researcher regarding his educational philosophy.

A closed wooden door without any décor, and two large windows with blinds lowered separated Yancey's office from a central area within the Learning Resources Center. Similarly the interior of the office was void of decoration, a two piece gray table top metal framed desk sat in the south west corner of the office underneath windows that

opened to the center section of campus. Yancey sat in a black fabric chair with rolling wheels, he rested his interlocked hands behind his head and his left ankle was propped on his khaki covered knee. In a laid-back manner Yancey shared his passion for teaching future educators. In addition to his full time administrative role within NECC, every semester Yancey taught a course for future educators.

> I feel passionately that there be passionate and really dedicated people to be teachers and unfortunately you rarely see that lately. So, what I've discovered over the years is that there are a bunch of people who think they want to be teachers who are lousy and for the wrong reasons, they want the summers off, they want to be off at 3:00 and so and I, I'd like to change that. And this course gets me an opportunity to get to know them real well. And encourage and support them and know if they are sincere about their dedication to school and teaching. (120)

It was to the students that were sincere about their dedication to teaching and committed to their own educational process that Yancey expressed interest in mentoring.

> I think I could be most useful as a mentor for people who are willing, who understand that it takes commitment. I guess that I could be most useful to people who are thinking about education for a career. Most of these people who are thinking about education, within that subset I could be most useful to people who are willing to invest their time into the process. To do what it takes to make it work. Who will follow up with the meetings. And even the people who you know with the right motivation they can master the skills. You know unfortunately so many of the students here

> have so many complications in their lives that they are not able to concentrate on their education for some time, or anything other than simply living, and that is the case for most of these people who take night classes. (147)

Yancey expressed his perception that "we babysit a lot here."

> Unfortunately there are those that come to school that just are not intellectually inclined, and that is not to say about the students who don't have the skill levels – you can over come that but I think are those who just there is no way they will make it through graduation. (128)

And for students who need support in areas outside of his content area he expressed

> I'm not a formal guide for holding student hands through the process. That is one of the reasons why when my last mentee came to me about financial aid I needed to get him to someone else because all those complicated things are not my business. I did not want to send him in the wrong direction. (264)

For seven years Yancey had served in an administrative role within Academic Affairs at NECC. He had participated in the formal faculty-student mentoring program most actively during the four years prior to the time of this study and described that many of his mentoring relationships had evolved from informal interactions with students.

> Mentoring is a formal program that makes a lot of sense to be involved with the students, but there are other options here to formalize relationship. But the less formal ones are just as important. …you know there are certainly tons of other examples of people who have wondered in

> or who I have taught before who stop by for direction who I stay in touch with – you know they too are true college mentoring but not through the program. (296…305)

Additionally he described how informal or formal mentoring ought to transpire

> because people care and want to be involved, not because someone in some far off administrative position says it has to happen – or dreamed up a mentoring program, I don't know it just needs to be a natural thing. (385)

Prior to his tenure at NECC Yancey had held positions within traditional public secondary education institutions for seven years, contributed to experiential secondary education within the public school sector, in addition to serving in various central administrative and research positions associated with public secondary education systems in the United States.

Henry

The eighth interview resulted when the interviewer stopped by the President's office to express her appreciation for his willingness to provide her permission and access to study mentoring at NECC. Henry, nodded his acceptance of the thank-you, shook hands with the researcher and invited her into his office located in a nationally accredited historic building – a regional treasure tying NECC to the surrounding communities.

Built in 1932 the 20-room Tudor mansion, with its large carved front doors, was crafted for philanthropic millionaires with great appreciation for warmth, comfort, and beauty. The warmth of Historic Hall was a welcome respite from the damp and dreary April morning drizzle. Henry was seated behind a grand desk centered in front of a large

window, a thin man dressed in navy slacks and a white oxford with a light narrow lined grey and maroon plaid that was button up through the collar where a maroon tie was loosely fit. This grand domed ceiling room with ornate walls paneled with carved oak, which once served as a family room, contained volumes of books including dissertations relating to NECC and Henry's administrative practices.

The researcher sat in a reupholstered high back blue couch, which had been one of the room's original furnishings, perpendicular to Henry's matching arm chair, as he explained his philosophy related to mentoring.

> so why do we need mentoring… the basic thing is to provide role models of people who have achieved to people who can achieve, to support our student to achieve – people who can guide our students to achieve all that they are capable of being – simple. (65)

He continued to express why he personally engaged in the formal faculty-student mentoring program at NECC.

> I just enjoy doing it – I enjoy helping out. And I also wanted to show others that everybody participates. That is it. You would be surprised at how much mentoring I do in the course of a year apart from the program…. at least once a month I get to do something like that. I think it is an obligation of our profession. (73…81)

As he continued to describe his dedication to mentoring and the purpose he perceived it played in the educational process he recalled a time during the beginning of his career when

> a young man who as a senior in high school, drove his girlfriend to this campus. She was enrolling and when he was there the director of admissions said 'what about you?' He says naww, I could never make it in college. So anyhow he talked him into possibly taking a class or two. His high school would not send us his transcript because they said he was not capable of college course work. So I drove down to his high school and picked it up. He went on to get a 3.5 average with us, a 3.7 average to the 4 year university where he transferred….I have his dissertation which was inscribed to me as 'from someone who was not supposed to succeed.' He went off to become a dean at a community college, graduate school administrator teaching community college courses, he has been part of a nation wide think-tank for community colleges, and now he is the president at the largest community college in the state. So, I have the pleasure of seeing somebody succeed who has potential, and you know, unfortunately the establishment had told him that he could not possibly do that (99…114)

Concurrent to serving as the president for NECC for the past 42 years, Henry had taught at a private four-year, graduate degree granting institution for more than thirty years. Described consistently by NECC faculty, administrators, and students as a man with outstanding character and passion for education, when asked why he chose to dedicate his career to community colleges his response was "…my graduate advisor, you could say because of mentoring."

Meghan

The ninth interview transpired with the third female NECC graduate, another passionate educator who expressed her perspective that her ability to empathize with students greatly contributed to her ability to support their academic success and personal growth.

If the bright yellow smiley face poster on the outside of Meghan's office door that stated "you can do it" did not grab your attention, perhaps the motivating motif within the office including elegant wall hangings that said "grow," "simplify," "create," or "inspire" would have. Holding the title of professor, Meghan served as the institution's clinician of social work and taught a three credit hour course each semester. A proud alumnus of NECC, Meghan had worked at the institution for six and one half years and had participated in the formal faculty-student mentoring program for three consecutive years prior to the time of this study.

Sandwiched between two student meetings, Meghan's interview was lively as she depicted how the economic downturn had impacted the already needy and overwhelmed base of NECC student populations. As she tucked her thick shoulder length blond hair with light brown lowlights behind her ear which displayed her thick silver hoop earrings that matched her silver rings on every finger and thick chunky charm bracelet, she expressed how she related to the students because:

> You know I was an adult student when I came back – I had three babies that I was raising and my husband was working round the clock to make this happen. I say 'its about sacrifice – you have to work hard and you know you have to set your goals and, just really you can do it.' (101)

As she crossed her right leg over her left knee her medium heeled black boots become apparent under her dark blue jeans, and she continued to describe the local environment and the students she mentored.

> We have a population of students who can't get a job – the shoe store is not hiring anymore, mom and pop's drugstore is out of business, so they are coming in and to a point – I just had a student who wanted to kill herself because she could not find a job. She was getting so much pressure at home because the parents did not have money and they were saying 'you got to help you got to chip in' and she says 'I'm tryin, I'm tryin but there is nothing.'
>
> You know that we are seeing a lot of that. I mean I started at 8 o'clock this morning. I got a phone call from a student who said 'I slept in my car I don't know what to do.' You know and this student is in panic – do I keep trying to go to college or to survive – so I just keep working trying to give my handful of referrals. It's wonderful to see that we have so many mentors that are really helping these students and they are really getting it. (176)

Her clear blue eyes looked down at her thick silver bangle watch and she stood up from the black rolling chair that she sat in behind her wooden desk, she ran her manicured hands across the front of her black and white striped oxford button up that was neatly tucked into her jeans and excused herself explaining that she needed to get to her next student appointment. Meghan stared out the open window in the corner of the office

that was cluttered with an overstuffed arm chair, three throw pillows, and an assortment of plants and she reiterated her commitment to mentoring when she said:

> I really really, really love teaching. And that helps with the mentoring. You know I always mention that we have the mentoring program in the class – so they are aware of it…I have a passion for this place and business – it is great. That's why – I want to give back – you want to tell these students they can and just give back. (325)

Gina

The tenth interviewee was Gina, a boisterous social worker with shoulder length curly red-brown hair, who had worked at NECC for seventeen years and had participated in informal student mentoring interactions from the beginning of her tenure. She explained that her office was not a suitable space for an interview, so she reserved a department work-room space where faculty and staff kept and prepared snacks and lunches in the mini-refrigerator and matching white microwave. As she prepared a cup of hot tea from the containers atop the microwave where packets of sugar, Splenda, tea packets, coffee bags, thin red straw stir sticks, and a variety of cups set, she expressed that she had been looking forward to discussing her experiences as a mentor to students.

> I've had a lot of conversations with people I notice either a gap or a struggle or, for lack of a better word an obstacle or challenge, you know I like to make it more into challenges that I see are prohibiting them from accomplishing whatever it is. And I sort of feel that if you can develop a relationship with somebody then I can help them move in that direction – I can help them get over that hump.(45)

Gina sat her tea cup on the eight-foot white table and settled into a maroon-colored plastic chair. She leaned forward with her elbows on the table's edge in a relaxed manner, adjusted her thick gold costume jewelry necklace, and with her perfectly French-manicured fingernails began fidgeting with her tea bag string. Her clear brown eyes danced with expression and her hand motions emphasized verbal interactions as she explained that prior to serving the NECC campus community she had held various positions in not-for-profit organizations that served women, as well as the post of professor at an Ivy League institution; however, it was the community college that she most loved.

> And then this job became available and I did the whole thing. I sort of fit the bill at the time, I mean it was kind of weird and I wasn't looking for a job but I interviewed and I really liked Henry and I really liked the campus as a whole and so I really kind of missed academia, a little bit, you know and so anyways I've been here now for 17 years and love it – I just love it, it's the best.. (322)

Gina maintained eye contact except when she expressed her personal experiences as a mentee during her graduate studies, this energetic woman described how she taught two evening classes each semester in addition to her full-time position as the Director for a one of the largest programs of its kind in the state because she, just like the rest of her colleagues, loved what she did. Formally, or informally, her perception was that

> Frankly I think almost every teacher that I've ever met here, while maybe they may not be a part of the formal mentoring program, I have yet to meet somebody who didn't move somebody or who hasn't helped

somebody…. I think people here like, embrace it, you know we live it, you know we don't just talk it, we really do it. (509…582)

Gina took in a deep breath as she looked down at a thick gold band watch, she exhaled, and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to talk about mentoring. Next, she explained that she needed to attend to an issue that had arisen involving her dean. A deep dimple prominently displayed on her chin as she smiled and whisked out of the room, her ruby orange suit jacket that sat just below her hips over the long black skirt floated behind her. The black backless flat walking shoes she wore allowed her to briskly return to her everyday activities as she retreated from the interview, she greeted others in the hallway as she headed towards her next meeting.

Dianne

Interview 11 transpired with Dianne after the researcher observed a portion of her class from the hallway adjacent to a classroom. The researcher made her way down the hall and waited outside Dianne's office door in order to request an opportunity to speak with her about her experiences as a faculty mentor. After class, Dianne noticed the researcher who sat outside her doorway and after a brief conversation agreed to meet with the researcher "after I see how I can help these students."

Described by her peers as "the epitome of a perfect mentor" Dianne is a full-time tenured professor who taught 15 credit hours each semester which included courses within developmental reading, developmental English, and study skills. Her ethic of care and passion for the student were evident as she expressed

One thing that drives me nuts is when a faculty member says 'I cannot get work done when the kids are here.' The kids ARE the work. Teaching is

> what I do. I am a teacher not a content expert. Teaching is who I am, it is a calling, and everyone needs a mentor. (207)

Similarly her actions and interactions with the students that followed her to her office after the conclusion of their class displayed a commitment to the personal, professional, and academic developmental processes of students.

> At the conclusion of class seven students, three males – one Caucasian, one Hispanic, and one African American and four females – one Caucasian, two Hispanic, and one African American follow Dianne to her office. Leaving her keys in the door as she props it open with a rock, she invites two of the females into the office space. While one student settles into a seated position on the floor next to a bookshelf full of books, another student is set up at her computer printing off an article to support the completion of a class assignment. Dianne, clad in dark blue jeans, a black shirt covered with a black suit jacket, wears a soft pink cotton/silk scarf and classic silver hoop earrings barely noticeable in her curly shoulder length brown hair; she answers students' questions, one at a time, giving the last student a hug before she leaves – encouraging her to "stick with it" and let her know if there was anything else she could do to support her. (Field notes)

Prior to her seventeen years at NECC Dianne taught for four years in a K-12 public education setting. Dianne had mentored students formally and informally since the beginning of her tenure at NECC.

Walter

Interview 12 took place on a Tuesday morning at 9:00 a.m. with Walter, an associate professor. Walter taught four courses each semester in addition to contributing to the coordination of NECC's honor program. Walter sat behind a contemporary light wood desk that hosted seven neatly stacked piles of papers. His back to the window, sun beams streamed in casting glares across the eight black metal picture frames that held portraits and candid photos of an attractive woman and children. Well stocked bookshelves were built into the office wall below the window sill. The window sill hosted various sized picture frames, thank-you cards, and a canvas painting of the words from one of Edgar Allen Poe's novel works.

Walter's smile transformed his clean cut, bearded professorial appearance – including a tan overcoat with elbow patches – you'd expect to see engaged in a Socratic lecture in an overcrowded university classroom, into a friendly, approachable, caring advisor. With his left elbow balanced on the arm of a black leather office chair, and his right ankle setting on his left knee such that his brown socks that perfectly matched his pressed slacks could be seen above the cuff of his classic brown leather loafers, Walter shared how invigorating it was for him to be a part of NECC's campus community, especially after years of experience in the corporate finance world.

> I just love the campus environment. I love having discussions with people who are discovering things about themselves who are putting themselves in a position to kind of take off. You know they are getting ready to begin their trajectory and - to talk about ideas with them whether that be in a classroom setting or whether that be in a one-on-one. (113)

He flashed a quick smile before he returned to his pensive engagement, then Walter described one of his initial mentoring experiences through which he learned a lot about himself and the curiosity, interaction, and communication patterns of the community college students with whom he grew to "respect tremendously."

> He would come regularly on Wednesday mornings to just talk and would come prepared with questions. Questions about life in general, questions about what I did to get to the place where I am in my life. And that was a different kind of a mentoring for me – because he wanted me to talk more about me which usually - I try to back off of. I usually try to keep the focus on the student on them but that was nice. It became very apparent that we had a lot of common ground as we had these sessions (37)

Walter also discussed that he made a conscious effort for students that take his classes to "…get to know me as a person and not just some academic robot up there or something but it never really goes deeper than that." (460) Yet he expressed that in his mentoring relationships there was more of

> A sense that you have exchanged something – that there has been a give and take on both parts –the student that they have been honest with you, you know that might involve vulnerability of getting to know someone is a way they don't know – or asking questions or sometimes opening up a little bit (462)

He continued and expressed that

> Sometimes it means talking about myself and there are things that I will share in mentoring relationships about myself that I would not share in the

> classroom – that can make all the difference to a student who, I don't think they want to feel like that they are taking all the chances and you know kind of putting it on the line (472)

However, he maintained that it was critical to the success of a mentoring relationship for boundaries to be established and respected.

> I want to make sure that the boundaries are clear but I want to also offer assistance in whatever assistance I can. And if they feel comfortable addressing me by my first name, and it keeps them coming back, then that's the important thing (60)

Prior to his six-year tenure at NECC Walter taught in an adjunct faculty capacity at various private and public four-year post-secondary institutions. During his years when we worked within corporate America, he did not experience positive mentoring relationships; however, individuals with whom he worked during his graduate studies exemplify qualities of purposeful mentoring. Walter had participated in the formal faculty-student mentoring program at NECC during the four years prior to the time of this study.

Saedi

Interview 13 explored the perspective of one of NECC's professional staff members who had been a part of mentoring processes on the campus for 31 years. Coordinating a mentoring program since1977, Saedi had supported and eased the transition for numerous adult women who returned to school, a successful mentoring program previously mentioned that paired female business students with female executives from community businesses. This mentoring program that focused its

attention to female business students was the same mentoring program that Erin, a participant from the second interview, supported. Saedi explained that the mentoring program "…has been like a dream that took on a life of its own." (266)

As she expressed the benefits she perceived that the students gained from participating in the program she shared:

> We have been working with them primarily to helping them build their self-confidence. And doing things to help think about and discuss with their mentors that whole work/life balance that is very challenging for some of our students who are parents. So work/life balance those are issues that are helpful for them to consider when they are planning for their future. The mentorship helps them to discuss those. (109)

She continued and described that during the past year the program had reached a milestone.

> This year for the very first time we have one of our mentees back to serve as a mentor. That was always one of our goals it was our dream. And that has started, but you know what we love too is when we get a call from a mentor who says, 'I have been talking you up and I have three more who are interested in doing this.' So the mentors go back and speak within their jobs and get other excited. (219)

Referred to participate in this study by the President, Saedi graciously participated in an interview on a Tuesday afternoon in her office. Located in the health sciences building, Saedi's office hosted a wall of bookshelves full of books, various sized three ring binders, and some mementos across from a wall with windows at the top, two of which were opened letting in some of the cool damp outside air. Adjacent to the window

at a 90 degree angle and against the wall that separated Saedi's office from the office manager's area sat a comfortable blue soft over-stuffed loveseat. Atop the glass and wood coffee table, between the love seat and Saedi, who was perched in a classic wooden chair in front of a traditional cherry wood desk, sat pictures, documents, and experiences associated with the mentoring program she had coordinated for over 31 years.

Observation and Critical Instances

In addition to the individuals portrayed above who formally consented and participated in semi-structured interviews, various observation and informal interaction sessions transpired through which a greater understanding of NECC's campus culture was developed. Below are depictions of a routine campus tour, impromptu interactions with an international student and a custodian, and observations from a formal faculty-student Steering Committee quarterly meeting.

Campus Tour

Reservations were required prior to the prescribed campus tour that began at 3:00 on the second floor of the administration building. A soft-spoken graduate of NECC, greeted the six prospective students and some of their family members. This five foot dark haired petite recruiter was dressed in gray slacks, short sleeved pink blouse under which a black cotton camisole peeked out. She guided the tour group down an interior hallway to a meeting room in which four- six-by-four feet white topped tables were pushed together and formed one large meeting space. The participants sat down in chrome-framed burgundy-cloth industrial chairs and turned their attention to the recruiter who expressed the benefits of earning a degree at NECC.

"NECC is the best place to prepare to transfer to a four year college. This is the best place to start – I know I would not have been so successful if I had not started here." Subconsciously the recruiter fidgeted with an oversized glitzy Mickey Mouse watch with a black leather band, or the large rectangular pink charm that hung around her neck which was attached to a thin silver box chain, as she provided a spiel regarding the highlights of NECC, how to apply for admissions, and statistics for various academic programs. She paused to ask if anyone had questions and then concluded the information session as she encouraged the future students to "be seen within your academic program." As the tour group was led back to the front of the Admission's office, a brief statement regarding the plethora of academic support services at NECC was provided and topped of with "we want our students to know we are here for you."

Once back in the front area of Admissions, the tour group was met by two traditional age Student Ambassadors. Strikingly attractive with long straight brown hair, yet somewhat shy in demeanor, the first student introduced herself as the volunteer tour guide. Next, she introduced her peer as an Ambassador in training. Nearly one-half of an hour later, the uneventful tour concluded back at the Administration building where the tour guides bid the group members farewell, pointed various individuals towards specific offices that they sought, gave each other a high five, and then hurriedly walked off to their next meetings – one in the student newspaper office and the other a tutoring session.

International Student

At 8:42 a.m. outside the Learning Resource Center a black woman with thick long braided hair - dressed in jeans and a tan corduroy hooded jacket cinched at the waist by a three inch belt – stopped to ask why I was staring at the goose that sat on its nest. After a

few moments of insignificant chatter, the Nigerian woman, with a strong accent yet clear articulate English expressed how “dese geese all over campus and their sheet (shit) remind me of my stagnant country.” She explained that she moved to the United States in 1994 when her government was taken over by military rule. “I was young, but I saw all dee older educated peoples were miserable and jobless. I wanted a better life. So I came to be here.”

Beginning her day every morning at 3:00 a.m. she studied for three hours, prepared for the day and then caught a bus from the city for a 40 minute ride to campus. After a full day of classes that began at 8:00 a.m. and finished by 2:00 p.m. she rushed back to catch another bus to get to her full-time job at the hospital where she worked a mid-shift from 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. “This schedule is difficult. Hard on my body, I am wearin out. Nursing is hard, but I will finish. This is much better than my country.” Returning her distantly focused gaze to direct eye contact she muttered “much better.” With an exhausted smile and a deep inhalation she placed her hand on my elbow and wished me a “good day” before she slowly yet intently walked towards the Science Building for her next class.

Custodian

His keys jingled on one hip, a radio on the other, and a worn grey plastic bucket with a metal handle void of the traditional plastic coating in his left hand, Samuel a building custodian stoped to see why I was working “so hard on a beautiful Friday afternoon.” His broken English and thick accent was tricky to navigate; however we managed to exchange greetings and I expressed that I was researching to get to know the school and some of its programs. He quickly obliged to sit next to me on the built in

bench in the center of the hallway and explained that he was from Central America, a Mayan Indian, and had worked for NECC for 22 years.

"The school culture and union here is a supportif place." He continued "You will like here. People care here-the student no, no – they no understand but the teacher, the professor – they nice and care – you will like here." A shrill two toned beep followed by a directive voice from his radio penetrated our conversation, Samuel reached across his body, turned down his radio, stood up with a sheepish smile as he explained "They waiting on me. Good luck with meetings. You will like – (NECC) is good people."

Steering Committee Meeting

It was four minutes past 12:00 noon before the first Steering Committee member, other than Dani the program's coordinator, hurriedly strolled into the large executive style meeting room with institutional bright white painted walls. Within the next three minutes four additional committee members showed up, their facial expressions a bit tense, strides short, quick, and directive. They all commented that the room was "extremely cold." They all kept on their overcoats as they helped themselves to the grilled chicken Caesar salad, biscuits, and fruit lunch that Dani had spread on the built in, black-marble topped counter at the side of the room.

Light personal conversation regarding health concerns, end-of-the-academic-year family activities, and pending summer course transpired while individuals made their lunch plates, settled into their seats, and began munching. The rhythmic chatter with spotted laughter cleared as Dani brought focus to the meeting – "Okay let's go ahead and get started – we are missing about 5 people – but it is a busy time of the year."

Business discussed included the upcoming end of the year academic awards banquet and the faculty-student mentoring program's sponsorship of that event, planning for the ensuing fall's student orientation program, and a discussion regarding training for new faculty mentors. Dani sat back and listened as three faculty members on the committee shared

> I wonder if they just don't get that it is going to be different with each student. Each student comes with a different set of needs some will have one or two questions that you answer them you help them with them, they go away and you may not see them again for months if ever. And they are happy. And other need more nurturing along the way and they like having the conversations – the pattern is there is no pattern. (Math Faculty)
>
> That's why there could be no training for such a unique relationship. It has to come from within. (Science Faculty)
>
> It has to come from the heart. (Librarian/Faculty, 302)

However, one participant conceded there was a need for some training as she explained

> I think the biggest misconception with being a mentor is that we are counselors - that we are there just to advise them on their schedule. I think that many mentors think that's what they are there for. And I think that relationships are so different. I mean it can encompass that – I don't ignore it but it is so much more, you are not an advisor, it's not just academics. (343)

While the remainder of the meeting encompassed a variety of topics which included: (1) the difficulties related to assessing the effectiveness of the formal mentoring

program, (2) difficulties faced in building a sense of community among the student populations that are working, raising children, caring for aging parents, homelessness, (3) the development of a peer mentoring program, and (4) brainstorming ways to increase the program's visibility on campus. An underlying theme to which the conversation frequently returned was how to get "the students to be connected"(409). Concluding the meeting at 1:15 p.m. Dani thanked the six committee members for their time and reminded them that they collectively were the decision making body for the formal faculty-student mentoring program. Dani encouraged the committee members to bring any concerns, ideas, or feedback regarding the program to her attention. As this group of faculty, including representatives from humanities, library sciences, math, physical sciences, an academic counselor, and a member of the institutional technology/distance learning gathered their belongings and returned to their respective posts, they continued to share successful mentoring stories with each other. As they left the meeting room they share smiles, chatted, their soft and bright facial expressions matched by relaxed strides were contrary to the manners in which they had entered the meeting.

Summary

Epistemologically grounded in social constructionism, it is necessary to grapple with the constructed social and cultural realities expressed by members of the community, as portrayed to the researcher, when considering the transferability and viability of the associated studies finding and implications reported below. The narrative portrait above serves to illustrate the spirit of community, ethic of care, and dedication to education expressed by faculty, staff, and students within NECC. Additionally, the contents of this chapter serve to depict normative behaviors and beliefs that portray the

NECC campus culture, as well as the formal-faculty student mentoring program culture. It is with this perception of the campus community and its members, as well as the participants of this research study, that the findings of the data that related to the formal faculty-student mentoring program at NECC are portrayed in Chapter Five. Following, Chapter Six contains a discussion regarding the implications that this research has related to theory, practice, and future research relative to community college formal faculty-student mentoring processes, conclude the study, and provide final recommendations.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

In analyzing the data from this study, themes were generated through open coding processes, followed by focused coding analysis that was guided by three discrete principles of RCT including: (1) social contexts are integral to relational interactions, (2) members of a mentoring dyad are mutually responsible for the skills, outcomes, and conditions of the relational processes, and (3) that systemic powers influence relational interactions and the developmental progress of relationship participants (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). After both open and focused coding processes were completed, similar themes were merged; thus, it became evident that the themes identified through open-coding process, with the exception of one, reflected aspects of RCT. Because RCT was the theoretical lens through which focused coding was conducted, discussion regarding RCT's association with specific related themes is incorporated into the thematic data presentation.

The data presentation and related discussion of findings is organized first by the guiding research questions, and followed by the presentation of an independent theme that emerged from initial open data analysis processes. The research questions that guided the focused data coding and analysis, and which provided the organizational structure of initial data presentation, were:

1. What mentoring processes are in place at this community college?
    1a. What tactics do community college faculty members employ to engage in productive mentoring processes?
    1b. What tactics do community college faculty members employ to mitigate negative mentoring experiences?
    1c. What factors within the community college culture support faculty members' attempts to foster student mentoring processes?
2. What are community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their mentoring experiences with students?
3. What is the efficacy of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory as a framework for looking at community college mentoring processes?

RQ 1: What Mentoring Processes are in Place at this Community College?

The variety of mentoring programs at NECC serve to exemplify that mentoring is prevalent within many factions of the campus and encased within the campus culture, Table 3: NECC Mentoring Programs, presents a quick reference to the formally established mentoring programs, as well as mentoring programs that are currently in various developmental or pilot stages, on the NECC campus.

As shown in Table 3 NECC hosts a plethora of formalized mentoring programs in addition to the formal faculty-student mentoring program which is discussed in detail throughout this dissertation. Concurrently, NECC's campus culture encourages the enactment of informal mentoring practices.

Table 3

NECC Mentoring Programs

Established Formal Programs
Links: Faculty/Staff – Student (Program studied for this research) Conversation Partners: NECC Community Member – Student
Formal Programs Currently in Development Stages
Peer Mentoring: Student – Student Faculty Peer Mentoring: Faculty – Faculty
Informal and Organic processes
Tenured and Veteran Faculty/Staff/Administrators – Junior Faculty/Staff/Administrators Faculty/Staff/Administrator – Student

As Gina, a lively participant expressed,

> …frankly I think almost every teacher that I've ever met here, while they may not be a part of the formal mentoring program, they mentor. I have yet to meet somebody who hasn't helped a student….I think people here like embrace it, you know we live it, we don't just talk-we really do it. (509…582)

Similarly, Shirley a tenure seeking English faculty member stated "…if you don't do it [mentoring] you are considered a sub-standard faculty member." (661)

Mentoring processes are intentionally endemic within the NECC campus community. The formal faculty-student mentoring program that was the focus for this study, the Links program, serves approximately 100 students each academic year (Dani)

and has the “President’s seal of approval.” (Saedi) Faculty members and students are recruited throughout the semester with intensive outreach efforts coordinated during orientation programs and other beginning-of-the-semester activities. Faculty, staff, and students receive invitations to participate in the Links program via electronic communications, campus mail, flyers posted around campus, and verbal exchanges with individuals already involved in the program. Individuals interested in participating in Links may complete a registration and information form in person at the office coordinating the program, or via electronic means within the NECC mentoring webpage.

Supported by a Steering Committee comprised of faculty and staff, Dani, the part-time college employee and coordinator of the Links program, connects students who register for the program with faculty and staff who volunteer to serve as mentors. Once Dani makes the match, she provides the faculty member with the student’s contact information and then as she shared, “…it’s really out of my hands because they’re in college and they have to take the initiative to follow through on it.” (115) In addition to the student’s information, faculty and staff who serve as formal mentors to students are provided a mentoring handbook designed to provide guidance for the mentor and to support the success of the faculty-student mentoring interactions.

Formal mentoring opportunities via the Links program, as well as the women’s business mentoring program and other programs, have been in place at NECC for decades. The success and growth of the mentoring programs have lead to the desire to develop a centralized mentoring center.

> There are a lot of programs around campus, and what we are trying to do is to develop a mentoring center. We have the idea of hosting all of the

> different programs in one location and if a student comes in – we can assign them to one or more programs if it's necessary. What we want to do is we want to have a place where students can come in and say "well I'm a business student but I also, need special accommodations on my test taking –What can you do for me?" Then we can have Erin meet with them for the business mentoring program and possibly get them connected with the small disabilities services mentoring program that we're trying to get off the ground… (257)

Mentoring processes, formal and informal, are ubiquitous within the NECC campus culture; therefore, as RCT purports, social contexts are integral to relational interactions, it follows that the NECC ethos promotes mentoring processes. Additionally, it is valuable to note that many of the mentoring support structures that NECC has in place are referenced as "student services" at other colleges and universities; however, at NECC these opportunities for students are presented in manners that promote the student taking ownership for their success. This particular presentation of the programs reiterates the campus' commitment to mentoring processes relative to the purpose of supporting the student as they grow and learn to help themselves.

RQ 1a: What Tactics do Community College Faculty Members Employ to Engage in Productive Mentoring Processes?

Table 4: Research Question 1a Themes, is provided to depict the primary theme and the related sub-themes, as well as the associated behavioral actions identified within the data, relevant to research question 1a: What tactics do community college faculty members employ to engage in productive mentoring processes?. Next, the relevance of

the contents of Table 4 is expressed through statements resulting from analysis processes as well as the illustrative data units from participants' interviews. The relevance of RCT's guiding principles is also discussed in association with each of the sub-themes.

Table 4

Research Question 1a Themes

Theme	Tactics	Behavioral Actions
Trust		
	Make Self Available	
		Listening
		Support
		Openness/willing to share self
	Allow Students to Lead the Process	
		Ask Questions
		Guide students as they identify goals
		Be patient with the process and the student

RQ 1a: Trust Theme

Consistently participants expressed that behind every successful mentoring story was a relationship built upon trust. Wonda a tenured faculty member currently serving NECC in an administrative role expressed it best when she stated

> Trust is a big issue, whether it is a mentor program or anything, you can not have a genuine relationship without trust. They [students] have to

> know that you [mentors] are there for them, you know, before they will come forward with their challenges. (Wonda 421)

Therefore, tactics which faculty participants described as actions and skills critical to the development of productive student mentoring were linked to the primary theme of trust – frequently depicted emically throughout data as the proverbial "two-way street." Sub-themes that surfaced as engagement tactics include "making self available" and "allowing students to determine the agenda."

Specifically, behavioral actions identified as critical tactics needed to engage in productive mentoring processes relative to "making self available" include listening, demonstrating support for a student through actions, and being open – willing to share information about yourself with the student mentee. Additional actions expressed as essential to the development of productive mentoring included the ability to ask questions to guide students through processes to identify goals and potential, and the practice of patience throughout the process. Each of the aforementioned sub-theme tactics, as well as the supporting behavioral actions revolve around the faculty members' insistence that trust, as a reciprocal factor, is fundamental to the development of productive faculty-student mentoring.

Dianne, a tenured faculty member with more than fifteen years of mentoring experience articulates that teaching is "her calling" and conveys the importance of reciprocal trust when she describes a mentor as

> Someone who is willing to admit mistakes, is honest, and is a role model. Being willing to talk about life, pain, that willingness to open up must be reciprocal – do not expect the student to open up, to hear advice, or to trust

unless the faculty member is willing to engage at a human to human level. (Dianne 121)

Implications of the Use of RCT

Consistent with the second principle of RCT in which both members of a mentoring dyad are believed to be responsible for the development of the mentorship, community college faculty members expressed the central theme of trust, as well as the sub-themes related to productive mentoring tactics as a reciprocal adventure. NECC faculty clearly articulated their perspectives that central to the development of productive mentoring processes is a trusting relationship. Furthermore, they express that trusting relationships are cultivated through specific tactics that demonstrated their willingness to "meet students where they are"; thus, exhibiting perceptions that there are shared responsibilities for mentoring, a concept that concurs with RCT.

RQ 1a, Tactic for Trust: Make Self-Available

Unanimously the participants interviewed expressed the awareness that productive student mentoring processes within their community college setting required their willingness to dedicate time to the students and the mentoring processes.

> This is certainly not the kind of thing that you can do while you are looking at the clock. I think that you need to be generous with your time, with setting limits of course, but I think that if you go into a mentoring program that you should be willing to block out time to meet with students. And meeting with students in ways that are not going to adhere to a 15 minute kind of schedule. Sometimes they come in for five minutes and sometimes they stay for an hour – there is not knowing. (Walter 85)

However, participants were quick to follow statements regarding the challenge of the associated time commitment by asserting that making time was not the only, and perhaps not even the most important, tactic to developing productive mentoring interactions. Instead what was most important to the development of productive student mentoring interactions was the ability to make themselves available to the students holistically.

> Very often we are talking about academics and you know things come up that are really serious issues at home and we discuss things. I'm always the shoulder to cry on – they know I'm always here and the doors always open.…I try to stay in touch with them because I do worry and I want to make sure that they know that I am there, if they need to talk to someone. (Misty 128)

Therefore, in addition to finding the time needed "to really connect" even when they are "super busy and don't have that much time" faculty expressed that being available involves "certain warmth," and that "you can not be cold or aloof to the students – they can see right through that." Specific behavioral actions that faculty members identified as contributors to the development of a sense of true availability and trust included their willingness to listen to students and to be open in sharing of themselves. Furthermore, NECC faculty perceived that by demonstrating their support of the student through actions also illustrated a mutual investment in the developmental process and fostered productive mentoring interactions.

RQ 1a, Behavioral action of listening illustrates the tactic of being available.

Listening attentively is one way that community college faculty members perceived that they demonstrated their availability to the students that they mentored.

> I think you have to be a good listener, you have to know when it is most beneficial to be listening rather than speaking. That's not always an easy thing … but I do find that the more that I can listen and listen attentively to what the student is saying or asking, or what needs I think they seem to be demonstrating, the more targeted I can be in my help for them. (Walter 79)

Listening is perceived by the NECC faculty to be a behavior central to their ability to develop productive mentoring processes with their students. NECC faculty members expressed that listening symbolized their holistic availability to their students. NECC faculty members perceive that through listening they are able to support their students in meaningful ways, as well as judge when and what aspects of their selves were appropriate to share with their students in manners that reiterated their availability.

RQ 1a, Behavioral action of showing support illustrates the tactic of being available.

Actively listening to their students provided NECC faculty with valuable insight into the concerns, questions, and needs of their students. Participants expressed that they seek to support their students through encouraging words and actions that display their commitment to the student and their belief in the student's potential. As Erin, a part-time NECC employee who assists with coordinating one of the formal campus mentoring program expressed "Sometimes it is just a matter of hearing someone say – 'You can do it,' that is all it takes." (872)

Shirley illustrated the art of supporting a community college student mentee through encouraging language at numerous points during an observed mentoring episode.

She articulated that delivering support through encouragement is an intentional action when she stated: "…when I see for instance today Kay was clearly going down a path of getting down on herself I try to boost that sense of self." (679) Shirley shared supportive language with Kay during their mentoring episode relative to her personal, academic, and professional endeavors.

Table 5

Examples of Shirley's Support for Kay through Verbal Encouragement

Personal	I'm so proud of you (236)
Personal	Remember that your most solid ground is yourself – you always come through – ALWAYS look back you always come through. You can always depend on you….YOU are the strength in yourself and your attitude of each day at a time will work it… (394)
Academic	I love your writing, you are a really good writer. I love your writing I love reading your emails. (300)
Academic	You're already a published writer for God's sake. So that
Professional	is so good for you. That will also help you to get into any program that you want to get in to (201)… Everything that you are publishing - you really don't understand how hard it is to get published today (307)…
Professional	Think how many hours you spend - make a list of the skills that you have to use to do that job. Okay you are not

> getting paid for it, it is all volunteer, but you organize, you communicate, you do PR, you direct members… (268)

In addition to sharing support through encouraging language, NECC faculty mentors expressed that they perceived it to be important to demonstrate support for their students through their actions. Gina shared a time when she "…went up to see their dance performance. They all were in the dance club together and so I went up there to see the performance and meet their parents." (537) From her perspective, this was one action that she could take to "show" the students that she was available to support them and their dreams. Similarly, Yancey discussed times when he met with a mentee to "go over a paper" at an off-campus location. Similarly, Seren shared that she and her mentees have "…met for dinner, we've met for breakfast." (58) Wonda conveyed that illustrating availability through actions was common among her peers who have mentored over the years.

> Those of us who have been mentoring for years – we do all sorts of things. I invite my students to my house for Thanksgiving because they may be a foreign student and they have not place to go. I have teenage kids in my house, they all came back from college from everywhere and I say one more will not make a difference.(261)

Faculty mentors at NECC clearly articulated that they perceived supporting students, through encouraging words and actions, as a key components to their ability to illustrate their availability to their student mentees; thus, critical to the development of productive mentoring processes based upon relational trust. Dedicating time to listen to

their students such that they were able to recognize what type of support and when to deliver the support to the student, are two behaviors that NECC faculty express as being associated with the necessary tactic of making one's self available – a tactic required for fostering productive mentoring interactions.

RQ 1a, Behavioral action of sharing of self illustrates the tactic of being available.

Some NECC faculty expressed that in order to portray availability to student mentees, mentors need to be "open" and willing to share of their personal self. In accordance with RTC, as previously mentioned, NECC faculty members perceive mentoring to be relational – a process in which both members of the dyad are responsible for its development. These community college faculty members expressed that their most productive mentoring experiences with students incorporated aspects of selective self-disclosure which served to illustrate their ability to empathize, and willingness to remember what is was like to "walk in their [students'] shoes." Meghan, a proud NECC alumnus and current tenured NECC faculty member relayed a "typical" conversation that she had with numerous student mentees.

> I say "How do you think I got that [NECC diploma displayed on the office wall]" and they say "well …." And I tell them that I worked for it – hard and I tell them that they can too. And I tell them "I did not have money – I studied and got scholarship and that's how I did that." You know I was an adult student when I came back – I had three babies that I was raising and my husband was working round the clock to make this happen. I say "its

about sacrifice – you have to work hard and you have to set your goals. Really you can do it" (Meghan, 94)

Additional comments reiterated the faculty perceived their willingness to share of the self relative to illustrating availability too students during the development of trusting and productive mentoring processes.

> Sometimes it means talking about myself and there are things that I will share in mentoring relationships about myself that I would not share in the classroom – that can make all the difference to a student. I don't think they want to feel like that they are taking all the chances and kind of 'putting it on the line.' I think that there is a sense of something having been shared and a kind of a common commitment. (Walter 462)

It was in association with the willingness to "share [things] in mentoring relationships about myself that I would not share in the classroom," that Walter expressed: "I feel like I have made myself available to them." Walter also expressed that his willingness to share of himself illustrated to students that they were not "taking all the chances…and putting it on the line"

Sharing of their selves is one action that NECC faculty members who mentor students perceived as important to their ability to illustrate their availability to their students. NECC faculty perceived that when they shared in manners that demonstrate their willingness to engage in respectful exchanges of values and life experiences, especially incidents that depicted the faculty members' ability to empathize, they engaged in behaviors that illustrated their availability to students; thus, ultimately they built trust and fostered future productive mentoring interactions.

Sharing of their selves also directly relates to RCT, relative to the theory's grounding factor that incorporates the concepts of selves in relation. NECC Faculty members expressed an appreciation for the importance of relating to their students such that the students may then relate to them, a process which incorporates the selves in relation concept expressed in RCT.

RQ 1a, Tactic for Trust: Students Lead

Most clearly stated by Shirley, but echoed by all other participants was the mentors' desires to support the student while allowing them to determine the mentoring agenda.

> My general rule of mentoring is that I let them determine what we are doing, even the parameters of how often we meet, when we meet, where we meet…. I let them determine the course… if you let the student determine the agenda you are always better off. (597 Shirley)

While Shirley is open to allowing the students to determine all of the parameters of a mentoring relationship, others expressed that they preferred to set some boundaries during the initial mentoring engagements.

> I think that students that I have had the relationships with that have been successful have been surprised when I say we can do this however you want to do it. We can meet a couple of times and then figure what we want to do next, we can talk about things that are going on in your classes, or we can talk about your professional aspirations. I think that they like being in charge of this things. Yes I set the boundaries and they appreciate that, but then let them identify the course. (Walter 399)

Specific behaviors community college faculty members expressed that they perceived to be beneficial in developing productive mentoring interactions with students included asking questions, guiding students through goal identification processes, and practicing patience with regards to the process, as well as the students. Faculty also expressed that by engaging in the aforementioned behaviors that allow students to determine the agenda for the mentoring process – they ultimately earned the trust of the students, the underlying theme to fostering productive mentoring.

RQ 1a, Behavioral action of asking questions illustrates the tactic of student leads.

Faculty consistently expressed that the art of asking questions was a critical skill to employ when developing trusting and productive mentoring interactions. Wonda explained that asking questions such as "Where do you want to be? What do you want your future to be?" allowed her to guide the student through the process of setting their mentoring agenda. Similarly Misty described her initial interactions with a potential mentee by sharing.

> I say "what would you like me to try to help you with?" I don't try to tell them this is what you should do. I say "where do you want to be and how do you think you can do that?" (Misty 171)

In addition to providing students with opportunities to set agendas for mentoring episodes, asking questions is an important skill for community college faculty members to employ because question guided interactions serve to advance student development of skills needed to make informed decisions. Gina explained that through questions she was able to role play situations that students were likely to experience.

> For example I will say “your teacher says x,y,or z how are going to handle that?” “How did you handle it?” “What are other ways we can look at that?” In one student’s case it was “Your parents are saying this but where are you, what do you want to do? What is it going to take to help you move from this point, to this point even though it is going to upset your father? What are you going to do?” (Gina 241)

She continued to explain that through role play and interactions that incorporated asking meaningful questions she ultimately was

> helping the student to learn how to communicate, helping them learn how to negotiate the system, how to become empowered, how to become engaged, you have to teach this to folks, they don’t just know this…so many of them have problems with communication and that is something I feel very comfortable with addressing with students. (Gina 237)

In general, faculty members at NECC who participated in the formal faculty-student mentoring program perceived that asking questions, and the associated outcomes, increased the likelihood for future mentoring interactions built upon trust. “…if they feel comfortable and it keeps them coming back, then that’s the important thing.” (Walter 61). NECC faculty also expressed that because the process of asking questions provided students with opportunities to determine the agenda for their mentoring episodes, students were likely to be open to continued communication processes and mentoring interactions through which the students began to identify their goals.

RQ 1a, Behavioral action of guiding students through the process of identifying goals illustrates the tactic of student leads.

Asking questions and listening, two skills identified by NECC faculty members as behaviors that they perceived as pertinent to the development of productive mentoring interactions with community college students were consistently referenced in association with the process they described as "guiding conversations through which students identify their goals." Clearly expressed by Saedi "many of our students come from families where they are the very first to attempt to receive an education and they have no basis for understanding what is out there." Henry echoed this concept as he explained "many of our students are the first ones in their homes to go to college and they really don't know the ropes." Therefore, the faculty perceived that mentoring was "something to help them get headed in the right direction:" it stopped the students from "…wallow[ing] around in ignorance." Instead, the students "…learn from people who have been there, people who want to help. They get advice from a veteran - they get help - they get nurturing…" that helps them to identify their goals.

For example, Seren expressed

> I build in a little relaxation into the conversation so that it is not always just about [class processes], it's about their lives because once they can relate their lives to what they're doing then it starts to make sense. I think half the students are coming because somebody told them to, or because it is the next logical step and they don't really understand why they are here… they're just lost. (635)

Similarly, additional NECC faculty shared numerous delightful stories about students who they had mentored that "had no idea what they are capable of" and had "no goals, no dreams." However, through mentoring episodes in which the faculty asked questions and listened, their students identified personal and professional goals and began to transform the mentoring interactions into sessions that served to support their advancement towards their goals.

> I strive to give students confidence and belief in themselves, to guide them to identify their own dream. To support them in the development of their goals. To support the development of a belief that they have potential. To help the student identify their potential and the skills needed to meet that potential. It may be a matter of getting them connected to others who can help them reach and achieve their goals or to sharpen their skills – that is a real mentor, (Dianne 214)

Like Dianne, other NECC faculty shared their perspectives that guiding students through the processes of identifying their goals and dreams were foundational tactics they employed that fostered productive mentoring episodes – mentoring interactions that, from their perspective, contributed to the ultimate successes of

- A distressed student ready to drop out of school who is haunted by past teachers comments of his low intelligence. This students ends up as the president of a large community college.
- A homeless man who "woke up one day in the streets of a large city and got to his feet and said I can't live like this cuz I won't survive," graduates from NECC.

Then he worked as a personal fitness trainer to earn money to pay for his tuition at a four year university where he studied kinesiology.

- A Nigerian woman who fled her home country in search of a better life, recognized her passion for medicine, and has graduated with top honors from NECC's nursing program.

The success stories noted above represent a small sample, of the plethora of examples, which NECC faculty provided to illustrate their perceptions regarding the importance of guiding students through processes of identifying goals as a tactic critical to the development of productive mentoring interactions.

RQ 1a, Behavioral action of being patient illustrates the tactic of student leads.

While the aforementioned success stories are only a sample of the abundant examples that NECC faculty members shared regarding their experiences mentoring community college students, the faculty expressed that they extended great amounts of patience to the students, and the mentoring process, in order to develop productive mentoring episodes.

> So I feel that patience is very important in this process. If you are going to make a difference you are going to have to keep trying. The first time you try, it may not work. The third time you try it may not work. But maybe the 30th time you try, it works. And I think that if it works just once it is worth it. (Wonda 599)

Faculty recognized that it could take numerous outreach efforts to connect with a student; therefore, tenacity was perceived as only one part of the important role that patience played in the process of developing productive mentoring episodes. Faculty

members also expressed that it was vital to employ patience with regards to observing desired outcomes, such as student development, when mentoring community college students.

> Patience and the willingness to put in the time to stay with their agenda. I think that is really the hardest part. Really staying where the student is at. You know you can see so much clearer what they have to do but you have to stay with where the student is at. You know how it really has to be, you know you are really there for them, that's what it is about and that part is hard. Because you can help someone, you can push them along a little bit - but sometimes you just should not do that. It's just going to take time…. even if you see the picture, it is going to take a whole lot longer than you think – its always gonna take a whole lot longer than you think to get to wherever it is that they are going because stuff happens here. (Gina 268)

NECC faculty expressed that they perceived that their ability to be patient with the student and the mentoring process was critical to developing productive mentoring interaction. Repetitively, NECC faculty members who mentor community college students articulated that being patient with the students and the mentoring processes contributed to the students' ability to direct the agenda of the mentoring episodes. Practicing patience in manners that support the students ability to direct the agenda, was perceived by the faculty to be associated with building trust; thus, patience is a behavior that these faculty members employed in order to engage in productive mentoring processes with community college students.

Summary of RQ 1a data: What Tactics Do community College Faculty Members Employ to Engage in Productive Mentoring Processes?

Overall, faculty members at NECC expressed their perceptions that in order to engage in productive mentoring processes that the interactions needed to take place within a trusting environment. They further expressed that they made their availability evident to students, and took actions that encouraged students to determine the agenda for the mentoring interactions. Moreover, the faculty perceived that factors of availability and allowing students to guided the agenda were as specific tactics that support the development of the trusting environments needed to foster productive mentoring processes. Specifically, NECC faculty members who mentored community college students shared that listening, sharing support for the student, and being willing to be open and share of their own experiences served to express their availability to students and fostered the trusting conditions needed for productive mentoring episodes. Additionally, these faculty members communicated that they were best able to guide students through a process in which the students determined the agenda for their mentoring interactions by asking questions, encouraging students to identify their goals, and by exercise patience with the students and their mentoring processes. NECC faculty perceived that through the aforementioned actions they intentionally employed the tactics of expressing their availability to students and allowed students to determine the mentoring interactions agenda, which in turn nurtures the trusting environments needed to engage in productive mentoring processes.

RQ 1b: What Tactics do Community College Faculty Members Employ to Mitigate Negative Mentoring Experiences?

Table 6: Research Question 1b Themes, contains the themes identified through data analysis procedures and represent the perspectives that NECC faculty members expressed as tactics that they employ to mitigate negative mentoring experiences. Next, each theme is illustrated via data units from the associated research and discussed relative to the research questions.

Table 6

Research Question 1b Themes

Emic Theme Language	Etic Theme Expression
Connections	Connect students with other resources and/or people
	Connect self with colleagues
Set boundaries	Provide students with parameters and template for episodes
Move on	Encourage students to move on
	Seek other students who will reciprocate commitment

RQ 1b: Connecting Students to Others Mitigates Negative Mentoring Experiences

Every participant within this study, as well as various documents associated with the NECC's formal faculty-student mentoring program, expressed that a primary tactic employed in order to enhance the productivity of mentoring interactions was to connect students with other faculty, other students, institutional resources, and the campus community as a whole. NECC's Guide to Mentoring for Faculty and Staff provided a litany of resources to which the mentor could have connected their mentees if they

perceived it was necessary. Resources provided included names, phone numbers, and locations for a variety of institutional services ranging from academic support, counseling information, administrative processes, and other miscellaneous resources.

Connecting students to others on campus who were better equipped to provide the support that the students sought was the most common tactic mentioned by participants with relation to the research question focused on mitigating negative mentoring episodes. NECC faculty openly expressed that they were not able to meet the needs of every mentee relative to educational, professional, or personal growth; therefore, in order to mitigate a negative mentoring interaction they sought ways to connect the students with someone who was able to support them.

Yancey, an administrator who also taught introduction to education classes at NECC shared a time when he was unable to provide a student with information that the student needed in order to plan for continued enrollment and academic advancement.

> He wasn't sure if he was going run out of financial aid eligibility. And a friend of mine here is the director of admissions – she knows a lot of this stuff – I don't have any idea of that stuff financial aid. So I asked my friend to come join us when he came back so she could explain all that stuff.

Yancey's example illustrated the faculty perception regarding the tactic of connecting a student to a different mentor to mitigate a potentially negative mentoring interaction. Yancey's actions of connecting the student with a colleague who could meet the immediate needs of the student culminated with all parties involved agreeing that the new pairing was a "better fit." In addition to connecting students with a colleague on campus

in an effort to promote the development of new and productive mentoring interactions, while mitigating potential negative mentoring episodes, faculty expressed their perception that connecting students to campus services was another tactic they employed to mitigate negative mentoring episodes.

Shirley perceived that she and a student had developed very productive mentoring practices that served to promote the academic, personal, and professional development of a student mentee. However, Shirley expressed that she recognized that the student needed more specific information regarding the process of transferring to a four-year institution.

> The last piece is about getting ready for a particular transfer, we have a transfer center. I know I've given her the advice I can but I am not an expert in that so I think she needs to go over there. But we have done a lot, we have searched for programs together and that kind of stuff…(Shirley 619)

Connecting her student mentee to additional campus resources and colleagues who provided the student with specific information the student needed was a tactic that Shirley employed to mitigate potential "empty" negative mentoring episodes. The abovementioned data provided an illustration of the faculty members' perceptions regarding the importance of connections within mentoring interactions and how they mitigated negative mentoring interactions. Succinctly expressed by Misty (307), the faculty perceived that through mentoring "…they get a sense of connection, to the campus - which is very important because many of our students are disconnected."

RQ 1b: Connecting Self to Others Mitigates Negative Mentoring Experiences

In addition to connecting students with other campus community members and services, NECC faculty shared perceptions that they were able to mitigate negative mentoring episodes by becoming more connected to other faculty who participated in the college's formal faculty-student mentoring program. Being connected with other mentors provided a network of individuals that faculty members called upon to provide them with advice regarding a negative mentoring experience.

> …to find out that one of my colleagues has one of my students in his class and I'll say ohhh yeah she is my mentee, and we talk about her. I think the less positive conversations can be helpful too. If there is somebody who is struggling…I try not to divulge any information that is given to me in confidence… we can kind of share a sense of where the student is at…(Walter 200)

Wonda (206) articulated her perception of the importance for community college faculty members who served as formal mentors to students to develop a network among their peers when she stated

> Maybe one thing to do is to sort of informally set up a buddy system to let the junior mentor – the new mentor – know that there are other people, their co-workers, who are mentors and that they can go talk to them when there is a challenge.

NECC faculty consistently recognized "getting with their peers" as a tactic that they employed when seeking to mitigate negative mentoring experiences.

Furthermore, a network of colleagues familiar with the mentoring processes who specialized in various areas across campus provided the faculty mentor with an arsenal of individuals who provided specific information regarding a need that the student mentee had. Dianne (160) expressed the importance of peer networks and connections when she stated "The purpose of the process is to connect your self to others and then to help them [students] get connected to the systems that may then support them in other ways." Gina's statement below in which she explained how she supported a peer who was mentoring a student illustrates the NECC faculty's perceptions regarding how their connections with each other mitigated potential negative mentoring episodes, and in essence promoted productive mentoring interactions instead.

> So I met her [a student] and I talked to her and I said "why don't you go try to be a part of the university transfer program this summer?" She did not know that there was a transfer program in the summer. Curt [the student's professor] did not know that there was a transfer program. So I called up the counselor who does this and asked when the meeting was and well… ultimately she got accepted. (Gina 591)

As expressed above, keeping connected to their peers as well as the campus community support services available for students was one tactic that NECC faculty members employed in order to mitigate negative mentoring experiences. In addition to mitigating negative mentoring interactions, faculty expressed that the connections that they made with other faculty who mentored students also provided them with a personal sense of integration with the NECC campus. Completing this recursive cycle between connections and mentoring, NECC faculty expressed that their sense of integration with

the campus also enhanced the quantity and quality of productive mentoring episodes because they were better able to assist the students as they learn to "navigate the system."

> I serve them initially as a trouble shooter, and I think that that is what sort of broke the ice for us because they really needed help navigating the system… so then we connected from that perspective really sort of procedural and THEN I said "do you want to make this a more formal relationship?" I said why don't you do that cuz then this will legitimize our relationship and then we'll get involved with other things, and do things together… the mentoring program allows me the latitude to of staying connected, there are a lot of opportunities for students and I find myself feeling obligated to let my mentee know what's going on. (Wendy 98)

Wendy continued and expressed that "the mentoring program does provide me with an opportunity to stay connected with other colleagues and with what is happening on campus." (Wendy 172)

The aforementioned statements depict the collective perspective shared by the NECC faculty that their personal ability to connect with colleagues supported their integration into the campus, which in turn helped to mitigate negative mentoring interactions because it increased their ability to guide students to learn how to "navigate through the system."

RQ 1b: Setting Boundaries Mitigates Negative Mentoring Experiences

NECC faculty who served as formal mentors to the College's students shared a plethora of examples of what they did to "connect with students," and to "connect

students to the campus." However, they clearly expressed that one of their tactics to mitigate negative mentoring interactions was to set boundaries with their students regarding the manner by which they would support the student connections and development.

> I want to make sure that the boundaries are clear. I want to also offer assistance in whatever assistance I can so they feel comfortable and it keeps them coming back …but I do think that you need to establish the boundaries early on to not let their be any confusion (Walter 60)

In addition to setting boundaries to mitigate negative mentoring episodes regarding the role of faculty members in the students' academic, personal, and professional development, faculty expressed that discussing expectations reiterated the boundaries for the mentoring interactions. Gina explained that "I think that somehow saying that contracting with your mentor is sort of like saying 'here is the expectations on both ends, here is what we can do'…. there are limits." She continued and shared that planning a schedule of when to meet helped to maintain the initial connections she made with students and served to mitigate the potential for negative mentoring interactions and outcome.

> Do they have to come every week or do they come every other week or do they come once a month, do they come once every three months or do they come right before final… I mean is it up to me and the students yes to some degree but… I think somehow it is worth it to think about setting some kind of structure. (Gina 133)

Setting clear boundaries was one tactic that NECC faculty members who served as formal mentors to their community college students mitigated negative mentoring interactions. Additionally, developing a structure upon which faculty mentors discussed the student mentees' expectations was another tactic that NECC faculty members perceived to have helped them to mitigate potential negative mentoring episodes. Providing students with parameters for mentoring episodes, as well as discussing both party's expectations, were two distinct tactics that NECC faculty members perceived as ways to mitigate negative mentoring interactions as they sought to connect students to the campus community.

RQ 1b: Encouraging Students to Move on Mitigates Negative Mentoring Experiences

A common perspective among the NECC faculty who participated in this study was that some students "…didn't really have a direction and didn't really know what [they] wanted to do" (Gina 14) so it was difficult to get the students connected to the campus community. Additionally, it was perceived that some students were in college just because it is the "next thing to do after high school." Yancey (138) expressed his perception that some students were not interested in college when he said "we babysit a lot here." Similarly, Misty explained that "…another mentee that I had last year, this is a kid wasn't too happy about being here. His mom was really forcing him to be here." It is to these students that the faculty expressed that they would encourage the student to move on. "I'm perfectly okay saying 'you're not ready' or 'you have to want this, it doesn't just happen' they have to know they have to work." (Seren)

Faculty also perceived that “there are people that you know probably aren’t going to make it.” (Meghan) While encouraging these student to “move on” is a tactic that the faculty employed to mitigate negative mentoring interactions, the mentors expressed that they had an obligation to the student “to tell that person what they can do;” give them options regarding their future. Mitigating negative mentoring interactions by openly encouraging a student to move on is a tactic that NECC faculty members employed; therefore, they did not continue to engage in mentoring episodes that they perceived were unproductive.

In addition to mitigating negative mentoring episodes via encouraging students to “move on,” faculty expressed that it was imperative for them to move on when a student did not display commitment to the mentoring process.

> It is kind of straddling that line, of finding that nice balance between trying to put together a mentoring relationships that stands a good chance of working out, but at the same time know when to let go and let them do what they are going to do. If they float they are going to float and if they sink - then you move on and go to the next one. (Walter 406)

Moving on to mentor a different student in place of a student who exhibits a lack of commitment to the mentoring process was a tactic that faculty employed to mitigate negative and unproductive mentoring interactions. By allowing themselves the flexibility to recognize that not all mentoring experiences would be productive, faculty perceived that they were more willing to engage holistically with students who displayed a commitment to the mentoring processes.

Summary of RQ 1b: What Tactics do Community College Faculty Members Employ to Mitigate Negative Mentoring Experiences?

In addition to encouraging student to 'move on', NECC faculty members perceived that connecting students with other people or campus resources as well as setting boundaries with expectations for mentoring processes were tactics that they employed to mitigate negative mentoring interactions. The aforementioned tactics were employed to assist in mitigating negative mentoring interactions in manners that the faculty perceived to be most beneficial to the students. Complimentary, the tactics of keeping their selves connected with colleagues who also served as formal mentors to students, setting parameters for mentoring episodes, and seeking new mentees committed to the mentoring process were perceived as personally beneficial to the faculty by mitigating their experiences with unproductive mentoring interactions.

Implications of the Use of RCT for Mitigating Negative Mentoring

Once again the RCT grounds the aforementioned tactics that NECC faculty members perceived to be helpful in mitigating negative mentoring experiences. "Moving on" incorporates the recognition that mentoring is the responsibility for both members of the dyad. Similarly, the faculty's perception of connecting students with others who were better able to meet the needs of the students represents a grounding component of the RCT related to selves in relation. Faculty perceived that it was imperative to relate with others, both for their own good and the good of the students, and that these relations were critical to their ability to mitigate negative mentoring interactions. Furthermore, without the social context of the NECC campus, as RCT would suggest, the ability for faculty to develop relations meaningful to mentoring processes would not be possible. Moreover,

the campus culture and the systemic powers within it, as expressed below, contribute to NECC faculty members' perceptions that they, their colleagues, and the students they mentor all had roles and responsibilities that together formed the potential for productive mentoring interactions.

RQ 1c: What Factors within the Community College Culture Support Faculty Members' Attempts to Foster Student Mentoring Processes?

Table 7: Research Question 1c Themes, contains the themes identified through data analysis procedures that represent the factors that NECC faculty members perceived as contributors to a campus culture supportive of student mentoring. Next, each theme is illustrated via data units from the associated research and discussed relative to the research question.

Table 7

Research Question 1c Themes

Theme	Exemplified through:
Presidential Support	Statements
	Actions taken
Recognition	System generated honors
	Peers and student antidotes
Regular Meetings	Biannual breakfast/lunch
	Steering Committee

NECC faculty members who served as formal mentors to community college students perceived that the campus culture, facilitated by their president, was extremely

supportive of their attempts to foster productive mentoring processes. Specific examples of factors that contributed to the supportive mentoring culture of the campus that were consistently provided during interviews included statements that the president made regarding the formal faculty-student mentoring program, recognition that they had received due in part to their activity within the formal faculty-student mentoring program, and the regular meetings facilitated by the NECC staff members responsible for administering the mentoring program. Overall, the campus culture, as perceived by the faculty, as expressed within the formal faculty-student mentoring program guidebook and college website, and as observed by the primary researcher while visiting the NECC campus, encouraged faculty-student interactions.

RQ 1c, Theme: Presidential Support

Henry, a community college president for over 42 years, shared his perspective when he stated: "I believe in mentoring…. I think it is an obligation of our profession." (Henry 53…82). Remaining active in the formal faculty-student mentoring program, NECC Henry explained

> I just enjoy doing it – I enjoy helping out. And I also wanted to show others that everybody participates. That is it. You would be surprised at how much mentoring I do in the course of a year… at least once a month I get to do something like that (73).

Henry's dedication to the community college student was evident throughout his interview, and was a referenced by a number of additional participants as a driving force behind the campus culture supporting mentoring processes.

Faculty members who served as formal mentors to the NECC students, and staff members who served to administer formal mentoring programs on the NECC campus, perceived that Henry's dedication to the students, and support for mentoring processes greatly contributed to the campus' mentoring culture. Gina, a full time staff member and adjunct faculty member shared

> It does not matter who you are, everybody is committed to the learning process, from the secretary, I think even the maintenance people, we all are very committed to people learning. We want people to become educated and to do that well you have to mentor people along…. It is something that our president looks at. He does not hire folks who are not interested in giving back to the community. And so we just do it cheerfully, it is just something that we want to do. I think that it is part of the college mission - we view it as part of the mission. (Gina 466…493)

Erin, one of the administrators for mentoring programs at NECC expressed, "What's interesting is Henry, the president of the college, has been a mentor for many years." (Erin 380) Therefore, in addition to his verbal expressions of support for mentoring processes NECC faculty perceived that the formal faculty-student mentoring processes had

> …the presidential seal of approval, people know about it, people respect it, people respect the work that Dani and Erin do. And the foundation respects it, the board members of the foundation, and the donors. Being part of it I think is seen as being a real privilege (Wendy 159)

Faculty and the administrators of the programs alike appreciated the president's commitment to mentoring processes. Saedi, a professional staff member responsible for directing a formal major-specific mentoring program for NECC students, expressed "Well I feel really lucky because I am fortunate to have the support of the president." (Saedi, 168) She also shared that a primary piece of advice that she would provide to anyone seeking to implement mentoring processes at their community college to "do your best to get support from the top of the college." (Saedi 275)

NECC faculty, staff, and administrators consistently expressed appreciation for their president's dedication to students and support for mentoring programs. When questioned about their perceptions of what factors within the college's culture supported their attempts to foster productive mentoring processes, the participants inevitably shared that the president's active engagement in the process was a primary contributor to the mentoring campus culture. Such statements exemplify one manner through which systemic powers influence relational interactions and the developmental progress of relationship participants, one of the guiding principles of RCT. In addition to the influence of presidential authority as a factor of systemic power, faculty perceived that the recognition they received, another class of systemic power that is discussed below also influenced the NECC's pro-mentoring culture.

RQ 1c, Theme: Recognition

Henry's active participation in mentoring processes was perceived by NECC faculty as a primary factor in the campus' mentoring culture, but was closely followed by their insights regarding the recognition associated with their participation in the formal faculty-student mentoring program. Faculty members expressed an appreciation for the

formal recognition that they received by participating in the mentoring program, as well as the informal recognition they received from their students. Gina shared,

> I think that the president does reward this. I think that people know that and I think that it is part of the PIF – personal development. I think that it is looked at and definitely taken into consideration - the president takes this very seriously. And I do think that it gets rewarded in the long run. For example, I have a chancellor's award for service to the school – so I get my big medallion to wear at graduations. I did not ask for it, it never mattered to me, I mean it is a big honor but don't get me wrong. To answer to your questions, we do get chancellor awards here. A lot of the faculty who do a lot of this stuff get a chancellor's award and that is a pretty high honor. (Gina 445)

However, institutional recognition for participation in the formal faculty-student mentoring program was perceived as a by-product of the real recognition that the faculty reported as a primary factor that supported a campus culture conducive to mentoring. External rewards including professional benefits were not mentioned by any of the faculty interviewed as a factor in their decision to mentor students. Wonda, a full time administrator who taught in an over-load adjunct capacity expressed, "You could not pay me – you can not say okay I give you 5,000 dollars a semester for you to help a student. I would say no thanks but thanks. It's not about the money." (Wonda 504) Similarly, another faculty member shared,

> I don't do it for professional benefits… I started being involved in the mentoring program because I was seeing so many students down here and

> I wanted to try to do what – to do it the way that the college is supposed to be doing it. And I tried it… (Misty 298)

Instead of external rewards or recognition, the formal faculty-student mentors perceived that the true recognition came when they shared student success stories with their colleagues, or when students came back and shared their success stories with their former mentor. .

> The payoff comes in the personal stories – capturing those – that's what we need to do and that is what we go for. One woman came back – one of the first awards, the student that won the award had been in foster care, homeless, you could not get any more needy AND when she came here the first time she flunked out one or two times because she was working – she literally was up 20 hours a day between working, going to school, whatever. She ended up going to pre-law at a prestigious school, earning her law degree from one of the nation's best law schools and currently teaches law at an Ivy League institution. And she is starting a non-profit organization to help poverty children. That's the payoff – can it get better than that? (Erin 889)

Dani, expressed a common perception most succinctly when she share, "There is nothing like hearing a student come back to you and say 'thank you – you have changed my whole life.' (Dani 908)

NECC faculty expressed their perception that one of the overarching factors within the campus community that supported their attempts to foster student mentoring was a culture of recognition. While formal recognition was mentioned as a factor that

faculty perceived to support their commitment to and engagement in student mentoring, faculty also perceived that the less formal recognition that they received from their peers and students was a factor that greatly contributed to the campus' mentoring culture. Gina's statement of "It's just what we do here," summed up the faculty's perception that the campus culture encouraged their engagement in formal faculty-student mentoring interactions.

RQ 1c, Theme: Regular Meetings

Regular meetings and interactions that were designed to recognize the commitments of the faculty who served as mentors was another factor that faculty perceived to reinforce the supportive mentoring campus culture. Additionally, faculty perceived that the gatherings in which they met and interacted with other mentors contributed to the campus' pro-mentoring culture. Every faculty member interviewed who served as a formal mentor to students expressed appreciation for the "campus-wide mentor breakfasts" from which they gained a sense of connection to their colleagues and other mentoring processes taking place throughout campus. Dani shared that the committee which guides the mentoring program "acknowledge their service to the school every semester with a breakfast, or lunch – to acknowledge their service to the students."

A faculty member who served as a formal mentor to NECC students elaborated on the biannual breakfasts/luncheon as she shared

> We have a luncheon that brings in over a hundred volunteer all together to share and recognize those that have volunteered for 20 – 30 years. It is quite a contagious experience. People share that they do it year after year after year and they are saying it is very rewarding. (Wonda 218)

Faculty perceived that the opportunity to engage in the regularly scheduled breakfasts contributed to the supportive culture of mentoring on campus among their colleagues, as well as the student body engaged in mentoring processes. Students were viewed an integral part of the NECC campus culture; therefore, the perception that faculty shared regarding the students' role in the mentoring culture on campus crystallized their perception that the campus culture was supportive of formal faculty- student mentoring interactions

Including students in regularly scheduled activities through which faculty members become better acquainted with the formal faculty-student mentoring program at NECC was perceived by the faculty as an indicator that the campus' culture of commitment to mentoring was comprehensive.

While students were incorporated into regularly scheduled activities such as the biannual breakfast meetings, they were not represented on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was a group of ten faculty and professional staff members who served as a guiding force for the formal faculty-student mentoring program. Dani, the lead coordinator for NECC's formal faculty-student mentoring program explained that "I don't do anything independently, I run everything by them. So it's always the respect of the decision of the group." (462) Other faculty and professional staff agreed that "Steering Committee is definitely vital piece." (Shirley 705)

> You need back up. When you have new faculty coming on board, when you have new people coming on board and there are all these activities to go to that you have to be at, you need to have a couple of people who are

committed to get there, get the stuff set, to physically be there, to be the face of the program. (Erin 455)

Faculty and professional staff members who collectively composed the Steering Committee for NECC's formal faculty-student mentoring program met regularly to "keep the program at the forefront" of institutional activities. An avenue for the coordinator of the program to 'infiltrate' the professorial ranks, the Steering Committee's monthly meetings served to maintain the momentum of the program, as well as provided faculty with direct influence within, thus bye-in for, the mentoring program.

Summary of RQ1c: What factors within the community college culture support faculty members' attempts to foster student mentoring processes?

Regular meetings through which faculty and staff who served as mentors to NECC students experienced a sense of connection to the overall programmatic processes, were perceived by faculty and staff members as a component of the campus' culture that supported their efforts to foster productive mentoring interactions. Similarly, the president's philosophy and support for the program, the manners in which their participation in the program was recognized, and the incorporation of students into some of the program's foundational meetings were factors that participants perceived as illustrative of a campus culture supportive of mentoring processes. The 'students first' philosophy expressed by NECC's president was echoed by the faculty and staff members who participated in this research study; and, it is upon this philosophy that the campus culture, as perceived by faculty, supported their efforts to foster productive student mentoring processes.

Implications for the Use of RCT Relative to Contextual Supportive Factors

As previously mentioned, the aforementioned factors of the president's philosophy, perceived manners of recognition, and the regular meetings at which the mentors interacted represent a cross section of the guiding principles of RCT applied to this research.

First, the faculty expressed a variety of ways through which they perceived that the NECC social context was integral to their mentoring interactions. Secondly, the manner in which the faculty members expressed the importance roles that students played in the mentoring culture on campus, as well as within individual mentorship dyads, was illustrative of their perception that both members of mentoring dyads contribute to the outcomes and conditions of mentoring interactions. Thirdly, the perception that the president and recognition processes valued their participation in the mentoring process exemplified that systemic powers influenced their engagement in the relational and developmental processes of mentoring. Finally, integral to the perceived campus culture that supported mentoring processes was the interrelation of the players within the mentoring culture; thus, the underlying concept of selves in relation upon which RCT sets was fully actualized.

Summary of RQ1 Data, Including Sub-Questions 1a, 1b, and 1c

The discussions above which described that components of the NECC campus culture were perceived to be supportive of faculty's attempts to foster productive student mentoring process, as well as the aforementioned tactics discussed relative to the faculty members efforts to mitigate negative mentoring processes, and the tactics they employ to foster productive mentoring processes, provided answers to the primary research question

of this study: What mentoring processes are in place at this community college? As previously expressed, and in Chapter IV the Narrative Portrait, NECC is a community college dedicated to students' professional and personal development. It is with an appreciation for the NECC student centered campus environment that the focus of this chapter will advance to the NECC faculty members' perspectives regarding their experiences mentoring students.

RQ2: What are Community College Faculty Members' Perspectives Regarding their Mentoring Experiences?

Table 8: Research Question 2 Themes, contains the themes identified through data analysis procedures that represent the NECC faculty members' perspectives regarding their experiences mentoring community college students. Next, each theme is illustrated via data units from the associated research and discussed relative to research questions 2: What are community college faculty members' perspectives regarding their mentoring experiences with students?

Table 8

Research Question 2 Themes

Emic Theme Language	Etic Theme Expression
Mentoring is a calling	Mentors mentor because they care and are passionate about student development processes
Mentors are believers	Mentors are people who believe they can make a difference
Pay it forward	Mentoring is exponentially transformational – mentoring one student impacts an infinite number of people

RQ 2, Emic Theme: Mentoring is a Calling

"Teaching is who I am, I teach students. Teaching is my calling, not my career" explained Dianne (210) a tenured faculty member at NECC. Wonda another tenured faculty member who also performs administrative duties expressed the same sentiments during her interview when she shared that mentoring

> makes you feel really close to the person and I think that being a teacher is such a great…I wouldn't even call it a job – its not a job its really a calling. You've been given, you've been blessed to be given the opportunity to support others in a way that no one else can. (Wonda 458)

The perspective of mentoring as "a formal extension of care" and that "it has to come from the heart," was expressed by every faculty member participant. While Yancey (149) stated that he "could be most useful to people who are thinking about education for a career," he also expressed that in order for faculty to engage in mentoring processes

> it has to be because people care and want to be involved. Not because someone in some far off administrative position says it has to happen – or dreamed up a mentoring program. I don't know it just needs to be a natural thing. (Yancey 393)

Members of the Steering Committee, within their conversation about their mentoring experiences, as they discerned how to best train new mentors, summed up the aforementioned sentiments when they said "there could be no training for such a unique relationship. It has to come from within." From the perspective of NECC faculty

members who actively engaged in the college's formal faculty-student mentoring program, successful mentors "care deeply", and their desire to support students through mentoring process "has to be something inside you – it is not something that people can make up," "it is a calling."(Seren 205)

RQ 2, Emic Theme: Mentors are Believers

Faculty members who perceived that successful mentors have a special caring quality within, also expressed that in order to engage in mentoring practices that foster productive outcomes mentors must "believe." Mentors must believe that they can make a difference. Mentors must believe that their students have potential and that they have the ability to learn the skill to reach their potential. Mentors must believe in their own abilities and display self-respect. "There is a care for the human spirit, for potential, there is a belief in belief itself." Dianne shared that her

> …favorite mentoring experience is the same story over and over again, When you believe in someone, then they trust your opinion and believe in themselves to be able to reach their potential…. 'I love to help the student turn their light on.' Turning on their internal light in the belief in their self – not just in their intellectual abilities but in their value of self. A mentor needs to be someone that the student can respect, someone that they can see believes that they can achieve, someone that has self respect and that belief that the student has a light to turn on. (Dianne 52…80)

Within the conversations that transpired during a Steering Committee meetings, a faculty member expressed her perception that "the faculty saying 'I believe in you' makes all the difference to these students." (Steering Committee 781) Meghan (132)

reiterated that “it is not only about cheerleading it is about believing in oneself, and the mentor believing in that student.” Misty (248) also expressed that “I not only want them to learn the material, I want to help them build their confidence and feel that they can do it.” Consistently faculty members that were interviewed expressed a shared perspective that their ability to believe in the students, and the mentoring interactions that they had with students that supported the students’ belief in their own abilities, were two vital components to developing productive mentoring relationships.

Finally, the coordinator of the program also perceived that it is a faculty member’s belief in their own ability to serve students that is of primary importance. She expressed that her role of supporting the faculty members who served as mentors striving to foster productive mentoring interactions was paramount. Dani (651) shared that “the strength of the program lies with making the mentors know that they can be serviced and service the students.” Dani, Erin, and Saedi expressed their perceptions that one of their greatest responsibilities was to reinforce the mentors’ perspectives that they had the abilities to “make a difference.”

Maintaining “a belief in belief itself” was perceived by the coordinators of NECC’s formal mentoring programs, as well as the faculty who served as mentors, as a critical factor in their abilities to foster productive mentoring interactions. Mentors perceived that by sharing their beliefs in the students’ skills and potential, as well as their belief in mentoring and developmental processes, they were able to support their mentees and facility academic success, professional growth, and personal development.

RQ 2, Emic Theme: Pay it Forward

Another unwavering belief that three study participants displayed was the perception that through mentoring they were "providing opportunities to change lives exponentially." Changing lives exponentially was explained in terms of the "ripple effect" of mentoring such that mentoring not only inspired the life of the mentee, but also the lives of those that the mentee influenced. (Erin 512) Popularized by the 2000 Film titled "Pay it Forward," a dramatic representation of Catherine Ryan Hyde's novel by the same name, faculty at NECC perceived that mentoring community college students resulted in activating the "pay it forward" concept.

> I'm always one to tell student to pass it on. Pay it Forward is my theme song. I talk about it a lot because if I can do something good for you, and you can do something good for one other person, and that one other person can do something good for a couple of people, then you've set the world in motion really, and that's my goal…. my first student [mentee] has come to every single one of my classes for 10 years to speak to students about time management skills, about the importance of being in study groups, and like a little missionary –he is definitely someone who passes it on. (Seren 497…Seren 256)

In addition to encouraging the students to pay it forward through their interactions within their classrooms and other aspects of NECC's campus community, faculty expressed a perception that the positive influences they imparted upon their mentees were multiplied outside of their academic worlds. Participants expressed that by reaching one student and guiding him or her through mentoring processes that result in an increased

sense of self, students would inevitably generate additional belief in others with whom they interacted.

> My theory is this – if we reach one – it's one more that we have impacted for good, so let's just do one at a time. If we run an entire mentor program and we were able to save one student, to help them to success then that's worth it. Because that person is going to go out and change the world the way he can, and he is going to make a difference in other's lives the way he would otherwise not. Its not necessarily a quantifiable thing but it is definitely invaluable, the difference we're making…. it's not just down the road that they contribute back, but they contribute back usually along the way and there is a multiple benefit factor, multiplication of the influence. (Wonda 231…671)

NECC's faculty who served as mentors to their community college's students believed that the students they mentored activated the pay it forward concept. While only three of the fourteen faculty members interviewed characterized their interactions with students as a part of the 'paying it forward' process, most of the NECC faculty interviewed did not associate their mentoring role directly with the 'pay it forward' initiative; however, faculty members shared stories that exemplified specific actions in which they engaged that epitomized the 'pay it forward' concept.

> I had a dean who helped me with all the massive reports and all the stuff we had to do. She actually did them with me. I thought it was unbelievably kind of her frankly. She did not have to do that but you know she took the time to do it, to actually do them with me and I had never had that before.

> I can say that I do that with all of the people who I work with now – we do them jointly. (Gina 434)

Perceptions among NECC faculty were abundant in that they believed that "the students we help be successful will reach others. The ones that we've helped and mentored, they go on to a four year [college], in their work, and in their lives." (Erin 790). Exponential impacts resulting from the activation of the "pay it forward" initiative was a desirable outcome of NECC faculty mentors.

RQ 2, Emic Theme: Mentoring is a Touch Stone

Within the context of this research study a touch stone represents a personal sense of being valued and balanced in life. A touch stone is a personalized cognitive space that when individuals "visit" creates an intrinsic sense of purpose and satisfaction.

> It serves like a touch stone almost, being part of a process, being part of a mentoring program. We all mentor so we could certainly do it without a program, but having a program legitimizes it. It gives it a sense of worth at the highest level. (Wendy 151)

Faculty members interviewed consistently expressed how much they enjoyed mentoring at NECC and perceived that their participation in the program was purposeful and personally satisfying.

> I just enjoy doing it – I enjoy helping out. You would be surprised at how much mentoring I get to do in the course of a year. I have the pleasure of seeing somebody succeed who has potential. It has been very satisfying. (73, 119 Henry)

In addition to a sense of satisfaction, faculty perceived that mentoring provided them with opportunities to identify an accomplishment, a point of motivation for their job on a daily basis.

> It just gives me a good feeling to be able to help someone, to make a difference in their life. A student will come in crying and if I can help that student to stop crying and get focus and somehow tackle the problem, it makes me feel that I have accomplished something in the day. I need to see those smiles once in a while and just to know that they are okay. I think that is just what makes me the happiest. I really don't want anything for myself – I just want to make sure that they're going to be okay. (Misty 282)

Concurrently the NECC faculty who mentor community college students expressed that some mentoring interactions lead to lifelong relationships, and that they frequently recognized that they learned from their mentee in dramatic ways throughout mentoring interactions.

> I'm still in touch with them, the students go back 12 or 15 years. We stay in touch because we're friends now and colleagues. I get as much from the relationship, or more sometimes….I have grown so much from this relationship that he could be my mentor. That's really how I feel. (Seren 36, 62)

Some of the lessons that NECC faculty expressed they learned from their mentees were "life lessons"

> The students' levels of coping are amazing - humans are strong; this serves to motivate me to stay strong. I have also learned that there are a lot of ways to view the world and I have become more grateful for my life. I have much more gratitude. (Dianne 141)

Other insights revolved around their approach to mentoring or teaching.

> They've taught me all those things that I wasn't sure of, that I never realized that I would need going into a mentoring relationship. They have certainly taught me about being patient, being a good listener, and that it is not about me. (Walter 141)

Every faculty member who participated in this research study expressed that their participation in the formal faculty-student mentoring program was personally satisfying. Similarly, the mentors perceived that they learned as much, if not more, from the mentees, compared to what they imparted to the students. Community college faculty said their experiences mentoring students served to fulfilling a personal sense of purpose; "mentoring serves as a touch stone."

Summary of RQ2 Data

In general, community college faculty members who participated in NECC's formal faculty-student mentoring program overwhelming expressed positive perceptions of their mentoring experiences with students such as enjoyment and satisfaction. Among NECC faculty, mentoring was optimistically perceived as a calling, through which people who believed that they can make a difference by reaching out to one student, ultimately "change the world," by activating a pay it forward initiative. NECC's faculty displayed the propensity to focus on the positive aspects of their mentoring experiences with

students, especially when compared to expressing their concerns regarding unproductive mentoring. Thus, one may conclude that these faculty members at this community college perceived that their mentoring experiences were predominantly productive, resulting in positive outcomes desired by both the mentor and the mentee.

RQ 3: What is the efficacy of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory as a Framework for Looking at Community College Mentoring Processes?

Table 9: Community College Mentoring Grounding in RCT, identifies manners in which these research data reflect two grounding concepts of the framework evident through data analysis procedures.

Table 9

Community College Mentoring Grounding in RCT

RCT Grounding Concept	How RCT Grounding is Actualized within the Study
Self in Relation	Faculty express importance of peer connections
	Faculty express importance of connecting students
Micro-Processes Investigated	Tactics employed to foster productive mentoring episodes
	Tactics employed to mitigate negative mentoring episodes

Designed to contribute to the fundamental knowledge of formal faculty-student mentoring at community colleges, this research was built upon the theoretical framework of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT). Central to relational mentoring is the recognition that humans are interdependent and that mentors function in relation to

and with other individuals within their social context; therefore, RCT provides the structure to investigate the manners in which mentors function within a context of interdependence and connections (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Additionally, RCT's grounding concept that mentoring includes episodic interactions, allowed for the examination of the micro-processes of mentoring that the participants expressed.

RCT Grounding Concept: Selves in Relation

Clearly, NECC faculty recognized the importance that 'connections' played in quality mentoring processes. Faculty perceived that their ability to relate with others in their environment, including the students that they mentored, was instrumental to developing productive mentoring interactions, as well as mitigating potential negative mentoring episodes. Furthermore, within the documents that NECC used to recruit faculty and student to participate in the formal program, were repetitive indications that "connections" served a primary role in the desired mentoring processes.

NECC faculty discussed their perceptions of the importance for them to develop and utilize relations with peers during the processes associated with developing productive mentoring interactions with community college students.

> I find myself not particularly knowledgeable about things like course schedules, financial aid. That is one of the reasons why when my last mentee came to me about financial aid I needed to get him to someone else because all those complicated things are not my business. (Yancey, 259)

In addition to the importance of being connected to their peers within the NECC campus, faculty also expressed a perceived importance for being connected to individuals and processes outside of the immediate social context of NECC.

> Today at noon we have a local Congress woman coming in and she will be meeting and giving a talk. Then she will be meeting with the student body president and they are going to talk about the student's interest in going to university. Our Congresswoman will be able to connect her with people there in hopes of supporting her in getting an internship. You know I have contacts with various things and when I meet a student with potential - you just do it. I've been a president for 42 year so I've been around and I have connections. (Henry 89)

It was recognized by the NECC faculty that their connections beyond the NECC campus served to extend their ability to promote the students they mentored; thus, the connections contributed to their abilities to foster successful mentoring episodes and mitigate potential negative mentoring interactions. All of the aforementioned examples illustrating NECC faculty members' perspective regarding the importance of connections, and their activation of networks, serve to demonstrate that the mentors within this study recognized the importance of selves-in-relation.

RCT Grounding Concept: Micro-Processes

RCT is distinct from many mentoring theories in that it allows for the investigation of the micro-processes associated with relational mentoring interactions. RCT provided the structure upon which to investigate the specific tactics for developing productive mentoring interactions that were employed by NECC faculty members who

served as mentors to community college students. In this way, RCT greatly contributed to the purpose and results of this research study. Likewise, in providing the framework upon which to explore specific tactics perceived by NECC faculty to mitigate negative mentoring interactions, RCT was ideal for investigating an understudied aspect of mentoring.

Expressing mentoring as a relational process resulting from a compilation of episodic interactions, each of which are influenced by various micro-processes, RCT functioned superbly as a framework upon which to design and analyze this study on exploring formal faculty-student mentoring processes at a community college. It was the ability to identify specific tactics within individual mentoring episodes that faculty perceived to be instrumental in their mentoring interactions that provided this study with the leverage to contribute to the fundamental knowledge of formal faculty-student mentoring at community colleges.

Evidence of RCT's Guiding Principles

Table 10: RCT Guiding Principles for Community College Mentoring, identifies manners in which these research data illustrated the three guiding principles RCT: : (1) social contexts are integral to relational interactions, (2) members of a mentoring dyad are mutually responsible for the skills, outcomes, and conditions of the relational processes, and (3) that systemic powers influence relational interactions and the developmental progress of relationship participants (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

Table 10

RCT Guiding Principles for Community College Mentoring

RCT Guiding Principle	Guiding Principles Exemplified
Social Context's Relevance to Interactions	Faculty perceived the Community College setting as a differential factor in their approaches to mentoring
	Faculty perceived that campus culture supported their efforts to foster productive mentoring interactions
Mutual Responsibilities	Faculty identified personal skills associated with productive mentoring interactions
	Faculty identified responsibilities of students divergent from their own
Systemic Powers	Perception of Presidential influence on program and processes
	Recursive cycle of student and faculty-colleague connections

RCT Guiding Principle 1: Social Context's Relevance to Mentoring Interactions

RCT was an ideal theoretic lens for this study because the investigation was focused upon mentoring within a specific social context, the American community college setting. NECC faculty participants expressed their perceptions that community colleges were a distinct culture in which a diverse student body crusaded against factors unique to these students.

> With a commuter school it is set a different way. When students go home and they're working and their doing umpteen other things, parenting, caring for aging parents…(Dani)

> Yeah our student populations, that is of course being at a community college, are working going to school, caring for aging parents… so we have a different type environment (Erin 200)

Similarly, another participant contrasted his experience attending a "traditional" four-year institution with the experiences he perceived that the community college students encounter.

> Some end up dropping out because life interferes you know. They lose their job or they are taking care of an aging parent, or they get sick or their own kids get sick or any number of things. I went to college straight out of high school and I think back that I was fortunate that I was able to do that. These people, they have to balance so much more, this [school] is just one of the things that they have to worry about all the time. (Yancey, 162)

Moreover, the faculty who had first experienced the NECC culture as a student magnified the distinctive culture and challenges that they perceived confronted community college students.

> They come here say I need a job – how am I going to get an education, how am I going to achieve? And I tell them, 'I did not have money. I studied and got scholarship and that's how I did that.' I was an adult student when I came back. I had three babies that I was raising and my

husband was working round the clock to make this happen. I say 'It's about sacrifice. You have to work hard and you have to set your goals. Really you can do it.'

Concurrent to the perception that community college students managed unique challenges distinctively associated with their social context, NECC faculty also perceived that the community college environment in which they worked fostered a culture that supported and encouraged their engagement in student mentoring processes. Discussed in detail above in association with Table 7, NECC faculty perceived that their campus leadership, as well as the overall campus culture, encouraged and supported their participation in student mentoring processes. With support from the NECC campus culture, faculty expressed their willingness to engage "holistically" in relational interactions with students. And, according to the perceptions of these faculty members, holistic engagement was necessary in order to develop trust, a precursor to productive mentoring interactions and a prerequisite for the ability to respectfully mitigate negative mentoring episodes.

RCT's guiding principle that social contexts are relevant to relational mentoring interactions was embodied through the perceptions expressed by NECC faculty member participants of this study, individuals who served as formal mentors to community college students. It was evident that the social context of the campus influenced the mentoring practices of professional members of NECC's campus community. Additionally, it is pertinent to note that the faculty members themselves perceived that the social context did indeed directly influence their willingness to engage in the mentoring practices and programs supported by NECC.

RCT Guiding Principle 2: Mutual Responsibility

Faculty members who participated in this research provided adequate indications that validated the second guiding principle of RCT: The responsibilities of productive mentoring episodes are mutual among both members of the mentoring dyad. Willing to accept their responsibilities relative to developing productive mentoring episodes and mitigating negative mentoring interactions, NECC faculty identified various skills, tactics, and beliefs that they perceived as instrumental in mentoring processes. Discussed in detail above within the sections associated with Tables 4, 6, and 8, participants identified specific responsibilities that they perceived to belong to the mentor.

Additionally, NECC faculty members identified the responsibilities of the students being mentored. Consistently faculty participants expressed that the primary responsibility that students did not maintain was attending scheduled appointments. The coordinators of two formal mentoring programs expressed that they "have not had a situation where the student will make the appointment and the faculty falls down on it – it's the other way around." Faculty also expressed that students had the mutual responsibility to commit time and attention to the mentoring processes, a mutual willingness to share openly with the mentor, and the explicit obligation to follow through with student-driven action plans developed through mentoring.

> It just has to be someone who really cares. Just as important as the skills is to know that they care. If that kid comes back on Monday, I'll spend extra time with him because he is caring enough to come back. And if he doesn't - he doesn't! (Seren, 673)

More than expressing that their student mentees had mutual responsibilities, the NECC faculty perceived that the formal faculty-student mentoring processes in which they participated fostered mutual learning and development. As suggested within RCT, faculty members implied their perceptions that both members of the dyad benefited from productive mentoring interactions.

> They have taught me a bit about myself: about what I bring and the assumptions that I've got about myself, about this program, and about the way that I expect things to proceed at a college. And they don't always necessarily proceed that way I anticipate. I'd say it's definitely a two way street. (Walter 158)

While RCT states that social context influences mentoring processes, NECC faculty statements implicated specific factions of the campus community as determinants of developing successful mentoring processes. Both Shirley and Gina explicitly discussed their reliance upon the college office dedicated to supporting students through the process of transferring to a senior institution.

> The last piece is about getting ready for a particular transfer you know. You know we have a transfer center and she keeps trying to get in touch with them…. I've given her the advice I can but I am not an expert in that so I think she needs to go over there. (Shirley 607…619)

Therefore, while RCT highlights the relational guiding principle that both members of the dyad are responsible for mentoring processes and outcomes, it does not specifically address the responsibilities of members or factions of the community surrounding the mentoring dyad. Instead, RCT suggests that understanding the social

context in which the mentoring episodes transpire contributes to researcher's ability to investigate mentoring processes and micro-processes.

A result identified within the data analyzed for this study, and discussed in further detail in the next section of the chapter, implied that mentoring is a communal activity – one in which mentoring processes are dictated in part by the community in which they transpire. In other words, not only is it important for researchers to understand the culture in which mentoring transpires for the purpose of recognizing why specific actions or outcomes occur, it is imperative to investigate what factors within a social context contribute to the development of productive mentoring relations.

RCT Guiding Principle 3: Systemic Powers

As with traditional mentoring theories, positional power within a system was identified as a supportive component within the NECC social context in which mentoring interactions were analyzed for this study. However, in alignment with RCT's advanced perception of systemic power, it was not only that the College's president and administrative forces, as well as state-wide institutional factors, that contributed to the productivity of the mentoring relations developed among NECC faculty and students. Rather, it was the systemic power that the social context provides students, in addition to the positional and institutional support for mentoring, that served as a catalyst for the development of successful mentoring episodes and the faculty members' ability to mitigate negative mentoring interactions.

Statements made by the president indicate the accuracy of the perception that faculty expressed regarding the ideal that at NECC "students are the number one priority." Recognized as the reason for the college's existence and the "mission" that

continued to drive the institution's purpose, students maintain a large capitol of systemic power within the NECC campus culture. Therefore, as displayed by their desire for the student to determine the mentoring agenda, the faculty respected the power that the students had within a mentoring relationship.

> I say 'what would you like me to try to help you with?' I don't try to tell them this is what you should do. I say 'where do you want to be and how do you think you can do that?' (Misty, 171)

Other examples indicative of the systemic power that faculty perceived that students contribute to the mentoring processes dynamics included their participation in the semester breakfast/luncheon meetings, and their ability to recruit new mentors to the program.

> It was so nice that I saw many of the mentees start chatting with each other - connecting with each other. And especially when they are continuing next year, it is good for them to know that there are these other relationships that are very strong. Even hearing from them what other pairs are doing can help to foster our relationship with our mentees. (Steering Committee, 44)

The above quote displays that the students were perceived to be important enough to be included in a biannual event that, in part, served as training for the mentors. Also, the quote exhibits that the faculty perceived that the students' participation in the breakfast program served a powerful purpose in that it contributed to the productivity and strength of their relationships with other mentees.

Furthermore, the coordinator of the formal faculty-student mentoring program at NECC indicated that when she was in need of identifying additional mentors for the program she surveyed students. Sometimes, “students offer up their faculty too. Students will request certain people. So, I’ll call the faculty member up and say so and so has requested for you to be their mentor would you like to join the program?” Within the NECC campus culture, students were recognized as powerful players in the formal faculty-student mentoring system. As suggested by RCT, faculty who participated in this study expressed the willingness to enact a model of “power with” their students as they engaged in mentoring processes that were traditionally viewed as hierarchical relations.

Therefore, to answer succinctly the third research question posed by this study, the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory was efficacious as a framework for investigating community college formal faculty-student mentoring processes. Relational mentoring concepts through which mentors and mentees were perceived in relation to others within their specific social context contributed to the ability to make meaning of the associated research data. Additionally, providing the structure upon which to explore the micro-processes of formal faculty-student mentoring processes at a community college, while allowing for the recognition of non-traditional systems of powers that influenced the mentoring processes, illustrates that the grounding concepts and guiding principles of RCT were upheld. However, one prominent theme identified within the data, as discussed below, were not predicated within the confines of RCT.

Naturally Emergent Theme

The previous sections of this chapter discussed themes that emerged during open coding processes, which were also associated with specific research questions or aspects of RCT, the study's grounding theoretical structure. An additional theme that emerged from open coding processes was emically described as "aggregate mentors." While, in part, elements of aggregate mentoring were touched upon within the previous discussion related to mutual responsibility and its interaction with social context is implicitly related to mentoring processes, it emerged as an independent theme within this study's data.

NECC faculty expressed that they were big believers "…that we don't succeed in life unless we are part of a community and those who get help do better." (Gina 207) Therefore, not only was there the perception that the individual faculty mentor, as well as the student mentee within the dyad, were responsible for and potentially benefited from productive mentoring processes, it was expressed that the NECC community at large was a true partner in mentoring process – suggesting a triad structure rather than the traditional dyad, with benefits for all. Faculty expressed their appreciation for working in community to mentor and support mutual growth and development.

> We all work together. We collaborate. It is amazing. If a student has issues, problems, or specific needs we come together as a group and we call it a Student of Interest committee. It is really helpful and we get the input from professors, deans, counselors – and of course this transpires only with the student's permission. (Meghan 141)

Moreover, the faculty expressed that they believed that rarely are they the only person working to support or mentor a student. Rather, they perceived that they were one of a "team" of people working together for the greater good of the student and the NECC campus community.

> Together we kind of created an aggregate mentor… students are coming to me as one of their mentors as opposed to me being their one mentor. And that has been my experience. Dealing the students that I have they are very intense. But even that one student that I had the full mentoring relationship with, I know that she was also working with my colleague my co-director. She would talk to him also and get his feedback. Sometimes she would go right from one office to the next…. I have not had experiences that suggest to me otherwise, that they are really counting on me to be their 24/ 7 and everything. (Walter 276…285)

Besides expressing that the community as a whole coordinates to serve as a network of support, and groups of faculty and staff members work collectively to provide a sense of aggregate mentorship, faculty perceived that their communal efforts resulted in campus-wide benefits.

> I think they [students] benefit academically. I think they benefit maturationally. I think they benefit emotionally. I think they benefit socially.… I think the college becomes more of a community because of mentoring. I think everyone in the campus community benefits from mentoring program. (Seren 221…253)

Therefore, the faculty at NECC perceived that mentoring transpired within their environment in manners specified to support the unique needs of their students, by teams of people, and produced results that benefited all parties involved, including the campus community at large.

Summary

Formal faculty-student mentoring processes at community colleges have been understudied. Specifically, there has been a paucity of investigations to explore the community college faculty members' perspectives regarding mentoring community college students. Data are expressed in this chapter relative to their association(s) among the research questions posed in order to contribute to the study's driving purpose – to contribute to the fundamental knowledge of community college mentoring processes. Data are organized such that they express the perspectives of faculty members who participated in formal faculty-student mentoring processes at North East Community College.

Initially, an overview of the mentoring processes and the social context in which they occur is provided. Next, data are presented to illustrate the tactics that NECC faculty members' perceived to be instrumental in their ability to develop productive mentoring interactions. Trust was identified as the underlying theme that faculty perceived as necessary in order to engage in productive mentoring episodes. Faculty perceived that by listening to students, supporting students in word and actions, and openly sharing appropriate personal information with students they demonstrated their willingness to make themselves available to their student mentees; thus build a trusting environment within which productive mentoring interactions may transpire.

Faculty perceived that trusting environments also developed when they asked student questions in manners that served to guide a process of goal identification. Patiently asking questions to identify goals was a process through which faculty members perceived they recognized the students' needs; thus, allowed student mentees to set the mentoring agenda. Building trusting relations in which students were comfortable setting the agenda was perceived by NECC faculty as appropriate when seeking to develop productive mentoring interactions.

NECC faculty members who participated in the study also perceived it important to connect the students that they mentored with other faculty or campus services in order to mitigate potential negative mentoring interactions. Similarly, setting boundaries and being willing to "move on" were tactics that the faculty perceived to assist their ability to mitigate negative mentoring episodes.

Moreover, because the NECC faculty perceived that their campus culture was supportive of their attempts to foster productive mentoring interactions and mitigate negative mentoring episodes, they expressed a willingness to engage in challenging mentoring processes. Factors that participants of this study identified as indicators that the NECC campus culture was supportive to their engagement in formal faculty-student mentoring processes included the support of the College's president, various forms of recognition received, and regularly held meetings through which the mentoring program maintained momentum and value.

Participants of this study who served as mentors to community college students also expressed a variety of perspectives regarding their overall mentoring experiences. NECC's faculty displayed the propensity to focus on the positive aspects of their

mentoring experiences with students, especially when compared to expressing their concerns regarding unproductive mentoring. Among NECC faculty, mentoring was optimistically perceived as a calling through which people who believed that they could make a difference by reaching out to one student at a time ultimately "changed the world," by activating a pay it forward initiative.

While only three participants interviewed identified themselves as direct contributor to the perpetual "pay it forward" cycle, all participants perceived that they, and the students that they mentored, participated in mentoring processes while maintaining, and ultimately developing productive relations with others. The Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) suggests that mentoring processes are relational and encourages mentoring research to investigate members of mentoring dyads as individuals in relation to others.

Additionally, RCT provided the framework upon which micro-processes of mentoring were investigated from which specific tactics employed by the participants were identifies. RCT's guiding principles provided the framework to explore NECC's social context's relevance to mentoring interactions, the mutual responsibilities of the mentoring dyad participants, and the influences that systemic power have within mentoring interactions. Overall, RCT was perceived to be efficacious when applied framework for investigating community college mentoring processes.

Finally, a naturally emergent theme emically identified as "aggregate mentors" was presented. The concept of "aggregate mentors" was specifically related to any one of the study's research questions yet emerged as a clear theme contained within the data.

In conclusion, the findings reported within Chapter V, provide comprehensive answers to the primary research questions of this study, in addition to produting the additional mentoring-related theme of “aggregate mentors.” The study’s data are in alignment with the purpose of this study such that they contribute to the fundamental knowledge of formal faculty-student mentoring at community colleges.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Provided in tabular format in Table 11 for quick reference, and in narrative format in Chapter V, are findings garnered from this study. In conjunction with Table 11: Comprehensive Findings, is a discussion expressing the implications of this study on theory, research, and practice, as well as the associated limitations and delimitations. Finally, a closing discussion is provided to summarize and reiterate the significance of this dissertation research, as well as recommendations for future study.

Findings

Findings from this study are summarized in Table 11: Comprehensive Findings. The findings were generated by exploring the associations among the data as viewed through the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), as well as mentoring theory, practice, and research as expressed within past and contemporary mentoring literature

Table 11

Comprehensive Findings

Research question	Result/theme
1. What mentoring processes are in place at this community college?	3 formal programs in place Links, Conversation Partners, Business 3 formal program being developed Student Peer, Faculty Peer, Disability Organic/Informal Mentoring
Research question	Result/theme
1b. Tactics to mitigate negative mentoring experiences.	Connections Set boundaries Move on
1c. Factors within the culture that support attempts to foster mentoring.	Presidential support Recognition Regular meetings
2. Faculty members' perspectives regarding mentoring experiences with students.	Mentoring is a calling Mentors are believers Pay it forward Mentoring is a touch stone
3. Efficacy of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT).	Efficacy of RCT expressed, yet not all themes can be encompassed within the theory.

As discussed in detail in Chapter V, results generated from data gathered during the associated study supported the three primary guiding principles of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) that served as the framework upon which this research was designed. Also critical to the purpose of this study is RCT's grounding concept that micro-processes of mentoring convene to culminate into relational interactions perceived to be mentoring activity (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Additionally, results reported highlight the faculty members' perspectives that concur with the second RCT grounding concept that mentoring relations are most effective when mentors intentionally recognize their self-in-relation to others. Data depicted that NECC faculty rely upon their sense of self-in-relation to the cultural landscape and colleagues in order to foster productive mentoring episodes as well as in their efforts to mitigate negative mentoring interactions.

Discussion and Implications

Discussions of the study's findings and related implications will next be presented relative to mentoring theory, research, and practice

Mentoring Theory

Findings supported the selves-in-relation grounding concept of the Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT), which emphasizes the importance of both members of the mentoring dyad recognizing that they, and their relationship, exists in relation to others. The data also indicate that faculty also perceived that their connections with other individuals and the social context in which mentoring interactions transpire were integral to their abilities to develop productive mentoring relations. Whereas RCT expresses the connections between members of the mentoring dyad with each other, as well as the mentors' connections with others to which they introduce to their mentee (Fletcher &

Ragins, 2007; Surrey, 1985), data from this study also illustrate the faculty members perspectives' regarding the support that they received from their connections, as well as the cultural context of both the NECC campus and the mentoring program, as integral to relational mentoring processes. While a supportive cultural context and connections were perceived as integral to productive mentoring interactions, these factors compliment faculty members' engagement in mentoring processes, they are not determinants of a faculty members ability to mentor students.

Furthermore, RCT recognizes that mentoring interactions transpire within a specific social context, a concept that the associated data supports. However, the associated data imply that the social context contributes to a cultural context that is more than a platform upon which mentoring interactions transpire; instead, the data dictate a recursive and symbiotic relation between the cultural context in which mentoring occurs, as well as mentoring interactions and outcomes. Moreover, given that mentoring is a phenomenon involving human relations that transpire in varied social settings, the complex relations between people and their collective cultural environments is dynamic and not inherently replicable.

As expressed in chaos theory, the ever evolving nature of culture, as well as the contiguous relations of human interactions, yields dynamic environments perpetually influenced by the very cultures they host. Therefore, RCT's inclusion of social context as a factor that influences mentoring processes is appropriate yet incomplete. Additionally, while RCT submits that micro-processes within mentoring interactions are influenced by the contextual factors of "hierarchical roles and relationship structures, organizational norms and mentoring climate, and societal-level gender and power dynamics" (Fletcher

& Ragins, 2007, p. 379), it does not recognize the specific mentor program culture associated with formal mentoring processes that transpire within the community college educational system. Thus, as chaos theory suggests, even though it is predictable that mentoring involves human interactions, the process is much too complex to predict because any diminutive change in the surrounding environment may influence the interactive behavioral pattern of one or both members of a mentoring dyad.

While the complexity of the mentoring processes are difficult to predict with regards to the human behavioral components and cultural contexts in which the mentoring dyad engagements transpire, the complexity of mentoring processes at NECC transpire in manners emically defined as aggregate mentorships. As expressed by many participants, NECC faculty perceive that they are one of a group of people that support a mentee through mentoring processes; thus, increasing the complexity of the mentoring interactions exponentially. For example, when one mentor connects the mentee to another service or person within the campus community, this process alters the mentoring circle for that individual mentee which then results in changes within the context in which the mentoring processes transpire.

Furthermore, the unpredictable influences associated with aggregate mentoring processes, coupled with the influences that the dynamic mentoring environment and campus culture may have on the interactive behavioral pattern of all participants of the mentoring process, may also affect the overarching mentoring program or system. Within formal mentoring practices there are multiple levels of events transpiring simultaneously in order for the process to proceed; thus, mentoring is a system as it is "… an organized collections of interrelated elements characterized by a

boundary and functional unity" (Bleecher, 1983, p. 68). For example in the context of this study, faculty members are receiving student mentees, while the student mentees are receiving mentors, while the third party coordinating the initial mentor-mentee interaction is receiving direction from its steering committee – all contributing to the common function of fostering mentoring relationships between community college faculty members and students. The interrelation of these systems is mandatory for the process to exist, and these systems exist within the campus cultural context as well as the mentoring program's cultural context; therefore, RCT's depiction of social context to influence, but not including the influence by mentoring processes, is questionable and it is suggested that theories such as chaos theory may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic nature of formal faculty-student mentoring processes.

Recursive data reported in this study depict the dynamic and unpredictable and interrelated cultural systems in which the NECC formal faculty-student mentoring program transpires. NECC faculty members expressed perceptions' that the environments in which they mentor actively support their mentoring effort, encourages mentoring interactions, and recognizing their participation in mentoring episodes; thus, the environment fosters productive and mitigates negative mentoring experiences, which in turn contributes to a contextual culture conducive to supporting mentoring efforts. Similarly, data indicate that faculty members perceive that the cultural context in which they mentor benefits from productive mentoring interactions, and that productive mentoring interactions benefit from the supportive cultural context in which they occur.

Therefore, it is suggested, based upon data explored for this dissertation, that the RCT framework is compatible with formal faculty-student mentoring processes within

the community college setting; however, within the community college setting, contextual factors not only influence relational processes and mentoring outcomes, the relationships are reciprocal in that contextual factors are influenced by relational behaviors and processes, as well as mentoring outcomes. An adapted graphic presentation of RCT is provided in Figure 2 and depicts the critical reciprocal relations among the social and cultural contexts in which the NECC formal faculty-student mentoring program transpires – a relationship that is supported by aspects of chaos theory. As mentoring scholars continue to explore theoretical foundations of mentoring, especially within the educational setting, it would be valuable for continued exploration relating to the interactions among mentoring processes and the contextual culture in which the interactions occur.

In addition to the implications that this research has relative to RCT as a theoretical structure for mentoring processes within the formal faculty-student mentoring processes at a community college, this dissertation referenced aspects of Tinto's (1975, 2006) student retention model, Astin's (1984) theory of involvement, Schlossberg's (1989) theory of marginality, and Rendon's (2002) concepts of validation. Each of the aforementioned concepts supports mentoring as an approach for increasing retention among community college students. While research has consistently expressed correlations amongst students' connectedness, integration, and validation with productive mentoring and educational interactions (Jacobi, 1991; Rendon, 2002; Schlossberg, 1989; Stromei, 2000; Pope, 2002; Thomas, 2000; Tinto, 2006), research has not investigated the relation of these concepts relative to measures of faculty connectedness and perceptions of validation. Results from this dissertation suggest concepts of mattering, involvement,

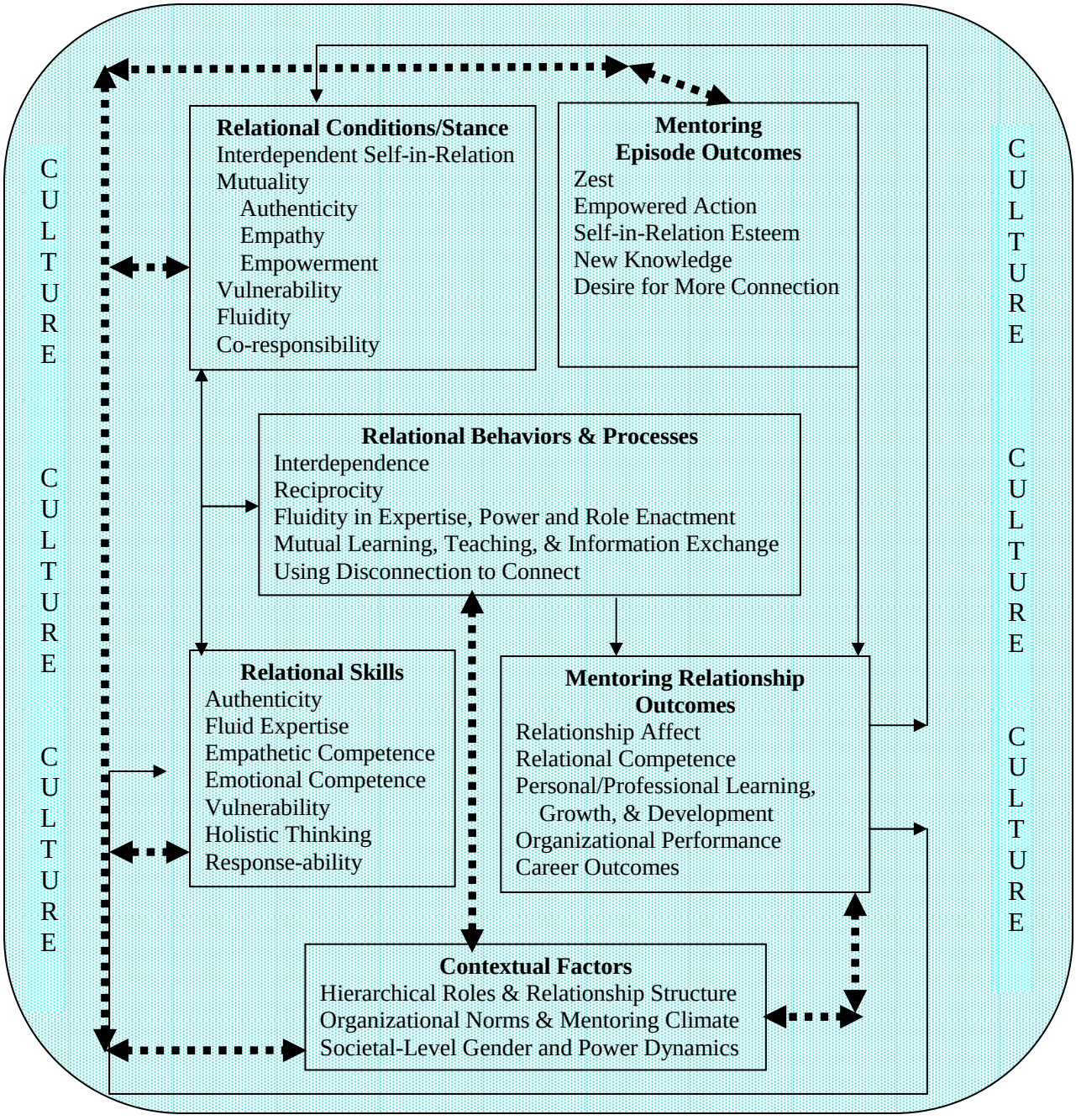

Figure 2. Adapted graphic depicting the RCT with recursive relations among contextual factors and other theoretical principles illustrated via ◄▪▪▪► in which every aspect of the mentoring process is imbedded within contextual culture.

[1] Adapted from Fletcher, J.K., & Ragin, B.R. (2007). "Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory: A window on relational mentoring." In B. R. Ragins & K. E. Kram (Eds.), *The handbook of mentoring at work: Research, theory, and practice* (p379). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.

and interactions of faculty within the campus community as critical factors. Faculty perceived that their sense of connectedness, engagement, and mattering to the campus and mentoring processes directly influenced their ability to foster productive mentoring as well as their ability to mitigate negative mentoring interactions.

The abovementioned results from this research provide a platform upon which to expand relational mentoring theories, as well as other retention based theories relative to post-secondary education, specifically the community college. Implications that faculty members perceptions' of their own sense of mattering and engagement are implicitly related to their perceived ability to foster productive mentoring episodes with students needs to be recognized within mentoring and retention theories devised for higher education cultures.

Therefore, data gathered for this study support the efficacy of RCT as a lens to explore formal faculty-student mentoring interactions at community colleges provided that reciprocal relations among contextual factors and all other RCT guiding principals are recognized. Moreover, the data bring to light the importance of faculty members' perceptions' of their own connectedness as a theoretical component of mentoring deserving further study.

Research

Findings from this research study have various implications for scholarly research that focuses upon mentoring interactions and outcomes. The discussion below expresses the implications and associations among historical and contemporary mentoring research findings, and the results garnered from this study. Specifically, the following sections

will articulate the ways in which the current dissertation data relate to the existing literature on mentoring and concepts of connectedness and retention, mentoring communities, and the potential differentiation between positive and negative mentoring processes relative to perceived power structures, or competitiveness. This section concludes with a discussion regarding the implications for several factors with which mentoring scholars continue to grapple – why, when, and how mentoring works (Ragins & Kram, 2007)

Connections and Retention

Research indicates that mentoring episodes involving interactions between faculty and students yield increased levels of student engagement, as well as enhanced student perceptions of mattering and validation (Laden, 1999; Rendon, 1994, 2002; Schlossberg, 1989); thus, connecting productive mentoring interactions with increased persistence or retention rates among post-secondary students (Barnett, 2007; Campbell & Campbell 1997; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Jacobi, 1991; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Pascarella, 1980; Rendon, 2002). Furthermore, while there is a growing number of inquiries related to mentoring in educational settings (i.e. Barnett, 2007; Bess, 2000; Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Galbraith 1994, 2002, 2004; Jacobi, 1999, Pope, 2002; Zachary, 2004), there is a paucity of research related to the community college setting, and even less regarding community college faculty members' perspectives regarding mentoring. The results discussed in Chapter V, and outlined above in Table 11, expressly serve to contribute to mentoring literature relative to formal faculty-student mentoring practices transpiring at a community college.

Results depict agreement between community college faculty members' perspectives and previous research findings which indicate that mentoring serves to increase a student's sense of mattering through validation (Rendon, 2002). In addition to recognizing that faculty members are aware of the theoretical connections among student mentoring processes, students' senses of validation, and retention rates, the findings reported from this study imply that faculty also perceive that their engagement in mentoring processes increases their sense of mattering and connection within their campus setting. Additional research that focuses on the relationships among faculty members' perceived sense of connectedness and their mentoring practices would further contribute to the educationally focused mentoring literature.

Mentoring Communities

Past research showed that providing student with various types of mentoring opportunities was perceived by community college students to be most effective in connecting them to the campus and their academic progress (Pope, 2002). Data associated with this research indicate that faculty members share the perception that providing students with a variety of mentoring opportunities is beneficial. An additional recurrent theme that surfaced within this research was the concept of an "aggregate mentor." Described as a process where students sought advice and guidance from a combination of people, rather than one specified mentor, NECC faculty perceived themselves as members of a communal group of professionals who serve as an aggregate mentor to their students.

Consistent with literature that expresses the importance of cultural context in developing mentoring relationships (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007), community college

faculty members shared their perceptions that they mentor their students as a part of a mentoring community. In addition to identifying aspects of the community as factors which support their mentoring interactions, participants in this research classified their mentoring interactions with others in the campus mentoring community as components of "aggregate mentoring." The "aggregate mentor" approach was perceived to further strengthen the productivity of mentoring interactions for the students as well as enhance the community-based connective benefits to faculty mentors.

Positive and Negative Mentoring Relative to Power Structures

There is a growing body of literature purporting the benefits of mentoring (Endo & Harpel, 1982; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979, 2005; Raggins & Kram, 2007; Rayle & Chung, 2007; Santos & Reigadas, 2005; Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006; Stromei, 2000; Thomas, 2000) while other reports express the downsides of mentoring (Duck, 1994; Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby et al, 2000; Kram, 1980, 1983, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Lenson, Kelin, & McDee, 1978; and Scandura, 1998). However, few studies have studied the phenomenon of mentoring in higher education settings. Data within this dissertation study depict the recognition among community college faculty that mentoring interactions have the potential to be productive as well as negative – a recognition that parallels Duck's (1994) projection that mentoring is subject to the dynamic nature of positive and negative experiences. Furthermore, findings from this study are consistent with the perception among mentoring scholars and business leaders alike who agree with Kram (1980) that, fundamentally, mentoring is a human relationship process. Therefore, this research study reiterates findings reported from previous studies in that it recognizes mentoring as a relational process susceptible to undesirable factors.

While participants in this study perceived that mentoring processes are susceptible to undesirable factors, they did not express concerns regarding the potential for negative outcomes. Conversely past research has indicated that mentoring processes may result in negative outcomes (Kram, 1983; Duck, 1994; Scandura, 1998; Simons & Eby, 2003). Duck (1994) states that negative outcomes result from the ill intentions of the dominant person within the mentoring dyad. Within this study, none of the participants identified their position as the students' mentor as a position of power. Furthermore, at no time did faculty depict any concern that the students they mentor were potential "competitors" for position, attention, or advancement; factors that previous researcher identified as motivations associated with ill intended mentoring interactions on the part of the mentor (Duck, 1994; Scandura, 1998; Simons & Eby, 2003).

As opposed to faculty members expressing a perception of being the "dominant" member of the mentoring dyad, NECC faculty purported that they learned "just as much, if not more, from students" than they imparted to students. Furthermore, data indicate that community college faculty members perceive that the students they mentored held an equal, if not greater percentage of the "power," within the cultural context and their mentoring interactions. Therefore, the lack of perceived competition, or intrinsic structure of power, among community college faculty members who mentor students suggests that the social and cultural contexts of the community college may differ drastically from work environments; this suggested difference calls for additional investigation into the aspects of negative mentoring, processes, and outcomes within the community college setting.

The Why and When Mentoring Works

Finally, respected for its transformational impact and practical application, researchers know mentoring works, yet they grapple with why, when, and how it works (Raggins & Kram, 2007). Data gathered express explicit reasons as to why, when, and how formal faculty-student mentoring processes work, as perceived by community college faculty members. Historically, it has been reported that productive mentoring interactions result after a trusting relationship has been built (Duck, 1994; Kram, 1985; and Scandura, 1998). Similarly, the primary theme expressed by NECC faculty was that productive mentoring interactions occurred only *when* trust was evident.

Additionally, NECC faculty shared their perspectives as to why they were able to foster positive mentoring interactions with the students they mentor. Discussed in detail in Chapter V of this dissertation, faculty expressed specific tactics that they employed in order to develop productive mentoring interactions. Similarly, the data collected provide insights into *why* and *how* mentoring works, at least in part, by presenting faculty members' perspectives of what tactics they employ to mitigate negative mentoring interactions. Research studies investigating when, how, and why mentoring works are needed in order to enhance contemporary literature related to mentoring processes.

Implications for Additional Future Research

In addition to the aforementioned needs for additional research, data from this study allude to the need for additional research related to mentoring processes within a post-secondary education setting. Previous research has expressed a positive correlation with matching mentors and mentees based upon gender (Brown, 1993; Pascarelli & Terenzini, 2005), race (Rendon, 1994; Pope, 2002; Santos & Reigadas, 2005) and similar

interests (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004; Jacobi, 1991). Data collected for this study depicts a perception among community college faculty that their ability to empathize with their mentee is a critical component in their ability to foster productive mentoring interactions with students. Thus, it is suggested that future research investigates the relevance of pre-college factors in matching functions within formal faculty-student mentoring processes.

Another interesting implication of this data relates to the association between the perceptions mentors have regarding their own experiences as mentees and the manner in which they function as a mentor. Literature suggests that individuals who are mentored are more willing to serve as a mentor to someone else (Ragins & Kram, 2007). While NECC faculty expressed mentoring as the application of the "pay it forward" concept with relation to perceptions that their interactions with mentees were exponential (see chapter V for a detailed discussion related to this concept), they did not express a perception that they were in essence paying it forward through mentoring based upon their experiences as a mentee. Rather, a few mentors expressed that they did not perceive that they ever received positive mentoring during their educational experiences. Therefore, investigations relating mentors' perceptions of their own personal experiences being mentored with their perceptions of factors they perceive to be integral in the process of fostering productive mentoring episodes and mitigating negative mentoring interactions would contribute to mentoring scholars' understanding of the mentoring phenomenon with post-secondary education settings.

Findings associated with this dissertation exploring community college faculty members' perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes connect

historical, contemporary, and future mentoring literature with the community college setting. The paucity of data available on mentoring processes within the community college setting calls for additional investigations of mentoring phenomenon as perceived by faculty, students, administrators, and community partners associated with the American community college setting.

Recommendations for Practice

Mentoring has been practiced as a form of guidance for personal, professional, and educational development for centuries. However, even though researchers know mentoring works, they grapple with why, when, and how it works (Raggins & Kram, 2007). Findings reported in Chapter V provide insights into NECC faculty members' perceptions regarding why, when, and how mentoring works. Discussed below, data from this study provide explicit recommendations for the administration of productive formal faculty-student mentoring programs at community colleges. Additional findings suggest specific tactics for faculty who serve as student mentors to employ in order to foster productive mentoring interactions.

Recommendations for Mentoring Program Administrators

Findings from this study suggest that faculty members who engage in formal student mentoring processes perceive that a supportive campus environment is integral with their willingness to be involved with a formal program. Furthermore, data suggest that faculty members who serve as student mentors appreciate meaningful recognition and recurring opportunities to interact with their peers.

Because faculty identified the campus culture as a determinant of their willingness to engage in formal faculty-student mentoring processes, it is suggested that administrators of mentoring programs align the program with the institution's living mission; therefore, faculty will recognize the relevance that mentoring has in their purpose as a campus community member. Furthermore, data suggest that administrators of mentoring programs should recruit a well respected institutional leader to "champion" the program. Henry, NECC's president, was a strong advocate for mentoring, participated in the program, and frequently recognized the import role that mentoring played in the advances of community college students.

In addition to identifying campus culture as force that encouraged their participation in mentoring processes, faculty members expressed an appreciation for the recognition they received as a result of their engagement in mentoring. Therefore, it is suggested that administrators who implement formal faculty-student mentoring programs at community colleges connect the program with established organizational recognition processes such as tenure hearings, professor of the year awards, or other institutional traditions. Capitalizing upon opportunities to recognize faculty members who practice mentoring with students may serve to foster their continued engagement in the process, as well as a method through which to recruit new mentor participants.

While faculty expressed that formal recognition of their participation in mentoring was appreciation, they also expressed an affinity for informal recognition that they received from peer interactions. Findings from this study indicate that faculty value recurrent interactions with their peers where mentoring is the focus; hence, it is suggested that administrators of formal faculty-student mentoring programs incorporate regularly

scheduled meetings or activities at which the participating faculty may interact with each other.

In addition to sharing stories, comparing experiences, learning about specific tactics to use to enhance the productivity of mentoring interactions, faculty perceived that their participation in regularly scheduled meetings kept them "connected" to their colleagues and the campus community. The importance of their perceived connection to campus and colleagues was iterated as a factor associated with their willingness to continue to engage in mentoring practices, as well as their perceived ability to engage in productive mentoring processes. Consequently, administrators who coordinate formal faculty-student mentoring programs would be wise to incorporate regularly scheduled meetings at which faculty members may interact organically with each other in manners that serve to connect them with each other, the program, and the campus community.

Administrators seeking to support productive formal faculty-student mentoring programs at community colleges would be wise to establish processes that promote interactions among faculty participants which result in their enhanced sense of connections. Furthermore, identifying a respected distinguished champion to advocate for the mentoring program is critical to the alignment between the program and the dynamic campus culture. Once institutionalized, opportunities for faculty to perceive that their engagement in the mentoring program is recognized and appreciated may be established, which in turn fosters a sense of "connection" and increased likelihood for the faculty to remain engaged in the mentoring program.

Recommendations for Faculty Serving as Student Mentors

Findings from this study provide detailed recommendations for faculty members who serve as student mentors. Underlying all of the detailed suggestions was the importance that trust plays in developing productive mentoring interactions with students. Faculty who intend to serve as a mentor to students would benefit from recognizing the importance role that trust plays relative to developing productive mentoring interactions with students, as well as to familiarize themselves with specific tactics that their colleagues at NECC identified as critical factors in their ability to develop productive mentoring episode while mitigating negative mentoring interaction.

Specifically, faculty are encouraged to make themselves available, physically and mentally to their mentees, as well as to practice behavioral actions to employ with the intent for students take the lead in determining the direction that the mentoring processes will take. Moreover, faculty serving as student mentors ought to familiarize themselves with tactics that their peers at NECC identified as helpful in mitigating negative mentoring interactions such as maintaining their own connections, setting boundaries for the mentoring processes, and recognizing when it is appropriate to respectfully move on.

Recommendations to assist faculty in fostering productive mentoring interactions.

Findings from this study show that productive mentoring interactions are fostered when faculty take time to listen, show their support directly to their student mentee, and share of themselves in a personal manner with their mentee. Therefore, faculty who intend to mentor students ought to resolve to dedicate ample time and attention to the student that they volunteer to mentor as well as the mentoring process. Data suggest that productive mentoring episodes are most likely to transpire when faculty dedicate

themselves to the process, and employ specific behavioral actions with the intentions of building trust with their mentee. Prior to engaging in mentoring processes with students, faculty would be wise to decide how they will illustrate their willingness to listen and desire to support the student, as well as their comfort with sharing of themselves in order to foster a trusting environment for the development of productive mentoring interactions.

Similarly, faculty would be wise to identify manners with which they will be comfortable guiding students through the mentoring process such that the student perceives and actually is leading the direction that the mentoring interactions take. Findings of this study showed that veteran faculty who mentored students perceived that they fostered trusting productive mentoring interaction by employing tactics such as asking students questions to identify their desired mentoring outcomes, guiding students through goal identification processes, and being patient with the student and the mentoring process. Developing a guiding set of questions to employ during initial mentoring episodes, designed to encourage the student to express their expectations and desired outcomes of the mentoring process, and which provide the faculty member with opportunities to share their expectations, is a specific behavioral action that faculty mentors may take to guide students through the processes of taking the lead in the mentoring interaction.

While preparing for mentoring interactions by developing purposeful questions to ask the student assists in the process of uncovering the students' expectations of the mentoring interactions, it also serves the purpose to begin guiding the student through goal identification activities. Even though a faculty mentor may be able to clearly see

actions that students could take to advance their circumstances, it is ideal to be patient with the mentoring processes and allow the student to realize and actualize their goal independently. Patiently guiding students through goal identification and actualization processes may result in a sense of independence within the mentee; thus, reinforce the trust that grounds future mentoring interactions and contribute to the productivity of the mentoring process.

Recommendations to assist faculty in mitigating negative mentoring interactions.

Findings from the study express that NECC faculty perceived a potential for student mentoring processes to be susceptible to negative factors. However, these faculty members identified specific tactics that they employ to mitigate negative mentoring interactions. Data showed that faculty perceived that their connectedness to colleagues, the campus, and the surrounding community, as well as their capacity to set boundaries and respectfully move on assisted their ability in mitigating negative mentoring interactions.

It is sensible for faculty who plan to engage in student mentoring processes to become familiar with campus resources, peers, and their local community so that they may reference these as supportive means to mitigate negative mentoring interactions. NECC faculty members who mentor students share that their ability to connect students with other people or support services reduces the likelihood for negative mentoring interactions to occur. Furthermore, this study shows that faculty members perceived that their connections with their peers, who experienced similar negative mentoring experiences, provides a supportive network through which these faculty members may learn additional behavioral actions to employ to mitigate negative mentoring interactions.

Maintaining connections with others and local services provide faculty members with a network that supports their efforts to mitigate negative mentoring interactions.

Similarly, astute faculty members who serve as mentors to students establish boundaries for the mentoring processes with their mentee and express that if the student needs support outside of these boundaries that they will work to connect the student with the most appropriate resource. Prior to engaging in mentoring practices faculty ought to contemplate their comfort level with various common concerns students' experience, as well as how they would express this comfort level with the mentee in a respectful and productive manner. Establishing and sharing boundaries and expectations at the beginning of a mentoring interactions, as well as reiterating them in future mentoring episodes, is one tactic that this study surmised mitigates negative mentoring interactions.

In some cases connecting students with additional resources, and setting boundaries do not resolve negative mentoring interactions; thus, faculty expressed moving on as a tactic to employ to mitigate negative mentoring interactions. When mentoring interactions maintain negative status, findings from this study suggest that faculty members respectfully move the student on to a different mentor or resource and that the faculty member disengages from the mentoring process with that mentee and moves on. Likewise, when students disengage from the mentoring process and refrain from additional mentoring interactions, it is wise for the faculty mentor to move on, identify another mentee and restart the course of action to develop productive mentoring episodes.

Findings from this study showed that faculty members may experience negative mentoring interactions; however, the data indicate that faculty mentors may employ

tactics of activating connections, setting boundaries, and moving on to assist in their ability to mitigate these negative mentoring interactions. Faculty members who engage in student mentoring processes are wise to be familiar with the aforementioned tactics, as contemplate how they would incorporate these tactics into their mentoring interactions.

Because mentoring is an interpersonal process (Kram, 1983), tactics and behavioral actions identified with mitigating negative mentoring interactions, as well as fostering productive mentoring episodes, may be enacted by faculty in various ways based upon the faculty members' personality, skills, and the community in which they mentor. Therefore, faculty members are encouraged to reflect upon their mentoring interactions with students and identify how they may be able to better incorporate the behavioral actions and tactics identified from the data in this study into their attempts to develop productive mentoring episode and mitigate negative mentoring interactions with their students.

Limitations and Delimitations

Every research study is susceptible to a variety of limitations and delimitations relative to the purpose driving the research, theoretical foundations upon which the study is designed, and methodological factors (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Most notable limitations associated with this study relate to the methodology considerations, while the primary delimiting factor is associated with participant recruitment factors.

Limitations

Because the purpose driving this research was to explore the perspectives of community college faculty members regarding formal mentoring practices, qualitative research protocols were employed. By design, qualitative protocols are intended to

provide insights into the perspectives of a specific group of people, within a specific setting, during a specific time period (Patton, 2002). Therefore, readers must be aware that results depicted in this dissertation should not be generalized; rather, the transferability of the reported findings must be determined with respect to the social and context and time frame in which the research was conducted, as well as with consideration to the study's participant population.

This study relied upon volunteer participation from faculty who participated in formal faculty-student mentoring processes at a specific community college geographically located in the Northeastern United States. Because participation in the study was voluntary, participants may have the propensity to have an overly positive perspective of mentoring the processes at NECC as well as the associated cultural support and resulting benefits. Moreover, volunteers were recruited utilizing a snowball processes in which participants recommended colleagues that they perceived to have rich experiences with mentoring community college students.

Therefore, initial respondents agreeing to voluntarily participate in the study may have held an exceedingly positive perspective related to mentoring practices and may have encouraged the recruitment of additional participants with the same propensity towards positive perceptions of mentoring. Thus, findings generated may have resulted from data provided by a participant population with overly positive perspectives of mentoring who were less likely to discuss negative or challenging mentoring experiences. Even though participants were required to have engaged in mentoring practices for a minimum of three consecutive semesters prior to contributing to this study specifically to increase the likelihood that they would have experienced negative or challenging

mentoring interactions, no measures were in place to determine the credence that they gave to such experiences.

Delimitations

In order to participate in this research study, participants were expected to have participated in a formal faculty-student mentoring processes at NECC for a minimum of three consecutive semesters. Requiring three consecutive semesters of experience was desired because it was expected that within a one year period that a mentor would have encountered at least one negative mentoring interaction. However, requiring a minimum of three consecutive semesters of mentoring experience disqualified inexperienced mentors from sharing their perspective regarding mentoring processes and the context in which they mentor.

Additionally, in order to qualify to participate in this study participants were required to express an interest in continuing their participation in formal faculty-student mentoring processes. Therefore, the perspectives among individuals who perceived their formal mentoring experiences to have been truly horrific such that they disconnected with mentoring practices were not included in the data collected and analyzed. Recruiting participants with continuous engagement in mentoring processes reinforces the likelihood that they held positive perceptions of mentoring processes, the supportive social and cultural contexts in which they mentor for mentoring engagement, and productive outcomes resulting from mentoring interactions.

Based upon limitations associated with this study's qualitative design, and the delimitations associated with requirements for volunteer participants, the results generated must be respected as representations of the perspectives of a specific group of

individuals, within a specific cultural context, during a specific time period, that may have had a special affinity for mentoring processes. Future investigations exploring mentoring practices at community colleges, specifically the perceptions of mentoring among the community college faculty who mentor students, are advised to consider the associated limitations and delimitations when designing their study. The paucity of research related to mentoring practices within community college settings calls for additional investigations into the associated processes, and even in the presence of the aforementioned limitations and delimitations, this study may provide investigators with a foundation upon which to expand related scholarly explorations.

Closing

Mentoring, for decades, has been touted as a process through which participants garner personal and professional benefits (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Within educational settings, mentoring processes have also been connected to academic advances (eg. Barnett, 2007; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979; Pope, 2002). Data in this study concur with the previous research depicting mentoring practices as productive processes through which all members involved experience growth and development. Similarly, findings generated from this study recognized the potential for undesirable interactions or outcomes to result from mentoring practices and, therefore echos some mentoring scholars' explanation of the "dark" side of mentoring. In general, results engendered by this research complement historical and contemporary mentoring literature, especially mentoring literature related to post-secondary education settings.

However, the data collected in association with this dissertation provides a number of novel implications. Related to mentoring theory, this research expresses a

potential reciprocal relationship between the cultural context in which mentoring processes transpire and the evolution of mentoring practices and outcomes within that context. An additional implication from this research relating to mentoring theory is the perception that mentoring, within the community college setting, is a ‘communal’ process such that the mentors perceive themselves as serving in an ‘aggregate mentoring’ capacity.

The concept of aggregate mentoring suggests to mentoring researchers a novel concept worthy of additional investigation. Furthermore, the data reported expresses a variety of novel implications related to research including, but not limited to: community college faculty members perceptions that mentoring practices activate a “pay it forward” initiative; within an educational setting, pre-college life experience factors may be a associated with more productive formal faculty-student mentoring matches than gender, race, or similar study interest; and the potential relation between a mentor’s perception of their experiences as a mentee and the manners in which they mentor students.

Novel implications that this research provides relative to mentoring practices include the specific tactics that mentors employ to foster productive mentoring episodes, as well as to mitigate negative mentoring interactions. Providing specific examples of precise skills, tactics, and behaviors that mentors perceive to contribute to *why* mentoring works is a valuable contribution that this study makes to mentoring literature relative to mentoring practices.

Contributing to mentoring scholars’ understanding of *why* mentoring works according to the perspectives expressed by mentors themselves, suggests continued development of formal mentoring programs. Ultimately, participants expressed a

perception that formal faculty-student mentoring programs are desirable enterprises to have on a community college campus. NECC faculty members who serve as mentors in their college's formal faculty-student mentoring program perceived that their engagement in mentoring processes benefited their own development as well as that of their students, their colleagues, and the campus community. Extending the perception of benefits to the local workforce community, community college faculty who participate in a formal faculty-student mentoring program expressed an unfettered passion to "save the world, one student at a time."

Commentary

As an educator dedicated to the academic success and personal development of students, I perceive the findings of this study valuable to the development, implementation, and assessment of formal faculty-student mentoring programs. Working within a community college setting I have gained insight into the many challenges that are specific to that setting. While four-year institutions may address similar challenges the intensity and combination of these challenges, the cultural context of community colleges, differentiate from their senior counterparts. Community colleges enroll the greatest number of minority students, non-traditional students, students living in poverty, and first generation students (AACC, 2008). Therefore, I perceive mentoring processes and practices advantageous to the community college students' transition into, and success within, the academic environment, as well as their personal development.

When considered comprehensively, I interpret findings from this study to suggest that the success of mentoring processes at the community college are contingent on the people recruited to serve as mentors. Simply stated, "It's about the people." In addition

to faculty, professional staff members and administrators successfully engaged in the formal mentoring program at NECC. Professional rank or content expertise were not perceived as critical factors in the success of mentoring processes; rather, an individual's commitment to student development and academic success were perceived as the critical factor in developing productive mentoring interactions. I believe that a person's capacity to engage authentically in mentoring processes with the intent to support the student's progress towards their goals, while teaching them how to navigate the educational system is the primary factor in developing productive mentoring interactions.

Additionally, I concur with the data suggesting that identifying a high level executive to champion the development and implementation of a formal faculty-student mentoring program was instrumental in the integration of the program into the college's culture. Moreover, incorporating a steering committee comprised of respected faculty, staff, and administrators reiterates the importance of activating advocates for mentoring processes, as well as providing the people who do the mentoring with opportunities to contribute to the development and implementation of the program.

Members of the steering committee at NECC expressed that while there was a structured program in which they participated and promoted among their peers, they perceived that the mentoring was a personal process, different for every mentor and mentee. I note this expressed perception because it illustrates a pattern that I found intriguing, and believe is deserving of continued research; that is, there were distinct parallels between the tactics that the participants shared that they employed to develop productive mentoring episodes and the types of support that they desired.

I initially, recognized the parallel patterns when the faculty members' expressed a desire to be provided with some guiding advice regarding the mentoring process, just as they expressed that they perceived that students benefit from boundaries guiding their mentoring interactions. I propose that the parallels between what the faculty members perceive regarding how the students experience mentoring, and how they describe their experiences as a mentor calls for continued research on this concept.

Finally, I found the lack of data expressing concerns about fiscal resources noteworthy. Rather than expressing concerns about budgetary issues, findings in this study showed that participants were more concerned about ensuring that the right people were involved in the mentoring processes. Therefore, as I strive to support the academic success and professional development of community college students through the development and implementation of a formal faculty- student mentoring program, I will seek to engage the "right people" in a program championed by an institution leader and guided by a steering committee composed of respected faculty and staff committed to the hope of mentoring.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RECRUITMENT COMMUNICATION

Dear Participant,

As an educator interested in the success of your students, would you be interested in sharing your experiences serving as a mentor to students? I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University studying faculty-student mentoring processes. Your name was provided to me by one of your colleagues as someone who has participated in your College's faculty-student mentoring program.

I would appreciate the opportunity to hear about your experiences mentoring students during a one hour informal interview. Information shared will be referenced for my dissertation. Great care will be taken to protect your confidentiality; your name and other identifying factors will not be utilized in any associated analysis or reporting processes.

Enclosed in this envelope is a sample of the aspects of your mentoring experiences that I would like to discuss with you. I will be in contact within the next week to see if you are willing to participate in this study.

Thank you in advance for your time. I look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,

Lisa Marie Kerr

enc: Mentoring Topics of Interest

Phone Script for Participant Recruitment

A. If potential participant answers the phone:

Hello, is XXXX available?

Hi, this is Lisa Marie Kerr, I received your name from one of your colleagues as someone who participates in the College's faculty-student mentoring program. How are you today?

Did you by chance receive my letter describing my interest in meeting with you to discuss your experiences mentoring community college students?

If yes – inquire if they are willing to participate and answer any questions they may have. Set up a date and time to meet, confirm email, and indicate that I will send reminder email the day before our meeting.

If no - explain who I am and why I am contacting them for the study, using the invitation letter as a guide. Ask them to participate and set up a meeting date and time. Confirm their email address and indicate that I will send a reminder email the day before our meeting. Also, indicate that I will be following up within the next day with electronic copies of the correspondence that I had mailed to provide them with additional information about the study and potential interview.

Thank them for their time.

B. If potential participant does not answer the phone – message to leave:

Hello, this message is for XXXX. My name is Lisa Marie Kerr, I received your name from one of your colleagues as someone who may be willing to participate in an one-hour informal interview with me to discuss your experiences serving as a mentor to your students.

I will follow up this message with an email that describes more details of my request to meet with you later today. I appreciate your consideration in participating. Please call me back at (405) 736-0304, or email me at lmkerr@okstate.edu with any questions you may have.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you in advance for your time.

Electronic Mail Correspondence

A. If no prior personal contact:

Dear participant,

I have received your name from one of your colleagues as someone dedicated to student success, and he/she indicated that you participate in the College's faculty-student mentoring program. Would you be willing to meet with me for an hour to talk about your experiences mentoring students? I am a doctoral student at Oklahoma State University studying community college faculty experiences mentoring community college students.

Below are the aspects of your experience in which I am interested. Thank you in advance for your time. Please call at (405) 736-0304, or email me at lmkerr@okstate.edu to indicate your interest in participating, or with any questions you may have.

Thanks – Lisa

1. Positive experiences you have encountered mentoring students.
2. Student mentoring experiences that did not meet your expectations.
3. Your perception regarding the value of mentoring students.
4. Additional questions that surface during out conversation.

B. If prior contact has been made:

Dear participant,

Thank your for your willingness to meet with me to discuss your perspectives regarding your experiences mentoring community college students. I look forward to meeting you on (Date) at (Time) in (location). If you have any questions or concerns please let me know.

Thanks again - Lisa

Mentoring Topics of Interest

The purpose of my study is to better understand community college faculty members' perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes. The perspective that you provide will be analyzed in coordination with a number of other community college faculty members who serve as mentors to students in order to contribute to future practice, research, and theory of student mentoring processes. Thank you for participating.

Primary questions that I wish to discuss with you relate to:

1. Positive experiences you have encountered mentoring students.
2. Student mentoring experiences that did not meet your expectations.
3. Your perception regarding the value of mentoring students.
4. Additional questions that surface during out conversation.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

APPENDIX B

IRB APPLICATION

HANDWRITTEN FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

Application for Review of Human Subjects Research

Submitted to the
Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board
Pursuant to 45 CFR 46

_____
IRB Number

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Title of Project: Community College Faculty Perspectives Regarding Formal Faculty-Student Mentoring

Is the Project externally funded? ☐Yes ☒No If yes, complete the following: ☐Private ☐State ☐Federal

Agency: Grant No: OSU Routing No:

Type of Review Requested: ☒Exempt ☐Expedited ☐Expedited Special Population ☐Full Board

Principal Investigator(s): *I acknowledge that this represents an accurate and complete description of my research. If there are additional PIs, provide information on a separate sheet.*

Lisa Marie Kerr		March 9, 2009
Name of Primary PI (typed)	Signature of PI	Date
Higher Education	Education	
Department	College	
18400 Scarlet Oak Lane, Edmond, OK, 73012	(405) 340-7395	lmkerr@okstate.edu
PI's Address (Street, City, State, Zip)	Phone	E-Mail

Required IRB Training Complete: ☒ Yes ☐ No
(Training must be completed before application can be reviewed)

Name of Co-PI (typed)	Signature of Co-PI	Date
Department	College	
PI's Address	Phone	E-Mail

Required IRB Training Complete: ☐ Yes ☐ No
(Training must be completed before application can be reviewed)

Adviser (complete if PI is a student): *I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are properly protected.*

Kerri Kearney		March 9, 2009
Adviser's Name (typed)	Signature of Adviser	Date
Higher Education	Education	
Department	College	
315 Willard Hall, OSU Stillwater	4-2755	kerri.kearney@okstate.edu
Adviser's Address	Phone	E-Mail

Required IRB Training Complete: ☒ Yes ☐ No
(Training must be completed before application can be reviewed)

NOTE: If sufficient space is not provided below for a complete answer in sufficient detail for the reviewer to fully understand what is being proposed, please use additional pages as necessary.

1. Describe the purpose and the research problem in the proposed study.

The purpose of this study is nested in basic research as described by Patton (2002). Expressly, the purpose of this research is to contributing to the fundamental knowledge of formal faculty-student mentoring at community colleges. Specifically, this research will explore community college faculty members' perceptions of tactics they perceive to foster productive mentoring process as well as tactics that mitigate negative mentoring experiences.

Research problem

Community colleges have low retention and graduation rates with a mere 36 percent of students earning a certificate, degree, or transfer to complete a bachelor's degree within six years of initial enrollment (Bailey, Alfonso, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, & Leinbach, 2004). One strategy that community colleges have employed to increase retention and graduation rates is formal student-faculty mentoring programs (Galbraith, & James, 2004; Pope, 2002; Rendon, 2002). However the data resulting from various studies investigation mentoring outcomes are equivocal regarding the association between mentoring programs and their benefits (Eby & Allen, 2000; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russe, 2000; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Long, 1997; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1979, 2005; Raggins & Kram, 2007; Rayle & Chung, 2007; Santos & Reigadas, 2005; Scandura, 1998; Simon & Eby, 2003; Spencer, 2007; Stevenson, Buchanan, & Sharpe, 2006; Stromei, 2000; Thomas, 2000). Conflicts within data related to formal mentoring outcomes may be better understood by investigating the mentors' perspectives. Specifically, factor impacting the outcomes associated with formal faculty-student mentoring processes at community colleges may include tactics faculty employ to develop productive student mentoring interactions (Galbraith, 2001), tactics faculty employ to overcome negative student mentoring interactions (Scandura 1998; Spencer 2007), and various aspects of campus culture (Fletcher & Raggins, 2007). Gathering community college faculty perspectives via open-ended semi-structured in-depth interviews regarding their perceptions and experiences related to formal faculty-student mentoring will provide insight into the conflicting results reported regarding outcomes associated with formal mentoring processes.

2. (a) Describe the subjects of this study:

1) Describe the sampling population:

Community college faculty members who have voluntarily participated in formal faculty-student mentoring initiatives for a minimum of four semesters at the research site and who have indicated their intent to continue to participate in student mentoring processes. Participants will be recruited from Westchester Community College (WCC) located in Valhalla, New York. Faculty will be recruited from a list of available mentors that is provided on the WCC website. The researcher will verify if the faculty member has participated in a mentoring program during the process of inviting the faculty member to participate in the study. All correspondence with participating faculty will be kept in files secured in the primary researcher's office (located in room 105 Student Services Building at Rose State College, Midwest City, Oklahoma). In order to protect participant confidentiality correspondences that contain their names will be kept in a locked filing cabinet drawer separate from where data notes and interview transcripts will be stored. Electronic correspondences will be printed off and stored in these files and the original electronic messages will be permanently deleted from the primary researcher's email mail folder.

2) Describe the subject selection methodology (i.e. random, snowball, etc):
Purposive snowball sampling

3) Describe the procedures to be used to recruit subjects. Include copies of scripts, flyers, advertisements, posters or letters to be used:
Individual will be recruited to participate in this study via letters, followed by electronic mail correspondences and phone conversations in order to secure the desired purposive sample. Copies of each stage of the recruitment process materials are attached.

4) Number of subjects expected to participate:
8 - 12

5) How long will the subjects be involved:
Each will participate in a 45-75 minute interview, with the option of participating in a following interview for member checking procedures. It is expected that all data collection and member checking processes will be completed within an 12 month time period to commence upon IRB approval.

6) Describe the calendar time frame for gathering the data using human subjects:
March 2009 – September 2009

7) Describe any follow-up procedures planned:
Check of typed interview transcript will be offered to each participant

(b) Are any of the subjects under 18 years of age? ☐Yes ☒No
If Yes, you must comply with special regulations for using children as subjects. Please refer to IRB Guide.

Provide a detailed description of any methods, procedures, interventions, or manipulations of human subjects or their environments and/or a detailed description of any existing datasets to be accessed for information. Include copies of any questionnaires, tests, or other written instruments, instructions, scripts, etc., to be used. .
3.
The participants will meet with the researcher at a pre-determined public location. The location will be a mutually agreed upon locale by both the researcher and the participant. The researcher will explain the study and purpose and notify the subject that the interview will be recorded for accuracy. The participant will complete the informed consent form and a written survey. During the interview, the researcher will also be taking additional notes on paper

4. Will the subjects encounter the possibility of stress or psychological, social, physical, or legal risks that are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests? ☐Yes ☒No

If Yes, please justify your position:

5. Will medical clearance be necessary for subjects to participate because of tissue or blood sampling, administration of substances such as food or drugs, or physical exercise conditioning? ☐Yes ☒No

If Yes, please explain how the clearance will be obtained:

6. Will the subjects be deceived or misled in any way? ☐Yes ☒No

If Yes, please explain:

7. Will information be requested that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive? ☐Yes ☒No

If Yes, please explain:

8. Will the subjects be presented with materials that might be considered to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? ☐Yes ☒No

If Yes, please explain, including measures planned for intervention if problems occur.

9. Will any inducements be offered to the subjects for their participation? ☐Yes ☒No

If Yes, please explain:

NOTE: If extra course credit is offered, describe the alternative means for obtaining additional credit available to those students who do not wish to participate in the research project.

10. Will a written consent form (and assent form for minors) be used? ☒Yes ☐No

If Yes, *please include the form(s). Elements of informed consent can be found in 45 CFR 46, Section 116. Also see the IRB Guide.*

If No, *a waiver of written consent must be obtained from the IRB. Explain in detail why a written consent form will not be used and how voluntary participation will be obtained. Include any related material, such as a copy of a public notice, script, etc., that you will use to inform subjects of all the elements that are required in a written consent. Refer to IRB Guide.*

11. Will the data be a part of a record that can be identified with the subject? ☒Yes ☐No

If Yes, please explain: Identities will be temporarily maintained in order to allow for follow-up. This information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet drawer in the primary researcher's office (located in room 105 Student Services Building at Rose State College, Midwest City, Oklahoma), separate from the audio tapes and transcriptions until all of the interviews have been transposed and analyzed. The paperwork indicating identities and all associated audiotapes will then be destroyed by March 2010.

12. Describe the steps you are taking to protect the confidentiality of the subjects and how you are going to advise subjects of these protections in the consent process.

Pseudonyms will be used and participants will be told that anything they say will be protected for confidentiality and no one will be advised of their specific comments. Rather, their discussion will be combined with the comments from others that are interviewed in order to protect everyone's identity. The principal investigator is the only person who will transcribe the interviews. Transcriptions will be stored in a locked filing drawer separately from the consent forms and any other correspondences that identify the participants. After tapes have been transcribed and checked for accuracy, they will be destroyed. The principal investigator will personally secure all data, documents, and audiotapes related to the project in locked filing drawers within a locked office. The only persons who will review the transcripts and any other data sources will be the investigator and her advisor. After 5 years, all material will be shredded.

13. Will the subject's participation in a specific experiment or study be made a part of any record available to his or her supervisor, teacher, or employer? ☐Yes ☒No

If Yes, please describe:

14. Describe the benefits that might accrue to either the subjects or society. *Note that 45 CFR 46, Section 46.111(a)(2) requires that the risks to subjects be reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits. The investigator should specifically state the importance of the knowledge that reasonably may be expected to result from this research.*

This study will seek to better understand community college faculty members' perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes. Results from this study will contribute to research, theory, and practice of faculty-student mentoring processes. Results may contribute to increased understanding of how to support community college faculty who mentor students, administrators who coordinate formal faculty-student mentoring programs, and students who engage in mentoring. The underlying critical issue that this study seeks to address is the disparity of graduation, retention, and persistence among community college students. Understanding the faculty perceptions regarding their role in a common retention practice, mentoring, may strengthen the community college institutions ability to address the underlying issue, strengthen the efficacy and efficiency of formal faculty-student mentoring processes at community

colleges, and increase faculty members awareness regarding the role they may play in their institutions' retention efforts.

Concurrence:

Dr. Bert Jacobson **Department Head (typed)**	Signature	Date	Department
Dr. Pamela Fry **College Dean or Research Director (typed)**	Signature	Date	College

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title:	Community College Faculty Perspectives Regarding Formal Faculty-Student Mentoring	
Investigators:	Lisa Marie Kerr, M.S.	Doctoral Student - Principal Investigator
	Dr. Kerri Kearney, EdD.	Dissertation Advisor

Purpose:

1. To gain insight into community college faculty members' perspectives regarding formal student mentoring processes. The study will seek to answer the following questions:

    - What actions do community college faculty members take to develop productive mentoring interactions?
    - What actions do community college faculty members take to reduce negative mentoring experiences?
    - What factors within the institution support community college faculty in their student mentoring interactions?

2. The study will use a qualitative research design that will incorporate in-depth, one-on-one interviews. Each interview will be audio recorded and then transcribed. Analysis will be conducted to identify themes based upon aspects of the Relational Cultural Theory, as well as themes that emerge from similarities among participants' statements.

Procedures:

1. It is understood that participants will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview for 45-75 minutes in which perceptions regarding formal faculty-student mentoring processes will be discussed.
2. It is understood that this interview will be tape recorded for accuracy and subsequently transcribed for analysis.
3. It is understood that the purpose of this research is to help the researcher learn more about community college faculty perspectives regarding formal faculty-student mentoring interactions.

Risks of Participation:

There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits:

There are no direct benefits for the participants. Potential benefits related to the faculty members' sense of contributing to knowledge related to faculty-student mentoring processes at community colleges.

Confidentiality:

1. All data will be stored in locked filing cabinets in the primary investigator's office which is located in room 105 Student Services Building at Rose State College, Midwest City, Oklahoma.
2. Only the primary investigator will have direct access to the data.
3. The dissertation advisor may view data; however will not review any forms with personal identifying information for any participants.
4. Data with personal identifying information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet drawer separate from the transcribed interviews.
5. Audio recordings of the interviews will be disposed of immediately upon confirmation of accurate transcripts, no later than December 2010.
6. Transcripts of interviews will be shredded 5 years after the completion of the research, no later than December 2015.
7. Data will be reported without any reference to factors that may identify participants, and will be organized based upon themes, combining data from participants.
8. There are no foreseeable risks to maintaining confidentiality.

The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

Compensation:

There is no compensation associated with participating in this study.

Contacts:

If there are any questions about this research please contact:

Lisa Marie Kerr Primary Investigator – Dissertation lmkerr@okstate.edu (405) 733-7372	or	Dr. Kerri Kearney Dissertation Advisor kerri.kearney@okstate.edu (405) 744-2755

If there are any questions about the rights of research volunteer, contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights:

1. It is understood that participation in this research is completely voluntary and there are no special incentives for participation, and there are not negative consequences for declining to participate.
2. It is understood that participants have the right to request a copy of any material that is to be part of the research before it is released.

It is understand that all participants are free to withdraw consent for participation at any time by contacting the principal investigator.

Signatures:

The consent form has been read and understood by the participant. It has been read and signed freely and voluntarily. A copy of the form has been provided to the participant.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

The primary investigator certifies that she personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____ _____

Signature of Researcher Date

APPENDIX D

WRITTEN SURVEY

Please provide the following information – Thanks!

Participant: _____ Gender: M F

Professional Title: _____

Years of teaching experience:

K-12 _____ Community College _____ Other _____

Years at current institution: _____

Number of semesters participating in student mentoring: _____

Do you intend to continue to participate in student mentoring? Y N

Teaching load: _____ Subjects: _____

Subjects: _____

Subjects: _____

Office hour load: _____

Administrative duties: _____

_____

_____.

Race: _____

Did you ever attend a community college during your academic career?

Yes: _____ If yes, did you complete a degree or certificate from a CC? _____

No: _____

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol

1. Greet the participant and thank them for taking time to be interviewed. Explain that our discussion should take 45 - 75 minutes.
2. Explain to the participants that for accuracy purposes, I will record the interview. Reiterate that I will be the only person privy to the audiotapes and that all audiotapes of the conversation will be destroyed once they are accurately transcribed.
3. Review the informed consent document and have the participant complete the form.
4. Reiterate that their identity and interview content will remain confidential. Information from this discussion will be combined with comments from other participants in order to protect their identities.
5. Explain that if they desire, they may have a copy of the transcribed interview.
6. Explain that I will be taking additional notes during the interview.
7. Complete the pre-interview survey at this time.
8. Ask if they have any questions before we begin the interview.
9. Start the interview tape and make sure that it is working.

Interview Questions

Below are the proposed questions for the informal open-ended qualitative interview. Additional questions may be asked as probes in order to explore concepts or aspects of mentoring discussed in greater depth from the participants.

1. What aspects of mentoring community college student do you find most enjoyable?
    - What specific things do you do that you think contribute to enjoyable mentoring experiences for you?
    - What specific things do you think transpire to reduce your enjoyment of mentoring experiences?
2. What do you perceive as the most beneficial component of faculty-student mentoring processes?
    - What specific things do you contribute to these benefits?
    - What specific things do you think get in the way of beneficial mentoring interactions with students?
3. What aspects of mentoring community college students do you find most challenging?
    - Please describe a time when a mentoring encounter was challenging.
        a. What did you do in response?
        b. What would you do today if you encountered a similar challenge?

- Please describe the most challenging part of mentoring.

4. Overall, how would you describe your experiences mentoring community college students?
    - What words would you use to describe your student mentoring experiences?
    - What words would you use to describe your involvement with the mentoring program here?
5. Describe your most enjoyable student mentoring experience.
    - How does this differ from your ideal?
6. What would the ideal mentoring experience look like to you?
7. Going back to benefits of mentoring processes - What do you perceive as the most beneficial outcomes associated with mentoring community college students for each of the following:
    a. Students
    b. Self
    c. College
8. What would the ideal environment in which to mentor look like?
    - How does this differ from your current institution?
9. Are there questions that you expected me to ask that I did not?
10. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?
11. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX F

FIELD NOTE PAGE

Date: _____ Location: _____

Time: _____ Purpose of Field Visit: _____

Noted Observations:

APPENDIX G

FIELD LOG

Date: _____ Location: _____

Time: _____

Activity:

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Friday, March 13, 2009
IRB Application No	ED0948
Proposal Title:	Community College Faculty Perspectives Regarding Formal Faculty-Student Mentoring
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 3/12/2010

Principal Investigator(s):

Lisa Marie Kerr
18400 Scarlet Oak Lane
Edmond, OK 73012

Kerri Shutz Kearney
315 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☑ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Lisa Marie Kerr

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctorate of Education

Dissertation: COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING FORMAL FACULTY-STUDENT MENTORING

Major Field: Higher Education

Education:

2009	Completed the requirements for the Doctorate of Education in Higher Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2009
2001	Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon Public Health, 68 Credit Hours Earned
1998	Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Exercise Physiology at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina in May 1998
1996	Completed the requirements of the Bachelor of Science in Physical Education at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, Michigan, in May 1996

Recent Experience:

2005 to Present	Rose State College, Midwest City, Oklahoma Director of Student Success and Retention Initiatives
2005 to Present	University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma Adjunct Assistant Professor

Professional Memberships: Association for the Study of Higher Education, American Association of Community Colleges, Council for the Study of Community Colleges, NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, Oklahoma Association of Community Colleges

Name: Lisa Marie Kerr Date of Degree: December, 2009

Institution: Oklahoma State University Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY MEMBERS' PERSPECTIVES REGARDING FORMAL FACULTY-STUDENT MENTORING

Pages in Study: 219 Candidate for the Degree of Doctorate in Education

Major Field: Higher Education

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore community college faculty members' perceptions of tactics they perceive to foster productive mentoring process and mitigate negative mentoring experiences. Purposive sampling was used to interview 15 participants individually as well as two small groups. Institutional artifacts and field notes were also referenced as data sources. Data were coded to develop themes. The Stone Center Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) was the theoretical perspective that guided the development of this study's design, data collection, and analysis processes.

Findings and Conclusions: Analysis of the interviews, field notes, and institutional artifacts resulted in identifying six established mentoring programs in operation as well as numerous organic efforts to foster mentoring interactions between students and faculty. Additionally, 11 common themes were identified.

- Trust is vital to productive mentoring and is developed by making yourself available to the students and by allowing the students to determine the agenda.
- Tactics the participants' perceived to mitigate against negative mentoring interactions included keeping connected with the college and colleagues, as well as connecting students with others, setting boundaries for the mentoring, and moving on if the interactions subside.
- Factors that participants perceived as supporting their efforts to foster productive mentoring included: the President's dedication, recognition received, and opportunities to engage in regularly scheduled meetings.
- Participants reported a sense that mentoring is a calling, good mentors believe in the process and the student, mentoring activates a "pay it forward" initiative, and mentoring serves as a personal touch stone.
- RCT was efficacious as a lens through which to investigate community college faculty members' perspectives of formal mentoring processes.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Kerri Kearney