

CONCEPTUALIZING MENTORING BASED ON  
EXPERIENCE IN MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

By

SCOTT BUSIEL

Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology

University of North Carolina Wilmington

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CONCEPTUALIZING MENTORING BASED ON EXPERIENCE IN MENTORING  
RELATIONSHIPS

Thesis Approved:

Dr. Jesse Mendez

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Thesis Adviser

Dr. Shabana Mir

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Dr. Steve Wanger

---

Dr. Sheryl A. Tucker

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Dean of the Graduate College

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, using the interviews of six participants, how one's understanding of the concepts of mentoring and the mentoring experience are influenced by prior experience in mentoring relationships. Specifically, the researcher hoped to see how the experiences of the participants, through careful reflection, have informed the mentors' and protégés' perceptions on the mutual partnership. The interviews of the mentors and protégés were used to explore their understanding of the concept of mentoring and their level of mentoring development. It was assumed that this information provided structure and framework for future research in the mentoring field.

Chapter I begins with an overview of the context and background of this qualitative study. The problem, purpose of the research, and research questions are identified in the following sections, to provide a framework for the study's direction. Information about the researcher, the methodology, and their assumptions are laid out to identify why the study was conducted in the manner that it was. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion on the rationale and significance to the study, providing groundwork for the methodology and related literature in future sections. Key definitions and terms were also identified.

## **Background and Context**

The concept of mentoring has been vague and poorly defined throughout the course of educational history. There are over fifty definitions of the term, and each of these definitions varies in scope, depth, and understanding (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). These inconsistencies provided difficulties for researchers attempting to study the concept of the mentor and mentoring and have led to a lack of focus in mentoring research.

Complicating matters further, mentoring has been studied in a number of fields, including business, education, and in the psychological realm (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Campbell and Campbell (1997) have examined mentoring from the perspective of a more experienced and knowledgeable member of an organization providing support and guidance to a less experienced and knowledgeable individual. This definition was consistent with programs under most business programs or companies. Psychologists focused their understanding of the term on an individual who was able to provide moral, emotional, and psychosocial support to another individual (Levinson et al., 1978). These differences in construction and understanding of mentoring have led to difficulties in utilizing research within the field and area.

Jacobi (1991) completed a literature review for mentoring research and discovered that there were three commonalities in the purpose of mentoring and mentoring relationships. The first commonality in mentoring was that the mentor is in a position to offer assistance to grow and develop the protégé (Cullen & Luna, 1993; Haring, 1999; Johnson & Nelson, 1999). Secondly, mentoring was designed to help an individual with their professional and career development (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). And lastly, the purpose of these programs was to offer strong role models who can provide psychological support (Cullen & Luna, 1993; Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001).

Mentoring has been shown to be successful in both quantitative and qualitative research, yet there has been a lack of theory that has guided these studies (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). The information in the following sections provided useful information in guiding this study in both literature and research.

### **Problem Statement**

Despite the amount of research conducted on mentoring and mentoring relationships, there was a lack of consistent definitions of a mentor and mentoring (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Over fifty definitions have been identified from the research (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). There was also a lack of relevant theory on the concept of mentoring. Zachary (2000) has worked to provide phases of a mentoring relationship; however, there are no theories that explain the stages in which an individual progresses in mentoring development. Exploring these concerns provided the framework for the remainder of the study.

### **Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore whether and how one's perceptions of the mentoring experience are influenced by prior experience in mentoring relationships. Specifically, the researcher hoped to see how the experiences of the participants, through careful reflection, have influenced the mentors' and protégés' understanding of the mutual partnership. The interviews of the mentors and protégés were used to explore their perceptions of the concept of mentoring and their level of mentoring development. It is assumed that this information will provide structure and framework for theory development in future studies. To provide context and to address the problem, the following research question was established:

- How have perceptions of previous mentoring experiences shaped the participants and their learned leadership approaches?



## **Research Approach**

The study being conducted was qualitative in nature and treated as case study research. Case study research focuses on providing understanding on a specific issue or concern. This is a particularly significant type of research in the social sciences, as it adds strength to its particular area of research by investigating something in context. Information was focus around the stories and experiences of participants. The research was conducted at a large, public institution of around 23,000 students located in the Southwest. Participants were gathered based off of demographic information and had various levels of experience within mentoring relationships.

A purposeful sample was collected, involving a total of six participants. Three were undergraduate students and three were graduate students or professionally employed participants who have major experience in mentoring relationships. Participants were purposefully selected from individuals who returned demographic sheets to participate in one hour-long interview. The undergraduate students were of sophomore, junior, and senior standing. These participants had limited experience in mentoring partnerships, defined by zero to two relationships. The individuals will have selected the protégé box in their demographic form as their primary role in the mentoring relationship, showcasing their limited experience in the field.

Graduate students and full-time professionals in the study had at least two years of professional work and mentoring experience within their current roles in Housing and Residential Life. Graduate students were selected, as they are in the College Student Development or Higher Education graduate program and have taken courses on student development theory. Both graduate students and the full-time professionals will have participated in three or more mentoring relationships and had seen their role as primarily the mentor or as both the mentor and protégé, indicating an understanding of the mutual learning in the partnership.

Following the completion of the research consent form, one hour-long interview was conducted with the six participants. These interviews were semi-structured and focused around obtaining the following information: [1] understanding the relationship between the protégé and mentor, [2] reflecting upon the participants' current levels of understanding on the concept of mentoring, and [3] reflecting upon how this level of understanding has/has not been affected by previous experiences in mentoring relationships. The participants had the chance to share their individual and personal stories so that the researcher was able to interpret their level of understanding the term, and concept of, mentoring.

Once this information was obtained, the researcher analyzed for patterns in the interviews to better understand if there were significant events that shaped how an individual understands mentoring. The researcher focused on determining whether this level of understanding impacted the relationship between the mentor and protégé. Information collected during the interviews were coded by the researcher to provide context for analysis. By coding the information and categories, there was greater potential for more relevant and significant results. Overall, this study was theoretical in nature and contributed additional mentoring research and an additional longitudinal study conducted by the researcher.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are preconceived beliefs that are thought to be true as the researcher began the study. Within this study, there were a few assumptions that guided the way the researcher developed the methodology. For one, undergraduate students were thought to have a more limited understanding of mentoring and mentoring relationships due to their lack of experience in these relationships. Many of these individuals may not fully comprehend what constituted a mentoring relationship, due to the fact that they are still in the midst of their development in cognitive, moral, and social categories (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010).

A second guiding assumption was that graduate students or full-time professionals with two or more years of experience in their particular field were more likely to provide reasonable mentoring and have a better understanding of the mentoring experience than graduate students or full-time professionals with zero or one year of professional experience. This assumption was made primarily due to the fact that professionals who have been in this capacity for this period of time may know more about the university structure, be able to provide appropriate resources and advice, and have balanced their time effectively. Incoming professionals may still be unacquainted with a variety of the resources on campus, may still be determining their own style of leadership, and may still be attempting to find that appropriate level of balance with work and the outside world (Evans et al., 2010).

The third and final assumption was that undergraduate students, graduate students, and full-time professionals would be interested and motivated to participate in the mentoring research study and be willing to provide accurate accounts of their experiences. This information was self-described, so the information and interviews would be analyzed based on these self-reports of their experiences.

### **Researcher**

I am a 25-year old male graduate student in the College Student Development program at the institution in which I am collecting information. This was my third year in the program, which allowed me greater opportunity to reflect upon my experiences and better prepare me for this study. In addition to my work in the program, I had graduate assistantship with Housing and Residential Life and devoted a great deal of time and energy helping the students in their personal and professional development.

Following a conversation with one of my previous mentors from my undergraduate institution, I began to research the idea of mentoring. I participated in a Student Affairs

Mentoring Program four years ago, and this paved the way for my work in the field. There were a number of successful pieces to the program, but I felt that there were still opportunities for growth and development. In the conversation with my mentor, I came to find a number of other individuals who I had attended college with who were looking into becoming professionals in student affairs. This conversation allowed me the opportunity to reflect on what it means to be a mentor or protégé in a mentoring relationship. The conversation also helped me to self-define mentoring and the mentoring experience.

Over the summer of 2011, I had the opportunity to work for another large, public institution in the Southeast and participated as a graduate assistant for Residential Curricular Initiatives. This academically-focused internship was centered in University Housing and allowed me the opportunity to see first-hand how important a successful mentoring relationship can have on undergraduate students. It also offered me the opportunity to see how everyone has a different level of understanding with the topic of mentoring and how this level of understanding can impact the degree to which individuals maintain these relationships. From this experience, I began heavy research on mentoring and advising, as both topics are closely related in the student affairs field. I spoke with a number of professionals in the field about their experiences in mentoring and advising.

## **Rationale and Significance**

### **Rationale**

Due to the overwhelming number of definitions of mentoring and the underwhelming number of “successful” research on mentoring and advising (Crisp & Cruz, 2009), this study helped to develop further research in these topics. Mentoring became a hot topic in the field, and it is an essential part of the growth process. Mentoring allows both mentors and protégés to reflect upon their experiences, which helps to facilitate growth in both parties (Zachary, 2000).

With the limited research in mentoring, this provided a framework for future studies. This was also an important opportunity to gauge whether the purpose of mentoring (personal growth, career development, and psychosocial support) is as Jacobi (1991) described.

### **Significance**

By the end of this research, it was the researcher's hope that more information be available for individuals looking to conduct studies on mentoring. This information provided a framework for individuals to develop additional student development theories, especially in the realms of mentoring and advising. The study was also attempting to fill the current gaps in the mentoring literature.

Eventually, the researcher hopes to develop a longitudinal study on an individual's understanding of mentoring as they take on long-term mentoring relationships. The methodology would be similar to Baxter Magolda's (1992) in her research in how students learn and develop throughout college.

### **Definition of Terms and Key Concepts**

**Mentoring:** The formal, or informal process, of helping someone grow and develop through personal connections and interactions. Mentoring is a relationship and growth and development occur in three forms, according to Jacobi (1991): [a] personal growth, [b] career development, and [c] psychosocial support. Typically, mentoring occurs between a more experienced individual (mentor) and a less experienced individual (protégé) through a 1-on-1 relationship (Zachary, 2000). Sharon Feiman-Nemser (2001) described mentoring as educative, where individuals on both sides of the relationship could grow and develop from the experience.

**Mentor:** The mentor is one player in a mentoring relationship. In most cases, the mentor plays a role in guiding and facilitating the growth and development of a less experienced individual. Through personal reflection, the mentor should experience their own sense of growth and development through the relationship (Miller, 2002).

**Protégé:** The protégé is the second player in a mentoring relationship. In many cases, the protégé is the less experienced member in the mentoring pair. These individuals may enter into a mentoring relationship to [a] grow on personal levels, [b] gain career and professional advice, and/or [c] to find a support system (Jacobi, 1991). These individuals may be considered “mentees” in other relationships; that is another term for protégé.

**Mentoring Culture:** The atmosphere that is established in a department, an organization, or an institution in which mentoring is considered the “norm.” A strong mentoring culture should be sustainable and have a strong influx of mentors and protégés interested in participating in a mentoring program or relationship (Zachary, 2000). This mentoring culture takes time to establish and can impact the attitudes of the participants or the outside constituents.

**Ecology:** Ecology refers to a series of forces working together and directing individuals in the present moment (Zachary, 2000). Organisms are interrelated in their specific habitats and environments; people are the same way we interact, grow, and develop from our relationships with others (Zachary, 2000).

**Mentoring Development:** Mentoring development refers to the knowledge and notions an individual has on the concept of mentoring and their abilities to reason through and learn from the relationship. This is the basis for this study and will be recognized a number of times through the synthesis of data and information. There is a gap in information available that recognizes one's ability to reason through a mentoring experience, so this concept is still underdeveloped. How apt is a protégé or mentor able to confront their partner with any issues? How successful is the communication in the relationship? How collaborative is the relationship? These are a few guiding questions that will allow the researcher to further develop this category.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a framework for the research to be conducted on an individual's experience in mentoring relationships. The problem, purpose, and research questions guided the chapter and how the study was carried out. Each of the components of this chapter were interconnected and were individually important to consider when reviewing the remainder of the proposal. Any biases and implications were outlined and considered in this section, providing an understanding to how the study was constructed. The rationale, significance, and definitions and terminology allowed the reader to better grasp the various concepts that would be displayed in later chapters of the research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, using the interviews of six participants, how one's understanding of the concepts of mentoring and the mentoring experience were influenced by prior experience in mentoring relationships. Specifically, the researcher hoped to see how the experiences of the participants, through careful reflection, have influenced the mentors' and protégés' perceptions on the mutual partnership. The interviews of the mentors and protégés were used to explore their understanding of the concept of mentoring and their level of mentoring development. It was assumed that this information provided structure and framework for future research in the mentoring field.

In order to carry out this study, it was important to gain a complete and thorough understanding of the literature that was available. This process involved critically reviewing relevant documents and studies. The review was an ongoing experience that took place throughout the data collection, data analysis, and synthesis portions of the study.



There were a number of areas in which to search, as mentoring is becoming an important topic of research. In order to narrow down the search, there were a few areas of literature that were critically review: [a] mentoring, [b] higher education/student affairs, [c] mentoring programs, [d] college students, and [e] advising. Literature came from business mentoring programs, mentoring programs in psychology, mentoring programs within education, historical models and programs, and student development theory. These models provided a rich framework for understanding the history, context, structure, training, and various components of mentoring programs. Information was provided on successful ways for mentors to engage their protégés and ways to cultivate a unique partnership.

For a successful and comprehensive literature review, the researcher pulled information from a variety of resources. Books, prior literature reviews, journal articles, Internet resources, and student affairs foundational documents were utilized in constructing this report. These resources were accessed through library catalogs, Google Scholar, ProQuest, websites provided following personal interviews, and from additional sources. In order to create the most complete and thorough critical review of literature, there was no time frame in which the research took place. In order to obtain the most current models of mentoring programs, large amounts of information were used following 2000.

Literature was analyzed for significance and relevance following the information collection. The review was organized in a way that first explored the history of mentoring and later incorporated the concept of mentoring to appropriate theories that have influenced these relationships. Information was funneled from broad topics down to more narrow bits of information that practioners and professionals may find helpful in their own research.

## **Mentor in Greek Mythology**

The original idea of a mentor was born from Greek mythology through a classic fable (Miller, 2002). In the tale of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus was preparing to charge for battle in the infamous Trojan War. Odysseus was best known for his intellect and cunning in devising the Trojan Horse trick and in the perils returning home from the war (Miller, 2002).

Prior to preparing to fight the Trojans, Odysseus entrusted his son Telemachus to one of his close friends (Miller, 2002). This close friend went by the name Mentor. Interestingly enough, Mentor was not the most responsible of individuals, yet he was chosen to take on this father-like role, helping Telemachus through the struggles of personal development (Miller, 2002). Athena saw promise in young Telemachus. As the goddess of wisdom, Athena often assumed the role of Mentor to provide that support and advice when it was most necessary and needed (Roberts, 1999). This was the true origin of the word ‘mentor.’

Due to the nature of Greek mythology, Athena took on the role of a man in order to impart wisdom and knowledge. Women were not considered appropriate mentors or advisers to younger protégés so it was important for this goddess to remain hidden (Roberts, 1999). In the end, it was Mentor who received the credit for the development of Telemachus, who ended up serving as a hero in the legendary *Odyssey*, as he searched for his missing father (Roberts, 1999). And while the mistakes of Mentor have been noted in a variety of texts, the concept of a mentor was named after this Greek man.

## **History of Faculty and Peer Mentoring**

While the concept of mentoring grew from early Greek mythology, it was inadvertently adapted to a number of different realms throughout the latter portions of the seventeenth century. As colleges became more appealing for the elite in society, there were different ways in helping these students make the transition into life working for the ministry. In a rather informal fashion

at the end of the seventeenth century, upperclassmen took on the early roles of mentors, as they helped incoming students find resources and become more proficient learners (Barefoot, 2000).

It was not until the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that the mentor and protégé roles were clearly defined (Johnson, 1989). Mentoring became specialized by field, and more research was being conducted to understand the importance of this growing topic. Innovative programs came about within colleges and universities around the country, as these institutions began implementing mentor programs in order to help our students succeed academically, personally, and professionally (Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

### **Early Mentoring Models**

Beginning as early as 1640, colleges assessed the need for guidance and help in transitioning students from their home life into the “real world” (Dwyer, 1989). Our first year students were typically the ones who were hazed, harassed, and disrespected by the upper-level students (Barefoot, 2000). Despite the incessant torture that the first year students faced, these individuals looked to our sophomore, junior, and senior students as role models and authority figures (Barefoot, 2000). Even today, our upperclassmen are viewed as knowledgeable resources, helping first year students engage in their coursework and learn more about the university system.

At Harvard in the late seventeenth century, college graduates immediately took on the role of a tutor prior to entering their career in the ministry (Finkelstein, 1983). These tutors were responsible for working with a single class of students from their entrance into the college until the students obtained their baccalaureate degree. From morning until night, these tutors were with their students and were equally responsible helping these individuals reach their peak in intellectual, moral, and spiritual development (Finkelstein, 1983). As far as history was concerned, these were the earliest examples of providing students with a mentor, helping students develop holistically. Alongside these tutors came the idea of freshman advisors. These individuals

were over-worked, undertrained, and were responsible for specifically working with the incoming class of first year students (Dwyer, 1989). As early Harvard and other colleges began to develop in terms of their ideals, faculty understood the importance of working to transition these incoming students from their home into college. It is important to note that, during this time, most mentor relationships were focused around our first year student population. It is also important to point out that a number of issues arose due to the untrained nature of these relationships.

By the early eighteenth century, Harvard instituted a program known as College Customs onto their campus, essentially initiating freshmen to the campus (Dwyer, 1989). This was one of the first reported hazing experiences. By 1770, Harvard faculty began to oppose College Customs, as they wanted to protect and strengthen the rights of the freshmen students (Dwyer, 1989). Initially, this opposition was not taken seriously by the upper administration at Harvard. It was not until the late nineteenth century that the university abolished College Customs due to the nature of the program (Dwyer, 1989).

In place of this tradition came about the idea of *trained* freshman advisors, helping the first year students with their academics and providing support and advice outside of the classroom, essentially providing the first formal and structured mentor experience (Dwyer, 1989). These freshman advisors also provided the first orientations for the incoming students. Our freshmen were lost socially and academically upon arriving to Harvard so this experience provided a showcase where expectations were shared.

The freshman advisors responsible for this in-service had a few points in which to address to our first years. Prior to moving in, the faculty spoke of the transition into the residential portion of the college experience, stating the importance of utilizing guidance in this major life adjustment (Dwyer, 1989). Additionally, freshman advisors spoke of the infinite number of choices that college life presents (Dwyer, 1989). These choices do not necessarily

mean freedom, and that is an important point to consider. Lastly, the orientation provided the students with information on what it meant to be a part of a new culture. Peer pressures were everywhere, and it was important to make sound decisions.

At this same time as Harvard and the re-establishment of freshman advisors, other colleges and universities began to conceive the idea of orientation seminars and implementing them for new students during their transition (Pickett, 2006). Colleges and universities had a new responsibility to our students, sparking the creation of these programs. Higher education classified this type of relationship as *in loco parentis* (Pickett, 2006). These relationships, and potential hindrances and pitfalls, paved the way for early first year student programs and mentor relationships and have even impacted the establishment of contemporary student services.

### **Mentoring in the Twentieth Century**

Mentoring never became a formalized process in the United States until well into the twentieth century (Johnson, 1989). Engineering faculty at the University of Michigan first took interest in understanding this mentoring relationship in 1911 and actually implemented an intentional mentor model (Johnson, 1989). It was not until 1988 that anyone attempted to break down the concepts of the roles and functions of these relationships and how mentoring fit into the educational environment for our students (Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

Utilizing the literature from business, psychology, and education, Anderson and Shannon (1988) proposed a definition for mentoring and its many components. They specifically created this definition and model for kindergarten through twelfth-grade teachers to utilize in school districts around the country (Anderson & Shannon, 1988). The main focus of their work was to identify mentors as individuals who served as role models, nurtured growing students, provided for professional and personal development, and cultivated and sustained a long-term relationships (Anderson & Shannon, 1988).

It was not until the late 1900s and into the early 2000s that mentoring was defined within the contexts of our higher education environment (Aagaard & Hauer, 2003). Due to the diversity of our students, through race, culture, gender, and even major, there became a number of theoretical studies to understand what mentoring actually means. It seems that mentoring has developed and grown to fill the niches of many programs, departments, and offices around the country.

### **Defining the Mentor**

Defining the role and responsibility of a mentor was an overwhelming task. There were a number of definitions and a number of pre-conceived impressions on how a mentor should interact with their protégé. In academics, some consider mentors and advisers to uphold the same duties and tasks (National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, & Institute of Medicine, 1997). Unfortunately, many mentors did not work in the advising realm, so it was important to think of them as separate entities.

One of the fundamental differences between mentors and advisers is that mentoring is focused on developing a professional, as well as personal, relationship (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Advisers focus on the area of professional development and typically stick to the goals, vision, or constraints of their position or organization (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). It is important to note that advisers can serve as mentors, depending on the quality and type of the relationship that the mentor holds with their protégé. Not all of their relationships can be considered mentoring relationships.

Effective mentors care about their protégé and take interest in helping individuals develop into successful professionals. Mentors also focus on helping their protégé develop personally. A mentoring relationship is successful due to the shared respect, trust, understanding, and empathy (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Good mentors can effectively share

and provide examples of their own life lessons and experiences and technical expertise, as it relates to their position in the mentoring relationship (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Typically, these individuals are great listeners, observers, and strong problem-solvers.

### **Taking on the Mentor Role**

People take on the mentoring role for a variety of reasons. Some individuals become a mentor to achieve personal satisfaction (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). These professionals and educators are genuinely concerned with helping others achieve their goals and becoming successful, both personally and professionally. Others may become a mentor to attract good students (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). If a professor is renowned in their particular field of study, they may become a mentor to keep a good flow of students coming through their program. If that person is successful, their mentoring skills and program will continue to gain the credit and they will receive the acknowledgement they deserve.

As mentoring relationships enhance learning and development on the mentor's end and the protégé's end, some professionals become mentors to stay on top of their field (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Everyone holds a unique set of strengths and abilities, and sometimes there are students who will be able to keep their mentors current with technological advances or up-to-date with innovate research and news in the field. Mentoring is also helpful in developing strong networking opportunities (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Professionals take on strong protégés in which they see potential so they are benefitted personally and professionally in the future. By serving as a mentor, an individual is connecting their protégé to influential figures in that particular field, especially if it is academic or a business-focused relationship.

And there are even some mentors who take on the role for completely selfless reasons. These individuals may just want to extend their contribution and are genuinely interested in

helping someone by providing their service (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Selfless mentors want to give back, as most were helped themselves. Whatever the reason an individual has for mentoring, they have similar obligations: to help advance their protégés in becoming the best people and professionals they can be. Different protégés will require different amounts of attention, advice, information, and encouragement (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). They will also progress through the developmental levels and acquire skills at a different pace. It is important that mentors are readily able to adapt to each relationship.

### **Benefits of Serving as a Mentor**

One of the most important distinctions between mentoring and other helping forms of helping, such as teaching, counseling, or coaching, is that mentoring provides both parties with the opportunity to learn from the experience (Miller, 2002). The type of learning will depend, in large part, on the type of mentoring relationship that is implemented between the mentor and protégé (Miller, 2002). Learning will also be dependent on the mentor and the levels of guidance, support, challenge, and vision they were able to provide.

As the mentoring experience progresses, the mentor will begin to develop their own sense of emotional intelligence (Miller, 2002). This experience will provide the mentor with the opportunity to practice, improve, and demonstrate their skills and capabilities (Miller, 2002). Some of these capabilities range from utilizing intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, and providing a strong sense of motivation and encouragement. While the mentor is teaching their protégé these important and valuable tools, they will also begin to develop a better sense of identity and will recognize their own growth and accomplishments as mentors.

In addition to improving their emotional-intelligence skills, the mentor will have the opportunity to become more marketable in a business sense (Miller, 2002). Mentoring provides the mentor with the chance to teach and impart knowledge and wisdom in another person. This is



an excellent professional opportunity for the mentor to remain updated in their current field and to expand their own knowledge and understanding. In most relationships, the mentor is able to learn as much from the protégé as the protégé is able to learn from the mentor.

### **Supervising vs. Mentoring: What is the Difference?**

Effective supervision and mentoring enables new professionals with the opportunity to be successful if they encounter issues on the job (Marsh, 2001). There are a number of common concerns that could begin to develop over time and over the course of any number of careers in which one may undertake. Some of the greatest areas of concern for new professionals is the balance between a personal and professional life, creating and developing values and living out those values appropriately, developing both a personal and professional identity, and combating burnout and attrition (Marsh, 2001).

It is important for new professionals to find that supervisor or mentor that can effectively help them combat some of these personal and professional issues. Both supervisors and mentors are well-equipped with the tools to help one grow either personally and/or professionally. There are a number of differences between the two terms, and the information following will provide a useful guide in differentiating an effective supervisor from an effective mentor.

#### **The role of the supervisor.**

Supervision is primarily seen as a management function that promotes the achievement of institutional, or organizational, goals (Tull, Hirt, & Saunders, 2009). The strong focus on the goals of the company, institution, or organization is designed to help cultivate the personal and professional workings of the staff (Tull et al., 2009). Supervisors are typically described as individuals who look after the well-being of their company, organization, or institution. Many supervisors, especially in business settings, are not focused on providing that sense of emotional support to their employees (Tull et al., 2009). In most cases, it is important for a supervisor to

provide opportunities for team development as these individuals work with a larger group than mentors (Tull et al., 2009). Mentoring is a concept much more focused on the ideas of motivating and inspiring others to do great things (Tull et al., 2009).

### **Functions of the supervisor and mentor.**

While there are vast differences between the two positions, there are a number of overlapping traits that both supervisors and mentors share. Both positions require effective communication in order to produce positive results (Tull et al., 2009). Supervisors and mentors need to provide assistance in honing in and developing strong communication skills amongst their employees and protégés, allowing individuals to effectively and appropriately convey their thoughts and ideas.

In addition to being able to provide this useful skill, both types of leaders should focus on providing career and skill development (Tull et al., 2009). In order to build an effective team, the supervisor needs to make sure that the skills of their employees are, at the very least, at the basic level. And a large portion of mentoring is for the mentor to provide their protégé with information and opportunities to enhance their careers. It is important for both groups to be clear in terms of expectations, recognize boundaries, and be patient and understanding (Tull et al., 2009). Creating those expectations and boundaries will put the supervisor and mentor in a position in which they can serve as an appropriate and positive role model.

### **Types of supervision relationships.**

Described by Winston and Creamer (1997), there are four types of supervision styles. These styles are noted in prominent student affairs literature. The first supervisory approach is known as the authoritarian approach (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Under this style, the supervisor will, in a sense, micromanage their employees, as they are seen as needing constant attention.

Employees are seen as not being capable of performing the necessary tasks without their consistent monitoring (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

A second approach to supervising is the *Laissez-Faire* approach (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Staff members and employees are allowed freedom to use their own talents to complete the necessary responsibilities of their position. The *Laissez-Faire* approach is the opposite approach to the authoritarian style, as these supervisors are hands-off in nature (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

The third style of supervision is known as the companionable approach (Winston & Creamer, 1997). Under this approach, supervisors and staff members are seen friends. Harmonious relationships are the key to building this approach to supervision, so supervisors will spend a great deal of time with their employees even outside of the typical work setting (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

Lastly, Winston and Creamer (1997) identified the synergistic approach to supervision. This style is described as a cooperative approach between the supervisor and staff. With a strong level of collaboration, joint contributions can be made for the betterment of the organization, company, or institution and that entity's overall goals (Winston & Creamer, 1997).

It is important to note that a single supervisor can utilize a number of these approaches and principles. A supervisor may have a dominant supervision style, but that does not mean this individual will fail to exhibit the qualities of another approach. These relationships, depending on the style of the supervisor, may or may not match the definition of a mentor. With the information provided on supervision and the styles of supervisors, a base has been laid to discuss the differences between supervisors and mentors and to showcase the important characteristics and qualities of an effective mentor.

## **Providing Career Advising and Assistance**

One of the primary responsibilities of a mentor is to provide the student with awareness of the evolving career conditions and opportunities within the protégé's areas of interest (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). While the mentor should not do the work for the student when it comes to researching jobs or internship opportunities, the professional should focus on connecting their protégé with recent graduates or other students on their paths to success. Mentors should also be aware not to fall into trap of forcing your protégé to follow in their own footsteps (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). It is natural to want others to do what you are doing, but a mentor's responsibility is simply to provide guidance and allow their student to find the most appropriate path.

In order to provide the best assistance, mentors should stay current on employment trends in their field (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). This can particularly be difficult, especially if the educator has worked at a single campus for a number of years. Challenging protégés to visit workplaces, shadow other professionals on the job, and take on off-campus internships is beneficial in developing that student's sense of what they want in their next career move (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). These practical experiences will serve that protégé well and will provide them with the necessary experiences to take on new and exciting roles and professional positions.

## **Cultivating Skills in a Protégé**

While career development is important, there are a number of additional skills that protégés of all levels should look to improve with the careful guidance of their mentor. Many of these skills can relate to the professional workplace, but most will help the protégé in their personal life, as well.

It is important for mentors to work with their protégés in planning, time management, and organization (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Planning ahead and organizing one's time will help, especially if an individual has to complete multiple projects with varying deadlines. It has also become increasingly apparent that mentors should be helping their protégés improve the quality of their writing skills (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Effective writing helps to provide a clear and concise point of view and will help in the day-to-day written communication skills. As technology becomes more prevalent in society, more communication is taking place over the Internet. Lacking an ability to appropriately communicate in written form can be one's downfall when it comes to working with other professionals.

Proper oral communication and strong teaching skills have also risen to some of the more important skills expected from upcoming professionals (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). Mentors should provide guidance on appropriate ways to communicate and tips on effectively teaching others. Strong communication can be the selling point behind whether your idea is selected or tossed aside in the world of business, education, or the sciences. Increasing importance is being placed on the ability to work in teams and being able to serve as a leader (National Academy of Sciences et al., 1997). It is important for mentors to help guide protégés in finding their specific definition of leadership and providing opportunities for collaboration. These experiences will lead to both professional and personal growth.

### **Attributes of a Strong Mentor**

In a section of his book, Miller (2002) noted and explained the qualities of a competent and strong mentor. The skills in which the mentor can impart upon their protégé are not enough in being to help in that individual's personal and professional development. Mentors also need to consider the following attributes the exhibit, allowing them the opportunity to educate and facilitate the mentoring relationship effectively:

### **Enthusiasm.**

Mentors need to earn the respect from their protégé and are largely responsible for helping to facilitate an effective personal and professional relationship (Miller, 2002). It is essential that the mentor be excited about beginning this new relationship with their protégé. This excitement will allow for an easier transition and will open the doors to communication between the mentor and protégé.

### **Accessibility.**

In order to help provide guidance, mentors need to be accessible (Miller, 2002). Accessibility can come in the forms of being available and willing to meet in-person or being able to respond, in a timely manner, to emails and phone calls. An important balance needs to be struck between being too accessible, where the protégé contacts the mentor for every need, to not being accessible enough. Once this balance is obtained, a successful mentoring relationship will blossom.

### **Sensitivity.**

Being sensitive to various issues and types of protégés is a critical trait for mentors (Miller, 2002). There may be times in which a student may talk to their mentor about a challenge they are facing in their life. It is important for the mentor to remain nonjudgmental and to offer appropriate levels of support.

### **Self-awareness.**

To be an effective helper, the mentor will need to be self-aware of their own strengths, areas of growth, and limitations, providing them with the opportunity to be upfront with their protégé (Miller, 2002). A great deal of learning from mentoring comes from reflection. Much of this learning will be from self-reflection. There will be times in the mentoring experience that the

mentor will learn a great deal about himself or herself, and that is completely normal. In order to be a successful educator, the mentor needs to understand their background, stories, ideals, and morals to impart wisdom upon their student.

**Discretion.**

There will be times in which a protégé may speak with their mentor about a sensitive issue. That mentor will need to understand the importance, and difference between privacy and confidentiality and utilize these concepts when working with their student (Miller, 2002). If a mentor has a tendency to gossip about the stories that their protégé is telling them in confidence, the mentor may lose their protégé's trust, if that individual discovers these disclosures. The loss of trust will negatively affect the mentoring relationship.

**Willingness to learn.**

Despite the hierarchy of a mentoring relationship, there will be opportunities for even the most experienced of mentors to learn. Mentors need to be open to the possibility that their protégé may teach them something (Miller, 2002). Through self-reflection, the mentor may discover something new about himself or herself. Continued learning will allow the mentor to seem more knowledgeable and approachable to their protégé in the long run (Miller, 2002).

**Patience.**

A great portion of the mentoring relationship will focus around the concept of mutual learning and understanding. There will be times in which a protégé may take more time than expected to process the information and gain an understanding of the topic at hand (Miller, 2002). An effective mentor will need to be patient and understand that learning and relationships take time to cultivate and develop.

### **Positive expectations.**

During the first few weeks of the mentoring relationship, it is important to have intentional, positive, and realistic expectations of the relationship and outcomes (Miller, 2002). By establishing these expectations, there will be an accountability piece for the mentor and protégé. These expectations will provide a way in which the mentor and protégé can measure the outcomes of their relationship.

### **Aims of the Mentoring Experience**

In the previous sections, the qualities of a successful mentor were discussed at length. A successful mentor is only one component of the mentoring process; the protégé is also essential in the development of a mentoring plan. In general, there are three primary goals and aims in most mentoring relationships (Miller, 2002). These aims are useful in a variety of positions, including such relationships in the business, psychological, or even the educational realms. Many of these goals will arise in the initial meeting with the mentor and protégé, but if they don't, they are important to address sooner rather than later. Addressing the type of relationship, and there may be overlap, is important during the goal-setting stages (Miller, 2002).

Mentoring is meant to be a developmental opportunity, not only for the protégé but also the mentor (Miller, 2002). In some extreme cases, mentoring may be utilized in order to address attitudinal changes that need to be made, social inclusion, or the providence of support for individuals who may be in need of breaking a drug addiction (Miller, 2002). Miller (2002) also argues that mentoring is meant to improve upon social skills, self-esteem, the understanding of self and others, spiritual development, motivation, and can provide one with a reflection of their own values and ideals. The mentoring experience should involve, on both ends of the relationship, listening, identifying problems and issues, and establishing a supportive environment (Nora & Crisp, 2007). Discussing fears and uncertainties is an important component



of the relationship-building process (Schockett & Haring-Hidore, 1985). The reflection and open nature of the relationship are important in the development of valuable skills.

Personal relationships, which are developed by the mentor and protégé, are important in bringing the mentor to that role model status (Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 1999). Individuals are able to learn from the experiences of the mentor, in addition to the mentor's achievements (Nora & Crisp, 2007). That relationship helps in the self-disclosure process, which is essential to creating that unique and individual experience (Nora & Crisp, 2007). In essence, mentoring can provide opportunities for skill development, whether they are social or attitudinal in nature.

While a great portion of the mentoring experience is devoted to this concept of social development, another type of mentoring relationship may be more focused on providing advice and assistance in a working environment (Miller, 2002). These relationships can either focus around preparing the protégé for entry into a specific field of work or helping that protégé obtain a new employment opportunity. Mentoring includes an assessment of the protégés strengths, areas of concern, abilities, and times in which the individual may need assistance (Nora & Crisp, 2007). By speaking about these issues, the mentor will be able to provide uniquely tailored career advice and opportunities best-suited for the student. Career-based mentoring works to evoke future goals and aspirations through critical reflection or advising sessions (Miller, 2002).

The last of the three primary types of mentoring experiences focuses on the academic realm and is a typical type when working with students: subject mentoring (Miller, 2002). This style is common in peer mentoring relationships, when peers provide academic assistance to others who may be struggling with classes or a specific subject matter. These relationships can also occur in the academic advising realm, especially in higher education. Subject mentoring focuses on knowledge acquisition and providing study skills (Miller, 2002).

In a number of studies (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Freeman, 1999; Sorrentino, 2007), the findings have indicated that mentoring relationships had a positive impact on the areas of student persistence and grade point average. Students who have been a part of a mentoring program or had a mentor are more likely to remain in school through graduation and have had significantly higher grades throughout the college experience (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Freeman, 1999; Sorrentino, 2007). In a study conducted by Bordes and Arredondo (2005), Latino students who had found a positive mentoring relationship were more comfortable with the university environment and were more likely to find academic success. This information highlights the positive impacts that mentoring relationships have on both the mentors and protégés. Kolb and other theorists have been able to identify the importance of experiential learning, which has been tied to success in these forms of relationships.

### **Kolb's Theory of Experiential Learning Relating to Student and Adult Development**

As a college education became more available, and necessary in some cases, to high school and adult students, there have been increases in diversity present on our college and university campuses (Evans et al., 2010). This diversity comes in the forms of race, culture, thought, and student learning styles. David Kolb created the Experiential Learning theory to provide educators with the tools to appropriately challenge our students and provide an effective support system (Evans et al., 2010). While Kolb's theory focuses on learning styles, it is much more developmental than that. Utilizing the information and research from psychologists (Jung, 1960), Kolb was able to study the intricacies of the brain when it comes to learning and the retention of information. These intricacies have provided for an effective theory in showcasing the need to provide different relationships to our diverse populations of students (Evans et al., 2010).

## **The Cycle of Learning.**

Learning is defined as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). This process is best described, according to Kolb, in a four-stage cycle that consists of grasping dimensions and processing dimensions (Kolb, 1981). Grasping dimensions describe how an individual takes in the information (Evans et al., 2010). Processing dimensions focus more on the ways in which individuals make meaning of the information (Evans et al., 2010).

There are a total of four stages. These items are termed *stages* as they provide a step in which an individual absorbs the information and processes it in a meaningful way (Kolb, 1981). It is important to note that individuals should master the use of all four stages in order to be effective learners. The first stage in the cycle is known as *concrete experience*. Concrete experience is a feeling dimension (Evans et al., 2010) that fully immerses one in an environment where they learn. In the scientific field, this could be a field trip to the local zoo in order to gain a better understanding of the connectedness of our ecosystem. Following this stage is the one known as *reflective observation*. This stage is the watching dimension (Evans et al., 2010) that provides an individual with the opportunity to observe and reflect on the information presented. The series of observation and reflection often lead to the development of new ideas, theories, and innovations (Evans et al., 2010).

*Abstract conceptualization* is the third stage in Kolb’s Cycle of Learning. Abstract conceptualization is the formulation of new ideas, theories, and generalizations that represents the thinking dimension (Evans et al., 2010). Following the passing through this stage is the idea of *active experimentation*, the fourth part of the learning wheel. Active experimentation is considered the doing dimension (Evans et al., 2010) in which an individual makes decisions and begins to solve problems. This stage is typically represented by scientists working in laboratories

or solving problems in the medical, forensic, or other health-related fields. Concrete experience and abstract conceptualization represent the grasping dimension, while reflective observation and active experimentation are a part of the processing dimension (Kolb, 1981).

It is important for mentors to understand these stages of learning, so they can understand where their protégé needs to grow. All learners utilize the four stages of the learning cycle but to various degrees. Effective educators will help develop and cultivate the skills necessary so a student learns at their peak potential. Mentors are also important in providing opportunities and working with their protégé in such a way that they are setting them up to succeed. They are successful when they can appropriately provide opportunities for their protégé to utilize the learning style that best suits their strengths.

#### **The learning style model.**

Using the different stages in the Cycle of Learning model, Kolb (1981) saw four learning styles emerge. The four learning styles display a stage from the grasping dimension and a stage from the processing dimension. Individuals who display the abstract conceptualization and active experimentation dimensions are known as *convergers*. Convergers are strong problem solvers and excellent decision makers (Evans et al., 2010). These individuals like to apply concepts and ideas to practical situations and tend to excel when they are asked to display deductive reasoning skills (Evans et al., 2010).

The opposite of convergers, the *divergers*, utilize the concrete experience and the reflective observation dimensions of Kolb's Cycle of Learning. Divergers work well with people and display a unique awareness of meaning and values (Evans et al., 2010). One of their strengths is their ability to see a viewpoint from many perspectives and offer alternatives and implications based on a well-rounded assessment (Evans et al., 2010).

*Accommodators* are the individuals who fall under the third learning style. Using the concrete experience and active experimentation dimensions, accommodators are doers (Evans et al., 2010). These individuals are most successful when they are able to implement new plans, work on task-oriented projects, and are offered new experiences (Evans et al., 2010). What sets accommodators apart is their acceptance of change and their willingness to take risks when solving complex problems.

Lastly, there are *assimilators*, who primarily display the use of the abstract conceptualization and reflective observation components. Assimilators are individuals who value logical decisions and have an affinity for creating and utilizing theories (Evans et al., 2010). Individuals who associate as assimilators work more closely with ideas and concepts, rather than working with people (Evans et al., 2010).

It is important to note that all learning styles contain some weaknesses. Kolb (1984) emphasized that while individuals hold a primary learning style, it is important to be cognizant of all styles. Individuals need to understand that flexibility in learning, and in style, is essential for human development. These inherent styles can be influenced by heredity, life experiences, and demands that come from our work and personal environments (Evans et al., 2010). Individual jobs and responsibilities also impact the type of style one develops. And these styles will change and adapt over time, as they are not fixed traits. Kolb and Kolb (2005) described these learning styles as a current state of mind of a dynamic state.

In the mentoring relationship, it is important for the mentor to understand how their protégé works professionally and personally. Their primary learning style may be indicative of their major or potential career path, as interests, strengths, and ultimate career goals go hand-in-hand. The goal for the mentor will be to challenge students to break out of their comfort zone in learning. That can be a difficult task, especially when mentors have to focus on maintaining a

strong relationship with that individual. Finding that balance between challenge and support and helping the protégé understand and embrace the other learning styles will help them personally and professionally by providing different experiences and perspectives.

### **The Mentor Learning Cycle.**

Adopted from the Cycle of Learning developed by Kolb, the Mentor Learning Cycle was designed by Miller (2002) to help individuals in a mentoring relationship understand the process of learning. This process, similar to Kolb's, is a four-stage, cyclical pattern, which helps individuals, especially protégés, make meaning of their mentor experience (Miller, 2002). The first part of the Mentor Learning Cycle focuses around the actual mentoring *experience* (Miller, 2002). Mentors and protégés build a relationship, focus their work on specific learning outcomes and goals, and attempt to carry out those goals over a designated period of time. There will be points in the mentoring relationship when large events come up, which eventually are seen as educational opportunities. These events can be a large project, an inspirational moment with the mentor or protégé, or a specific failure. Once an individual in the relationship makes it to this point, *reflection* will help carry that individual in making meaning of the experience (Miller, 2002).

The reflection phase of the Mentor Learning Cycle may be one of the most important. Since a majority of learning comes through reflection, this phase will help the mentor or protégé understand the nature of the event or their work (Miller, 2002). Reflection can be small-scale in nature or large-scale. If the protégé is unsuccessful with a specific project and they move into the reflection phase, that individual may focus on ways to improve for upcoming projects or assignments. This would be an example of a small-scale reflective opportunity. Large-scale reflective opportunities allow for more meaning-making. If that protégé was unsuccessful with their project, they may reflect on ways in which they can improve for the next project, personally

and professionally. Deep reflection requires that an individual assesses himself or herself. There could be personal issues that led to the failure of that specific project, such as troubles with family, friends, or other relationships and struggles to bring your primary learning style into the work environment. Once an individual has reached this point in reflection, they move to the next phase, known as *generalization* (Miller, 2002).

During the generalization process, the individual in the mentoring relationship begins to rethink and learn from their specific experiences (Miller, 2002). They begin to learning from their failures, learning from their successes, and begin taking the advice from other mentors or influences. The generalization phase leads into the *application* phase, when the individual puts what they have learned into practice (Miller, 2002). Once the mentor or protégé has put what they have learned into action, they will once again be able to take in experiences and reflect upon those experiences. Someone may proceed through the Mentor Learning Cycle countless times during the course of a mentoring relationship, as there are many defining moments and experiences that could lead to an individual's growth (Miller, 2002). Each experience or event, in a successful mentoring relationship, may lead an individual to reflect and eventually apply the information to his or her life and work.

### **Purpose and Types of Mentoring Programs**

Mentoring relationships are formed on the basis of need. According to Portner (2001), mentoring operates best within a program, and the program operates best within a system. A program is defined as the planned and formal process for which things are to be done or to take place (Portner, 2001). Agendas and schedules are two small examples of programs. Working on matching mentors and protégés, creating and implementing mentor training, and utilizing forms to help understand the time that mentors are sharing with their protégés are examples of programmatic activities (Portner, 2001). Mentoring programs take place within the larger context

of a macrosystem (Portner, 2001). The program is only a minute component within the larger framework of an institution, a company, or an organization.

There are two primary types of relationships that occur within a mentoring program. The first is the idea of a natural (informal) mentoring relationship and/or program (Miller, 2002). The second type is a planned (structured) relationship or program (Miller, 2002). Both forms of mentoring are helpful, but the structure of the relationship is dependent, in large part, on the goals of the mentor and the protégé. In some cases, the protégé may not have a choice in the type of relationship that will occur, as some careers in the business sector require their new employees to serve as protégés in a planned mentoring program. Whatever the need, there are a number of mentoring program subcategories that are helpful to know and understand, as each provide new ways of challenge, support, and vision.

### **Natural Mentoring**

Natural mentoring can take place within various contexts and at various occasions in an individual's life. In some cases with natural mentoring, the relationship between the mentor and protégé is not as defined (Philip, 2000). During a time of crisis, a mentor may appear to an individual in need, helping to form the relationship (Philip, 2000). While there is less structure with a natural mentoring relationship and program, there are a number of different forms.

#### **Classic mentoring.**

The first form is the idea of *classic mentoring* (Miller, 2002). This is the typical one-on-one relationship, in which a more experienced individual serves in the mentor capacity (Miller, 2002). The mentor provides support, advice, and a series of challenges to a less-experienced, and typically younger, individual. In a number of cases, the mentor will be an adult figure and will have a great deal of influence in shaping the life of their protégé. These relationships are some of the most common forms of mentoring.



### **Individual-team mentoring.**

A second type of mentoring relationship is called *individual-team mentoring* (Miller, 2002). Groups of individuals look to the expertise of a leader or small group of leaders for support, advice, and challenge (Miller, 2002). Some examples of these types of groups may be scouts or youth groups. Each relationship has a unique focus, identified by the individuals involved.

### **Friend-to-friend mentoring.**

*Friend-to-friend mentoring* is the third type of natural mentoring relationship (Miller, 2002). Individuals who are in need of this type of relationship utilize their best friends for advice and as a safety net (Miller, 2002). In a number of cases, young women who are in need of support use the friend-to-friend mentoring approach (Miller, 2002). These women may be skeptical of adult figures, due to any number of circumstances, and look to the guidance of their closest peers to help get them through the identified issues. This approach tends to lack a career or academic focus and is much more focused on helping the protégé understand their support systems.

### **Peer-group mentoring.**

Common amongst groups of friends, *peer-group mentoring* allows individuals to explore answers to various, and complex, life, academic, or career-related issues (Miller, 2002). This form of mentoring relationship and program is common in study groups. Individuals who are in similar majors and are taking the same courses may form peer study groups in order to gain a better understanding of the information. In addition, peer mentoring relationships are helpful as individuals are going through transitions. Mentors can work with their protégés in transitioning through significant life events, as some leaders may have experienced difficulties themselves.

### **Long-term mentoring.**

The last form of mentoring relationship, defined by Miller (2002), is called *long-term mentoring*. These types of relationships or programs take place when an adult takes on an individual who may be considered “at-risk” (Miller, 2002). The at-risk youth may be having difficulties adjusting to school, making friends, and many are close to dropping out of their classes. These relationships are some of the most challenging, but they can also be the most rewarding. Large amounts of time are typically needed for a mentor to take on this relationship.

### **Planned Mentoring**

As opposed to the natural mentoring relationships, planned mentoring relationships are focused around structure (Miller, 2002). These relationships are common in formal mentoring programs or organizations (Miller, 2002). In many cases, individuals who are involved in a formal relationship and program sit down together to draft goals and expectations during the course of the mentoring experience. Mentors and protégés are already aware that their relationship is focused around the idea of mentoring. In many natural mentoring relationships, the protégés are unaware that they are involved in that type of relationship until they have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. As with natural mentoring, there are a number of types of relationships and programs that fall under planned mentoring.

### **Contract mentoring.**

At the beginning of the relationship, the mentor and protégé will strike up a contract to describe the nature and objectives of their relationship (Miller, 2002). Throughout the experience, the mentor and protégé have the chance to reflect upon their experiences and look back to the initial contract, ensuring both parties are meeting their goals. That contract will serve as the agreement to the mentoring relationship and should keep the mentor and protégé focused on the learning outcomes.

### **Holistic mentoring.**

The typical mentoring program, *holistic mentoring* occurs when the mentor uses their expansive knowledge and array of interpersonal skills to help another individual meet their personal goals (Miller, 2002). These goals tend to be focused on the three purposes of mentoring: personal development, career achievement, and academic growth (Miller, 2002). During this form of mentoring relationship, the mentor and the protégé will meet regularly to discuss their work progress. The mentor will work to impart wisdom and provide vision for the protégé, so they are able to develop holistically.

### **Approaches to planned mentoring relationships.**

Depending on the level of development in both parties, the mentor may implement a variety of approaches to their structured mentoring relationship (Miller, 2002). These approaches are specific to the style of the mentor. It may not be appropriate to utilize every style for every relationship. The mentor is to use their best judgment to determine which approach is most likely to help their protégé grow, learn, and succeed.

During one tactic, the *continuum approach*, the mentor will utilize important skills in providing various levels of challenge and support to their protégé (Gay, 2000). There are a total of seven tactics, each with varying characteristics, in which the mentor could implement. The approach goes from exploring, revealing, guiding, advising, teaching, training, and directing (Gay, 2000). The tactics are sequential in nature, so the mentor should continue to assess the needs of their protégé in order to fully understand which concept is most appropriate. On the exploring end of the continuum, the protégé is given more independence and autonomy in their decision-making, promoting the idea of risk-taking (Gay, 2000). At the opposite end of the spectrum, in directing, the mentor is more supportive in nature (Gay, 2000). The mentor may help the protégé by confirming which decision they think is the most appropriate.

Roberts (2000) has described another approach to structured mentoring relationships. This approach is known as the *phenomenological approach* (Roberts, 2000). Within this relationship, a more knowledgeable and more experienced mentor provides a supportive role to a less experienced protégé (Roberts, 2000). The mentor is not responsible for providing clear direction, as in the above case with the directing end of the continuum approach. Instead, the mentor focuses their role on providing opportunities for reflection (Roberts, 2000). This reflection is utilized to help facilitate learning in the protégé's career and personal development.

In another approach, described by Miller (2002), mentoring is considered an experiential process. Within the *power of experience approach* to mentoring, the protégé will shadow and learn from the experiences of their mentor (Miller, 2002). The mentor will speak about what they have learned throughout their time in the field and will react to their experiences, providing useful information for what the protégé should expect. There is a lack of focus placed on teaching the protégé the skills and talents they will need to succeed (Miller, 2002). There is also no clear emphasis on the concept of reflection (Miller, 2002).

With the number of different approaches and forms of mentoring relationships that fall under the natural and planned themes, it can be difficult for the mentor to select which is most appropriate for the relationship. It is important to keep in mind that the style and approach should be best-suited for the protégé in the relationship and should focus around the strengths of the mentor (Miller, 2002). By speaking with the protégé in what they are expecting from the relationship, the mentor will be better adjusted to selecting an appropriate approach.

### **An Early Mentoring Model**

One of the earliest models of a mentoring relationship was developed by Kram in 1983. Tull, Hirt, and Saunders (2009) identified that social support is one of the most important outcomes in mentoring, yet it was often not given a great deal of priority. The lack of attention to

social support has been shown to lead to student attrition in high school and college (Tull et al., 2009). Kram was aware of this, even in the 1980s. Through the promotion of mentoring relationships and programs and the observance of various relationships and programs, Kram (1983) was able to create a model that emphasizes the phases of the relationship.

The first six months to a year of the mentoring relationship was known as the *initiation* phase (Kram, 1983). During this stage, the relationship between the mentor and the protégé is just beginning. Expectations of their relationship are identified, and the mentor serves as a supportive figure to the protégé. During the next two to five years, the mentor and protégé go through the stage of *cultivation* (Kram, 1983). This is where the majority of learning and development takes place (Kram, 1983). The mentor is able to impart wisdom upon the protégé and refine their skills, help them focus on a career path, and help in the individual's psychological and social development. After the learning has taken place and the protégé has met a significant number of their goals and expectations, there is a shift in the relationship.

This shift is known as the *separation* phase, and it generally takes place for a period of six months to two years (Kram, 1983). The structure of the relationship is different, at this point. The relationship may also suffer, as the protégé have developed a number of skills and will have reached a place where they may feel more comfortable without the mentor's help. The protégé may also reach this point if they feel that the relationship between them and the mentor has never positively developed (Kram, 1983). Once the mentor and protégé discover the relationship may be ending or they need to reevaluate the goals and expectations, they pass into the *redefinition* phase (Kram, 1983). This stage lasts for an indefinite period of time, where the relationship may end or the mentoring relationship may take on vastly different goals and learning outcomes (Kram, 1983).

While this model provided some significant contributions to the mentoring field, it also had a number of limitations. The time periods that were designated for the phases did not always match up with the actual time periods for planned mentoring relationships. Many of the structured programs had a designated period of time the relationship would take place. In many cases, individuals were in mentoring relationships for a year or two. These time periods did not always fall into the Kram's model, making it difficult for individuals to understand their level in the experience.

### **Mentoring in its Current Form**

In order to establish a successful mentoring program and mentoring culture, a great deal of planning and work needs to occur. A detailed description, purpose, and mission statement should be established for the mentoring program. During this pre-planning phase, a steering committee should be established in addition to the recruitment staff (Miller, 2002). These groups should conduct research prior to creating a new mentoring program or continuing a successful mentoring program, in order to create that unique sense of program identity. Individuals should observe developing partnerships with other agencies, how they will recruit mentors and protégés, and what the training sessions will look like (Miller, 2002).

Once the planning has taken place, it is time to recruit mentors and protégés (Miller, 2002). In some cases, the protégés will already be identified. This is the case if the company or organization requires the new employees to participate in a mentoring program. The recruitment staff should look at criteria for selecting mentors and protégés, how they will communicate the goals, vision, and expectations for the program, and prepare information to pass along to the individuals who are eventually selected for their respective roles (Miller, 2002). Mentoring handbooks and training guides are useful resources that could be helpful in garnering participation.

The steering committee should focus on providing an orientation and training session for all mentors and protégés, allowing them to ask questions and get a better understanding of their individual responsibilities (Miller, 2002). In terms of expectations, MacCallum and Beltman (1999) provided some useful tips and pieces of information to provide the mentors and protégés during training. In designing a mentoring program, or taking control of an existing program, be sure to state the expected number of contact hours, frequency of interactions between the mentor and protégé, appropriate boundaries, how to appropriately communicate, and what the first one-on-one mentor/protégé meeting should look like (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). It is also important for the steering committee to understand how the mentor/protégé matching system will work, how to successfully evaluate the program, and if there is a need to celebrate at the end of the experience (MacCallum & Beltman, 1999). Compiling this information will prove helpful prior to implementing the program for the upcoming term.

This information provides a basic framework for constructing a mentoring program. As the program begins to take shape, it is important to consider the phases in the mentoring relationship. Previous models provided unique timeframes for the various levels of the relationship. Zachary (2000) has provided a more useful guide, utilizing the research from Kram (1983), in order to develop a more successful framework for the mentoring relationship. Mentoring should be considered a learning partnership, in which both parties learn and continue to explore themselves (Zachary, 2000). In the end, the mentor is considered a facilitator and should focus their efforts on providing resources and guiding their protégé through the formal phases of mentoring.

#### **Four Phases of Mentoring Relationships**

In a fluid and predictable cycle, mentoring relationships progress through four phases (Zachary, 2000). These four phases are preparing, negotiating, enabling, and coming to closure

(Zachary, 2000). One model that gauges the readiness of the protégé and mentor to progress to the next phase is the ROS Model (Zachary, 2000). ROS stands for readiness, opportunity, and support (Zachary, 2000). Readiness relates to the openness of the mentor and protégé to a new, and sometimes challenging, learning experience (Zachary, 2000). Opportunity is represented by the settings and situations available to creating that learning experience (Zachary, 2000). In all cases, the quality of the opportunity is based off of these venues and situations. Lastly, support is defined by the assistance that is provided by the mentor to support and promote effective learning (Zachary, 2000).

It is important to note that each new learning experience is defined using this model. Protégés will either consciously or subconsciously decide if they are open to that experience based off of the ROS Model criteria listed above. Even though readiness is indicated as the first component to the model, it is often the last piece that falls into place, especially if mentors and protégés are not involved in the pairing process (Zachary, 2000). A good rapport and line of communication is needed in order to create a successful mentorship experience. Once these three elements are in place, a mentoring relationship is able to progress through the four phases.

### **Preparing.**

In order for mentors to facilitate a successful mentoring experience, they need to work with their protégé in building, developing, and maintaining a strong personal and professional relationship (Zachary, 2000). This is the definition of the preparing phase. Mentors and protégés need to adequately prepare for their unique mentoring relationship. It is important for them to understand the program, if there is a formal mentoring program, and understand the unique intricacies of their mentoring companion.

For planned mentoring programs, an effective training session need to occur prior to developing the relationship with their mentoring partner (Zachary, 2000). This provides context



for the remainder of the relationship. The mentor and protégé also need to explore the forces that are driving them toward this mentoring opportunity (Zachary, 2000). Mentors need to be able to utilize a number of skills in order to help their protégé grow and develop. For one, mentors need to understand the personal and professional contacts that will prove beneficial for their protégés (Zachary, 2000). It is also important for mentors to understand the importance of building and maintaining relationships (Zachary, 2000).

Strong communication will prove to be a successful tool in a mentoring relationship, as it will allow both parties the ability to discuss the successes and areas of concern throughout the experience (Zachary, 2000). This communication will be important in managing conflicts as they may arise, working to problem solve, and setting goals and encouraging protégé progress in completing stated goals. One of the most important skills for the mentor throughout the mentoring relationship is their ability to critically reflect on the experience and to help their protégé in understanding the importance of personal reflection (Zachary, 2000). Even if the mentor feels confident in utilizing these skills, it is important that they create a plan to challenge themselves to serve as more effective facilitators.

During any initial meeting, it is important for the mentor and protégé to understand that they need to be present for one another (Zachary, 2000). This sounds like an abstract concept, but being present simply means that they need to take the time to get to know one another and communicate without any outside distractions. Prior to the initial meeting, the mentor should come up with expectations, work to understand the protégé's goals, and determine ways to gauge the protégé's needs and limitations (Zachary, 2000). By being open and present, the mentor and protégé are on their way to having an open and successful mentoring relationship.

### **Negotiating.**

The second phase of a mentoring relationship, negotiating focuses on the process of conversation, consensus, and commitment (Zachary, 2000). Ultimately, the mentor and protégé will want to have a well-developed plan for their mentoring partnership. This plan should focus around well-defined goals, ways in which to assess the goals, mutual responsibility, holding one another accountable, and procedures to deal with difficulties in the relationship (Zachary, 2000). As a large portion of this phase is the formation of goals, Smith (1995) has recommended a set of criteria that is helpful during this process.

Strong goals should be specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and timely or SMART (Smith, 1995). Individuals should have specific reasons in their drive for setting a particular goal. The outcome of the goal should be able to be measured by the end of the mentoring experience. Goals should be accomplishable and should be accomplishable in the time period designated by the mentoring program.

During the negotiation phase, it is important for the mentor and protégé to discuss boundaries and the communication flow (Zachary, 2000). If boundaries are too loose, they may be misinterpreted and the relationship could end up being more of a friendship, which is not always the best type of relationship for facilitating learning and development. If boundaries are too rigid, it may hamper the quality of the mentoring relationship. Boundaries should be discussed when it comes to communication, so that there is good separation for the mentor in the experience (Zachary, 2000). Whenever boundaries are crossed, it is important to talk about how that conversation will look, so that both parties are aware of the consequences.

Once the agreement and list of expectations have been established, the mentor and protégé should look at establishing a work plan (Zachary, 2000). In the work plan, both parties should identify objectives that will help the protégé reach their ultimate goals (Zachary, 2000). If

needed, lay out the steps to be taken within the identified objectives in order to create a more streamlined process. Lastly, it is important to set target dates for accomplishing goals (Zachary, 2000). If the protégé wants to gain enough experience to obtain an internship for the summer, determine when the experiences need to be accomplished so the protégé can meet the internship application deadline.

### **Enabling.**

By far the most time-consuming stage, enabling is the phase in which the mentor takes action and begins to challenge, support, and provide vision to the protégé (Zachary, 2000). Daloz (1999) created a three-pronged theory of challenge, support, and vision in a mentoring relationship. At the base is the concept of support, as it is the most critical in laying the foundation in any strong mentoring relationship (Daloz, 1999).

In order to provide a sense of support, the mentor needs to create a learning environment, a dynamic climate in which learning will take place (Daloz, 1999). This environment is characterized by the attitudes of the mentor, the actual meeting locations, the resources available and provided, and the opportunity for growth (Daloz, 1999). Throughout the mentoring experience, the mentor and protégé will need to build and maintain their working relationship. Without this relationship, there will be no basis for learning and there will be no respect given from either party. Being able to communicate, build trust, and show respect are some of the key skills required to maintain this important relationship (Zachary, 2000).

Mentors will need to find balance between providing a strong sense of support and providing a unique blend of challenge. Challenge allows the mentor to question their protégés thinking and reasoning and pushes their work to the next level. This is where the learning takes place (Daloz, 1999). As too much challenge can be detrimental to the relationship, especially if the protégé does not feel enough support, it is important for both parties to monitor the process

and openly discuss their relationship (Daloz, 1999). With these open lines of communication, the mentor and protégé should be able to constantly evaluate the relationship and the mentoring experience to ensure the protégé is fulfilling their goals and getting the most out of the relationship.

The last portion of the enabling process is the providence of vision (Daloz, 1999). This should be an inspiring and informative process, in which there is a sharing of stories, experiences, and display of empowerment. During this phase, the mentor should encourage the protégé to constantly reflect on their experiences and interactions (Daloz, 1999). The mentor should also be engaging in the reflection process, as this is where the growth takes place. Reflection allows an individual to step back, take a look at something, examine the various perspectives, and move forward (Daloz, 1999). It also allows the mentor and protégé to reflect on their designed learning outcomes and objectives.

#### **Coming to closure.**

Ending the mentoring relationship is often the most difficult part of the experience. In planned mentoring programs, a specific date is identified at the beginning of the program. While it is often difficult, the coming to closure phase is filled with great opportunities for reflection, learning, and growth (Zachary, 2000). It is important for the mentor and protégé to acknowledge their emotions and move on as part of the separation process.

Closure can often change the type of relationship that a protégé has with their mentor (Zachary, 2000). In some cases, the mentor becomes more of a friend or colleague. Even unanticipated endings occur in the healthiest of mentoring relationships, as individuals have to face different challenges, moves, and transitions in their lives (Zachary, 2000). It may be important for a mentoring relationship to come to closure if the protégé has accomplished their goals, the protégé and mentor regret the time they spend together, the process is draining on one

or both parties, there is a consistent breach of confidence, or the relationship is one-sided (Zachary, 2000). There are even some instances in which there is a renegotiation of time, if there is still more to accomplish in the mentoring relationship (Zachary, 2000).

As the relationship ends, it is important to discuss how to celebrate the accomplishments and the process (Zachary, 2000). Even if the relationship was not as successful as planned, it is important to reflect on what can be taken away from the experience. Expressing mutual appreciation is important, even in the worst of relationships.

### **Current Trends in Mentoring**

As technology is becoming more advanced and available, there have been new trends that have hit the mentoring field. These trends have required mentors to take on different roles with their protégés, especially as forms and models of communication have changed significantly. While settings for these relationships may not be the most ideal, it is important for professionals to adapt to these changes to help provide support, challenge, and vision to individuals who are in need of a mentor.

#### **Technology and long-distance mentoring.**

With the advancement of social media and new methods of communication, long-distance mentoring has become more common (Zachary, 2000). When a face-to-face mentoring relationship is not feasible, individuals can communicate via various electronic and web-based methods. Mentors and protégés who utilize long-distance mentoring programs are less likely to engage on a regular basis. While this sounds like a major issue, it can actually be seen as a great way for learning and reflection. With the amount of time between conversations and interactions, whether it is over the telephone, through Skype, or via social networking sites, both parties have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences (Zachary, 2000).

Even with the greater focus on reflection, there are still a number of issues in which mentors and protégés need to be aware. The quality of connection and quality of relationship may be hindered by the lack of interaction (Zachary, 2000). Even if mentors and protégés speak weekly, there is only so much relationship building that the parties can do from either end. Time differentials also present challenges, especially if there are great time differences separating mentors and protégés (Zachary, 2000). Scheduling times to speak can be challenging.

In order for these relationships to be successful, a mutual consensus about the meaning of a “regular” conversation and the decision to adhere to their agreement should be established (Zachary, 2000). It is also important to discuss the types of interactions both parties want to have. Finding these commonalities and points of connection will serve as useful building blocks for facilitating effective communication and interactions.

### **Complexity of Mentoring and Mentoring Terminology**

Mentoring and mentoring relationships can be difficult to comprehend. Each mentoring experience and relationship is unique to the mentor and protégé or the mentor and the group. And each of these experiences will be different, based on the perceived needs of those invested.

When attempting to understand the complexity of mentoring, it is important to understand the ecology and forces at work (Zachary, 2000). Ecology is not simply a term used to describe the relationships of organisms living within a given system or environment; it is more than that. Ecology is a series of forces that are always present and are always directing our actions in the present moment (Zachary, 2000). Humans, as well as other organisms and creatures, are interrelated within their own systems, communities, and environments, so are humans. These ecological forces play a role in the way we interact, grow, and develop within our own personal environment (Zachary, 2000).

In order to understand ourselves, which at times can be daunting, it is important to understand the complexity that are the forces around us. How are these forces affecting our personal, professional, and academic lives? How are these forces affecting our relationships? In order for a mentoring experience to be successful, it is important to understand the specific forces that are involved in the mentor and protégé's lives (Zachary, 2000). Once these forces and the specific ecology of the mentoring relationship has been identified, then the successful interactions, growth, and development can truly take hold.

### **Exploring Mentoring Using Educative Experiences**

In 1938, John Dewey promoted the concept of getting the most out of our educative experiences. He stated that educative experiences should help foster richer experiences, in both the academic and personal realms (Dewey, 1938). From this, professionals can connect the concept of mentoring to promoting future growth, ultimately leading to better, and more fulfilling, learning experiences. While this sets particular goals and expectations from the mentoring experience, it is rather broad in nature and is not descriptive in how to encourage the potential within our students.

In 2001, Sharen Feiman-Nemser utilized this information in creating this new idea, known as educative mentoring. This concept combined instructional, technical, and emotional support, allowing mentors to challenge and support their protégés on authentic issues, ultimately leading to development, on both ends, and student learning (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In essence, mentoring must be educative in nature. While there is a great focus on the curriculum, there is still an early emphasis placed on mentors being able to provide emotional support to their protégés, in order to develop strong working relationships with these individuals (Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2007). These established relationships will eventually help to guide and facilitate the protégé's knowledge and learning.

With this educative concept of mentoring comes some challenges and confusion. Through these definitions, it almost seems that mentoring should be academically-focused. Mentoring is much more than that. While it is important that mentoring remains educational in nature, there are no boundaries when it comes to the direction in which these mentoring relationships take. This ambiguous educational mission has contributed to the ambiguous nature in the perceptions of the mentor, mentorship, and the type of program or relationship that needs to be established.

### **Unclear Mentoring Terminology**

In the winter of 1991, Maryann Jacobi wrote a review article about the direction that mentoring is taking in the higher education field and reacted to some major concerns on what mentoring actually means and as it applies to the general success of our students. Jacobi recognized that there is a lack of understanding when it comes to mentoring terminology (Jacobi, 1991). It appears that there is a lack of a common definition and conceptualization of what it means to be a mentor, a protégé, or even what it means to actually be in a mentoring relationship (Jacobi, 1991). In a review of the present literature and studies, there were over fifty definitions of mentoring, all of which vary in scope and purpose (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). These inconsistencies in the perceptions of mentoring provide challenges when it comes to establishing programs or creating successful relationships.

Jacobi (1991) also identified a number of other issues in understanding the concepts of mentoring. At the time of this review of literature, there seemed to be a lack of awareness on the purpose of both informal and formal mentoring relationships (Jacobi, 1991). Professionals could not appropriately determine when it was useful to establish a formal mentoring program versus an informal relationship. There were also difficulties in understanding the importance of which



mentoring functions are the most critical to the academic success of our student populations (Jacobi, 1991).

With some of the problems identified nearly two decades ago, there was some hope that research would help to combat these ambiguous issues. Unfortunately, mentoring research has not made significant progress in identifying a common definition and understanding of mentoring (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). This has been one of the most significant issues revolving around mentoring at this time. The lack of a common definition could be due to the fact that there has been a shortage of highly rigorous, quantitative research designs (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Most of the current definitions are not based on relevant research, rather they are based on assumptions made from loosely-designed studies (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

### **Difficulties Mentoring and Common Mentor Pitfalls**

Time has caused a significant shift in the learner-centered mentoring paradigm (Knowles, 1980) in addition to the structure of many types of mentoring programs. Due to the changes in styles and purposes of new mentoring models, it has made for a difficult transition for some mentors who have served in the capacity for decades. With the new innovations and ideas of mentoring relationships, there have been some troubles in the relationships in which mentors and protégés establish (Zachary, 2000). As mentors, it is important to understand these potential difficulties upon assuming the role in order to combat the issues before they appear in the mentoring relationship.

### **The Impact of Time**

Looking back at the past, mentoring programs and relationships have significantly shifted over the years. The roles of the mentors and protégés have changes substantially. Mentors once served in an authoritative capacity, passing along information to their passive protégé (Knowles,

1980). Currently, mentors serve to facilitate learning and share an active role with the protégé in the learning experience (Knowles, 1980).

Even the learning process in the mentoring relationship has shifted from a mentor-directed approach to one that is protégé-directed (Knowles, 1980). While many planned mentoring programs have a specific timeframe for the relationship, there are opportunities to continue with the mentoring experience even following the end of the experience. In most mentoring relationships prior to the 1980s, the length of the relationship was determined by a specific length of time (Knowles, 1980). Even if the mentor and protégé failed to accomplish the goals, the relationship would end at a specific time. Nowadays, relationships are much more collaborative and goal-oriented in nature (Knowles, 1980). Mentoring relationships can and should continue if the goals have not been reached and there is still growth to be made.

While there are still mentoring relationships that focus on the outcome (product-oriented), most mentoring experiences have switched to a more process-oriented approach (Knowles, 1980). These relationships are focused more on the reflection and application of the reflected experiences. The journey allows individuals to make discoveries, learn, and begin to develop.

With these changes in mentoring relationships over time, mentors should focus on being more flexible through the duration of the experience. Protégés may also be undergoing a number of significant life changes that impact their attitude and responsiveness to the mentor. Nancy Schlossberg has been an important theorist in defining transitions and how an individual is able to cope through these significant life events. Knowing this information will prove useful for mentors, as they begin to develop strong working relationships with their protégés.

## **Mentoring in the Student Affairs Perspective**

As colleges and universities have become more diverse, there has been a need to offer more resources and services to address the demands and concerns (Reynolds, 2009). There has been a call for specialized training which led to the establishment of professional training programs, particularly for student affairs professionals and individuals serving in a mentoring capacity (Evans & Reason, 2001). In a review of the major foundational documents in the student affairs profession, Evans and Reason (2001) indicated there were a number of underlying themes. Some of those themes included an emphasis on the whole student in all educational endeavors, the respect for individual differences, the importance of providing an open and encouraging educational environment, and the responsibility to society (Evans & Reason, 2001).

Student affairs administrators see themselves as educators as a part of the out-of-classroom experiences (Lloyd-Jones & Smith, 1954), but there has been a demand for more than that. The education that student affairs professionals provide has expanded into providing resources and helping students deal with the emotional demands of academic life and progressing through the various stages in personal development (Creamer, Winston, & Miller, 2001). Helping skills remain at the forefront of the interactions that student affairs personnel have with students (Reynolds, 2009). Sometimes professionals are directly helping the student understand their personal conflicts, and sometimes the helping skills are important for providing students the resources to advance their careers. These helping and advising skills serve as one of the core competencies in the profession (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004).

In essence, mentors are helping their protégés understand their potential and reflect upon their experiences. These reflective moments provide the mentor and protégé with important opportunities for growth. Without the helping and advising skills, the mentor loses focus on the

purpose of the mentoring relationship and will not be able to offer the protégé with proper guidance, support, challenge, or vision.

### **Creating a Mentoring Culture**

Mentoring programs and relationships can be sustainable over time if there is an organizational culture that promotes and values the idea of experiential learning (Zachary, 2000). For student affairs, it is important to assess the current culture of the institution in order to determine whether a mentoring culture is possible. Some of the challenges that come with mentoring programs are derived from the design and planning of such experiences and relationships (Zachary, 2000).

In some cases, there is no clear vision or purpose for mentoring programs (Zachary, 2000). A mentoring culture cannot be created when there is no foresight. It is also important to gain support from upper administration, as they are able to support the creation of an action plan for the department or organization (Zachary, 2000). If possible, draft up a document by including the potential stakeholders, their roles in the mentoring program, and specific tasks and responsibilities. This will develop campus partnerships and create a sense of buy-in for the program and experience.

Once the program has been well-organized in the areas of management, goals, coordination, and training, it is important to try to foresee potential obstacles (Zachary, 2000). By identifying ways to overcome mentor/protégé fallouts, there is a greater chance a program can overcome its struggles and pitfalls. There will be struggles during the course of program implementation, and by attempting to solve these problems in advance, there will be a greater sense of buy-in and support from others within and outside of the organization (Zachary, 2000).

These challenges will take time to overcome. The first year of mentoring programs is experimental in nature; there will always be opportunities for growth. After a few years, and after

the mentoring program begins to gain valuable campus partnerships, individuals will begin to see a mentoring culture develop (Zachary, 2000). One of the greatest signs that a mentoring culture is present at an institution is the demand to participate in the program (Zachary, 2000). There will be a significant interest from both mentors and protégés to be a part of the experience, and these individuals will know who to contact to participate. There will also be a common vocabulary that is established at the institution (Zachary, 2000). Some mentoring programs, especially those within student affairs, use acronyms to identify the program. If the mentoring culture is strong at the institution, individuals will be able to identify the acronym and understand its purpose and goals.

Successful cultures also reward their participants and provide a strong and supportive safety net of well-trained and caring professionals (Zachary, 2000). Once a number of these signs are in place, one can safely say that a mentoring culture is present at that institution or organization. It is important to note that mentoring cultures take time and investment from multiple resources. One person cannot create that culture himself or herself. Obtaining buy-in from campus partners will prove an invaluable tool, as someone begins to develop a successful and engaging culture.

### **Cross-Cultural Mentoring**

With the increase in student diversity at colleges and universities across the United States, it has become increasingly important that professionals, including mentors, understand the barriers and implications of the diversity (Zachary, 2000). Cross-cultural mentoring has become common at institutions, especially as students of different races and cultures try to find success in their personal and academic environments. With the importance placed on understanding different groups and populations, it is important to understand that each race and culture has a different understanding and perception of mentoring (Zachary, 2000).

One of the greatest challenges is understanding language or cultural barriers that may exist between the mentor and the protégé (Zachary, 2000). Some individuals will require differing levels of challenge, support, and vision. It will also be important for the mentor to explore, at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, how their protégé views mentoring and what that individual is hoping to get out of the relationship and experience. Individuals from different cultures will express themselves in unique ways. It is essential that the mentor displays patience when building the mentoring relationship (Zachary, 2000).

Cross-cultural mentoring relationships rest on four elements (Zachary, 2000). A mentor needs to have a strong cross-cultural competency. They must also display a flexible cultural lens, as individuals are unique within the greater cultural context. Mentors must be able to display strong communication skills, in order to find multiple ways to keep in contact with their protégé. One of the most important pieces of information to consider is that mentors must be interested in continued learning (Zachary, 2000). There is no expectation that the mentor knows everything about every culture. The mentor must be interested in learning about the culture of their protégé if they expect to have a real chance at developing a successful partnership. By exploring that culture, the mentor should also identify his or her own bias and stereotypes (Zachary, 2000).

By utilizing this information, student affairs professionals will be ready to have authentic personal relationships with their protégés. Mentors will learn about themselves during the process through effective reflection and communication. As the student affairs field continues to evolve and new theories begin to develop, the mentoring role will evolve and redevelop.

### **Summary**

Mentoring has been an important topic of study throughout history. While it began in early Greek mythology with the story of Mentor and Telemachus (Miller, 2002), it has continued further into tutoring programs at Harvard (Finkelstein, 1983). Various mentoring terms have been

established and research has been conducted on mentoring, leading to a general understanding of the concept of the mentoring relationship.

As more research is being conducted on mentoring, there have been more definitions and ideas of what the mentoring relationship entails (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Even with this ambiguity, there has been progress made on creating a solid mentoring program structure (Zachary, 2000). Three primary goals have been identified as outcomes in mentoring relationships (Miller, 2002). Mentors are to create a successful relationship that focuses on developing a protégé in the personal and social realm, finding a career path, and helping the individual succeed academically (Miller, 2002). These goals have provided a framework for mentoring programs, relationships, and experiences.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This conceptual framework provided a focus and shape to the research study, specifically tying the research questions to the current literature. The qualitative methodological design was determined based off of the information from this section of research. Personal experiences and insights from the researcher have also been included, indicating prior knowledge and vision for the direction of the study.

### **Purposes of Mentoring**

**The significant piece of literature guiding the study was through the research and data compilation by Jacobi. Jacobi (1991) reviewed literature and determined that there were three major purposes of mentoring: Professional development, personal development, and the providence of support. This information served as the backbone for the research, as the content of the interviews was analyzed with the help of this framework.**

Participants had the opportunity to discuss personal experiences in mentoring, and explained past events as a mentor, protégé, or in both roles. From their stories, this content was pulled to determine their understanding of mentoring and the learning that takes place within each relationship. Jacobi (1991) stated that no matter the definition of mentoring, these three factors remained consistent amongst these relationships. While each relationship may have a different focus, it was important for the participants to adequately describe how their experiences impacted their learning through these three factors.

### Phases of Mentoring

Each of the six interviews were also analyzed through another lens with Zachary (2000) and the phases of mentoring. Participants in a mentoring relationship undergo a series of phases, starting with preparing the plan and relationship (Zachary, 2000). Individuals soon follow through the negotiating phase, where mentors and protégés speak about learning and what needs to take place in the partnership, enabling phase, where individuals actually carry out the plans and the relationship, and the coming to closure phase (Zachary, 2000). In coming to closure, participants speak about what worked, what didn't work, and officially end the relationship.

Zachary provided structure to mentoring, where Jacobi was able to provide much of the content to the relationship. This information helped the researcher understand the extent of experience in each participant in the study. Informed and more experienced participants will be better able to explain the phases of the mentoring relationship, as learning takes place through each of the four phases (Zachary, 2000). If participants are able to describe their experiences in context to the different phases of mentoring, they are more likely to be reflective and have learned a great deal professionally and personally from the mentoring relationship.



## **Extent of Learning**

Individuals learn through different methods (Kolb, 1984), and learning occurs at varying rates. It was my hope that participants learned more about themselves through the reflection of previous relationships, as mentoring is a reflective and uplifting experience (Zachary, 2000). In some cases, the relationship provided the protégé with the confidence needed to approach a faculty member or staff member for academic or personal help.

As learning occurs at different rates, it was essential to understand what mentors and protégés gained from their experiences. Even if previous relationships ended on a negative note, it was important to assess learning. Were the mentors and protégés who struggled to build that relationship and maintain it able to gain valuable experience and personal knowledge?

By defining learning and recognizing the educational potential in a mentoring relationship, a more refined definition of mentoring will later be conceived. Goals of a mentoring relationship, especially in a student affairs mentoring relationship, will be defined in a more concise and less-ambiguous way.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, using the interviews of six participants, how one's understanding of the concepts of mentoring and the mentoring experience were influenced by prior experience in mentoring relationships. Specifically, the researcher hoped to see how the experiences of the participants, through careful reflection, have influenced the mentors' and protégés' perceptions on the mutual partnership. The interviews of the mentors and protégés were used to explore their understanding of the concept of mentoring and their level of mentoring development. In seeking to understand this information, the researcher has developed one research question: [a] how do prior mentoring experiences shape individuals and their learned leadership approaches?

This chapter explored the study's research methodology and specifically addressed the following topics and considerations: [a] research sample, [b] information used to process research questions, [c] research design, [d] data-collection methods, [e] data analysis and synthesis, [f] ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness, and [g] limitations. This chapter concludes with a brief summary of the information presented.

## **Research Sample**

In order to conduct a sound qualitative study, it was important to consider the institution involved in the study, the general population, the selected sample, and how the researcher planned to select a subset from this sample. To better understand the students and professionals from this institution, a brief history of the founding of this university is outlined in the following sections. Demographics are included to provide the reader with context in how the participant's actions may be influenced from the culture of the university and the surrounding environment.

### **Institution and Population**

Founded on December 25, 1890, this large, public institution originated as an agricultural and mechanical college (OSU Alumni Association, 2010). The Morrill Act of 1862 provided the state with 30,000 acres of land designated for engineering, agriculture, and military sciences (OSU Alumni Association, 2010). This state university continued to grow and thrive and became a place rich in history and tradition. Athletic support became a large part of the campus culture throughout the history of the university.

This study took place at a large, public institution located within the Southwest region of the United States. This institution is a land grant university with over 21,000 students enrolled on the main campus according to the admission numbers from 2009 (News and Communications, 2009). The number was representative of both undergraduate student and graduate student populations. For the remainder of this study, I will refer to this institution as Student Affairs University.

Students attending the university came from over 40 states and nearly 125 countries (News and Communications, 2009). With an incoming class of 3,554 students in 2009, there were 826 individuals (23%) who identified as Native American, African American, Hispanic, Asian American, or international students (News and Communications, 2009). And nearly 70% of the

student body was composed of individuals who grew up within the state and have claimed in state status (News and Communications, 2009). One in every five students in attendance was considered a first generation student (News and Communications, 2009). These numbers were important to consider prior to conducting the study.

### **Sample**

From the population, six individuals were purposefully selected to participate in qualitative interviews at one time within the 2011-2012 academic year. These individuals were selected from voluntary participants who returned a consent form and a demographic sheet from an email sent out our one hundred and eighty student staff, graduate residence directors, and full-time professionals within Housing and Residential Life at Student Affairs University. From these six individuals, three were purposefully selected from student staff members who live on campus. These individuals were selected based off of their assumed limited experiences in mentoring relationships. The other three individuals were purposefully selected from graduate student residence directors and full-time staff members who have served in their current role in Housing and Residential Life for more than two years. Graduate students were combined with professional student affairs staff due to the courses they have taken in student development theory. By the second year of the College Student Development program, individuals will have taken two courses, and it was assumed they were reflective and experienced enough to speak thoroughly about a variety of mentoring experiences.

These individuals signed waivers indicating they were interesting in participating in the study. The researcher completed one interview, allowing participants to describe their experiences in mentoring relationships and identify their perceptions of the mentoring relationship. This provided the researcher with a good sense of how previous mentoring experiences impacted an individual's philosophy of mentoring and learned leadership.

## **Sampling Strategy**

Following the thesis proposal defense and the completion of the Institutional Review Board's approval of the research design, information was sent out to Housing and Residential Life student staff within Student Affairs University. A description of the research was included in this information and can be found in Appendix A. Information was sent out via to graduate student residence directors and professional staff in Housing and Residential Life who have served in their capacity for at least two years. These individuals had one week to complete the consent form (found in Appendix B) and return it to the researcher in a sealed, unmarked envelope to Zink 115.

Once the information was compiled, six participants were contacted about their involvement in the program. Three individuals were undergraduate Housing and Residential Life student staff. Three individuals were graduate students or full-time professionals, who have served in this capacity, for two or more years. Individuals had the opportunity to schedule an hour-long interview time to speak to the researcher about their experiences and perceptions in mentoring relationships. The interview questions are found in Appendix C. Following the six interviews, the information was analyzed using Zachary's (2000) four phases of mentoring and Jacobi's (1991) three components of a successful mentoring experience, which provided the framework for the case study analysis. The sample for this study was purposeful and based off information obtained from the demographic form. Three undergraduate student staff were selected if they were a sophomore, junior, or senior in class status. These individuals must have participated in between zero and two relationships. These numbers were selected to gain participants from one end of the experience continuum (the low experience end). Three graduate student residence directors or full-time professionals were selected if they had selected the mentor relationship box on the demographic form. Individuals may also be selected if they indicated they have served in mentor and protégé relationships. These three participants must have been a part of

at least three mentoring relationships, providing the other end of the continuum (the high experience end). Race and/or ethnicity were not used to determine which participants were selected to complete interviews. These components were on the demographic form to provide context to the relationships in which these individuals may have been involved.

### **Information Used to Process Research Questions**

Here is the research question under investigation for this study:

- How have perceptions of previous mentoring experiences shaped the participants and their learned leadership approaches?

This question provided a framework for the various stages of the study. Most of the needed information was classified in four general areas: contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical information. Within the following sections, these areas will be explored to provide insight into what types of questions were asked during the interviews.

#### **Contextual Information**

Individuals who served as participants in the research study provided unique insights into their specific relationships with previous mentors or protégés. This information was contextual in that it was dependent upon their particular experience. Both mentors and protégés were able to articulate what influences have led to their opinions and beliefs on the concept of mentoring.

This contextual information was important in understanding how and why mentors and protégés reason. Near the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked the sample of participants on their experiences that have led them to their current positions and systems of beliefs. The researcher asked about prior mentoring relationships in which the mentor or protégé has been involved. This information provided the researcher with useful information on what the individual already may know about mentoring or their experience with this topic.

## **Perceptual Information**

Obtaining perceptual information was crucial for the success of this study, as the data and analysis were based off of the perceptions of the mentors and protégés and their experiences with mentoring. The goal of this research was to treat these interviews as case studies in order to provide additional research to the mentoring field. This study was established for future longitudinal studies. Some mentors had years of experience and have taken on numerous protégés in mentoring programs, but they may not be developed enough to provide personal, academic, or career-related insight to their partner. The opposite was also true in that mentoring may come more naturally to some mentors and leaders. What makes a good mentor?

This information was provided as the mentors and protégés spoke about their perspectives on mentoring, the roles that the mentor and protégé have played in the relationship, and the types of activities that each party engaged in during their previous mentoring partnerships. When speaking with the mentors, it was important for the researcher to ask about their style of leadership, the intentionality they put into the relationship, and the expectations that were laid out at the beginning of the mentoring experience, if expectations were constructed. The protégés provided a developmental perspective. One of the goals was to have these individuals speak candidly about their experiences, providing information on how their respective mentor provided levels of support, challenge, and vision.

By asking the mentors and protégés about their perceptions, the researcher was able to gauge the levels of development that both parties underwent throughout the interview. Mentoring is an abstract concept that individuals may not think about until they participate in a mentoring relationship. This semi-structured approach to interviewing allowed participants to reflect on what they have learned from one another and their experiences.

## **Demographic Information**

Demographic information was important to obtain prior to conducting the first interview. Before arriving and meeting the researcher, each participant was to describe their background, including race, culture, family life, where they grew up, how they grew up, number of mentoring experiences, and their age and level of education. This information served as the framework and potential context for the remainder of the experience. Demographic information allowed the researcher to categorize the participants' experiences, especially on the basis of race, culture, and level of education. Participants were selected based off of their indicated position in a mentoring relationship and their prior experiences.

It was important to gather this information in order to determine the type of relationship that mentors have with their protégés. Multicultural competency is an important component of the student affairs field, but the lack of understanding one's background can have negative consequences for the success of the mentoring experience. Understanding a mentoring partner's race, culture, and other pertinent pieces of information allows the relationship to be more open and intentional.

## **Theoretical Information**

In order to pull from the perspectives of the participants, it was important for the researcher to have a solid grasp of developmental theories. The researcher had an understanding of mentoring concepts and stages to gauge where the participants have progressed in their own relationships throughout their prior experiences. It was important for the researcher to have a grasp on learning styles and how these styles may impact mentoring relationships.

Through the interviews and narratives of the participants, it was important to understand these styles and perspectives in the background information from each participant. This information was pulled from questions revolving around the relationship between the mentor and



protégé and where these experiences were successful or unsuccessful. The reflection provided insight into the working styles of both parties and if they had a good grasp of the strengths and differences in these styles. Learned responses were analyzed based on Jacobi's (1991) three outcomes to a successful mentoring relationship: personal growth, career support, and personal support. Experiences were analyzed to determine if they fit within Zachary's (2000) four stages in a mentoring relationship: preparing, negotiating, enabling, and coming to closure.

## **Research Design**

### **Planning Stages**

Prior to the conducting the interviews, a great deal of work and research needed to be conducted to provide a framework for the study and to provide a solid understanding of the mentoring relationship described by previous literature. Zachary (2000) noted the importance of creating a learning partnership between the mentor and protégé. This partnership is significant in the mutual learning that takes place; the mentor should gain knowledge from their protégé, but they should also be able to facilitate the learning process (Zachary, 2000). This information inspired the researcher to conduct a study on how a mentoring relationship can affect an individual's perspective and knowledge on the concept of mentoring. Intentional reflection is the key to the mentoring experience (Zachary, 2000).

### **Planning the proposal.**

In order to create a successful proposal, the researcher needed to study the various levels and components of the mentoring relationship, create interview and research questions to provide focus for the study, and go through the appropriate avenues for research approval. The description of the study is provided in Appendix A, the consent form is outlined in Appendix B, and the interview questions are provided in Appendix C. This information provided a framework for the remainder of the study.

This study is a case study design, so it was important for the researcher to go through appropriate approval processes and understand the importance that information will come from personal experiences and stories. Case study research focuses around a specific subject area and is meant to further research in that particular subject area. This type of design looks at “real life” events to determine the significance. The researcher also needed to complete the thesis proposal and defend in front of the respective committee. A thorough understanding of mentoring needed to be illustrated in this proposal. The methodology in study design was to be thoughtful and provided information on the outcomes of data analysis. It was important for the researcher to plan the goals and research questions prior to creating the interview questions. These research questions guided the interview, and the researcher was able to gather valuable information from participants due to the strong connection between the goals, research questions, and interview information.

#### **Planning for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.**

Following the completion and defense of the initial proposal, the researcher went back and made changes, based off of the recommendations from the committee. Prior to making these changes, the researcher sought IRB approval from Student Affairs University. Due to the time-sensitive nature of this study, IRB approval needed to be completed by April in order for the researcher to conduct the interviews in a timely manner. This information was based off of the research conducted by Zachary (2000) in preparing for mentoring relationships.

#### **Gathering Participants**

Once the approval process for this study was completed, the researcher focused on gathering participants for the research study. Purposeful sampling took place, and the researcher sought out undergraduate student staff members, graduate students, and full-time staff in Housing and Residential Life. Individuals were emailed to complete a consent form, if they were interested

in being interviewed for the study. The researcher obtained an email list via the SharePoint database that Housing and Residential Life staff monitors. The only limiting factor was that students must have attended Student Affairs University to complete the interview. The graduate student or full-time professional must have served in their current role for at least two years.

Once these forms were received, the researcher sent out the demographic form to participants to fill out. Only individuals who completed the consent form were emailed the demographic information. Individuals were asked to return the forms within a week to be considered for the study. Communication was conducted through email, and potential participants were asked to return the completed forms in a sealed and unmarked envelope to Zink 115. From the individuals who submitted consent and demographic forms, six participants were purposefully selected. Three undergraduate student staff in Housing and Residential Life were chosen if they had served in between zero and two mentoring relationship and considered themselves a protégé on the demographic form. Graduate student residence directors and professionals were selected if they had participated in three or more mentoring relationships and had served primarily in the mentor role or both roles. Participants were emailed to schedule a one-hour interview with the researcher.

### **Conducting Interviews**

Participants selected for interviews were notified of scheduling an hour to speak about their background and perceptions on mentoring, based off of previous experiences. These were one-on-one interviews between the researcher and mentor or protégé. They took place in a secure office located in Zink 115. Individuals selected a pseudonym to preserve their identity throughout the study. The interview questions can be found in Appendix C.

The participants were notified that these interviews needed to be recorded within the consent form. Interviews lasted an hour, but additional follow-up times needed to be scheduled

based on whether all of the designated questions were asked during the first hour timeslot. It was important that the researcher developed a relationship with the individual being interviewed in order to gain more candid and open responses.

Following the interview process, the researcher transcribed the interviews from the taped recordings. Their perceptions and thoughts were analyzed and categorized based on their experiences and formulated opinions on the concept of mentoring. These interviews and transcriptions were available if the participant was interested in reviewing their own information at any point during the study.

### **Data – Collection Methods**

To connect the review of relevant literature, the research questions, and the methodology of the study, this section has been created and outlined below. This information outlined the specific data-collecting methods, a rationale for each method, and information on how the researcher planned to utilize the instruments. Additional information was added to show how and why these instruments were created, how they were tested, and how the information would remain secure and safe-guarded throughout the study and following the study.

### **Demographic Collection Instrument**

In order to gain a better understanding of the individuals participating in this research, the researcher planned on utilizing a demographic collection instrument. This instrument was taken and modified from the qualitative dissertation guide created by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008). Prior to the initial interview, the researcher asked the participant to fill out the one-page document. The researcher utilized this instrument to obtain background information from each of the selected participants who consented to complete the interviews. This allowed the researcher to understand the experience each participant brought to the study.

Due to the limited timeframe, it was not reasonable to ask the participants these questions during the interview. This would take away time from completing these interviews, building relationships with the participants, and obtaining the crucial information for the study. A copy of the demographic collection instrument is located in Appendix D.

### **Qualitative Forms**

Most of this mentoring study was focused around a set of qualitative interview questions. Due to the goals and plans of the researcher in determining if experience in mentoring helped define participants' understanding of mentoring, a qualitative study seemed the most feasible and appropriate method due to the ability to gather substantial information.

One of the primary concerns with mentoring research at this time was due to the number of definitions concerning the topic of mentoring (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). A second concern with conducting a quantitative study was the lack of strong methodology associated with previous research (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). As the researcher, I would have to develop my own instrument due to the lack of success in prior mentoring studies. This would be time-consuming and would require collaboration with a number of outside constituents. The few qualitative studies that have been conducted have been successful at adding to the theoretical understanding of the mentoring experience (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). This research has been methodologically flawed and has provided a limited description in how the researchers collected and analyzed the data (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

While there were significant concerns with both quantitative and qualitative forms of research, qualitative research is more closely-related with the goals of this study. Designing the study as a case study analysis allowed the researcher to gather personal experiences of the participants. Qualitative research was the most appropriate type of research in this regard. These interviews, and the interview questions, needed to relate back to the research questions

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), otherwise the methodology can be considered flawed. Qualitative research can be used to extrapolate the findings to similar conditions in future studies, adding additional literature to the field

### **Developing and Testing the Qualitative Instrument**

The interviews were created based on the research questions and goals. The primary research question focused around the perceptions of the mentors and protégés and how they view the mentoring experience. This allowed the groups, both mentor and protégé, to define mentoring. Since this was a case study approach to research, the researcher was able to utilize previous experiences, stories, and personal accounts in the analysis of the interviews. It allowed these groups to conclude how the mentoring experience shaped their understanding of the mentoring relationship and how it can impact an individual's experience and understanding of the three goals of mentoring: personal growth, social and personal help, and career help (Jacobi, 1991).

According to Yin (1994), there are five components to case study research. The first is developing the research question(s) (Yin, 1994). Once this has been established, the researcher looks at creating propositions linked to the research question(s). At this point, units of analysis are considered, and the researcher links the data to the propositions (Yin, 1994). Lastly, the researcher develops criteria to interpret the data (Yin, 1994). Stake (1995) identified three types of case study research that could be applicable to mentoring research. The first is instrumental case studies, where subjects provide insight into a particular issue (Stake, 1995). The second is intrinsic case studies, where the researcher probes for a deeper understanding of a particular case (Stake, 1995). A third type of case study research is called collective case studies, where the researcher observes a number of cases to inquire about a particular phenomenon (Stake, 1995). This study primarily observed the instrumental form of case study research, due to the limited interactions between the researcher and participants.

The researcher moved between the data and literature throughout, to compare the findings with results in similar studies. The research question involved the experience of the participants and how experience in mentoring influenced the extent of learning in these types of relationships. Research focused on exploration and description and related back to the purpose and aims of the study, rather than in the formulation of propositions. Subjects were the units of analysis, specifically undergraduate students who worked in Housing and Residential Life and graduate students and professionals who have worked in Housing and Residential Life for at least two years. It is important to note that the data collection and analysis occur together in this mentoring study.

### **Recording and Safe-Guarding the Data**

Interviews for this study were conducted using a personal recording device of the researcher. This recording device was not lent to other colleagues, students, or professionals for any reason during the duration of this study to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the data and participants. Individual interview tapes were stored within the personal office of the researcher in an area in which few individuals have access. Due to the nature of the graduate assistantship, facilities and upper administration professionals were the sole individuals able to access the personal space of the researcher. These tapes, transcribed interviews, binders, and other research information were securely stored with lock and key and isolated to ensure that outside influences did not play a role in tampering with the information.

Prior to sitting down with the participants for the initial interview, the researcher allowed the participants to choose a pseudonym they would carry for the duration of the study. The researcher and individual participant were the only two individuals who knew the pseudonym. These pseudonyms were used on all transcriptions, reports, and documents containing data. A single document, created by the researcher, had the matching names and pseudonyms for all six

participants being interviewed. This document was created and maintained on the personal laptop computer of the researcher, and no individual had access to this list.

### **Data Analysis and Synthesis**

Analyzing qualitative studies can be difficult without guidance from a strong theoretical framework. The researcher analyzed the case studies from the six participants by relying on theoretical propositions. As stated earlier in this document, there are two guiding theories that construct the framework for the mentoring research.

Due to the nature of the research being utilized, the researcher considered chronologies in the study. With the questions based on previous experiences, the researcher analyzed the data to compile a timeline of events. This was compared with Zachary (2000) to analyze the validity of the four phases, based on these participants and their experiences in mentoring relationships. Chronologies can provide cause and effect relationships, and this was essential in this case study. The researcher wanted to compare whether experience caused participants to reason and rationalize their mentoring relationships differently. Since Zachary stated the phases in a relationship are sequential, the researcher compared the experiences with the research to determine if this was the case for every mentoring experience.

Guba and Lincoln are experts when it comes to preparing and analyzing case study research. They said that positive results come from purposeful activities (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Each case study should outline the purpose of the study and the actions of the researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). In terms of this study, experience in mentoring relationships is based on factual and interpretive information. It was factual in that the researcher recorded, constructed and presented, and produced facts (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The case study was interpretive in that the researcher construed, clarified, and made meaning from the experiences and stories provided by the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).



### **Stage 1: Describing Experience**

Case study questions are the heart of the methodology (Yin, 1994). It was important to ensure that there were loosely structured questions to the interview to allow the researcher to take alternative paths when speaking with the participant. Literature on mentoring was considered prior to, during, and following the mentoring interviews. Based on the information from Guba and Lincoln (1981), experiences were mapped. Information was based on Jacobi's (1991) research, Zachary's (2000) research on the phases of mentoring, mutual learning in mentoring relationships, and general life experiences.

### **Stage 2: Describing Meaning**

Following the interviews, multiple perspectives were reviewed for their content. These perspectives were analyzed based on their source: protégé or mentor. According to Guba and Lincoln (1981), these experiences are strong indicators of how individuals make meaning. Burbank (1988) outlined that individuals make meaning based on symbols, events, and life in general. This information was considered as the researcher analyzed the information provided by each of the six participants.

### **Stage 3: Focus of Analysis**

Qualitative research is limited in the ability to generalize the information obtained from the interviews. Fortunately, the findings can be extrapolated to similar studies. During this stage, data were linked to prior information and research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Results were analyzed based on information connected to the purpose of the mentoring study, rationale, and the established research question (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Rigor was established in future sections through the use of credibility, transferability, and dependability.

## **Ethical Considerations and Issues of Trustworthiness**

For qualitative studies, it was important to consider the needs of the potential participants involved in the research sample. As with many theoretical studies, the research conducted on mentoring perceptions involved active human participants. These individuals had the conscious choice in whether they were interested in participating in the qualitative interview portions of the study.

Once the proposal was defended and IRB approval was granted, the researcher sent out descriptions and consent forms to the respective constituents in Housing and Residential Life. Graduate students and staff members were notified that they must have served in a professional role in the field for two or more years. By signing the consent form and returning it to Zink 115, the individuals agreed to participate in the interview portion of the study.

Following the selection of participants, the six individuals received notification that they had the opportunity to participate in one-60 minute interview over the course of the 2011-2012 academic year. The researcher noted throughout the study that if the participant did not feel comfortable continuing in the process, the participants would have the opportunity to withdrawal from the interviews.

In addition to considering the needs of the program participants, it was also essential to consider the biases of the researcher, the dependability of the methodology, and the generalizability of the information obtained. These pieces provided a useful framework for the quality of data and how the data could and would be utilized.

### **Credibility**

As the researcher of the study, I am confident in presenting my own biases and limitations for the success of the study. I am a 25-year old male, College Student Development

graduate student who attends the institution in which I am conducting the study. I also hold a graduate assistantship within Housing and Residential Life at Student Affairs University.

While I have conducted research on mentoring and mentoring programs, I have not served as a professional in the student affairs field at this point in my research. As most individuals, I am still learning and will continue to learn about the field and, more specifically, mentoring following the completion of this study. It is important to note that there may be better methods of conducting this study outside of the researched I have reviewed. Most of the research I conducted looked into beginning mentoring programs and developing a mentoring culture. Due to my inexperience in the field, I will be regularly working and reflecting with my program coordinator and advisor, who has taught and been in the student affairs field for more than a decade, to ensure that the methodology and analysis of data is sound and reliable.

### **Dependability**

In order to provide other researchers with the opportunity to conduct similar studies and to utilize this information and research, it was important to track the progress and processes of the interviews and study, in general. The limitations and roadblocks that hindered the study would be noted within the appendices of this thesis, in addition to the successful outcomes. Important documents were included in the paper trail for individuals who are looking to conduct additional research on mentoring or student affairs programming. Data was analyzed using the research and theories presented from Jacobi (1991) and Zachary (2000). The unique techniques were specifically noted in the previous portion of the methodology chapter.

### **Transferability**

While the goal of qualitative studies is not to generalize to other settings, the information provided can serve as a sounding board for other researchers who are able to conduct similar studies at their institutions. Individuals involved in this study attended a single institution, making

generalization nearly impossible. Similar studies can be replicated at other institutions to provide additional research, data, and literature to the field.

It was my hope that others review this study and take the research back to their institution in order to conduct interviews. This information can create a beginning for future work that can be conducted on the concepts of mentoring and an individual's level of mentoring development. Further research will strengthen the database on mentoring research and information and will allow this topic to grow and develop.

### **Limitations**

Regardless of the study and how well a researcher plans, there were limitations that could hinder the success of the research. It was important to acknowledge these potential hindrances. Within the following section, there will be a list of limitations that could arise within the research study. These concerns came from a variety of avenues from background of the researcher, the type of methodology that is in place, and the type of research that was being conducted. These anticipated shortcomings provided the researcher with a framework for the study and provided ways in which to plan against the external and internal forces working to limit the quality of work.

### **Education of Researcher**

As the researcher, I have not been introduced to the student affairs field outside of my work in my graduate assistantship and courses. My understanding of the field was more limited than others who have been in the field for decades. In order to combat this limitation, I worked closely with my program coordinator and advisor. This collaborative relationship helped me in my research and when it came to analyzing the data

## **Generalizability**

One of the primary concerns with all qualitative research is the lack of generalizability. While there is no way to combat this issue, it was important to address that this study will provide a comprehensive guide to further research that can be conducted. The information presented in future chapters was based off of six individuals with varying levels of education and background. These individuals were confined to a single institution of higher education. Future research should focus on mentoring at other institutions, in order to provide a more thorough and representative outlook. Even with the lack of generalizability, this research was meant to provide context for future studies in a similar environment.

## **Mentor's Experience Mentoring Undergraduate Students**

Due to the timeframe of the program, there was only be a minor screening process for participants. Individuals were able to serve as participants if [a] they were an undergraduate student staff member in Housing and Residential Life at Student Affairs University, [b] they have served as a graduate student or full-time professional for a minimum of two years, and [c] if they completed the consent form and demographic form. The researcher was not able to meet with the participants prior to conducting the interviews. The concern was whether the graduate students or full-time individuals have a strong understanding of what it meant to be a mentor and their potential impact within a mentoring relationship.

## **Single Interview and Timeframe**

Data was collected from a single interview, based on the self-reported experiences of the participants. Due to the narrative nature of the interviews, the information we obtained may or may not be reflective of the true mentoring experiences of the participants. As a researcher, it was important to take the word of the participant, as they were the only individuals knowledgeable on these reflections.

Eventually, this research can be converted to a longitudinal study that looks at the development of understanding the mentoring experience. Time did not allow this to happen, and the researcher was confined to conducting a single interview to gauge the understanding of the participants. This was why the purposeful sampling comes into play, as it was important to gauge the understanding with the levels of experience each participant held.

### **Summary**

In summary, this chapter provided a description in how the study was conducted and the plan for the analysis of the information. Qualitative interviews were conducted with six individuals in a case study interview design. Three undergraduate student staff members in Housing and Residential Life and three graduate student residence directors and professionals with two-years of experience in Housing and Residential Life were allowed the opportunity to participate in the study and in the interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to gauge the participants' knowledge, perception, and understanding of mentoring. This information was utilized to contribute additional literature on the mentoring experience to the field of research and knowledge.

Additionally, concerns and limitations have been outlined to showcase the biases of the researcher and the potential pitfalls of the study. This information was unique to this study, yet the information can be used by others who are looking to research the ideas of mentoring and mentoring relationships. While the study is ambitious, it provided useful information for other colleges, universities, and researchers to use if others are interested in conducting their own studies in the field.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, using the interviews of six participants, how one's understanding of the concepts of mentoring and the mentoring experience were influenced by prior experience in mentoring relationships. Specifically, the researcher hoped to see how the experiences of the participants, through careful reflection, have influenced the mentors' and protégés' perceptions on the mutual partnership. The interviews of the mentors and protégés were used to explore their understanding of the concept of mentoring and their level of mentoring development. It was assumed that this information provided structure and framework for future research in the mentoring field.

This chapter presents the key findings from the three interviews with protégés and the three interviews with mentors. Interviews were coded based on Jacobi's (1991) perceptions of the purposes of mentoring and Zachary's (2000) phases of mentoring relationships. Findings were reported and analyzed for consistencies or discrepancies with the two groups of participants. From this, a hypothesis was created from the data. The information was analyzed further for information. A chronological series of events were created to provide a framework for the discussion of information. From this information, A few major themes emerged from the data:

1. All participants expressed a thorough understanding on the areas and purposes of mentoring, according to Jacobi (1991).
2. Various themes and characteristics emerged from the participants' understanding of what it means to be a successful mentor and protégé in a mentoring relationship.
3. The age of the mentor became a point of comparison following the interviews of the mentors as protégés, as both had different perceptions of a time in one's life when they can adequately become a guide.
4. Experience through formal and informal mentoring relationships became a point of comparison between the mentors and protégés. All mentors have been a part of both relationships, whereas protégés were only involved in informal relationships.
5. All participants indicated the importance of the mutual learning and teaching process during the relationship.

A summary of these findings is presented in Table 1, following the appendices. A summary of perceived characteristics is found in Table 2. Following is a discussion of the findings with information that supports each of these major findings. Actual reports from the participants were included to allow the reader the opportunity to enter the minds of the mentors and protégés. This information was also included to legitimize the findings that will come in later chapters. Participants noted rich experiences that have shaped their views on what it meant to be a mentor and protégé. Personalities of previous mentors impacted the ways in which the participants currently conceptualize key mentoring terms. Following the findings is a summary section.



**Finding 1: All participants (6 of 6 [100%]) expressed a thorough understanding on the areas and purposes of mentoring, according to Jacobi (1991).**

One of the primary purposes of the study was to determine whether experience in previous mentoring relationships played a role in how individuals conceptualized terms in mentoring. This finding was significant in that there was no difference in how protégés and mentors defined the purpose of mentoring. All three protégés (100%) and all three mentors (100%) indicated that mentoring helps individuals grow personally, professionally, and helped to provide support during various phases in a protégé's life.

*I see the purpose of mentoring as having somebody, as having somebody to go to if you need help or whatever it is that you may need. It's just another person to help you through what you're doing or to help you grow and continue developing. (Annie)*

*They really helped to get me connected around campus, to different resources, regional and national organizations. And from those experiences and opportunities, I changed and developed into sort of more of who I am now. And we just developed and fostered a really successful relationship. They were friends, as well as mentors, to me. (Hayley)*

Mentors and protégés indicated the importance of having a positive relationship with their mentor in order to have the most rewarding experience. A few participants spoke about the fact that mentors chose them at one point due to similar interests and career aspirations. Through

these common bonds, goals, and experiences, mentors were able to help the protégés in providing support, professional assistance, and opportunities for personal growth.

*I've had two really strong mentors that I can think of. Both have been older than me, and they have been in the same degree path or have had the same goals. They have been able to teach me and have helped me learn what to do or what not to do. (Rachel)*

*In certain ways, the personality dynamic [between the mentor and protégé] is what made them successful. Everybody that I have either mentored or been a mentee for... we have just gotten along very well, professionally and personally. And I think that has really made it successful, because I can be more inclined to open up to them about things I was struggling with, my successes, my failures, and things like that. (Hayley)*

*That is the fact that you can't jump into this and say, "You're doing this wrong!" You actually have to build a relationship, which takes time. You [the mentor] have to probe, without being too forceful. You have to know what their weaknesses and strengths are. (Johnny)*

Not every mentor will be able to provide each one of these three areas of assistance. Bill noted, "You can have a mentor just about in any role or any aspect of your life, even if it is just looking for someone to help you learn how to take on a healthier lifestyle." Participants spoke of the importance of having supervisors as mentors and the significance of having mentors for

professional connections. Two of the three mentors spoke about how one or two specific mentors got them connected professionally in their chosen career path. That was the significant contribution in the relationship.

*Well, I guess I was a mentee in a formal program during my senior year of college. They created a formal structure for people to be mentored and who wanted to be mentored. And that was through the student affairs division of my undergrad. And so they had a formal dinner, to start things off, an information sheet to pair us up with individuals we wanted to be paired up with, and just some loose guidelines like that. (James)*

**Finding 2: Various themes and characteristics emerged from the participants' understanding of what it means to be a successful mentor and protégé in a mentoring relationship.**

All participants were asked what characteristics make up a successful mentor in a relationship. Despite different levels of experience in mentoring relationships and different contexts and reasons for these relationships, there were two common characteristics amongst both groups. All three (100%) of protégés and two (67%) of mentors stated that mentors must be interested and willing to help and teach. Here is one perspective:

*I definitely think that mentoring is a two-way street. The mentor has to want to teach, and the protégé also has to want to learn. (Rachel)*

A majority of participants stated that mentors need to be honest. Two of three (67%) protégés indicated that as a quality of a successful mentor. All three (100%) of mentors indicated the same characteristic. Johnny was moved by the question on the characteristics of being a successful mentor and stated, “You’re not just a hypocrite or two-faced. I think that is the most important thing.” Here is another excerpt from an interview with Annie:

*I think mentors should be honest. I don't like being lied to, and I really don't like things to be sugarcoated. Sometimes that is okay, but I respect people more when they are open and honest with me. I look for that in a mentor. (Annie)*

Interestingly enough, mentors found a few other characteristics of a successful mentor. Overwhelmingly (3 of 3 [100%]), mentors stated that other individuals who were serving in the mentor role must be experienced. None of the three protégés stated experience as being a quality of a successful mentor. Rachel stated that experience in the field was an important factor in her decision in selecting a mentor, even though she never conceptualized it during the question.

*I think they [mentors] should be a resource and some pool of information. They should be fairly competent and educated to the degree that's needed. (James)*

*To making them mentors, I would say experience is one thing. Both professionally and personally, they had gone through some of the same things that I was going through, so I could go to and come to them for advice. (Hayley)*

Another interesting characteristic was that idea of caring. Only one of three protégés (33%) stated that mentors should be caring in their approach to the relationship. On the contrary, all of the mentors (100%) stated that being caring was an important characteristic to being a successful mentor.

*They also had a really good caring side to them. It was just so easy to see their interactions with coworkers, their interactions with families, with friends, with people. (Hayley)*

*They see a benefit of their own in helping others. That was just the type of person they were, just good values and good characteristics: Genuine, caring, honest, and open. (James)*

All participants were asked the question on the characteristics found in successful protégés. There were two traits consistent amongst both groups: Mentors and protégés. The first was the idea that the protégé is willing to contribute to the learning process. All three protégés (100%) and two of three (67%) of mentors stated this as a significant trait.

*You have a mentor to help develop your skills, develop your personality. And there's going to be some things that need to be changed, and you have to recognize that going into it [the relationship]. (Johnny)*

*And it would depend on what your relationship with the mentor is, whether it is a religious setting or an academic setting. In general, that is someone who isn't as experienced in something and can learn from that person. (Annie)*

*They must be able to learn or willing to learn. I've always wanted to learn more to be able to be better. My drive for learning has also helped with that. I've not necessarily wanted to be like my mentor, but I've wanted to be as successful as they are. (Rachel)*

The second characteristic essential to a successful protégé was the idea that they needed to be able to accept feedback, especially constructive criticism. While difficult to hear about areas in which one is weak, it is essential to the growth process, as stated by the protégés and mentors. Two of three protégés (67%) and two of three mentors (67%) stated that this was an important trait.

*They [protégé] need to be open and willing to receive criticism. They have to be... I guess "mature" is the word. They need to be at a good point in their life where they are willing to receive information, analyze it, critique it, transform it into their own, and just better themselves. (James)*

**Finding 3: The age of the mentor became a point of comparison following the interviews of the mentors as protégés, as both had different perceptions of a time in one's life when they can adequately become a guide. 3 of 3 (100%) of protégés stated that mentors must be older.**

**Only 1 of 3 (33%) of mentors stated this as a requirement for the relationship to be successful.**

A finding that was not fully linked to the purpose of this study came with the age in which an individual can be a mentor. While experience was stated as one of the defining characteristics of a mentor, according to the mentors, age was seen as a defining requirement amongst all protégés in the study. Age and knowledge were connected in many of the protégé statements. Individuals also mentioned experience when speaking about the importance of age in mentoring.

*It is someone who is more experienced and older or they are just more knowledgeable. They [mentor] take someone under their wing, but the protégé also lets them and acknowledges that the mentor knows what they are talking about. (Rachel)*

When speaking about the characteristics that define a mentor, Bill said the following:

*There was an age difference, as well. They were older than me. They had been through a lot more than me. And they were able to provide perspective and insight that I may not have thought of, and it was always nice to have someone who has been through it before. (Bill)*

**Finding 4: Experience through formal and informal mentoring relationships became a point of comparison between the mentors and protégés. All mentors (3 of 3 [100%]) have been a part of both relationships, whereas protégés (3 of 3 [100%]) were only involved in informal relationships.**

One discrepancy in the data, relating back to experience in mentoring relationships, was the commitment to formal versus informal mentoring relationships. Every protégé (3 of 3 [100%]) indicated they have been a part of an informal mentoring relationship. None of the protégés spoke about their experience in formal relationships, even when prompted to speak about their experiences in mentoring.

*My most recent mentor, we were on the same team, we had a similar degree plan, and we had the same kind of attitude. We wanted to help. I don't know exactly what it was, but in both of my mentoring relationships, it was more of the mentor has chosen me. The mentor decided after becoming general friends that they wanted to mentor me and that they didn't just come up to me and say, "Hey, do you want to be my mentee now?" (Rachel)*

Rachel made it clear that she has been involved with few mentoring relationships. She signified that while the verbal contract of mentoring was initiated, it was not through a specific program. Friends, classmates, and other students came up to her and got her involved in various areas within engineering after a relationship was already established. These were one-on-one relationships. Here is an excerpt from another protégé:



*They were there just to give love and to support you. And they were always someone I could go to if I need help. I've had a lot of informal mentoring relationships where it wasn't one of those things where we really sat down and said, "Okay, I'm going to be your mentor." (Annie)*

Annie took this time to reflect upon her previous relationships in determining the quality of the mentoring experience. She mentioned that her relationships were just a given. Individuals never sat down with her to establish expectations. They simply provided guidance when Annie needed it most. These conversations are different than those of the mentors, who have all experienced some form of formal mentoring relationship, whether it was through a program in the field or another program around campus to help someone in their transition.

*I would say it has been more of an informal mentor role up until recently when I am officially a mentor for an ACUHO-I Stars College participant. And thus far, it has been phenomenal. It has been great to have that kind of relationship with a student who is interested in going into student affairs, and it is flattering someone respects me enough to think that I could be a benefit to them. (Bill)*

*Even though there is this more formal interaction, we were both busy and we get together as many times as we could. And even though I didn't develop and change as much as I did with my past mentors, it was something that still got me more tied to OSU, and it made me feel more helpful. It gave me more purpose here than just going to school and just working. (Hayley)*

The formal relationship in which Hayley was involved gave her more purpose and allowed her the opportunity to be mutually benefitted. She learned more from the formal relationship than from other relationships due to the structure and sense of accountability that was provided. Hayley forced herself to balance her responsibilities in order to provide the most support for her protégé. This relationship allowed her the opportunity to reflect upon her experiences and understand herself. This information was common amongst the other two mentors after describing their formal mentoring experiences.

**Finding 5: All participants (6 of 6 [100%]) indicated the importance of the mutual learning and teaching process during the relationship.**

Zachary (2000) stated that an important component of the transition process is that learning takes place between both parties. Individuals would not have a successful experience and come to closure if one portion of the relationship was the sole contributor to learning and teaching. During the interviews, all three protégés and all three mentors indicated that both parties were active participants in successful mentoring relationships. While two of the three protégés (67%) have not served in the mentor capacity, they have taken on the role to set goals and have committed to researching what they need.

*Not only is it to help someone who is not as understanding and who hasn't quite gone through that stage of life yet, the protégé gets to help him or herself become a better person. The protégé ends up being a mentor to someone else. (Rachel)*

Rachel shared the importance of the cycle of learning and contributions. While the mentor was responsible for being available and teaching the protégé new skills, the protégé was responsible for being engaged. As Rachel indicated, the protégé will eventually become a mentor. These experiences and the mutual learning that takes place will allow these individuals to serve as future educators. Here is another perspective from another protégé:

*Debate is an intelligent conversation of difference of opinions. And if you do it right, you both end up happier in the end. And that is when I think you can be a mentor and mentee. I can see you both benefitting from that. (Johnny)*

Earlier in the conversation, Johnny indicated the distinct roles necessary for the relationship to work. Mentors must be able to instruct, and protégés must be willing to learn and accept criticism. Johnny noted, “The mentor may change throughout the process. That has happened.” This supports the idea that both sides are able to take away from the relationship. It is important for both sides to communicate.

*If a mentee isn't communicating well enough and a mentor isn't communicating well enough, it tends to go really badly. I would see the mentor and mentee as a partnership. You have to be able to depend on cues from one another. (Johnny)*

For the learning to take place, Johnny indicated that communication is key. It can make or break the experience. Johnny noted that it is essential for both sides to understand verbal and nonverbal cues from one another. Rachel also spoke on the impact of communication within a mentoring relationship.

*I think there is a responsibility for both parties to stay connected. It is just like a friendship; it is a two-way street. You have the protégé who is like, “Let’s hang out. Let’s do something with the group.” And the mentor also has those same responsibilities. (Rachel)*

During the interviews, all mentors (3 of 3 [100%]) indicated that protégés could help them better understand technology and current events. Two mentors are between the ages of 23 and 25, while one is between 26 and 30. All of the protégés are 22 or under.

*I think that everybody can learn from everybody else. Even if you are in the mentor position, that doesn’t mean you can’t learn. They [protégés] can teach you anything from computer tricks just to help you relate to what is happening with the student now. You may be somewhat removed from that. (Hayley)*

Hayley made that distinction with age and the difference in what mentors may know from protégés. She noted a difference in age typically associated with the mentoring relationship, but Hayley stated that anyone at any age could take on the mentor position. The experience for mentors is not exclusive to older individuals. Technology was stated as something in which younger generations are more competent. Bill stated this in response to the question of whether an individual can be a mentor and protégé in the same relationship:

*You've got to be open-minded. You've got to be open to it. I can learn just as much from the kids I supervise as they can learn from me. Even if it is new technology or something that I have no clue about. I still don't know what Tumblr is... whatever... (Bill)*

Despite the jokes, Bill referenced the importance of mutual learning and using strengths to gain new knowledge. It was generalized in four of the six interviews (67%) that protégés are more in tune with technological advances and current events. An interesting piece of data was that all three mentors indicated that they regularly revert back to protégé roles.

*I think I used a mentor during my job search to just figure out if I was on the right track. I wanted someone who wasn't in my day-to-day life or even my week-to-week life to be able to connect with and just rattle off everything that was going on. (James)*

Prior to this portion of the interview, James spoke about his experiences as a mentor. James recently finished graduate school and completed the search for his first full-time role. As a mentor, James still needed other resources for advice and support during his time of professional growth. Hayley spoke of her mentors, who still remain in her life as a part of that role.

*The people who were my mentors... who still are my mentors... I still turn to them for advice. We check in on each other, but we still communicate regularly, and they are still my rocks. (Hayley)*

From this information, the mentors currently reside in both realms of the relationship: Mentor and protégé. All three individuals continue to look to others for support, depending on the type of resources they need at a specific time. Hayley, James, and Bill indicated their constant pursuit of a strong base of information. In order to help others, they have spoken about their need to help themselves.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the five findings following the six interviews. The research question focused around the extent of learning, and this information was presented to highlight this information clearly and concisely. Data was conducted based on individual experiences in mentoring relationships from the perspectives of three protégés and three mentors. Extensive examples were provided to provide context and legitimacy to the research study and the results.

The primary finding focused around the expression of a thorough understanding on the areas and purposes of mentoring, according to Jacobi (1991). With an extensive review of literature, Jacobi (1991) noted three consistent outcomes to mentoring relationships: Providence of support, personal development, and professional development. From the information provided during the interviews, all six participants (100%) indicated an understanding of all three purposes of mentoring. While individuals may not have received all three within a specific relationship, there was an understanding that various mentors can provide various resources at different times.

A second finding was that various themes and characteristics of a successful mentor and protégé emerged from the interviews. All three protégés (100%) and two mentors (67%) stated that successful mentors need to be interested and willing to teach. Another consistent trait was that of honesty. Two protégés (67%) and all three mentors (100%) stated that honesty was one of the most important characteristics of a mentor. There were two traits that were inconsistent

amongst both groups: Caring and experience. Only one protégé (33%) stated that caring was an important quality in a good mentor. All three mentors (100%) stated that a mentor must be caring and compassionate. Zero protégés versus all three mentors (100%) stated that experience was important for mentors. In terms of protégés, there were two emerging characteristics. The protégé must be interested in learning and contribute to the learning process, and the protégé must be open to constructive feedback.

Age became a comparison in the third finding. All three protégés (100%) indicated that mentors needed to be older and more experienced. Only one mentor (33%) stated mentors needed to be older to serve in the capacity. Within the interviews, there was talk about experience and how that played a role in the relationship. Are these two terms used interchangeably?

The fourth finding was that protégés have solely been involved in informal mentoring relationships. All three mentors (100%) have been involved in both formal and informal mentoring relationships. Their accounts talk about the benefits of both types of relationships and what protégés and mentors can gain and provide one another.

Lastly, all six participants (100%) indicated the importance of mutual learning throughout mentoring and the individual relationships. There was no disconnect between the protégés and mentors in this category. This information was used to determine if individuals have an understanding of what it means to progress through mentoring relationships, according to Zachary (2000). With this information, a number of participants indicated the importance of communication in order to effective learning and teaching to take place. All three mentors (100%) also indicated their transition between mentor and protégé roles, even as they serve as primarily a mentor at this point in their careers.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, using the interviews of six participants, how one's understanding of the concepts of mentoring and the mentoring experience are influenced by prior experience in mentoring relationships. Specifically, the researcher hoped to see how the experiences of the participants, through careful reflection, have informed the mentors' and protégés' perceptions on the mutual partnership. The interviews of the mentors and protégés were used to explore their understanding of the concept of mentoring and their level of mentoring development. It was assumed that this information provided structure and framework for future research in the mentoring field.

This research used case study analysis in collecting and understanding the qualitative data collected during the in-depth interviews of protégés and mentors. Participants included three undergraduate student staff members within Housing and Residential Life, serving as protégés, and three graduate student or full-time professional staff within Housing and Residential Life who have held their role for at least two years. These individuals served as mentors for the purpose of this study. Chapter 2 provided a conceptual framework for the study, and the research question was constructed based on the overarching purpose and goal. The following study was based on this research question:



1. How have perceptions of previous mentoring experiences shaped the participants and their learned leadership approaches?

The conceptual framework was organized into four areas that led to the creation of the research question and the presentation of data in Chapter 4. One of the principle observations was that both mentors and protégés seemed to understand the purpose of mentoring, according to Jacobi (1991), despite various levels of mentoring experience. Every participant noted the three purposes and goals of mentoring at some point in their interview. Individuals noted that previous mentors may not have moved a protégé through all three during one relationship, but the participants were able to self-reflect and grow from the experience and the varying level of support provided by these role models.

Through this information, the chapter is based around the analyzed data, personal interpretations, and synthesis of the findings. Following the analysis section, the study will have a brief conclusion and recommendations to better provide mentoring experiences to others and to continue in mentoring research. Analytic categories were established based on the research question and the conceptual framework. The chapter is organized based on the following categories:

1. The perceptions of mentoring and the purposes of mentoring, based on the Jacobi's (1991) review of literature.
2. The perceptions of roles in the mentoring relationship and what it means to be a protégé and mentor.

3. Experiences in mentoring and how these experiences impact the participant's understanding of the relationship and ability to reason.
4. The extent of learning that takes place in and from the mentoring relationship.

Within this chapter, relevant theory will be tied to the findings and analytic categories to provide another level of analysis and to better support the data collected. Through this section, findings will be analyzed to determine if the themes complement or contrast the current literature in mentoring research. While the previous chapter organized the data into a readable narrative and remained objective, the purpose of Chapter 5 is to provide subjective insights into the findings. Within this section, it was the researcher's hope to [a] determine connections between the participants in the study, [b] understand how participants perceive these connections, [c] understand discrepancies in the data and research, [d] provide recommendations for individuals in formal and informal mentoring relationships, and [e] provide recommendations for future research in the mentoring field.

**Analytic Category 1: The perceptions of mentoring and the purposes of mentoring, based on Jacobi's (1991) review of literature.**

One of the purposes of the research question was to get a basic understanding of how protégés and mentors perceive mentoring and the purpose of the experience. Jacobi (1991) outlined, through her review of relevant mentoring literature, that there were three areas in which mentors provide for protégés. These three areas were consistent amongst all studies, despite the different definitions of mentoring and what it means to be a part of this type of relationship. Mentors help provide support to protégés (Jacobi, 1991). Mentoring can take place during a time

of transition, and this support helps to build a solid relationship. Annie, Johnny, Hayley, James, and Bill spoke about the importance of establishing a relationship and noted that mentoring is a relationship between the mentor and protégé.

The second component of Jacobi's work was that mentoring provides for personal growth (Jacobi, 1991). Individuals spoke about becoming better people through the mentoring experience. In some cases, individuals took on the qualities of their mentor as they were able to redefine values.

*When I have huge struggles in life, this is how I have another person involved.  
My mentors have taught me about how to treat other people, how to love other  
people no matter what. For me, mentoring has always taught me to love people.  
(Annie)*

Annie was able to personally grow and develop into the person she wanted to become. This was the kind of person her mentor was. This account was consistent amongst other participants. Individuals adapted their own style and grew according to the type of support and leadership their mentors provided. While this wasn't a question in this study, it would be interesting to ask about the values of the mentor versus the values of the protégé. Having closely aligned values would not be a surprise result.

Lastly, Jacobi (1991) stated that mentors help protégés develop professionally. All three mentors spoke about the importance of networking and developing those professional connections. They attributed their success in the field due to the guidance of their previous role models and mentors.

Surprisingly, every participant in the study spoke about these three areas when talking about the benefits of a mentoring relationship and what previous mentors have provided them. One of my previous assumptions was the distinction in experience level between the mentors and protégés. The protégés were all undergraduate student staff members and were selected due to their limited experiences in mentoring relationships. This assumption was based off of their limited cognitive developmental level, based off of the compilation of theories in Evans et al. (2010). In contrast, the mentors were all graduate student Residence Directors or full-time professionals who have served in their current roles for at least two years. Selection based off of the two year timeframe was intentional, as these individuals were able to better connect themselves to the university and were familiar with student development theory. It was assumed these individuals had more experience as mentors and protégés to provide different perspectives and experience to the study.

This information was a base for the study, in hopes to gain relevant information from protégés and mentors. While there were no discrepancies in understanding the purpose of mentoring between the protégés and mentors, this information indicated that individuals have been provided with successful mentoring experiences. The data also supported the current research in the field.

**Analytic Category 2: The perceptions of roles in a mentoring relationship and what it means to be a protégé and mentor.**

Individuals pick up styles of leadership based on the roles and characteristics of influential figures who helped to shape their lives. Within the study, there were a few characteristics of mentors and protégés that emerged consistently amongst many of the

interviews. According to the protégés and mentors in the study, mentors needed to be willing to teach and help others. Five out of the six participants stated this as an important trait of mentors entering a relationship. This should not come as a surprise. Individuals who are passionate about helping and spreading knowledge are more likely to be successful at what they are doing. This information was consistent with Miller's (2002) compilation of attributes of a strong mentor.

In developing a successful partnership, the mentor needs to earn the respect of their protégé. Their excitement and selfless interest in helping others will allow for an easier transition and will open the doors to communication between the mentor and protégé (Miller, 2002). Rachel spoke about one of her previous mentors and the positive impact of this individual. This was her response when asked about what she learned from her mentoring experiences:

*The more leadership you take on, the more pressure there is from those you are leading. She was big into service and volunteering, so learning how to serve and be selfless when serving... and just serving through love. (Rachel)*

The second consistent characteristic of successful mentors, described by both protégés and mentors in the study, was the idea of being honest. When looking through Miller's (2002) literature on traits of a great mentor, this quality did not come up. Miller (2002) hinted at honesty through sections on enthusiasm and sensitivity. Mentors are more likely to have open communication if they are able to be discrete and build trust in their relationship with their protégé or protégés. With this honesty and openness, mentors and protégés can create goals to help to foster both the protégés and mentors as people and professionals (Miller, 2002). With honest mentors, protégés are more apt to discuss their fears with their mentors and can address any problems and issues they are having (Nora & Crisp, 2007; Schockett & Haring-Hidore,

1985). This information was consistent with the interviews, as both protégés and mentors spoke about the importance of building that connection. The participants also spoke about the importance of honest in providing constructive feedback, on both ends of the relationship.

While these two characteristics were consistent amongst a majority of participants on both sides of the relationship, there were two traits favored by the mentors. The first was the importance of being experienced as a mentor. All three mentors stated that mentors must be experienced in order to help their protégés. None of the protégés spoke about the importance of experience when prompted with the question about important characteristics of a successful mentor.

Miller (2002) did not directly mention the importance of experience in a mentoring relationship. Miller (2002) stated that mentors should be self-aware of their own strengths and limitations in order to provide the best experience for their protégé and themselves. The ideas of self-awareness and experience can be intertwined into one concept, as all three mentors spoke about the importance of being introspective and continuing to learn and serve as protégés. Here is how James describes this concept:

*I think there is a lot of introspection and reflection that can be done by having a mentor. I guess what I've learned is that there is a lot more out there than what I am aware of. (James)*

Even with this loose connection with the ideas of experience and self-awareness in Miller's (2002) study, there is a lot to say about the importance of being experienced in a mentoring relationship. There is a great deal of responsibility in being a mentor. In some extreme cases, mentoring can be utilized to address changes involving social inclusion, individuals going

through drug addictions, or individuals who have experienced a traumatic experience, like sexual assault (Miller, 2002). Without an experienced mentor, the lives of these individuals are likely to be impacted for the worse. It is important for mentors to understand the implications of their relationship and to have a good grasp of personal and professional resources, in case there comes a time when the mentor cannot provide that direct level of support.

The second characteristic inconsistent amongst the protégés and mentors in the study was the idea that mentors should be caring. Overwhelmingly, all of the mentors stated that as an important quality. Only one of three (33%) of the protégés stated that being caring was an important characteristic of mentors. Miller (2002) stated that mentors should be sensitive to their protégés and the information their protégés may provide during the relationship. Mentors must be caring individuals in order to balance providing feedback and guidance with that sense of support. Without a sense of caring, protégés are unlikely to self-disclose personal information (Nora & Crisp, 2007). Jacobi (1991) stated the importance of mentors being able to provide support to their protégés during the relationship. All protégés stated that mentors have provided them support through their experiences. It was interesting to note that the support and sense of caring did not carry over as one of the most important qualities in their mentor.

Mentors are involved to challenge, support, and provide vision to their protégés throughout the relationship (Daloz, 1999). It is possible that the protégés may not fully understand that challenge is a good thing. Johnny was the only protégé to synthesize the importance of sympathy and caring in a relationship. He was the protégé who was the most in-depth with his understanding of self throughout the interview. Johnny understood the importance of challenge and constructive feedback in the relationship. It was noted in his interview that mentoring is a relationship and a process. The process was to develop a protégé into someone who is greater than when they began the experience. He was also the only protégé who made note

that he has served as a mentor in multiple capacities, which could explain the difference in views between the other protégés, who stated that they have only served in the protégé capacity.

Protégés and mentors were also asked about the characteristics that define a successful protégé in the mentoring relationship. There were two common themes amongst both groups of participants. The first trait was the idea that the protégé would be willing to learn and contribute to their learning. Individuals know their learning best, as defined by Kolb in his research on learning styles (Kolb, 1981). Participants can take the information provided by the mentor and utilize it in a way that best suits their own learning. Kolb (1981) characterized the learning styles into stages where an individual absorbs and processes the information. Individuals must master all four stages in order to be effective learners, but there are stages and processes in which individuals make use of over others (Kolb, 1981).

The second characteristic that defined successful protégés was the ability to take constructive feedback. All three mentors and two of the three protégés (67%) identified this as an important trait for individuals to be effective in this role. Individuals can have the best mentors, but it is up to the protégé to take the feedback and make changes for the better. This is part of the reflection phase of the Mentor Learning Cycle, defined by Miller (2002). Individuals should reflect upon their successes and failures after each given project or conversation. The reflection phase is when individuals can make meaning from their experiences (Miller, 2002). This idea of reflection and understanding constructive feedback also transcends into the generalization phase. Individuals begin to think upon and learn from specific experiences (Miller, 2002).

Due to the overwhelming identification of the importance of feedback, it is safe to assume that at least five of the six participants understand the process of mentoring and understand the importance of feedback. Through this feedback, the participants spoke about ways they were able to improve in their given areas and relationships. This is reflective of the



application phase in Miller's (2002) model. Annie stated, "As you enter and exit phases of your life and as you move from one area to another, your mentors kind of change." This is an important part of the mentoring process, and this is where the most effective learning takes place.

**Analytic Category 3: Experiences in mentoring and how these experiences impact the participant's understanding of the relationship and ability to reason.**

Over the course of the interviews, participants began speaking about their experiences in mentoring relationships. In all interviews, the idea of formal versus informal relationships emerged without being prompted. Based on the information provided by the protégés and mentors, all six participants were involved in informal mentoring relationships at one point in their life. These relationships, also known as natural mentoring, are helpful and flexible depending on the needs of the individuals involved (Philip, 2000). One of the more common forms of informal mentoring is through the typical one-on-one relationship, known as classic mentoring (Miller, 2002). Generally, an adult figure influences and shapes the life of someone who is younger (Miller, 2002).

In all protégé cases in the study, the participants referred to having a one-on-one relationship with their mentor. Johnny indicated that he used to serve as a mentor to some of the younger students in wrestling, so his responses were a bit different than Rachel and Annie's. This classic form of mentoring may explain the rationale behind another statistic in the study. Three of three protégés stated that mentoring comes from an older individual helping a younger individual. In many experiences, they spoke about an older figure helping them academically or personally. This could explain why these three individuals spoke of the importance of having an older figure helping them through their development. The protégés were also at least one year younger than

the mentors, and they were all undergraduate students. Cognitively, they may not be as developed as the mentors and may see things differently through Kohlberg's scale of moral development. From the researcher's assessment, the protégés were more dualistic in nature than the mentors (Evans et al., 2010). They saw the guidance of their mentors as the correct guidance. There was not as much introspection and reflection on whether the advice should be placed into context. This would be an interesting future study: Connection between understanding of mentoring relationships and cognitive development of participants.

All of the mentors participated in the natural mentoring relationships and in structured (formal) mentoring relationships. None of the protégés indicated participating in structured mentoring relationships. This additional experience could provide rationale for why the mentors provided additional characteristics of successful mentors in the previous analytic category. These formal relationships are successful, as they allow individuals to sit down and draft goals and expectations for the experience (Miller, 2002). This was consistent with the views of the mentors.

*Whatever they could help with... they bought into who I was or who I could become. And so, I could think of different experiences with a formal mentor, in which he gave me some structured programs to do or he would just start telling stories about where he came from or his background. It was a professional-based mentoring program. (James)*

This example, provided by James, spoke about the idea of contract mentoring, where individuals would draft goals and expectations (Miller, 2002). These relationships tend to focus around a specific aspect in a person's life. In this case, the program helped him professionally.

These structured programs are helpful in holding people accountable for their share of the work in the relationship (Miller, 2002).

In the cases of the three mentors in our study, they have little experience actually mentoring other individuals. In most cases, the mentoring is informal and comes with the responsibilities of their respective positions on campus. Two of the three mentors (67%) have served as mentors in formal mentoring programs to protégés. This formal experience provided them a good structure for developing those relationships and could have been a reason for their successful experience. With each successful and unsuccessful mentoring relationship, individuals get a better idea of who they are as individuals, as mentors, or as protégés. Individuals understand their own strengths and limitations, which are helpful to know prior to entering a relationship.

The limited experiences of the protégés in various forms of mentoring relationships could be a reason that 100% felt that mentors need to be older than the protégés. Only one of three mentors (33%) indicated that a mentor should be older than their protégé or protégés. I say various forms of mentoring, because the protégés and mentors had around the same number of mentoring relationships, according to the information on their demographic forms.

Mentoring is meant to be a developmental process for the protégé and mentor. In the cases above, the protégés linked age and experience, while that is not always the case. Age does not always coincide with experience at the professional setting. Age could be helpful in promoting the reflection process and developing the person in their social development. Professional development comes through experience, and age is not always reflective of standing within an organization.

In the formal mentoring relationships, the mentors spoke about moving through the process and how that felt. Two mentors, Hayley and James, spoke about how the relationship was established, the setting of goals, and then the follow-through. Hayley also touched on the coming

to closure process, which Zachary (2000) noted as an important point in growth. As previously stated in earlier chapters, there are four phases of mentoring, according to Zachary (2000). They are preparing, negotiating, enabling, and coming to closure.

With the informal relationships of the protégés, individuals did not clearly describe going through specific phases during the experience. In all cases, individuals spoke about being enabled and acting upon the things their mentors spoke about. Annie also touched on coming to closure and the importance of some relationships ending when there is a need. None of the protégés indicated going through the preparing or negotiating phases of mentoring. This could be due to the type of relationship. Informal relationships can be rather ill-structured, and the protégés may not have fully talked about what they are hoping to get out of the experience. The mentors may also have been ill-prepared to mentor their protégé and may not have fully understood their role as a mentor.

Based off the information from the mentors, there was a clearer understanding of the structure in a mentoring relationship. This could be due to the fact that these individuals have been through more structured programs. Hayley spoke about each of the steps, as she took on her protégé in the women's mentoring program at the university. Here is an example of how the two came to closure at the end of the experience:

*The last conversation... we sort of met together for the end of the year for an hour and a half lunch. And then three days later, it was her birthday. (Hayley)*

James also spoke about his experience as a protégé in a structured program, which has given him a better understanding of how to serve as a mentor now.

*I would say with a formal mentoring program, there are more guaranteed learning outcomes. There are ideas you can get out of that interaction. Both sides know they are meeting up for a shared goal or to make shared goals. (James)*

When he interacts with students on a regular basis, as their mentor, he knows what types of questions to ask and how to be more intentional to get them to where they need to be personally and professionally. James did not directly attribute these learned outcomes from his time in the formal program, but it can be extrapolated from his previous experiences.

**Analytic Category 4: The extent of learning that takes place in and from the mentoring relationship.**

As mentioned earlier, all six participants (100%) indicated the importance of mutual learning and teaching from a mentoring relationship. This was an unexpected result due to the more limited experiences of the protégés. While all participants saw the mentor as being the primary provider of information and the individual who guides the relationship, participants felt the protégé needed to make an effort to speak about their goals and expectations. They must also complete their fair-share of work in order to grow personally and professionally.

This information is consistent with the research for the enabling phase, defined by Zachary (2000). The most time-consuming and difficult phase due to the large amounts of challenge, support, and vision, the enabling process is defined by action and growth (Daloz, 1999; Zachary, 2000). Daloz (1999) commented that support was the most critical concept in the mentoring relationship. This goes back to the data received from mentors on their characteristics of a successful leader.

Without the mentoring relationship, there is no way for the mentors or protégés to learn and grow from the experience (Daloz, 1999). Communication, trust, and respect help to foster this relationship (Zachary, 2000). A few individuals spoke about the importance of communication as something that was essential to the learning process. Four of the six participants directly mentioned the importance of communication, while the other two hinted at the importance of availability and willingness to participate in a mentoring relationship.

The last connection through the interviews came from the mentors. 100% of the mentors indicated that through this mutual learning, they have utilized their protégés to help them understand and become more competent with technology and in the area of current events. These individuals all stated that they still view themselves as protégés, despite serving in the mentor capacity. This indicates a strong understanding of what it means to be a mentor, in the context of learning. Miller (2002) explained that mentoring is a developmental opportunity for the mentor, in addition to the protégé. This was evident through these conversations.

As mentors indicated their need to better understand technology, it begs the idea that many protégés are part of the millennial generation. These individuals may be more apt to help make advances through their thorough understanding of technology and current events and issues. Millennial students are more connected to the internet, and information has become more available. This would be a great note for future studies.

By better understanding technology and using protégés for this understanding, long-distance mentoring may become more effective in future years. Social media and new methods of communication have sparked interest in long-distance mentoring (Zachary, 2000). While individuals may not be regularly engaged as they are during face-to-face conversations with mentors and protégés, it allows for more time for personal reflection. It would be interesting to

note whether the relationship is hindered, as students become more connected to the internet and other technological resources.

### **Revisiting Assumptions from Chapter 1**

In order to fully connect the research and make it more viable, it is important to revisit the assumptions from Chapter 1. These assumptions were created at the beginning of the study and were based on the literature and prior knowledge of the researcher. The first assumption stated that undergraduate student protégés had a more limited understanding of mentoring research and mentoring relationships due to their lack of experience in relationships. These individuals were still undergoing development in the cognitive, moral, and social realms (Evans et al., 2010).

This results from the study indicated the protégés had a good understanding of the purposes of mentoring. Every protégé acknowledge that mentoring helps individuals on a social level, personal development level, and professional development level (Jacobi, 1991). The protégés in the study also indicated some of the characteristics of a successful mentor, as defined by Miller (2002). This assumption held true in that protégés did not have as much mentoring experience. None of the mentors participated in formal mentoring relationships. This hindered their understanding of the mentoring process (Zachary, 2000), as the protégés did not have an understanding of the preparing or negotiating phases of a relationship.

A second guiding assumption was that graduate students or full-time professionals with two or more years of experience in their particular field are more likely to provide reasonable mentoring and have a better understanding of the mentoring experience than graduate students or full-time professionals with zero or one year of professional experience. There was no way to determine whether the individuals are able to provide reasonable mentoring based on these interviews. From the descriptions, the mentors have more experience mentoring in a variety of

settings, which could lend to better mentoring. The mentors had a better understanding of the phases of a mentoring relationship, as most have been involved in many types of mentoring experiences, personally and professionally.

The third, and final, assumption was that individuals would be interested and motivated to participate in the study and would provide accurate accounts of their experiences. Individuals did sign up to participate, and the study featured three protégés and three mentors. There were a few issues with the selection of participants. Johnny indicated he was a protégé, but during the interview, he spoke mostly about his experiences mentoring others. There were also discrepancies in the number of mentoring relationships in which individuals have been a part. On the demographic form, most individuals marked 3-4 relationships, but in actuality, many of the protégés were only involved in 1-2 relationships. James marked 1-2 relationships, but he has participated in 3-4. The demographic form should be clearer for future research.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

To provide further research in the field of mentoring, the researcher recommends further studies be conducted to develop a greater pool of information and gain a better understanding on how mentoring can affect protégés and mentors a longer term. The following information should be considered in continuing with future studies:

1. The demographic form should be more basic. Rather than ask individuals the number of mentoring relationships in which they have participated, it would be more useful to solely gauge their role. This would be useful for longitudinal studies, which would be a good direction for mentoring research.



2. The researcher should select a larger range between the ages and experience levels of the mentors and protégés. Two years was a significant timeframe, but more beneficial information would be collected if mentors have been in their specific field for at least 5-6 years.
3. A longitudinal study should be conducted in order to observe whether individuals progress through Zachary's (2000) phases of mentoring. It was not possible to fully conclude whether participants had transitioned through those phases. The longitudinal study would allow the researcher to determine where individuals may reside, in terms of phase. This would also help the research and determine the extent of learning from a mentoring relationship over time.
4. Participants should be selected from a formal mentoring program. It was difficult to compare experiences, as the protégés were not a part of a structure relationship. This would streamline the data and make it more viable.
5. Be realistic in the timeframe and in building the relationship. Some of the data may not be as accurate, as this was a single interview. The researcher was not able to develop a relationship with the participants.

### **Researcher Reflections**

*Nothing worth doing is ever easy, and what fun would this have been if it were easy? It's those things we accomplish and achieve after we thought we couldn't that are the most fulfilling. And it's those memories we make while traveling the hard road that we will never forget.*

- Greg Steele (my mentor)

As we come to a close in the study, I want to pause and take some time to thank those who were influential in guiding me to graduate school, through graduate school, and in completing this study. I wanted to first say “thanks” to Greg Steele, one of the first significant mentors in my life. You have shaped who I am today more than you know. I constantly think of how you always taught me to be more reflective and authentic in every part of life. You were the reason I decided to go into student affairs, and it has been one of the best decisions I have made. Thank you for your constant support, encouragement, wisdom, and sense of humor.

I would also like to thank Sharon Stead, my graduate assistant supervisor of two years. With your help, I was able to branch out from Oklahoma State and participate in my life-changing ACUHO-I internship. You were there for me when I needed you most, even if it was at four in the morning. Thank you for being my rock and for encouraging me to be the better version of myself.

Lastly, I would like to thank my research committee for their time and effort in helping me better this study. Through countless hours of work, revisions, and endless cups of coffee, I wanted to let you all know that I appreciate your help. I am grateful for your expertise and support.

### **Summary**

Chapter 5 outlined the data in four analytic categories to streamline the information collected from the interviews. These categories were created based off of the research question and from the works of Jacobi (1991) and Zachary (2000). Expanding upon the data from Chapter 4, Chapter 5 went into depth connecting the literature with the information from the interviews. At the end of the study, it was determined that the mentors experienced greater learning due to their experience in formal mentoring relationships. They were more apt to provide support,

challenge, and vision due to their understanding of the process of mentoring and the purposes of mentoring (Jacobi, 1991; Zachary, 2000).

The protégés still understood the purposes of mentoring, according to Jacobi (1991). These participants were limited in their understanding of the phases of mentoring, according to Zachary (2000). The protégés were never part of formal mentoring programs to contribute to their understanding of the mentoring experience.

In addition to the data analysis, there were recommendations for future research. A longitudinal study would be beneficial to better understand the viability in Zachary's (2000) phases of mentoring. It is also recommended to gather participants from structured mentoring programs, as these individuals may have a better understanding of what it means to be mentored. The data would be more consistent between protégés and mentors. And lastly, the researcher took some time to provide some reflection during their time conducting the research study.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A. Description of the Study, IRB Review, & Email to Participants



## Understanding of Mentoring Study Research Information

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### Concept Origination

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What does mentoring mean to you? Looking at research, there have been numerous definitions in what mentoring means to many people. Following conversations with some of my own mentors, I reflected on what it means to be a mentor and protégé (the person being mentored). I am hoping to add additional research to the limited research in the field.

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### Purpose of Mentors and Protégé Relationships

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The purpose of this study is to determine if experience plays a role in one's understanding of mentoring and the mentoring relationship. Mentors are important, in any field, as they provide their protégés with the opportunity to develop personally and professionally. Mentors have been found to provide professional advice, especially when it comes to career decisions or internship opportunities. On a personal level, mentors help individuals who may be struggling with a major life event or are having trouble connecting to their peers.

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### Expectations

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Scott Busiel will serve as the primary researcher throughout this study. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact Scott at [scott.busiel@okstate.edu](mailto:scott.busiel@okstate.edu). Attached to this email is a consent form with additional information on the specifics of this study. You will later be asked to complete a demographics sheet to better understand your background and experiences in mentoring. Following the completion of these documents, you may be asked to complete a single hour-long interview with Scott. Questions will be geared to help you reflect on your experiences and personal constructions of various terms in mentoring. You will have the opportunity to view the results of the study following the completion.

## Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, April 05, 2012  
IRB Application No ED1266  
Proposal Title: Conceptualizing Mentoring Based on Experience in Mentoring Relationships

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

**Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 4/4/2013**

Principal Investigator(s):

Scott Raymond Busiel	Jesse P. Mendez
100 Iba Hall	312 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078	Stillwater, OK 74078

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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](mailto:beth.mcternan@okstate.edu)).

Sincerely,



Shelia Kennison, Chair  
Institutional Review Board

Dear Oklahoma State Student Leaders, Graduate Students, and Staff:

My name is Scott Busiel, and I am a Master's of Science candidate for the College of Education. You are invited to participate in a research study that explores your personal definition of mentoring and the mentoring relationship, based off of your personal experiences. Your participation in this study requires an interview during which you will be asked questions about your opinions and attitudes relative to your experience in mentoring. The duration of the interview will be approximately 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed; the purpose being to capture an accurate record of your responses and discussion.

Attached to this email is a detailed description of the study, where it originated, and its purpose. Please take a look through the information to determine if you are willing to participate. There is also a consent form that should be completed prior to your participation. I want to stress the importance that your participation in the study is voluntary, and there are no penalties if you refuse to participate. If you are interested, please fill out the consent form, place it in a sealed and unidentifiable envelope, and deliver it to my office in Zink 115. Additional emails will follow, based on your participation.

If you have any questions, please email me at [scott.busiel@okstate.edu](mailto:scott.busiel@okstate.edu). Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Scott Busiel

## Appendix B. Participant Consent Form



# Understanding of Mentoring Study Consent Form

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### Part 1: Research Description

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**Principal Researcher:** Scott Raymond Busiel

**Research Title:** Conceptualizing Mentoring Based on Experiences in Mentoring Relationships

You are invited to participate in a research study that explores your personal definition of mentoring and the mentoring relationship, based off of your personal experiences. Your participation in this study requires an interview during which you will be asked questions about your opinions and attitudes relative to your experiences in mentoring. The duration of the interview will be approximately 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be audio taped and transcribed; the purpose is to capture an accurate record of your responses and discussion. Your name will not be used during the study, and you will be referred to based on your selected pseudonym.

The study will be conducted by the researcher, Scott Raymond Busiel, a master's candidate at Oklahoma State University. The interview will be conducted at a time and location that is suitable with both parties, and the location at Zink 115, the researcher's office.

#### **Risks and Benefits**

This research will contribute to the field of student affairs and in the area of mentoring and advising research. Participation in this study will carry the same risk as the discussion with colleagues. There will be no financial remuneration for participation in this study.

#### **Data Storage to Protect Confidentiality**

Under no circumstances will your name be used as an identifier in the course of this research study or in its publication following. Every effort will be made to ensure that the information provided will be treated as confidential. All data will be coded and securely stored and will be used for professional purposes only.

#### **How the Results will be Used**

This research study is to be submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. The results will be published as a thesis. In addition, information may be used for educational purposes in professional presentation[s] and/or educational publication[s].

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**Part 2: Participant's Rights**

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- I have read and discussed the research description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in this research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has developed becomes available that may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the researcher will provide me with the information.
- Any information derived from the research that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If, at any time, I have questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact Scott Raymond Busiel who will answer my questions. The researcher's phone number is 405-744-1535.
- If, at any time, I have comments or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact Oklahoma State University's Institutional Review Board. The phone number for IRB is 405-744-3377. Alternatively, I can visit 219 Cordell North.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.
- Audio taping is part of the research. Only the principal researcher and the members of the research team will have access to written and taped materials. Please check one:

\_\_\_\_\_ I consent to be audio taped.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do NOT consent to being audio taped.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name [Please Print]: \_\_\_\_\_

**Investigator's Verification of Explanation**

I, Scott Raymond Busiel, certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to \_\_\_\_\_ [participant's name]. [S]/He has the opportunity to discuss it with me in detail. I have answered all his/her questions and [s]/he provided the affirmative agreement to participate in this research.

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_



## **Appendix C. Sample Interview Schedule Based on Research Questions**

### **Interview Schedule**

#### **How have previous mentoring experiences shaped the participants and their learned leadership approaches?**

1. Think back to prior experiences in curricular and co-curricular settings. How have individuals served in the mentor capacity?
2. What previous experience do you have in mentoring relationships?
3. What have you learned from the experience?
4. What processes made these relationships successful?
5. What characteristics made these individuals mentors, from your perspective?
6. What are distinct roles that a mentor must play in a mentoring relationship?
7. What are distinct roles that a protégé must play in the mentoring relationship?
8. How would you define mentoring and its purpose?
9. What is a mentor?
10. What characteristics define a successful mentor?
11. What characteristics define a successful protégé?
12. How would your experience differ in a mentor versus protégé relationship?
13. What are some shared characteristics and responsibilities of a mentor and protégé?
14. What are ways in which you can be a mentor and protégé in the same relationship?

Appendix D. Demographic Data Sheet



# Understanding of Mentoring Study

## Demographic Data Sheet

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Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study. Please complete the survey below and return it to Scott Raymond Busiel prior to the first interview. Note that the information collected in this questionnaire is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study.

1. My sex is: \_\_\_\_\_ Female    \_\_\_\_\_ Male    \_\_\_\_\_ Transgender    \_\_\_\_\_ Other

2. My age is: \_\_\_\_\_ Under 18    \_\_\_\_\_ 18 – 19    \_\_\_\_\_ 20 – 22    \_\_\_\_\_ 23 – 25  
\_\_\_\_\_ 26 – 30    \_\_\_\_\_ 31 – 35    \_\_\_\_\_ 36 – 40    \_\_\_\_\_ 40 +

3. My race/ethnicity is:

\_\_\_\_\_ African American

\_\_\_\_\_ Asian/Pacific Islander

\_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic/Latino[a]

\_\_\_\_\_ Native American

\_\_\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_\_\_ Other [Please Specify]: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Overall Number of mentoring experiences:    \_\_\_ 0    \_\_\_ 1 – 2    \_\_\_ 3 – 4    \_\_\_ 5+

5. Primary role in current mentoring relationships: \_\_\_\_\_ Protégé    \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor

6. Highest degree earned: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Your personal definition of mentoring: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix E. Sample Conceptual Framework and Components for Analysis**

### **Perceptions of Mentoring (Based on Jacobi (1991))**

- Strong understanding – 3 components of relationship
- Good understanding – 2 components of relationship
- Minor understanding – 1 component of relationship
- No understanding – 0 components of relationship

### **Perceptions of Mentor and Protégé**

- Strong understanding
- Good understanding
- No understanding

### **Experiences in Mentoring Relationships**

- Significant experience – 5 or more relationships
- Moderate experience – 3-4 relationships
- Minor experience – 1-2 relationships
- No experience – 0 relationships

### **Extent of Learning (Based on Zachary(2000))**

- Dialogue from previous experiences
- Understanding of the mutual learning process
- Utilization of the four phases (preparing, negotiating, enabling, coming to closure)
- Willingness to teach others

Table 1

*Data Summary Table*

	<b>Protégé Role</b>	<b>Mentor Role</b>	<b>Jacobi's Three Purposes of Mentors</b>	<b>Mentors Must Be Older</b>	<b>Involved in Formal Program</b>	<b>Involved in Informal Program</b>	<b>Learning is Mutual Process</b>	<b>Protégé Helps with Tech.*</b>
<b>Rachel</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	---
<b>Annie</b>	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	---
<b>Johnny</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	---
<b>Hayley</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>James</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Bill</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>N = 6</b>	<b>6/6 = 100%</b>	<b>4/6 = 67%</b>	<b>6/6 = 100%</b>	<b>4/6 = 67%</b>	<b>3/6 = 50%</b>	<b>6/6 = 100%</b>	<b>6/6 = 100%</b>	<b>3/3 = 100%</b>

*Note:* \*Tech. stands for technology

Table 2

*Table of Perceived Mentor and Protégé Characteristics*

	<b>Mentors Must Help &amp; Teach</b>	<b>Mentors Must Be Honest</b>	<b>Mentors Must Have Experience</b>	<b>Mentors Must Be Caring</b>	<b>Protégé Must Actively Learn</b>	<b>Protégé Must Accept Criticism</b>
<b>Rachel</b>	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
<b>Annie</b>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Johnny</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Hayley</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>James</b>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Bill</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
<b>N = 6</b>	<b>5/6 = 83%</b>	<b>5/6 = 83%</b>	<b>3/6 = 50%</b>	<b>4/6 = 67%</b>	<b>5/6 = 83%</b>	<b>4/6 = 67%</b>

*Note:* “Yes” indicates that the characteristic was brought up in discussion. “No” simply means that it was not described during the interview.

VITA

Scott Raymond Busiel

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: CONCEPTUALIZING MENTORING BASED ON EXPERIENCE IN  
MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Major Field: Educational Leadership, College Student Development

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational Leadership at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in August 2012.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, Wilmington, North Carolina in May 2009.

Experience:

Residence Director, Housing & Residential Life, Oklahoma State University,  
July 2009 – Present

Intern for Residential Learning Initiatives, University Housing, University of  
South Carolina, May 2011 – July 2011

Professional Memberships:

American College and Personnel Association (ACPA), July 2009 – Present

Association of College and University Housing Officers – International,  
(ACUHO-I), July 2009 – Present

Name: Scott Busiel

Date of Degree: July 2012

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: CONCEPTUALIZING MENTORING BASED ON EXPERIENCE IN  
MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Pages in Study: 136

Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Educational Leadership, College Student Development

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore, using the interviews of six participants, whether one's understanding of the concepts of mentoring and the mentoring experience are influenced by prior experience in mentoring relationships. The interviews of the mentors and protégés were used to explore and better understand their level of development through significant relationships. This research was also conducted to add further research and provide context for future research in mentoring literature. In order to obtain this information, three undergraduate students who worked in Housing and Residential Life and three graduate students/professional staff members within Housing and Residential Life were purposefully selected to participate in the study based on their willingness to complete the consent form and upon their completion of a demographic information form. A 60-minute, semi-structure interview took place to help the researcher better understand the following question: How have perceptions of previous mentoring experiences shaped the participants and their learned leadership approaches?

Findings and Conclusions: Following the interviews, the data was analyzed around Jacobi's (1991) literature on outcomes of mentoring experiences. Through this, a few themes emerged: All participants displayed a thorough understanding of the three components to mentoring relationships, various characteristics (some consistent amongst the mentors and protégés, some disparate) emerged on what it meant to be a successful mentor and protégé, the age of the mentor became a point of comparison as a majority of protégés clarified that a mentor must be older, none of the protégés participated in a formal mentoring relationship while all mentors have been a part of this experience, and all participants indicated the importance of mutual learning. From this information, the researcher created recommendations for future studies. For one, a longitudinal study would be helpful in measuring learning through mentoring relationships and participants should be collected from formal programs. This would be able to effectively gauge Zachary's (2000) phases of mentoring and determine accuracy.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Jesse Mendez

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