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Creating Experiences that Matter: A Qualitative Study Exploring Honors Program Peer Mentoring and Self-Authorship Development

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Creating Experiences that Matter: A Qualitative Study Exploring Honors Program Peer

Mentoring and Self-Authorship Development

by

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Creating Experiences that Matter: A Qualitative Study Exploring Honors Program Peer

Mentoring and Self-Authorship Development

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The purpose of this case study was to explore the role that peer mentoring in a university honors program plays in self-authorship development for the student mentors at Midwestern University. Self-authorship was identified through participant responses identified in the three actions grounded in Baxter Magolda's (2001) Learning Partnerships Model: (a) validate students as knowers, (b) situate learning in students' experiences, and (c) define learning as mutually constructed meaning.

Research on student, peer-to-peer mentor relationships is often focused on the mentee rather than the mentor, so the goal of this research was to look further into the role and experiences of the student mentor and how those factors may impact self-authorship development. Another important factor is the research on interaction with peers. As identified in Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), "studies indicate consistently that students' interactions with their peers, net of other relevant factors, promote positive academic and intellectual self-concepts and self-confidence" (p. 265). Peer mentoring could be considered that key peer-to-peer interaction.

In order to identify major trends surrounding this topic, literature surrounding self-authorship, peer mentoring and honors programs will be discussed. Context will also

be explained, describing Midwestern University's (MU) honors program purpose and

structure.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

Marcia B. Baxter Magolda stated, "college education is intended to help students prepare for success and leadership roles in society" (Baxter Magolda, 2005, p. 93). Those individuals and activities that students choose to surround themselves with throughout their collegiate career are vital to success in societal roles after graduation. Students are put at a crossroads between what involvement would be most beneficial for their future (professional school, future jobs) and what involvement would be enjoyable. How can college students ensure that their student involvement in college is meaningful to their future goals and self-authorship? What are the activities in the college environment that propel personal development that will be beneficial in the future?

This qualitative research considered a population of selected students that were current peer mentors in the Midwestern University (MU) Honors Program Peer Mentoring Program. The study sought to examine how the program promoted self-authorship development in their first year of being a mentor. Specifically, this study considered the reasons the student became a peer mentor, the relationships formed in the program, and the way the mentor made decisions in leading the group of mentees. Baxter Magolda's Self-Authorship Theory is discussed to reveal the components of the peer mentoring experience that might encourage self-authorship development. Honors program and peer mentoring program research were used to further create the context for this case study.

"Successful journeys, even short ones, require good company" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. xv). One way of exploring the impact of involvement in peer mentoring is through self-authorship. In short, self-authorship is "a holistic meaning—making capacity" that is characterized by internally dictating one's beliefs and values instead of depending on external values and figures (Boes, Baxter Magolda, & Buckley, 2010, p. 4). Pizzolato (2006) defined self-authorship as:

> a relatively enduring way of understanding and orienting oneself toward provocative and uncomfortable disequilibrating situations in which the person recognizes a) the contextual nature of knowledge and b) balances this understanding with the development of his or her own internally defined goals and sense of self. (p. 32)

Kegan described the theory as an internal identity that is no longer authored by them but that identity authors them (Kegan, 1994, p. 185). The way a student makes meaning of their experiences is related to collegiate experiences. "Students' ways of knowing affect the meaning they make of co-curricular experiences: relationships with roommates and friends, participation in student organizations and activities, and the overall student culture on campus" (Baxter Magolda, 1992, p. 297). Is peer mentoring a meaning making activity for the student mentors that propels self-authorship?

Honors Program Peer Mentoring Program

Peer mentoring in the honors program at MU is structured so that all first-year honors students have a peer mentor assigned to them during the first 8 weeks they are on campus. Participation in the program is required for all first-year honors students. For the approximately 500 new honors students admitted each year, 32 peer mentors are responsible for meeting with groups of 10-12 of those students. The students meet with their peer mentor and mentor group once a week for 8 weeks total. Each week has a

prescribed lesson plan and theme; for example, one week discusses registration for classes and one week discusses traditions on campus. To prepare the student peer mentors, all student peer mentors complete a training process before beginning working with their mentees. The trainings were three monthly, hour-long workshops where the peer mentor leaders and director of the program shared goals, expectations, and ideas.

Students who are peer mentors in the program go through an interview process and are carefully chosen based on their individual skill sets. For example, a strong candidate to be a peer mentor in the program would have eminent communication skills and relational qualities. Peer mentoring was targeted by the researcher as a potential college activity to propel self-authorship development based on three principles identified by Marcia Baxter Magolda (2001): "validating learners' capacity to know," "situating learning in learners' experience," and "mutually constructing meaning" (p. xxi).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the role that peer mentoring in a university honors program plays in self-authorship development for the student mentors at Midwestern University. Self-authorship was identified through participant responses identified in the three actions grounded in Baxter Magolda's (2001) Learning Partnerships Model: (a) validate students as knowers, (b) situate learning in students' experiences, and (c) define learning as mutually constructed meaning.

Research Questions

A grand tour question and three sub-questions guided the study. The grand tour question studied was: Do peer mentors in the university honors program at Midwestern University experience self-authorship? If so, how is the experience described?

1. How do student mentors make meaning of their peer mentoring experience?

2. What elements of self-authorship is the student mentor exhibiting?

3. How can a student affairs practitioner enhance peer mentoring to promote self-authorship and encourage meaningful student mentor involvement?

Research Design

Eight participants were interviewed at Midwestern University to describe their individual experiences as a first-year peer mentor in the fall of 2011. A qualitative, case study approach was chosen because the study was looking at constructed meaning within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007, p. 73; Merriam, 2009, p. 13). Student mentor participants were recruited through an email sent to all first year peer mentors. After a low response rate, potential participants were also contacted via telephone. After gathering the eight volunteers, each participant signed an informed consent form, consenting to participate in the study and to be audio recorded.   The researcher completed the interviews on campus in the university honors program office. After recorded interviews were finished, the researcher and an outside transcriptionist converted the recordings into transcriptions. Data were analyzed based on the responses provided by the participants and the descriptions of their individual, peer mentoring experiences. Themes were developed through analysis and help describe the findings in the study. Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship was used to further analyze the findings of the study in relationship to the Learning Partnerships Model, a model of practice that helps educators intentionally promote and foster self-authorship development (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 187).

Definition of Terms

Peer Mentor—A first-time mentor in the program that is of sophomore, junior, or senior class standing. A peer mentor is in charge of leading a group of 10-12 freshmen honors students in weekly group meetings over an 8-week period. Each week has a different topic to discuss; for example, one week discusses how to register for classes. In a broader definition, peer mentors are defined as "colleagues who share problems, strategies, professional and personal information, friendship, and support" (Welsh, 2004, p. 33). Peer mentors and peer educators are both terms used interchangeably throughout the research.

Peer Mentee—A first-year honors program student that is a part of a peer mentor group.

Peer Mentor Leader—An honors program student that serves as a liaison between the peer mentors and the university honors program office.

Self-Authorship—"a holistic meaning—making capacity" that is characterized by internally dictating one's beliefs and values instead of depending on external values and figures (Boes et al., 2010, p. 4).

University Honors Program—"the total means by which a college or university seeks to meet the educational needs of its ablest and most highly motivated students" (Austin, 1986, p. 5).

Peer Mentoring Program—A program at Midwestern University that is aimed to aid in transitioning new honors students into collegiate life and requirements as an honors student. Kram and Higgins (2008) defined peer mentoring programs as a "group

structure of a small diverse group of composed peers that create an environment and process of mutual trust" (p. 1).

Significance

The purpose of this case study was to explore the role that peer mentoring in a university honors program plays in self-authorship development for the student mentors at a large research Midwestern University. The Learning Partnerships Model "holds substantial promise for transforming higher education to promote self-authorship during college" (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. 61). Baxter Magolda challenged researchers in her scholarly works to study self-authorship with the Learning Partnerships Model across paradigms and in different contexts (p. 89). Previous qualitative research has been done longitudinally and has mainly focused on a White, middle-class population. In fact, almost all of Baxter Magolda's work was based on privileged individuals who were all undergraduates at Miami University of Ohio (Evans et al., 2010, p. 193). After researching the literature, qualitative work on self-authorship has not been conducted with honors students in a peer mentoring program setting. To study another context in which self-authorship can develop, this qualitative case study will provide more information on the potential of peer mentoring programs promoting self-authorship development in a higher education setting.

Delimitations

Unavoidably, some considerable delimitations existed in this study. Delimitations limit the scope of the study based on demographic characteristics of participants (McMillan, 2008, p. 112). The study was only conducted at one large research Midwestern University and in one Honors Program. Eight students participated on a

volunteer basis in the study. Participants only had to have one characteristic to be considered to participate in the study, which was to be a first-time peer mentor in the honors program. Fifty-five students were identified as fitting those characteristics and eight stepped forward as volunteers.

Limitations

Limitations in a qualitative case study are threefold: sometimes, the specific phenomenon being studied is described "rather than predicting future behavior," the study is limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator, and "assessing the effectiveness designed to promote self-authorship is challenging" (Merriam, 2009, pp. 50-51; Pizzolato, 2006, p. 34). This qualitative case study has significant limitations to consider. The honors program peer mentoring program is designed to meet the needs of the honors students at the large Midwestern University, resulting in a difficulty replicating this study at other institutions. Every honors program differs from institution to institution and not all honors programs have a peer mentoring program in place for new honors students. In addition, purposeful and convenient sampling techniques were employed in this study. Consequently, the experiences of the eight peer mentor participants who volunteered for the study may not be the experiences of all first-time peer mentors. These participants represented males and females equally, but the sample was not diverse demographically. Another limitation in this study was time. Additional time would have provided the researcher with the opportunity to interview more participants until saturation was achieved. Finally, Pizzolato (2006) mentioned that "without consistent literature to specify the types of practices consistent with the LPM in

non-classroom settings, implementing and assessing the effectiveness of practices designed to promote self-authorship is challenging" (p. 34).

Assumptions

Through past experiences with the program, the researcher approached this study assuming the student peer mentors were able to develop self-authorship through their mentoring experiences. In addition, the researcher assumed that working with the honors student population on campus would pose some challenges. For example, a higher ability student may try and answer the interview questions by the giving the answer the researcher wants and not necessarily the right answer as it applies to his or her situation.

Conclusion

This study observed the development of self-authorship of student mentors through the roles and responsibilities they had in an honors program peer mentoring program. The review of literature pertaining to this issue is described in Chapter 2 and goes into more detail on Marcia Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship, peer mentoring, and the purpose of honors programs. Marcia Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship was used as the theoretical framework for this study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the role that peer mentoring in a university honors program plays in self-authorship development for the student mentors at Midwestern University. Self-authorship was identified through participant responses identified in the three actions grounded in Baxter Magolda's (2001) Learning Partnerships Model: (a) validate students as knowers, (b) situate learning in students' experiences, and (c) define learning as mutually constructed meaning.

Introduction

The purpose of the literature review was to build a strong foundation of information on the Theory of Self-Authorship in higher education and to determine its influence in studying self-authorship development in peer mentoring programs. In order to identify major trends surrounding this topic, finding research and literature surrounding self-authorship, peer mentoring and honors programs will be discussed. Context will also be explained by describing Midwestern University's honors program purpose and structure.

The literature was found through books and online databases of peer-reviewed journals. The main focus of the research was on higher education. The following search terms were used when searching for peer-reviewed journal articles: "self-authorship," "Marcia Baxter Magolda," "peer mentor," "peer coaching," "peer teaching," "honors curriculum," and "honors programs." Of course, the review does not entirely exhaust the

literature on the aforementioned subjects; however, a foundation for the study was established.

The first section of the literature review describes the evolution of self-authorship. When applying the theory of self-authorship into practice the conditions that foster the development of self-authorship are as important as the concept itself (Evans et al., 2010, p. 187). Marcia Baxter Magolda (2001), the theorist who developed the idea of self-authorship, stated that "environments that were most effective in promoting self-authorship challenged dependence on authority" (p. xx). Arguably, an honors program environment may not be the type of environment that challenges the dependence on authority; however, acting as a peer mentor within the honors program creates intentional circumstances in which the student may need to improvise and make sound judgments without the help of authority. "Personal characteristics and environmental context both mediate the evolution of self-authorship" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 273). A peer mentoring program may be an example of a program that will fulfill that purpose.

Self-Authorship

Self-authorship is a concept that was originally developed by Robert Kegan (1994) and has been refined through research since its creation (Baxter Magolda, 1999, p. 9). The concept of self-authorship falls under the category of theories titled constructive-developmental, which mean that these theories focus on "the growth transformation of ways people construct meaning" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 177). In fact, the theory that Marcia Baxter Magolda builds upon for the definition of self-authorship is Kegan's Evolution of Conscious theory and her own Epistemological Reflection Model (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 15; Kegan, 1994, p. 7).

Kegan's theory, now referred to as stages of the mind, "saw the process of development as an effort to resolve the tension between a desire for differentiation and an equally powerful desire to be immersed in one's surroundings" (Kegan, 1994, p. 8). As a result of that observation, he created orders or stages of the mind, which describe the way people construct meaning regarding their life experiences (Evans et al., 2010, p. 177). These orders were created on research with adults specifically and have been referred to as "stages of development" in 1982, "orders of consciousness" in 1994 and "forms of mind" in 2000 (p. 177). Kegan (1994) changed from stages to orders to forms as a result of theory maturation over the years of the theory's existence (p. 7). The orders are listed from 0-5 below.

Order 0: This is the order where Kegan (1982) placed infants because they are "living in an objectless world" (p. 78). This is the time before infants begin to realize that objects outside of themselves exist (p. 78).

Order 1: This is typically a stage of mind that occurs in children between 1-2 years of age (Kegan, 1982, p. 29). This is identified because the child realizes they have control over their reflexes (p. 29).

Order 2: This is considered the "instrumental mind" stage in which the person is able to identify things as durable categories (Kegan, 1994, p. 22). This enables an individual to create classifications of objects, people, or ideas with certain characteristics (Evans et al., 2010, p. 179).

Order 3: The "socialized mind" stage is identified by the person being able to think across the categories. In other words, this is the ability to connect objects, people and ideas, if related (Kegan, 1994, p. 22).

Order 4: This order is known as the "self-authoring mind" and occurs when a

person is able to both relate and construct across categories (Kegan, 1994,

p. 22). This is where Marcia Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship

focuses. Individuals "have the capacity to take responsibility for and

ownership of their internal authority" and are able to establish their own

values and ideologies (p. 179). Kegan stated that through his research

they discovered that people rarely move beyond the fourth order, and if

they do, it is never before their forties (Kegan, 1994, p. 352).

Order 5: those participants that were studied by Kegan infrequently reach Order

5. This order is where individuals see beyond themselves, others, and see

how their personal system could connect to another system, otherwise

referred to as trans-system (Kegan, 1994, p. 315).

Self-authorship is also broken down into dimensions by Baxter Magolda,

stemming from the natural dimensions that formed from the stories her participants

involved in the longitudinal study described (2001, p. 15). These dimensions emerged

from the above mentioned studies and are described as the following:

Epistemological: "The evolution of assumptions about the nature, limits and

certainty of knowledge" (p. 15).

Interpersonal: "The evolution of how one perceives and constructs one's

relationships with others" (p. 15)

Intrapersonal: "The evolution of how one thinks about one's sense of self and

identity" (p. 15).

> Tracing their epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal journey through their twenties offers insight into how contemporary society- higher education, work places within college contexts, and community within the college context- can be shaped to steward this crucial transformation (referring to the self-authorship transformation). (p. 26)

Thus, understanding these three dimensions is critical in assisting someone's journey to self-authorship.

Baxter Magolda (1992) was particularly interested into the epistemological dimension and cognitive development and conducted a study with 80 college students over their years spent in college (p. 3). The interviews with the 80 participants were conducted annually and focused "on their assumptions about the nature of knowledge; the role of the learner, instructor, peers, and evaluation in learning; and the nature of decision-making" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 26). The result of the study was the *Epistemological Reflection Model (EPM): Four Ways of Knowing*, which pinpointed absolute, transitional, independent, and contextual as the four ways of knowing (p. 27). This research revealed that the longitudinal participants were "at the threshold of self-authorship at the end of college" and motivated Baxter Magolda to continue interviewing some of the participants after college to clearly identify the phases of self-authorship in a lifetime (p. 36).

The epistemological reflection model (EPM) revealed a "context-bound" personal epistemology (Baxter Magolda, 2004a, p. 31). In other words, when an individual takes in a new experience, they interpret what has happened, analyze what happened based on their current perspective, and form conclusions about what their experience means (p. 31). In the fourth way of knowing in the model, contextual, Baxter Magolda's (2002) research suggests that individuals hit a crossroads phase where individuals "recognize

that they need to shift from external to internal authority but are unsure how to do so and afraid of the costs involved" (p. 4). The dissatisfaction from previous decisions made by external concepts result in individuals becoming the author of their own life and taking "responsibility for one's belief's, identity, and relationships" (Baxter Magolda, 2002, p. 4; Baxter Magolda, 2004a, p. 40).

Derived from Kegan's work and specifically the fourth order of consciousness titled the "self-authoring mind" and her study and creation of the EPM, Marcia Baxter Magolda (2001) identified four phases in the journey towards self-authorship. These phases were refined and further examined by multiple studies completed by Baxter Magolda in the 1990's. The first study looked at aspects of adult life and how 17 men and 22 women met the demands of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143). Through conducting informal interviews, Baxter Magolda identified areas in which self-authorship can be practiced while in college in order for students to handle adult life more confidently (p. 153). A similar study was conducted by Baxter Magolda (1999) but focused more on the internal identity development and higher education's role in propelling the changes in students (p. 629). That study suggested that "offering students active partnership in the college environment would assist in the development of internal identities" (p. 643). The phases are further explained in the next section.

Phases of Self-Authorship

After those various studies were completed, Baxter Magolda (2001) identified four phases in the journey towards self-authorship (p. 40). The evolution of self-authorship is mediated by personal characteristics and environmental context (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 273). For example, a student could move from phase to phase based

on a time in their life where self-authorship is demanded, which are often situations that students face in college activities and decisions (p. 273).

      Phase 1: Following Formulas: Young adults follow the plans laid out for them by external authorities in this phase. These plans can include what they should think and how they should accomplish work (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 40).

      Phase 2: Crossroads: This phase describes when the young adult "questions plans and sees the need for their own vision (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 40). Baxter Magolda (2001) determined that this happened most frequently in career settings (p. 50).

      Phase 3: Becoming the Author of One's Life: This phase is considered to be most similar to Kegan's (1994) fourth state of mind (Evans et al., 2010, p. 186). The main characteristics of this phase are the ability to choose one's beliefs and stand up for them in the face of conflicting external viewpoints (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 140).

      Phase 4: Internal Foundation: Characterized by young adults who are "grounded in their internal belief system, coherent sense of self, and in the mutuality," this is the fourth and final phase (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 40). Baxter Magolda (2001) defined the belief system as "solidified and comprehensive" (p. 155).

While self-authorship development has been identified as a benefit for students in college, "substantial evidence suggests that self-authorship is uncommon during college" (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. xxiii). This is a direct result of traditional aged college

students relying heavily on external authorities for "their beliefs and values" (p. xxiii).

Young adults may recognize the need to develop their own identities and activities and

situations in the college environment can begin that process (p. xxiii).

Elements of the self-authorship theory were identified in a study completed by

Baxter Magolda (2008). These three elements enriched the concept of self-authorship

further and guide practitioners to more easily apply the theory in everyday work (Baxter

Magolda, 2008, p. 269). The three interrelated elements, trusting the internal voice,

building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments, emerged from a

longitudinal study that interviewed 30 participants over the course of 21 years (p. 272).

These elements were observed in particular patterns, leading to the notion that "personal

characteristics and environmental context both mediate the evolution of self-authorship"

(p. 273). Implications for practice from this study were identified as a challenge to

educators to help students cultivate their internal voices by reducing the student's

external noise, which can take such forms as peer, family, or society (p. 282). In

addition, this study revealed that self-authorship does not happen in a linear trajectory,

but in more of a cyclical nature (p. 281). This study revealed the complexity of self-

authorship development and the power of personal characteristics in developing a self-

authored life (p. 282). For example, gender, sexual orientation, faith, or race can all have

an effect on the experiences a student seeks in college and life, resulting in a direct effect

on their self-authorship development.

Application of self-authorship theory. Since the creation of the theory, many

scholars have studied how the theory can be applied in day-to-day practice. Baxter

Magolda began this idea through her work by creating the learning partnerships model

(LPM) for self-authorship development. The LPM is a "blending of guidance and enabling responsibility to promote self-authorship" (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. xviii). Learning in this model is "a complex process in which learners bring their own perspectives to bear on deciding what to believe and simultaneously share responsibility with others to construct knowledge" (p. xvii). "The LPM helps learners meet the challenge by validating their ability to learn, situating learning in learners' experience, and defining learning as a collaborative exchange of perspectives" (p. xviii). Baxter Magolda stated that "environments that were most effective in promoting self-authorship challenged dependence on authority" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. xx). Through the development of the LPM, Baxter Magolda concluded that educational practice that encourages self-authorship development is based on three principles: (a) "validating learners' capacity to know, (b) "situating learning in learners' experience," and (c) "mutually constructing meaning" (p. xxi). This model has now been applied to multiple educational and student affairs settings.

One of the student affairs applications of the learning partnerships model was in a residence hall environment by Piper (1997). Piper (1997) recognized that the residential housing environment was not a positive cooperative (p. 22). In fact, this particular institution was really struggling to create a sense of community and shared responsibility among all students in residence halls. To combat this issue, Piper (1997) and staff implemented the Community Standards Model, which is a model that applies directly to the Baxter Magolda's learning partnerships model (p. 24). The Community Standards model is a list of standards focused on the "development and learning of residents in the context creating a healthy community" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 292). After applying

the main components of the model, the housing staff began changing their processes.

One dramatic change came in the selection of resident assistants. "We started selecting

RAs who demonstrate attributes such as self-awareness, critical thinking, openness, and

ability to listen- rather than more traditional traits such as assertiveness, confrontation

skills and programming ability" (p. 24).

Pizzolato also worked to apply the learning partnership model into practice, but

decided to focus on academic advising. Pizzolato (2006) conducted a study that

determined that students who worked with advisors, who encouraged reflection in goal

setting and intentional planning and discussed with students their nonacademic life

experiences, were more likely to develop abilities and perspectives associated with self-

authorship (p. 32). Pizzolato investigated this area by reviewing 132 student narratives

that described thoughts on advising and the selection of academic majors (Pizzolato,

2006, p. 32). The result of the study was the creation of the recommended advising

practices for academic advisors to follow based on the learning partnerships model (p.

43).

> The type of advising promoted as a result of this study is designed not only to
> help the student make immediate decision of a major, but it will help them
> develop the skills necessary for solving problems and making purposeful
> decisions in the future. (p. 44)

Another application of the learning partnerships model is the creation of a model

titled "Engaged Learning University," which was developed by Hodge, Baxter Magolda,

and Haynes (2009) and was centered on the method in which students are educated (p.

20). The three-tiered framework is modeled after the learning partnerships model and is

articulated to the educators at the Miami University Ohio to encourage them to design

curriculum and classroom environments that promote self-authorship (p. 20). The three tiers are:

Tier 1: "validating learners' capacity to know"

Tier 2: "situating learning in learners' experience"

Tier 3: "mutually constructing meaning" (pp. 20-22)

Different experiences and learning communities were studied in relation to the three-tiered framework. For example, Tier 2 recommended the learning experience include "authentic methods, approaches, and skills of scholarship or leadership with others (p. 21). The movement towards self-authorship occurred "when the internal voice overtook external influences" (p. 21). Overall, the study identified a range of activities for every tier so staff and faculty could apply the concepts into practice.

Recent developments in self-authorship. One of the most recent self-authorship developments is in the way self-authorship is researched. Pizzolato (2007) identified the need to create a quantitative instrument to measure self-authorship, which is referred to as the Self-Authorship Survey (SAS) (p. 33). The main purpose behind developing the SAS was in order to assess student development and potentially use the measure in certain program evaluations (p. 33). This quantitative measure is accompanied with a second part survey titled the Experience Survey, which asks the students to write about an important decision they have made (p. 36). Prompted questions are in the experience survey in order to make the response thorough.

This next study used a mixed methods approach to create a developmental curriculum designed to promote self-authorship for student affairs practitioners to use (King, Baxter Magolda, Barber, Brown, & Lindsay, 2009, p. 108). The researchers used

a sample of 600 students at multiple institutions to complete the quantitative portion of the study and then 174 students were selected from the first pool of participants to be interviewed (p. 109). The study focused on developmental outcomes and how different experiences and meaning making orientations can encourage student engagement (p. 108). The meaning making orientations considered were labeled as external, mixed, and internal (p. 112). A direct result of this study was a chart for practitioners to use when considering effective student experiences (p. 116). A large gap in this study was the participants sampled. Eighty percent of the sample identified as white (p. 109).

Like the King et al. (2009) study mentioned above, a major limitation in much (Baxter Magolda, 1998, 1999, 2001; King et al., 2009) of Baxter Magolda's work is that the sample populations were primarily made up of Caucasian respondents. In fact, almost all of Baxter Magolda's work was based on privileged individuals who were all undergraduates at Miami University (Evans et al., 2010, p. 193). Pizzolato has been a primary scholar in investigating self-authorship in other populations. One of her studies focused on high-risk students and how self-authorship was applied to their lives. She defined high-risk as personal characteristics that place the student in "a population (e.g., first-generation students or students with low socio-economic status) without a long or necessarily successful history in higher education" (Pizzolato, 2003, pp. 798-799). She used an interview data collection method to talk to 35 high-risk students and identify: "(a) To what degree do high-risk college students possess self-authoring ways of knowing? and (b) What types of experiences are associated with development of self-authoring ways of knowing?" (p. 797). Her findings were stunning in that students with lower levels of privilege appear to have developed self-authoring ways of knowing prior to

college enrollment, compared to other findings where students are in the first phase of self-authorship their first year of college (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 41; Pizzolato, 2003, p. 797). A large need for research still exists on self-authorship development in other student populations.

Another recent study conducted by Torres and Hernandez (2007) focused on Latino college students on the influence of ethnic identity on self-authorship (p. 559). Findings indicated that "although Latino/a college students display many of the characteristics described in Baxter Magolda's (2001) study, they have distinct issues resulting from their Latino/a identity, culture, and experiences that are not as clearly highlighted in that research" (p. 571). Culture and ethnic identity were two characteristics that Baxter Magolda's (2001) study lacked. This longitudinal study aimed at including other student populations in self-authorship research.

In addition to more student populations, other research methods could also be used to study self-authorship. Baxter Magolda's work is based on mainly longitudinal studies, so integrating other research techniques would perhaps add more to the body of research. More quantitative studies would be a strong addition to the body of research because many of the self-authorship studies are qualitative.

Mentoring and Peer Mentoring

Gardiner, Enomoto, and Grogan (2000) define mentoring as a relationship, both active and intentional, and is focused on the need of the protégé (p. 53). Oftentimes the purpose of a mentoring relationship is to help the protégé "acquire knowledge, skills, and self-confidence in hopes that he/she becomes a better employee, student or organizational leader" (Burke, 1984, p. 254). Benefits have been identified for both the protégé and the

mentor. Newby and Corner (1997) identify outcomes of a mentoring relationship

specifically, including increased pride, satisfaction and confidence (p. 10).

As identified in Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), "studies indicate consistently

that students' interactions with their peers, net of other relevant factors, promote positive

academic and intellectual self-concepts and self-confidence" (p. 265). Consequently,

peer mentoring could be considered a key peer-to-peer interaction for promoting self-

authorship.

"In reviewing the literature on peer mentoring, it is apparent that there is no single

agreed definition of mentoring" (O'Hara, 2011, p. 272). Welsh (2004) offered a working

definition for the purpose of this study. According to Welsh (2004), peer mentors are

defined as "colleagues who share problems, strategies, professional and personal

information, friendship, and support" (p. 33). The unique difference between traditional

mentoring and peer mentoring is that peer mentoring usually involves employees with

roughly equal levels of experience (p. 33). Peer mentors and peer educators are both

terms used interchangeably throughout the research.

In the case of peer mentoring in higher education, peer mentors provide

educational programming to fellow students in the form of counseling, relaying

information, and conducting outreach programs (Brack, Millard, & Shah, 2008, p. 566).

Different kinds of peer mentoring also exist on college campuses. For example, a

campus could have academic peer mentors supervised by academic departments as well

as health center peer educators advised by the on-campus Health Center. Of course, peer

mentoring and educating differ greatly in these two instances, with academic peer

mentors focusing on academic success and health peer educators focusing on preventing

risky behaviors (p. 568).

> On today's college campuses, peer educators are involved in providing a wide
> range of supportive service activities. These services, cutting across a variety of
> peer educator roles, include providing information, explaining policies and
> procedures, orienting new students, making referrals, offering specific help
> strategies for problem-related counseling issues, implementing social and
> educational programs, enforcing rules, providing academic advising, facilitating
> community development, offering tutoring, helping with financial management,
> performing diversity training, and providing crisis intervention services. (Newton
> & Ender, 2010, p. 3)

Colley (2003) stated that mentoring could mean different things to different

people (p. 30). "Definitions of mentoring should take into account two broad

approaches; mentoring as a function, and mentoring as a relationship" (p. 33).

Research focused on peer mentoring has been completed in a variety of ways;

however, little was uncovered in relation to peer mentoring in an honors program setting.

Brack et al. (2008) distributed 28 self-reporting questionnaires in order to determine

whether peer educators were considered as peers by the mentees (p. 566). The results

indicated that the peer audience did identify the peer educators as peers (p. 568). The

researchers noted that the study was limited due to a small sample size (p. 568). Another

study that also used questionnaires was done on a larger scale to investigate

undergraduate students in a paraprofessional role (which can be considered a peer

mentoring role on some levels, but refers more to student employment). Carns, Carns,

and Wright (1993) sent questionnaires to 25% of undergraduate institutions in the United

States and found that the largest number of student paraprofessionals were found in

residence halls (p. 358). Through thorough literature investigation, peer mentoring roles

appear to have been studied more quantitatively rather than qualitatively. A wide variety

of research on peer mentoring programs exists for first year students, but they all differ in methods, focus and theoretical orientation (Jacobi, 1991, p. 526).

Benefits of Peer Mentoring

Throughout various studies on peer mentoring, the benefits of involvement are frequently highlighted. In Brack and colleagues (2008) study, students who wanted to become peer educators "reported higher self-esteem, greater leadership skills, and fewer risky health behaviors than did demographically similar college students" (p. 566). In addition, the study noted that students in the peer educator or mentor role "can be powerful role models because, by virtue of their training, they are prepared to assist and influence others" (p. 568). Furthermore, the act of peer mentoring can also be seen as a reflective tool for the student. Acting as a peer mentor allows students to think about their own experiences and respond personally to a situation that may come up with a fellow college student (Newton & Ender, 2010, p. 31). "Research has consistently shown that peer educators are successful because of shared experiences that permit a connection to the student's situation and a feeling of ease when talking with a peer" (p. 31).

Description of the Honors Program Peer Mentoring Structure at Midwestern University (MU). "Peer mentoring programs have been widely adopted by universities and colleges as important components of their strategies to enhance the experience of first year students to assist them in making the transition from school to university" (Hall & Jaugietis, 2011, p. 42).

Peer mentoring in the honors program at MU is structured so that all first-year honors students have a peer mentor assigned to them during the first eight weeks they are on campus. For the approximately 500 new honors students admitted each year, 32 peer

mentors are responsible for meeting with groups of 10-12 of those students. The students

meet with their peer mentor and mentor group once a week for eight weeks total. Each

week has a prescribed lesson plan and theme; for example, one week discusses

registration for classes. Overall, the feedback from the program has been positive and the

honors program department continues to investigate strategies to make the peer

mentoring program stronger.

Honors Programs and Students

Generally, honors education strives to include "the total means by which a college

or university seeks to meet the educational needs of its ablest and most highly motivated

students" (Austin, 1986, p. 5). Programs need to be structured with an umbrella purpose

in mind so that the needs and talents of the students are utilized appropriately. The

purpose of all honors programs according to Byrne's (1998) literature review outlines an

easy list to follow and model. Those purposes are:

1. to recognize and meet the unique needs of talented students;
2. to encourage a high level of excellence;
3. to attract and retain talented and motivated students;
4. to benefit the whole campus;
5. to enhance the school's public image;
6. to challenge, reward, and retain faculty;
7. to give academic balance to the curriculum;
8. to serve as a center for innovation; and
9. to provide incentives and recognition for excellent students. (p. 71)

Another definition of the philosophy of honors programs was offered by Hebert and

McBee (2007) as, "The underlying philosophy of such programs is similar to that which

underlies gifted programs at the K-12 level that academically talented students require

modifications to the usual classroom experience to fully actualize their potential" (p.

137).

Over 1,000 American institutions of higher education foster the honors program curriculum and purpose in different ways (NCHC, 2010a, para. 1). In a study completed by Clifford Adelman (1985), four dominant honors programs emerged: the honors community, "supply-side" honors, the "exponential major," and general honors (p. 57). Adelman collected these results from an inventory conducted at a select sample of honors programs in the United States to observe the common types of honors programs (p. 1). The honors community is a program structured to help a select group of learners develop over the course of their college career and is focused on providing services, like advising and additional courses, all throughout the student's curriculum (p. 57). Differing from the honors community model, the "supply-side" honors format admits students into the program after their first year and is created around the specific demands of the students and their major and personal interests (p. 57). The final two program types are based upon curriculum. The exponential major option is a case in which an honors program has a specific "honors" major that a student can add after their first year of college (p. 57). Finally, the general honors model is "an interdisciplinary General Education program, confined to the first two years of college, and has a heavy emphasis on the Liberal Arts" (p. 57).

Today's honors programs, in both two-year and four-year institutions, rely heavily on the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) for support, network, and professional development. The NCHC functions as the professional association of undergraduate programs and colleges for honors programs and was established in 1966 (NCHC, 2010a, para. 2). The formation for the organization was a result of a number of people yearning to share their ideas and have a strong national voice of excellence in

higher education (para. 2). The association supports programs with conferences, resources, and a shared interest in their success. Over 900 institutions of higher education are current members of the NCHC (NCHC, 2010a). Below are some of the basic characteristics listed for honors programs to use (NCHC, 2010b):

1. The honors program offers carefully designed educational experiences that meet the needs and abilities of the undergraduate students it serves (admission criteria, retention, and completion requirements) (para. 1).

2. The program has a clear mandate from the institution's administration in the form of a mission statement or charter agreement (para. 2).

3. The honors curriculum meets the needs of the students (i.e., counting as general education courses) and features special courses (para. 4).

4. The program requirements constitute no less than 15% of the participant's undergraduate work (para. 5).

5. The program provides a locus of visible and highly reputed standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus (para. 9).

6. The program has an active director (para. 10).

7. Honors students are assured a voice in the governance or direction of the honors program (para. 11).

8. Honors students receive honors-related academic advising from qualified faculty and/or staff (para. 12).

9. The program engages in continuous assessment and evaluation and is to the need for change in order to maintain the distinctive position (para. 14).

10. The program emphasizes active learning and participatory education by offering opportunities for students to community service, research, and experiential education (paras. 1-17).

Each honors program is different, so comparisons of programs must be done with caution. In order to create a specific context of Midwestern University's honors program, the characteristics of that program will now be discussed.

The Honors Program at Midwestern University

The honors program in which the peer mentors are a part of at Midwestern University is an example of an "honors community" type program identified by Adelman (1985, p. 57). The program develops a "small select group of learners within an institution . . . tending to emphasize organization and support services over curriculum" (p. 57). The program admits qualified freshmen and sophomores into the program and requires a various number of honors credit courses, maintaining a 3.5 GPA, and a final research or thesis project (Institutional Honors Program, 2011, paras. 1-4). While specific qualifications are not listed on the website, some recommendations for "more successful candidates" for the program are a 29 or above ACT composite and a top 10% in high school graduating class. The program can be applied to all majors and fields of study. The community is created in a physical sense with the Honors Residence Hall, a living unit that is home to the honors program offices and most honors students. The community is created with various floor activities and the ambience of the building itself. This physical component of the program nurtures the creation of community among the students and allows the honors students to find their honors program services easily.

Characteristics of Honors Students. "A small number of studies have

attempted to describe the characteristics of honors students themselves" (Hebert &

McBee, 2007, p. 138). Hebert and McBee (2007) conducted a qualitative case study to

explore how honors programs influence "the intellectual, social, and emotional

development of gifted university students" along with adding to the literature a richer

description of the characteristics of honors students (p. 138). After interviewing seven

honors students and the honors program director, five strong themes emerged: isolation,

questioning religious value systems, "real" community, hunger for personal and

intellectual growth, and the value of a mentor (pp. 143-147). These findings uncovered

main characteristics to consider when working with gifted students. For example, the

participants in Herbert and McBee's (2007) study expressed feelings of isolation in their

childhood because of their abilities, so meeting and interacting with students that have the

same intellectual capabilities was critical (p. 143). Opportunity for growth is also a large

factor to keep in mind, because honors students yearn for the academic challenge.

Another study conducted by Gerrity, Lawrence, and Sedlacek (1993) compared

honors to nonhonors students in demographics, attitudes, interests, and behaviors (p. 43).

This study focused on a sample of freshmen students from one particular campus, 231

honors students and 709 nonhonors students (p. 44). The demographics discovered by

the study showed that honors students had more highly educated parents (p. 50). In

addition, the attitudes about education were notably different between honors and

nonhonors students. "Nonhonors students seemed to be attending school to increase their

financial standing, whereas honors students attended school to prepare for future

educational endeavors or simply for the sake of learning" (Hebert & McBee, 2007, p.

139). Considering the study results from the studies conducted by Herbert and McBee (2007) and Gerrity et al. (1993), the differences between honors students and the typical college student are critical to consider as their motives for learning or attending college may differ.

Conclusion

This chapter described three important bodies of literature: Self-authorship, peer mentoring, and honors programs. Understanding the foundations of each of these topics will lead to a better overall study. Self-authorship presents the theoretical basis for the study. The descriptions and studies based on peer mentoring and honors programs create context for this study. Overall, each section adds rich details to begin painting the picture of potential self-authorship development through peer mentoring.

By exploring this topic of self-authorship development and peer mentoring, the researcher hopes to add to the existing body of research by potentially uncovering a new extracurricular experience that can positively promote self-authorship development. "Experiences that matter" are important to all students but are especially important to honors students. Investigating the experience of a peer mentor could catapult the creation of intentional experiences for gifted students. Once these meaningful activities (e.g., peer mentoring) are identified that support self-authorship, researchers can focus on the steps to successfully creating these experiences intentionally and perhaps extend the research outside of honors students. This study will add a qualitative study to the peer mentoring literature. Chapter 3 provides an in-depth look into the methodology of this study and the rationale behind the chosen method for this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the role that peer mentoring in a university honors program plays in self-authorship development for the student mentors at Midwestern University. Self-authorship was identified through participant responses identified in the three actions grounded in Baxter Magolda's (2001) Learning Partnerships Model: (a) validate students as knowers, (b) situate learning in students' experiences, and (c) define learning as mutually constructed meaning.

Research Questions

A grand tour question and three sub-questions guided the study. The grand tour question studied was: Do peer mentors in the honors program at Midwestern University experience self-authorship? If so, how is the experience described?

1. How do student mentors make meaning of their peer mentoring experience?

2. What elements of self-authorship is the student mentor exhibiting?

3. How can a student affairs practitioner enhance peer mentoring to promote self-authorship and encourage meaningful student mentor involvement?

Research Design

Every peer mentor program in higher education is unique. For example, there may be a peer mentoring program in place for all first-year engineering majors or all students within a certain student organization opposed to an honors program. In order to capture the peer mentor experience, a qualitative case study research design was chosen for this research. A qualitative case study approach was chosen because the research was

looking at constructed meaning within a bounded system (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). The researcher was interested in "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). The peer mentor experience is different for each student mentor, thus there was a need to capture the experience of each participant and identify if the experience promoted self-authorship development. The interviews allowed the participants to reflect on their experience and process the meaning of the experience in their life.

As a case study, this study was bounded and considered a "within-site" study because the study took place at one geographical location (Creswell, 2007, p. 246). In addition, a case study qualitative research method provides a "rich and holistic account of a phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p. 51). The study was bounded in setting and context. The setting was one large Midwestern University. The context was a specific program at a specific time – the case of a first-time, student peer mentor experience in the fall of 2011.

Institutional Review Board Approval

The researcher, prior to the start of the study, completed the Consortium for IRB Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protections (CITI) for certification in human subjects research. In addition, approval from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was received before the study began (Appendix A). In the IRB process, the researcher mentioned that six participants would be the goal. Because of the success of recruitment, the researcher sought to include two more participants, making the final total eight. Once the participants were identified for the study, they were emailed an informed consent form (Appendix C). A copy of that informed consent form was given to each

participant before the interview and they were given the opportunity to review and sign

the document. Confidentiality was kept by assigning each student participant a

pseudonym and keeping all contact information on a password protected computer. The

student participants were also informed that the information they shared in the interview

would be used in the researcher's thesis and potentially could be published in an

educational journal or presented at an educational conference. Finally, the honors

program advisor through the university honors program provided names, email addresses,

and telephone numbers for the participants.

Research Site

  This study was conducted at a large research Midwestern University, specifically

Midwestern University (MU). The institution is a research extensive, four-year

institution with a total enrollment of 24,593 in the fall of 2011, when this study was

conducted (Fact Book, 2011, p. 44). The undergraduate population fall of 2011 was

19,345 (p. 45). The institution offered over 150 undergraduate majors from ten different

colleges.

  All interviews were conducted in one room at MU. Participants met the

researcher in a study room in honors residence hall, which is the location of the university

honors program office. This location was ideal because the area was familiar to the

student mentor participants and provided privacy for the interview. A quiet location was

needed in order for interviews to be audio recorded without interruption and to give the

student participants a private space to share their peer mentoring experiences.

Participants

Purposeful and convenience sampling techniques for selecting participants were utilized in this study. Purposeful sampling is advantageous for this study because the researcher is allowed to select "individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Convenience sampling was used so that "the researcher could access and easily collect data" (p. 126). The researcher chose a specific student population who had participated as a student peer mentor in the fall 2011 peer mentoring program. In addition, the student mentors had to be first-time peer mentors. In order to be considered to participate in the study, the student had to be in the university honors program and a first-time student peer mentor in the peer mentoring program. No age or level of study criterion was used.

The purposeful sample provided 47 potential participants. A recruitment email (Appendix D) was sent to those 47 participants and four responded. Participants that responded received a follow-up email stating the date, time, and location of their interview (Appendix E). An electronic copy of the informed consent form was attached to the email as well so that the interviewees had the opportunity to review the form prior to the interview. In efforts to recruit more participants to bring the interview number up to eight, the researcher used a telephone script to call student mentors that did not respond to the email (Appendix H). After five, randomly selected, participant phone calls, an additional four participants were recruited for the interview and follow-up emails were sent to them including the date, time, and location of their interview.

At the conclusion of the recruitment process, eight students agreed to participate in the study. While all of the participants appeared to be White to the researcher, the participants were not asked specific demographic information, resulting in the inability to ascertain if they were Hispanic or Multiracial. Because that information was not gathered, specific demographic information is not available for this study. Interviews were held in a quiet study room in the honors residence hall on campus (where the university honors program office is located) and were audio-recorded. To keep the participants' identities confidential, each student mentor was assigned a pseudonym. Table 1 shows the interview number, the corresponding pseudonym for each participant, and the participant's gender.

Table 1

Participants

Interview	Pseudonym	Gender
1	Jack	Male
2	Pam	Female
3	Rob	Male
4	Larry	Male
5	Kim	Female
6	Lily	Female
7	Cheryl	Female
8	Jake	Male

Data Collection

Before collecting data, the researcher obtained IRB approval and permission from the Director of the University Honors Program (Appendix B) to conduct the research. All of the participants were sent the informed consent form to review before each interview, and at the beginning of each interview, the researcher reviewed the consent form with the participant. The informed consent form was signed by all participants before the interview began. Priority was placed on discussing the consent form in order to reassure the participants that they had the opportunity to discontinue at any time. The participant was also given a copy of the consent form to take home with them at the end of the interview. All interviews were held in the same location (a study room in the honors residence hall), were audio recorded, and lasted no longer than 30 minutes.

The questions asked throughout the interview were based on the grand tour question and subquestions: Do peer mentors in the honors program at Midwestern University experience self-authorship? If so, how is the experience described? Participants responded to 12 questions and subquestions throughout the duration of the interview. The interview protocol is in Appendix G. The questions were written to determine if being a student peer mentor in the honors program promoted the participants' self-authorship development. The interview was semi-structured in order to allow the "researcher to respond to the situation at hand" and to follow up with questions if necessary in each interview (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). For example, if the participant would answer a question about a difficult time they had as a mentor, the researcher would follow up with the question that asked how the difficulty was handled and if they would handle it differently in the future. All of the interviews were audio recorded using a

digital recorder. The primary researcher transcribed two of the interviews verbatim and a private transcriptionist completed the remaining six. The transcriptionist confidentiality statement is in Appendix I.

The Theory of Self-Authorship and the Learning Partnership Model (LPM) were instrumental in the creation of research questions. The researcher carefully constructed questions based on the phases of Self-Authorship, particularly the Crossroads and Becoming the Author of One's Life phases (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 40). For example, the Crossroads phase is described as a time when a young adult "questions plans and sees the need for their own vision," so the researcher carefully asked questions about following the peer mentoring guidelines or improvising (p. 40). The LPM was used in the data analysis because the model works to identify activities for student affairs practitioners to apply to practice and aid in development of self-authorship. The researcher used the three tiers of the model, 1) "validating learners' capacity to know," 2) "situating learning in a learners' experience," and 3) "mutually constructing meaning," to identify self-authorship in the participant responses (Hodge, Baxter Magolda, & Haynes, 2009, p. 20-22).

Data Analysis

After completing the transcriptions in detail, the researcher read each interview transcript thoroughly for overall meaning. The transcripts were read a second time to gather additional content and provide familiarity. Finally, the transcripts were read for a third time and notes were made in the margins to begin developing categories of in vivo codes. Creswell (2007) described the categories of in vivo codes as clusters of "exact words used by participants" (pp. 150-153). This begins what is referred to as the "lean

coding" process where 25-30 labels or codes are determined as the transcripts are re-reviewed (p. 152). Once the lean coding process has taken place, the winnowing begins to reduce the categories into overall themes (p. 152). The themes that emerged from this study are illustrated in Chapter 4, Table 2 (shown in Chapter 4, p. 44). Categorical aggregation was used to develop the themes in order to seek "a collection of instances from the data, hoping that the issue-relevant meanings will emerge" (p. 163). A Microsoft Word document was created and included each theme with participant quotations. The participant's pseudonyms are used to distinguish between the participants. Chapter 4 presents the findings resulting from this qualitative process.

Researcher Reflexivity

All eight interviews were conducted by the researcher, which creates a need to understand the researcher's background with the university honors program peer mentor. The researcher has extensive experience with this peer mentor program. The researcher has experienced every level of the peer mentor experience, beginning as a mentee as a freshman, then moving to be a peer mentor, then taking a leadership role as a peer mentor leader and then finally moving to a graduate student peer mentor intern. Having been exposed to every aspect of the experience, the researcher only disclosed this information if the information was asked during the interview. The researcher did not want the participant to answer differently based on her experience or relationships with the university honors program staff.

Verification Strategies

"Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative research involves conducting the investigation in an ethical manner" (Merriam, 2009, p. 209). A variety of validity and

reliability techniques were used in this study to ensure these important concepts of qualitative research. After all, validation is needed in qualitative research in order to "assess the 'accuracy' of the findings, as best described by the researcher and the participants" (Creswell, 2007, pp. 206-207). The validation techniques that Creswell (2007) presented are: (a) "prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field," (b) using multiple and different sources, methods and theories, also known as triangulation, (c)"peer review or debriefing," (d) "negative case analysis," (e) "clarifying research bias," (f) "member checking," (g) "rich, thick description", and (h) "external audits" (pp. 207-209).

Member checking, clarifying research bias, rich, thick description and external audits were used to validate. Member checking occurred as the researcher emailed the participants their responses so they could make corrections or approve if their interview was correct. None of the participants responded. The researcher clarified research bias in the "researcher reflexivity" section, indicating the past experiences they had with the program. Rich, thick description was also exercised to illustrate "transferability because the writer describes in detail the participants or setting under study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). The words of the student mentor participants' provided rich, thick description that was used in the data analysis and findings section in Chapter 4. This description piece is vital in order for readers to have the opportunity to decide if findings of the study can be applied to a peer mentor program on their campus. Finally, the use of an external audit was also used as a validation technique. This allowed an external consultant to "examine both the process and the product of the account and assessing their accuracy" (p. 209). The external audit attestation is in Appendix K.

"Reliability refers to the extent in which research findings can be replicated" (Merriam, 2009, p. 220). Interviews were audio recorded with a digital recorder that captured various pauses and tones created by the participant. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and a professional transcriptionist and were checked by the outside auditor for accuracy.

Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology of this study. The study began with seeking approval from IRB. Semi-structured interviews were used to answer the grand tour and research questions of this study. In order to prove reliability, member checking, rich, thick description, and the use of an external auditor were used in the data analysis portion of this study. Chapter 4 will present the findings from the analysis and coding from the interview transcriptions.

Chapter 4

Findings

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the role that peer mentoring in a university honors program plays in self-authorship development for the student mentors at Midwestern University. Self-authorship was identified through participant responses identified in the three actions grounded in Baxter Magolda's (2001) Learning Partnerships Model: (a) validate students as knowers, (b) situate learning in students' experiences, and (c) define learning as mutually constructed meaning.

Description of Participants

Eight students participated in this study and met the following criteria: members of the university honors program and a first-time student peer mentor in the peer mentoring program. Forty-seven emails or phone calls were made resulting in eight students agreeing to participate in the study. The honors program peer mentoring experience influenced each participant in a different way. Thus, this chapter will examine how student peer mentors make meaning from the peer mentoring experience.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym in order to keep identities confidential. Four males and four females participated in the study. Below is a brief description of each participant.

Jake. Jake was a junior, male Political Science major from a small town in Nebraska. He started as a peer mentor because of the encouragement he got from his peers in Honors Ambassadors, a group of students organized by the Honors Program to give tours to prospective honors students and assist in admissions activities. As a peer

mentor, Jake worked to help the freshmen honors students adjust to college life and answer any questions they had.

Cheryl. Cheryl was an enthusiastic female, sophomore from a larger high school in eastern Nebraska. As a Criminal Justice major, she was comforted as a freshman in her honors peer mentor group and wanted to pay it forward by also serving as a mentor. She defined a good peer mentor as someone that the students can look up to and someone who is prepared to share how things work at college from a student's perspective.

Lily. Lily was a female, sophomore from a larger town in Nebraska. She worked hard as a Pre-Veterinarian and Psychology major, hoping her involvement and academic activities would assist her getting into Veterinarian School. Not only did Lily want to be a peer mentor to get more involved, but she also wanted to mentor in order to carry on the tradition of the excellent peer mentor she had as a freshman. Her peer mentor put a different spin on things and always had a lot of energy; thus, she yearned to spread that energy also as a mentor. Peer mentoring to Lily was a balance between acting as an authoritative figure and a relatable peer. A strong peer mentor, according to Lily, was a student who could relate to the student's experiences best because they had gone through the same things just a year or two before.

Kim. Kim was an out-of-state, female sophomore from a larger city majoring in Marketing. Kim was drawn to becoming a peer mentor based on the recommendation from a professor she had in class. She was flattered that the strength was identified in her and remembered how much she enjoyed her own peer mentoring experience the year before. Kim was also involved in other activities on campus related to her major. Kim

identified the peer mentor role as a guide for the new students that answers questions and can relate from their past experiences.

Rob. After having an "absolutely awesome" peer mentor as a freshman, Rob was encouraged to serve in that same role as a sophomore and give back to the Honors Program. Rob was a current male sophomore from a small town in Nebraska and was majoring in Advertising and Public Relations. His idea of peer mentoring was related to creating a comfortable environment in order to get the new students started on the right track. He believed his various involvement experiences aided him in his peer mentoring success.

Jack. Jack was a male, junior majoring in Agricultural Business from a small town in Nebraska. Jack was a student living on east campus and wanted to serve as a peer mentor in order to make it easier for the east campus students to attend meetings. MU has two campuses, one called city campus and the other called east campus. East campus does not have as many classes or residence hall living opportunities as city campus but still plays a significant role in the college life of a student. A peer mentor to Jack was an individual who is more willing to be open and honest with the students than a professor or professional advisor may be.

Pam. Sophomore participant Pam, majoring in Sociology and Political Science, was an out-of-state, female peer mentor from a larger city. She was motivated to serve as a mentor based on her impersonal experience as a mentee the year prior. She wanted to make the program better by participating. Pam saw the peer mentor role as a teacher that caught up with the mentees once a week.

Larry. The final participant was Larry, a male sophomore majoring in Physics and Mathematics from a larger city in Nebraska. His major motivation to be a peer mentor was not only to get more involved but to also give back to the university. He realized that when he was a mentee in the program that there were not a lot of mentors with his major so he wanted to make himself available for other Physics and Mathematics majors. Larry saw a peer mentor as an individual setting up the new students for success in all four years of their college education by being a resource for them. As a peer mentor, he strived to make himself available for all questions the mentees might have.

Research Questions

A grand tour question and three sub-questions guided the study. The grand tour question studied was: Do peer mentors in the honors program at Midwestern University experience self-authorship? If so, how is the experience described?

1. How do student mentors make meaning of their peer mentoring experience?

2. What elements of self-authorship is the student mentor exhibiting?

3. How can a student affairs practitioner enhance peer mentoring to promote self-authorship and encourage meaningful student mentor involvement?

Overview of Themes and Subthemes

This chapter illustrates the themes that emerged from participants' peer mentoring experiences, exploring how the participants made meaning of their overall mentor experience. Six themes are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes

Themes
1.   Giving Back to the University Honors Program
2.   Significant Personal Outcomes as a Peer Mentor
3.   I am a Role Model
4.   Training Impact on the Peer Mentor Experience
5.   Improvising During Peer Mentor Meetings
6.   Relationships with Peer Mentees

The "Giving Back to the University Honors Program" theme provided details about why the participants decided to become a peer mentor and why peer mentoring was important. The "Significant Personal Outcomes as a Peer Mentor" theme supplied the personal influence and impact the mentor experience had on the student mentors. The next theme, "I am a Role Model," illustrated the roles student peer mentors took on during their time as first year peer mentors. The theme "Training Impact on the Peer Mentor Experience" described the influence of training that the participants identified as a first year mentor. The fifth theme, "Improvising During Peer Mentor Meetings" described the experiences the mentors had with training and how to adjust to those situations that came up in their mentee group that were unplanned. The sixth and final theme was "Relationships with Peer Mentees" and explored how each participant fostered their personal mentee relationships.

Themes

       Theme: Giving back to the university honors program. When discussed in interviews, each of the eight participants had different ideas on the importance of mentoring and why they chose to serve as a student mentor in the honors program. Rob presented a thorough summary of his peer mentoring experience and the impact mentors can have on new students.

> To me, my peer mentoring experience means that I was able to take students who were kind of lost when they came here to MU and get them settled and give them an identity and give them a safe place so that they could start their journey at college.

Rob used his peer mentoring experience meaning to make new honors students feel comfortable and ready for the next step in college. Another participant, Larry, also shed light on the importance of the peer mentoring program by describing the potential future success of the individual student mentee. "Just helping them get situated, like for freshmen, getting them situated at the university." Rob and Larry both had different notions of what the purpose of peer mentoring is for new students and how they could give back to the program.

       Each participant also had a different reason and motivation for deciding to give back as a student peer mentor in the honors program. Four participants mentioned friends, professors, and other experiences that motivated them to serve as a peer mentor. In particular, Kim mentioned a professor's encouragement for her to apply. "my teacher just kind of talked about how we can be honors peer mentors . . . so I filled out an application." Similarly, Jake was presented with the mentoring opportunity through a student organization. "Somebody at Honors Ambassadors mentioned that everybody

should become a peer mentor so I'm like it would be kind of fun to talk to younger

students."

One other common reason for being a peer mentor among the participants was

based on their past experience as a mentee in the program. Two participants, in

particular, Rob and Larry, mentioned that they wanted to give back based on the positive

experience they had had. Rob was especially interested in giving back to the program.

> I decided to get involved in peer mentoring because I—as an incoming Freshman
> I had a peer mentor who was absolutely awesome. She did a great job making me
> feel comfortable with the honors program. And, I really liked the way that the
> honors program had that program for me and I wanted to give back to other
> students that could—so I just wanted to give back to them because it was such a
> positive experience form.

Similar to Rob, Larry was also interested in giving back but more to help other students

like him. He was a Physics and Mathematics major and found it difficult to relate to his

peer mentor.

> Peer mentoring stuck out to me because when I was going through the program,
> my peer mentor was an English major. She wasn't very helpful in answering
> questions for me about my major and specific questions there. So I figured I
> would do a favor to the incoming freshmen and be a resource to them.

By acting as a peer mentor, Larry was confident he could help other students with his

same major in the future. Both Rob and Larry were looking to give back to the program

based on their past experience. No matter how these student peer mentors came to be

mentors, they all had individual reasons to serve and give back.

Finally, Lily was motivated to serve as a mentor based on the impact her past

mentor had on her. Her peer mentor had been a role model for her and so she aspired to

be just like her.

> I like the experience I had with my peer mentor, because she was like, I don't know, she kind of put a different spin on what I thought the honors program was . . . I kind of wanted to sort of be like her.

Discovering the value of the peer mentor program was part of Lily's decisions to serve as a mentor. Signing up to participate, no matter the reasons why, they signed up to begin with was the beginning of an unforgettable experience.

In addition to realizing their own personal reasons for wanting to mentor new students and give back, the participants also reflected on the new knowledge and benefit they hoped the program will give to mentees. Five out of the eight participants specifically discussed the benefits they predicted for new student mentees in the honors program.

Both Jake and Larry discussed adjustment and security as added benefits the new students would gain. Jake described adjustment in the way of having someone to ask the tough questions to.

> It means helping basically your peers in adjusting to whatever they may have questions to, like adjusting to college life, answering questions that they may not want to ask their parents or anybody higher up because as a peer mentor you are on the same level as they are. So, they can talk to you and feel more secure that way.

Larry discussed adjustment relating to being completely situated on campus and the peer mentor being a part of that situating process. "Just helping them get situated, like for freshmen, getting them situated at the university and setting them up to be successful for both that semester and the following four years of their education."

Like Jake and Larry, Cheryl and Lily saw added program benefits for the new mentees but by mentors providing the student perspective for them. For example, Cheryl mentioned:

> …but having people look up to you and you know, you telling them, you know, here's how things work, kind of teaching them a little bit about – from like a students perspective more than an adults perspective of what things to do, how things work, how to go about college life in this kind of circumstance.

The student mentees have the option to ask a peer, in this case their peer mentor, for a student perspective on college life versus an adult perspective. Lily added on to Cheryl's point, as she mentioned that "it's best to hear that from someone- like a peer, someone you could actually relate to who's gone through the exact same experiences, just a year prior."

Rob mentioned something unique that would be a new perspective for the mentees.

> Because I feel like so much—when we go to college, so much of society's perceptions is like—oh, you can start a new life, you can be whoever you want to be, but its really hard to do that if you're not comfortable with something of the experience. It's hard to start making those changes. So, peer mentoring is that safe place to me that those kids can use.

Rob believed that peer mentoring, to those mentees who take advantage of the program, has the potential to help a student start their life as a college student and make those "changes" in a safe place. Thus, the concept of giving back was important for the participants in why they choose to serve as an honors peer mentor. Each participant described giving back in a different way and explained the information they hoped their mentees would gain as a result of the experience.

Theme: Significant personal outcomes as a peer mentor. Following the completion of their first year as a honors program peer mentor, participants were asked if they had taken away with them one significant outcome from the experience. Table 3 describes what each participant identified as their significant outcome from the experience.

Table 3

Personal Significant Outcomes

Participants	Identified Outcome
Kim	"felt like I had a sense of importance."
Lily	"I could be a really good leader in the honors program."
Cheryl	"being able to say I've taught these students."
Pam	"She (a mentee) came in as undeclared, but then throughout the weeks, she had a more clearer picture of what she liked. I helped with one of the pieces of the puzzle."
Rob	" to know that my time was actually worth something and actually made a difference was really fulfilling."
Jake	"I felt pretty good that everybody kind of liked being together."
Jack	"Appreciation for people who have done it for me."
Larry	"the self-satisfaction that I helped some freshmen get set in their college career— giving them very valuable information that they'll hopefully go on and do something with."

Personal fulfillment, importance, and appreciation are three of the more prevalent

outcomes mentioned by participants. Rob felt like the whole experience was worthwhile

after receiving a letter of thanks from a mentee.

> the fact that she (a mentee) took the time to sit down and write me a letter and give that letter at that meeting, I just wanted you to know- that really meant a lot to me. Because, I mean, I don't receive anything from doing my mentoring. I don't get scholarships, I don't get paid—I mean, it's literally me giving my time. So, to know that my time was actually worth something and actually made a difference was really fulfilling.

To Rob, mentoring in the honors program was not about getting paid. This act of

affirmation from his mentee reassured him that his time spent as a peer mentor made a

difference. Kim believed she had more of a "sense of importance" during the first eight

weeks as a result of the mentoring experience. Alongside feelings of importance were

feelings of appreciation. Jack mentioned that his significant outcome was "appreciation for what others have done for me."

Challenge. While the peer mentor groups in the honors program are formed to have students from the same or similar major in them, not every freshmen honors student can be placed with a peer mentor that has a similar major to them. Most of the time, scheduling conflicts disrupts the freshmen from being paired with a mentor that has a similar major. The participants identified various challenges like the example mentioned above throughout the interview dialogue.

The different mentees in Rob's group turned out to be a positive challenge for him.

> It [The peer mentor experience] influenced me because it really challenged me to connect on different levels and different areas with different people. I can be a little bit of a pessimist and I had all sort of different—going in, I was just kind of assuming that everyone would like me and like the way that I did things. I realized as I started getting into it that they didn't dislike me, but that sometimes I had to state things a little different way or go about things from a little bit of a different angle. So, it really helped me a lot in figuring out different ways to communicate different things to different kinds of people.

Rob was in a situation where he could learn first hand how to interact with students that were different from him. While thinking about things in a different way was a challenge, he stated that it was still helpful learning how to communicate different things to people with various backgrounds.

Sometimes a challenging situation makes a student realize how difficult a task is. Jack, for example, mentioned that the experience gave him an appreciation for the mentor process. "It gave me an appreciation for, or made me realize how difficult it is to organize something for people who don't realize how important it is." Incoming honors

students are required to participate in the honors program peer mentor program, so the students can sometimes "under appreciate" the value.

Leadership. While challenges emerged as personal significant outcomes, participants also mentioned in great length the leadership opportunities in which the mentor experience prepared them. Three participants specifically mentioned leadership as an outcome of their mentor experience. Jake was first to identify a particular leadership skill as a personal outcome, which was "leadership in leading groups." Larry recognized the leadership role he was in as a mentor. "it [Peer mentoring] definitely takes a more leadership role to prepare and present this information to the freshmen. Also, taking the information they [honors program peer mentor leaders] give me and tailor it to my group of freshmen." Identifying himself as in a leadership role, Larry was confident in tailoring the information and presenting the details to students.

Lily mentioned that the experience made her more confident to consider other leadership positions on campus.

> It was one of my first positions at MU as a leader—like in a leadership position, like me, actually being in charge of these nine Freshmen by myself, with no one watching me. And so that, like really gave me the confidence I needed to apply for more leadership positions.

Whether mentoring provided a positive leadership experience for the participants or supplied them with more confidence, leadership was a prevalent outcome mentioned throughout the interviews.

Retrospection. This theme was more of a self-reflection in which the participants spoke. When discussing their personal, significant outcome, two participants reflected on the peer mentor experience. Cheryl looked back at her experience as a freshman mentee:

I'm kind of looking back and saying, like you know, I wish I would have taken their advice [her peer mentors]. Now that it actually means something to me. But, it just kind of makes me think back to what I did and what I listened to and you know, just kind of how that affected my college experiences.

Through Cheryl's reflection, she was admitting that the information now means something to her and she is going to ensure that her mentees knew how that information (or lack thereof) affected her college experiences. Lily also admitted to the mentoring experience teaching her more about what the "university has to offer." Both Cheryl and Lily used their self-reflections to make themselves better mentors.

For Kim, looking back at an outcome from the experience was about feeling proud and accomplished. "You know whether they [mentees] took my advice or just did it on their own, either way, it doesn't matter, they did it and that made me really proud." She was pleased that all of her mentees made it through the program and looking back made her realize that no matter what they learned, she was proud of all of them.

Theme: I am a role model. In the peer mentor role, two of the participants felt the pressure of acting as a role model. Many participants even spoke of becoming a role model during this experience, like Kim. "I looked up to my peer mentor when I was here and I feel like, hopefully, you know, they look up to me and so, definitely I think I've transformed to more of a role model." The peer mentors are assigned five to twelve new honors students (mentees) and start the program the first week of the fall semester. Cheryl mentioned that she had become more aware of her behavior after serving as a peer mentor. "I just think more about the things that I do and how other people will look up on them and knowing that I am an influence."

By being a role model, two of the participants stated that they cared for the

mentees in their group and took personal responsibility for the mentee's experience. Lily

stated:

> I sort of have this sense of like protection, you know, of like someone in the
> honors program kind of authority, but not really, but sort of just knows a lot about
> this stuff and so that could sort of be of guidance and so, I just kind of see myself
> as more like a leader now that needs to help people.

Her role in the honors program equips her with the right knowledge to assist her mentees

and have a larger part in the honors program as a whole. Rob displayed care for his

mentees through the time he spent answering questions.

> I realized that my role was to accommodate her and her questions and it took a
> little extra work from me, but at the end of the program, she wrote me a letter and
> was like, thank you so much, I really appreciate how much you helped me out.

Despite the extra work, Rob was willing to go the extra mile and make sure his mentee

had all her questions answered. He took ownership of her mentee experience, making

sure that he did all he could do.

In the peer mentor role and serving as a role model also shaped personal views of

the participants. Two participants specifically disclosed how their personal views

changed from the mentor experience. Cheryl thought out loud about what her mentees

might think about her personal stories and decisions.

> I think about how the younger years view the decisions that I've made. And, you
> know, sharing personal stories of like being on campus and stuff. It's kind of like,
> oh, I probably shouldn't have done like that kind of stuff when I was a freshman.
> Here are things not to do because you're not going to like the consequences.

Despite the difficulty Cheryl may have had sharing her personal views, she recognized

that the freshmen could learn from her and at least be aware of the potential

consequences. Jack had a different realization as a peer mentor and role model. His

views helped him recognize the important people in his life. "I think I have been more appreciative of what other people have done for me, as far as opening doors and helping me through situations."

Theme: Training impact on the peer mentoring experience. Each mentor mentioned the influence that the required peer mentor training had on his or her actions as a peer mentor. Each peer mentor had an assigned group of mentees that could encompass different majors and backgrounds, so the training they experienced was aimed to assist the mentors in engaging all of the students and understanding different learning styles. Mentors like Jake saw the training affirming what he already knew. "A lot of training kind of just reaffirmed the other things that I have learned from doing stuff." On the other hand, Cheryl felt as though the training did not equip her to help her students learn about campus and get involved. "I think just getting people involved that don't want to be involved. Because, you can't force them [to be involved]. And so, you just try to make them see the big picture." This theme unveils the impact of the training described by the participants.

Training was seen as a necessary piece of the puzzle and six of the participants identified the training experience as positive and helpful. Rob was pleased with the materials and the expectations the training provided.

> What was expected of us, and the material is very, very comprehensive and gives us a lot of resources that we don't necessarily have to pass on to the mentees unless they ask. It's very good having things like that and guiding us to where we can find the answers to that.

Pam was also comforted by the training experience. "Everything was covered and it was never like I was out on a limb and not sure what to do about it. That was really helpful

and comforting." Pam not only was more comfortable after training, but more confident

in her ability to act as a peer mentor.

> I really liked the training in general and I think ultimately the [peer mentor] leaders were like you know, at the end of the day this is more of a guideline than a requirement and so in that respect they kind of gave us the liberty to do what we saw fit and that was really good.

Cheryl also felt prepared. "There weren't any situations where I had no idea what to do.

I was prepared."

Two participants felt that the training was necessary, but identified that there are

some things a formal training cannot teach a mentor to do. One of those concepts was

going off book. Kim mentioned:

> I think the training is really important, but a lot of it, you just kind of have to think on your feet. Sometimes training can't always help you. You have to be really outgoing and sometimes it depends on your personality.

Larry shared Kim's sentiment. "They can' teach you how to tailor it because that will be

individual to you and your group and what they need."

Five participants discussed their training experience as being a barrier to the

mentor experience. Some of the requirements that Jake and Jack did not like were what

they were told to do. For example, Jake "found it most difficult when he added everyone

on Facebook, because they told us to do that." He did not believe that was a vital

component of the experience. Jack was unhappy with the lesson plans, thinking they

were too simplified. "Following the lesson plans when you really don't believe in it is

difficult." Jack thought the lesson plans were ridiculous, so struggled throughout the

entire experience in order to deliver the appropriate information to his mentees.

Two participants sometimes found the programs difficult when it came to what

they thought was the right thing to do. For example, Pam was frustrated during the last

week of the program because her mentees were registering for classes and she was told

she only had limited information she could provide.

> The final week we had to help them kind of work out the MyRed and the search
> for classes and things. And we were told very specifically that you are not the
> academic counselor, you can't tell them what to take and what not to take. And
> so that was really hard to stick within the boundaries of that.

Pam often had to stop herself from recommending one class over another to a student,

recognizing that that is not a responsibility of the peer mentor. Rob also struggled

keeping personal opinions and interests to himself as a mentor.

> For me, it was difficult to differentiate my personal opinions and experiences
> from those of the overall honors program. Because, there are things about what I
> was telling them or what I was informing that I didn't necessarily always agree
> with, or was—or if I was fully on board with them, but I had to take a step back
> there and be really objective and say—look, even though I don't necessarily agree
> with this personally, it is the policy of the organization that I'm in. And
> sometimes that was a little difficult to not let my personal beliefs infringe upon
> that information that I needed to give them.

Rob was quick to recognize that he had to separate his personal beliefs from the

experience and complete what was expected from him. A final program structural

component was the time for the peer mentoring sessions. Each mentor met with his or

her group eight times, once a week for one hour. Going too fast or taking too long with a

session seemed to be something the participants mentioned. Lily, for example,

mentioned that the week the group was supposed to do a Campus tour, she had to shorten

the tour herself to make sure the session ended in one hour. Overall, training affected

each participant in a different way. Training provided a foundation to build from to act

as a peer mentor, but some of the participants saw those structural components taught to

them in training as a hindrance.

Theme: Improvising during peer mentor meetings. Participants were pointedly asked in the interview to describe a situation in which they were forced to go "off book" or improvise during their peer mentor sessions. Two peer mentor participants provided examples of how they compensated when something unplanned happened. Jack showed up to the first session of the program unprepared. "The first meeting I showed up and thought I had a lesson plan and opened my book and whoops, it wasn't there . . . it was student involvement week so it wasn't too difficult to draw off of past experiences." Jack did not panic and was confident in answering based on his own student involvement experiences. Kim had something happen unexpectedly before the last meeting of the program.

> There was one time I went to give blood and I got really, really sick and like couldn't go to a meeting and it was like one of our last meetings and a bunch of kids had tests and we couldn't re-schedule it. So, I kind of just had to like give them their information through an email.

Even though Kim was sick, she made sure her mentees got the information they needed in a different way. This theme explored the participants reactions to unplanned circumstances as a peer mentor.

Every peer mentor was taught during training to fashion the curriculum in a way that fit his or her personal teaching style. Two peer mentors shared their way of interjecting individuality into their peer mentor style. Lily appreciated that the training discussed techniques on how to put her own personal flair on her mentoring and felt more comfortable going "off book."

> More than just going over the curriculum, we sort of talked about ways to every peer mentor experience different. And so, by doing different types of icebreakers and by – just sort of just adding your own personality into how you taught and how you interacted with your students, like they sort of taught us about that too.

Rob, like Lily, was also conscious about adding his own personal touch to his mentoring

sessions. When one of the weekly topics was alcohol, he knew the perfect personal story

that might shed the light on the consequences of drinking.

> I tried to use my personal experience. . . . And the one thing that I went off book that I think really helped my students is that we were talking about the detox center on campus. I don't remember what it's called. The detox center on campus and I had a friend, freshman year, who went to—who had to go to detox. So, I talked about that and how horrible it was for him and that going off book and building instead of just reading to them about it. Telling them the personal experience that my friend had with it.

If Rob would have just read off of the curriculum outline about the session's lesson on

alcohol, the session may not have been as powerful. Making sure that individuality is

exercised within the program requirements is critical not only for the quality of learning

for the mentees, but also for the quality of the experience for the mentors. Finally, Larry

put to the test his best judgment when the information was missing from one week's

curriculum about how to get involved in research.

> Student involvement and volunteering, things I had had more experience with I could more readily relate that to what I have learned. Like the outline talks about getting involved with research but it really doesn't tell you much on how, where, who to talk to, when to do that, so that was an experience I had to learn for myself that I could pass on to my mentees.

Larry identified the missing piece and was able to interject his own personal research

experience. Each participant discussed improvising as a peer mentor and sometimes not

knowing if they are doing the right thing. Chances were, the peer mentors will had been

through or known someone going through a similar experience and could relate to the

mentees situation in that regard.

Theme: Relationships with peer mentees. The importance of relationships with

mentees and other individuals in the peer mentoring program varied between each peer

mentor. Most of the participants explained that relationships with the peer mentees

should be top priority. Kim believed:

> Your relationships should be like your number one thing. Because some of them (peer mentees) are coming here with no friends. You know, this is an opportunity to, like, make a friend which is like a huge deal and I want to be someone that after the eight weeks—if they have a problem, they can still call me. You know, it shouldn't end at that period. It should a four-year long deal.

Kim felt an obligation beyond the end of the program, noting that she hoped the mentees

still would be comfortable confiding in her after the end of the program. Like Kim,

Cheryl made her mentee relationships a priority and demonstrated that by having special

office hours.

> I definitely made sure that they could like come to me at any time and, you know, that I was available and, like those hours were set out for—our meeting day was Monday, but that hour was set out for them, and I would stay, you know, as long as they needed.

Cheryl and Kim attributed their peer mentor enjoyment to the time they spent building

relationships. Other mentors made relationships a priority in other ways.

Two participants, in particular, focused the relationships that they had with their

mentees on getting them connected to the right organization or resource on campus.

Larry took time out of each weekly session to discuss connections. "After we spent time

talking about the information for that week, we just spent time talking about how to get

involved and what that would look like as a freshman in college." At that time, he self-

disclosed what he got involved with as a freshman and then could make sure they knew

how to get started.

Jake used his connections as a Political Science major to help his mentee

relationships. With the majority of his mentees as Political Science majors', he was able

to provide words of wisdom on the page experience he had in Washington D.C. and

campus connections that would be crucial to have. "I did try to get to know my mentees a little bit, like several of them were political science majors and that's what I am so I tried to tell them about political science opportunities that I had." Larry and Jake observed their peer mentor role as one that connects.

Some of the participants were good at connecting their mentees around campus while others were good at maintaining the mentee relationship after the program had ended. At the time of the interview, the program had been over for approximately three weeks. Cheryl had a communication plan in place and had already sent her mentees an email.

> I send them an email every once in a while to just like, you know, how is school going, like if you guys have any more issues that come up. . . . But just kind of an update me on your life—like if you need any assistance, let me know.

That continual communication opened the door for future questions and perhaps provided the mentee with comfort. Pam was looking forward to no longer being their peer mentor and being a fellow peer to her mentees in the classroom setting. "I am really excited to have them in my classes next semester because it is like we can actually be friends." Larry recognized the importance of ongoing relationships with the mentees, but had yet to contact any of them.

> …(Ongoing relationships) break the mold of mentor/mentee. So opposed to just talking to them like here is what you are going to learn about the university and here is what you are required to learn for the honors program, it becomes more like a dialectic friendship.

Understanding the relationship component was a priority in each participant's time as a mentor, but everyone expressed a different relational style.

Summary of Findings

      Theme: Giving back to the university honors program. Each of the

participants had a variety of student activities to choose from to join as a college student.

The student mentors who participated in this study were all led to the honors program

peer mentoring opportunity in different ways, such as recommendations from professors,

peers, and past mentee experiences. Two of the participants wanted to give back to the

program based on the experience they had. Nonetheless, each participant spoke about the

value in the peer mentoring program and the benefit to the incoming honors students.

Having once been new honors students themselves, the peer mentor participants were

able to discuss benefits and new perspectives the incoming honors students would gain

from participation in the program. In sum, the participants all wanted to pass on the

knowledge and give back to the program by serving as a peer mentor.

      Theme: Significant personal outcomes as a peer mentor. After participating in

the eight-week peer mentoring program as a first-time student, peer mentor, the

participants were asked what they would identify as significant personal outcomes from

their experience. Importance and appreciation were among two of the outcomes, based

on letters of affirmation the mentors received or a polite thank you. More serious

significant outcomes were about challenge, as some of the mentors were in situations

they had never been in before. Leadership opportunities also emerged as a common

outcome, resulting in the participants explaining how mentoring gave them their first

leadership role on campus or provided them with the confidence they needed to apply for

leadership positions in the future. Finally, participants identified some lessons learned

from their mentor and/or mentee experience. For example, one participant was surprised

to learn all the university has to offer and how that information can affect her college life in the future.

Theme: I am a role model. This theme detailed the realization of the participants in their role as not only a peer mentor but also as a role model. The participants first discussed the various moments they recognized they were role models and how the mentor experience aided that process. As a role model, participants also felt like they began to care about their mentees and for the experience they were having in the honors program. Student peer mentors displayed this by helping their mentees outside of the weekly session and making sure all of the questions they had were answered. Finally, participants noticed that personal views were starting to change as they became more of a role model.

Theme: Training impact on the peer mentoring experience. The training experience was seen as a vital component of the mentoring process, despite some of the challenges the participants expressed with the program requirements. While much of the training experience was positive and helpful, specific difficulties surfaced throughout the interviews. The participants struggled sometimes getting buy-in from their mentees, or in other words, communicating to them the value and helpfulness of the program. Getting the mentees attention or going off book were identified as concepts that can't be taught. Some of the participants also felt restricted by the requirements placed on them or they did not completely understand why they would have to do some of the tasks they were required to complete. Regardless, training was seen as a positive experience by a large majority of the participants and was a significant factor in their actions as a peer mentor.

Theme: Improvising during peer mentor meetings. In training, every peer mentor was told to be prepared to add a personal flair on his or her mentoring style. The participants responded to going off book in two different ways. First, they gave examples of how they infused their individuality into the mentoring experience. This was by sharing personal experiences during training or weekly sessions. The second concept that surfaced was the importance of knowing boundaries when going "off book." While the program encouraged the mentors to add personality, each mentor was still expected to cover the full curriculum at each weekly session. Individuality and understanding boundaries were two critical concepts expressed by the participants when they had to go "off book."

Theme: Relationships with peer mentees. The sixth and final theme was all about relationships and how each mentor felt obligated in different ways to nurture mentee relationships. For example, almost half of the peer mentors discussed the importance of connecting their mentees to an organization or involvement opportunity. Other peer mentors felt obligated to stay in contact with the mentees even after the program ended, through Facebook or email. Clearly, each peer mentor held relationships with their mentees at a different priority level.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of findings, discusses results of this case study, implications from the results, and recommendations for the future.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study was to explore the role that peer mentoring in a university honors program plays in self-authorship development for the student mentors at Midwestern University. Self-authorship was identified through participant responses identified in the three actions grounded in Baxter Magolda's (2001) Learning Partnerships Model: (a) validate students as knowers, (b) situate learning in students' experiences, and (c) define learning as mutually constructed meaning.

Research Questions

A grand tour question and three sub-questions guided the study. The grand tour question studied was: Do peer mentors in the honors program at Midwestern University experience self-authorship? If so, how is the experience described?

1. How do student mentors make meaning of their peer mentoring experience?

2. What elements of self-authorship is the student mentor exhibiting?

3. How can a student affairs practitioner enhance peer mentoring to promote self-authorship and encourage meaningful student mentor involvement?

Summary of Findings

The findings of this study demonstrated that the honors program peer mentoring program did promote self authorship for the peer mentors at Midwestern University.

- Each participant had a unique experience as a student mentor and were able to identify elements of self-authorship from their peer mentoring experience.

- Participants began as peer mentors by seeking out the opportunity and completing an application process.

- They learned about becoming a peer mentor from professors and friends and had the individual desire to give back.

- After completing three training sessions with the peer mentor leaders, the student mentor participants felt comfortable and prepared in leading a group of 8-10 freshmen honors students for the eight-week session.

- Participants learned through mentoring how to integrate their own individuality into their mentoring style.

- Relationally, the participants made strong connections with their mentees. Participants felt like role models as student mentors and made an ongoing relationship with their mentees a priority.

- Participants identified a wide range of significant personal outcomes from the whole experience.

On the whole, the findings supplied evidence to answer the grand tour question on the promotion of self-authorship through peer mentoring in the honors program.

Discussion

This study added to previous research on the self-authorship and peer mentoring. Specifically, Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship and Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) was used to relate the findings of this study to how the participants made meaning of their peer mentoring experience and promoted their personal self-authorship growth.

Research Question 1: How do student mentors make meaning of their peer mentoring experience? "Self-authorship evolves when the challenge to become self-authoring is present and is accompanied by sufficient support to help an individual make the shift to internal meaning making" (Baxter Magolda, 2001, 2008, p. 271; Kegan, 1994). A student's meaning making orientation is defined as "the structural lens used for interpreting the world, self, and relations with others" (King et al., 2009, p. 115). Terms used to describe major meaning orientations throughout the research are external, mixed and internal, with the internal orientation being most critical in self-authorship development (p. 111). These meaning making orientations help understand the characteristics of each student participant and how they "approach the world or decide what to believe, who they were, and how they related to others" (p. 111). Participants made meaning of their peer mentoring experience both externally and internally.

Four participants externally processed their motives to become a student peer mentor. Friends, professors, and other experiences on campus served as motivating factors to give back and serve as a student mentor. In particular, Kim mentioned a professor's encouragement for her to apply. "My teacher just kind of talked about how we can be honors peer mentors . . . so I filled out an application." Similarly, Jake was presented with the mentoring opportunity through a student organization. "Somebody at Honors Ambassadors mentioned that everybody should become a peer mentor so I'm like it would be kind of fun to talk to younger students."

Two participants described personally wanting to give back to the peer mentoring experience and illustrated a more internal meaning making orientation. Mentoring to Rob was his ability to "take students who were kind of lost when they came here to MU

and get them settled and give them an identity and give them a safe place so that they could start their journey at college." Like Rob, Larry mentioned his role to get the new honors students situated in their new environment for success.

Participants also made meaning of the peer mentoring experience by discussing a significant personal outcome from the experience. This illustrated how the participants "interpreted their learning experiences and what lessons they associated with the experience" (King et al., 2009, p. 111). Table 3 displays all of the participant's significant outcomes from the student peer mentoring experience (see p. 49). Noticeably, three students discussed leadership as a significant outcome from the student peer mentoring experience. Larry recognized the leadership role he was in as a mentor. "it [Peer mentoring] definitely takes a more leadership role to prepare and present this information to the freshmen. Also, taking the information they [honors program peer mentor leaders] give me and tailor it to my group of freshmen." Identifying himself as in a leadership role, Larry was confident in tailoring the information and presenting the details to students. Lily mentioned that the experience made her more confident to consider other leadership positions on campus.

> It was one of my first positions at MU as a leader – like in a leadership position, like me, actually being in charge of these nine Freshmen by myself, with no one watching me. And so that, like really gave me the confidence I needed to apply for more leadership positions.

By and large, participants identified the impact of being a part of something bigger. Rob mentioned his significant outcome was "to know that my time was actually worth something and actually made a difference was really fulfilling."

Research Question 2: What elements of self-authorship is the student mentor exhibiting? Self-authorship can develop before or during college and "should be a key

focus of a college education" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 282). Baxter Magolda (2008) described three particular and interrelated elements of self-authorship: trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments (p. 269). Depending on the student and their background, one or none of the elements of self-authorship are experienced by the 20s (p. 271). Participant responses in this study showed support of peer mentoring aiding in the development of the first self-authorship element: trusting the internal voice.

Five of the participants discussed specific events in their peer mentor experience that drew them to trust their internal voice. Baxter Magolda (2008) defined trusting the internal voice as: "A distinction between reality and one's reaction to it. They recognized that reality, or what happened in the world and their lives, was beyond their control, but their reactions to what happened was within their control" (p. 279). Participants were in mentoring situations that required them to make a decision and trust their reaction to reality. Larry exercised his internal voice by adding information he thought was missing from the curriculum one week:

> Student involvement and volunteering, things I had had more experience with I could more readily relate that to what I have learned. Like the outline talks about getting involved with research but it really doesn't tell you much on how, where, who to talk to, when to do that, so that was an experience I had to learn for myself that I could pass on to my mentees.

Kim found herself sick the last week of the program and unsure of how to handle the situation at first. She "chose to react to reality" by understanding the meeting could not be scheduled so emailing the mentees the information instead.

One of the participants understood the power of his internal voice and made sure to interject his individual stories throughout the program in efforts for the mentees to

relate better to the topics. Rob discussed an experience a friend of his had in detox and how that situation had affected him. If Rob would have just read off of the curriculum outline about the session's lesson on alcohol, the session may not have been as powerful. Making sure that individuality is exercised within the program requirements is critical not only for the quality of learning for the mentees, but also for the quality of the experience for the mentors. Rob saw that opportunity to discuss his personal experience and trust his internal voice.

A large part of trusting their internal voices is "heightening their ability to take ownership of how they made meaning of external events" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 279). The participants experienced a heightening effect in their abilities when they realized they were serving as role models in their roles as peer mentors. Four of the participants reacted to the reality of their peer mentor role by recognizing they were a role model and being conscience of their actions as a result. Cheryl mentioned, "I just think more about the things that I do and how other people will look up on them and knowing that I am an influence." Similarly to Cheryl, Kim stated "I've transformed to more of a role model." Both Cheryl and Kim made meaning of the external event (in this case the peer mentoring experience) by understanding their role and abilities as role models to the mentees with whom they worked.

Research Question 3: How can a student affairs practitioner enhance peer mentoring to promote self-authorship and encourage meaningful student mentor involvement? Baxter Magolda stated that a student could move from each self-authorship phase based on a time in their life where self-authorship is demanded, which are often situations that students face in college activities and decisions (Baxter Magolda,

2008, p. 273). Participants were placed in a situation to mentor 8-10 freshmen honors

students and decisions had to be made each week about discussion topics. The Learning

Partnerships Model (LPM) best illustrated the peer mentoring situation and how the

experience can be intentionally molded in the future to promote self-authorship.

Educational practice that encourages self-authorship development is based on the three

principles in the LPM. Below are examples of how participants employed the three

principles:

1. "Validating learners' capacity to know": The training portion of the peer

   mentoring process aided in this principle. Kim mentioned, "I think the

   training is really important, but a lot of it, you just kind of have to think on

   your feet. You have to be really outgoing and sometimes it depends on your

   personality."

2. "Situating learning in learners' experience": The student peer mentors were

   situated in a "learners' experience" by being assigned to peer mentor 8-10

   incoming, freshmen honors students for an eight-week time frame.

3. "Mutually constructing meaning" (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. xxi): The

   personal significant outcomes each student peer mentor described explained

   the meaning constructed after the experience. Rob saw his meaning as

   making a difference. "To know that my time was actually worth something

   and actually made a difference was really fulfilling." Jack interpreted the

   meaning differently. "Appreciation for people who have done it for me." No

   matter what the student peer mentor described as their personal significant

outcome, each outcome was a result of an experience constructed between a group of student mentees and a peer mentor.

The impact from the peer mentor training that the participants described validated the student peer mentors with the "capacity to know." The training gave each student mentor the guidelines for the once a week sessions over the eight-week period. Six of the participants identified training as positive and helpful. Rob was pleased with the materials and the expectations the training provided.

> What was expected of us, and the material is very, very comprehensive and gives us a lot of resources that we don't necessarily have to pass on to the mentees unless they ask. It's very good having things like that and guiding us to where we can find the answers to that.

Pam was also comforted by the training experience. "Everything was covered and it was never like I was out on a limb and not sure what to do about it. That was really helpful and comforting." Finally, Cheryl felt prepared. "There weren't any situations where I had no idea what to do. I was prepared." Training situated the student mentors with the capacity to know and learn throughout the peer mentor experience.

The second principle of the LPM is evident in the peer mentoring structure. Each student peer mentor was in charge of "situating learning" for others (the freshmen honors students) while being in a learning experience for themselves. Two participants offer information about not only what their mentees learned but also what they themselves learned from the "learning experience" of being a student peer mentor. For example, Lily admitted the mentoring experience taught her more about what the "university has to offer," claiming that she gained something valuable personally as a student mentor. Thus, the peer mentor situation provides "a context from which to bring their identity to learning" (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. xix).

The final principle of the LPM, mutually constructing meaning, is acknowledged as a "mutual process of exchanging perspectives to arrive at knowledge claims" (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. xix). The unique context of a peer mentor to mentee relationship is the opportunity to share and exchange perspectives. For example, Rob mentioned that he was able to mutually construct learning in the peer mentor experience from the conversations he had with the different mentees.

> It [The peer mentor experience] influenced me because it really challenged me to connect on different levels and different areas with different people. I can be a little bit of a pessimist and I had all sort of different—going in, I was just kind of assuming that everyone would like me and like the way that I did things. I realized as I started getting into it that they didn't dislike me, but that sometimes I had to state things a little different way or go about things from a little bit of a different angle. So, it really helped me a lot in figuring out different ways to communicate different things to different kinds of people.

Rob was in a situation where he could learn first hand how to interact with students that were different from him. Cheryl also brought up a point about mutually constructing knowledge through telling her personal stories.

> I think about how the younger years view the decisions that I've made. And, you know, sharing personal stories of like being on campus and stuff. It's kind of like, oh, I probably shouldn't have done like that kind of stuff when I was a freshman. Here are things not to do because you're not going to like the consequences.

Despite the difficulty Cheryl may have had sharing her personal views, she recognized that the freshmen could learn from her and at least be aware of the potential consequences. She also had the opportunity to reflect and construct personal meaning from those experiences she shared.

Implications

The findings of this study indicated that the honors program peer mentoring experience promotes self-authorship at Midwestern University. The results add to the

growing body of literature on applications for self-authorship development in the college setting.

While the training was seen as a positive experience by a majority of the participants, the peer mentor training curriculum was also mentioned to be lacking in preparing the mentors to improvise or conduct other activities that weren't mentioned in the curriculum. Pizzolato identified academic and student affairs professionals as instrumental in "pushing students to develop their own beliefs and help them see themselves as capable of making sense of complexity and their experience" (2006, p. 33). Therefore, one of the conclusions is the student affairs professionals involved in the honors program peer mentoring program should evaluate the current training structure. If promoting self-authorship and a deeper understanding of identity for the mentor is a shared goal, the training should be structured to foster the three principles from the Learning Partnerships Model (LPM). For example, student peer mentors could be validated as learners' with the capacity to know by more intentional activities completed in training, like role-playing and ice breaker practice. The role-playing activity would allow the student peer mentors to practice being situated in learner's experience. Finally, the third principle could be incorporated in training by encouraging the student peer mentors to learn from each other and to ask the mentees their opinions on the weekly activities.

Participants in this study identified the pleasure in having the leadership opportunity while serving as a peer mentor. Literature on self-authorship identifies developmentally effective experiences as "Experiences that both challenged students' beliefs and provided a strong support structure for exploring new territory that was

intellectually or emotionally challenging" (King et al., 2009, p. 116). Creating new and more leadership opportunities in student organizations and academic departments could be a strategy for promoting self-authorship in the future by providing a student with the opportunity to supervise a project and/or a group of students through an organization. An organization could create more leadership roles in order to create more opportunity for involvement. Overall, departments and organizations looking to promote self-authorship should look into creating more leadership opportunities for students to position them to explore new territory and be intellectually and emotionally challenged.

Due to the fact that "adult life requires the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one's own beliefs in order to form judgments," there is pressure in higher education environments to create settings to support identity and self-authorship development (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143). Honors programs should share the information about their peer mentoring program and infusing the LPM in the training with other departments on campus, in order to continue to identify developmentally effective experiences for promoting self-authorship. Baxter Magolda and Blaich (2007) offer questions student affairs and academic professionals can ask themselves when evaluating their experiences. Those questions are:

1. What characteristics do your students bring to your environment?

2. What experiences do you offer?

3. How can these experiences be tailored to students who are externally defined to promote their growth?

4. How can these experiences be tailored to students who use a mixture of external and internal self-definitions to promote their growth? (Baxter Magolda & Blaich, 2007)

Through these four questions, understanding the meaning of internally and externally defined is critical. Externally defined reflects the "passive acceptance of societal views" (Tewari & Alvarez, 2009, p. 178). Internally defined is identified by a "personal conscious choice" (p. 178). These questions can help the honors program reach out to departments and convey the importance of developmentally effective practices (King et al., 2009, p. 117).

Finally, participants in the study mentioned that relationships with their mentees was a priority but said little about working with fellow mentors throughout the process. Institutions of higher learning should look into how students support other students in their self-authorship development by encouraging team work and collaboration. For example, "research evidence suggests that adults who experience oppression and marginalization develop self-authorship prior to or during their 20s" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 271). Institutions should intentionally create experiences for students from all levels of self-authorship development to come together.

Future Research

The findings of this study added to previous qualitative research on applications of self-authorship in higher education. With an identified lack of literature in types of practices consistent with the LPM in non-classroom settings, this study added a new non-classroom situation (peer mentoring) which can be considered to promote self-authorship (Pizzolato, 2006, p. 34). However, more quantitative research would be beneficial to

measuring the progress made by students in self-authorship through particular activities. Jane Pizzolato (2007) developed the first ever quantitative measure of self-authorship and this could be used after reliability is reached with the measure to assess self-authorship development in student activities (p. 33). Pizzolato (2007) stated that just using qualitative research for self-authorship research is difficult.

> Although these methods have provided rich descriptions of practices designed to support movement toward self-authorship and students' experiences in them, it is hard to determine if progress toward self-authorship has been made and what type of progress it is. (p. 33)

Using the quantitative measure of self-authorship could potentially add a new dimension to future research and allow researchers to easily determine the progress participants have made towards self-authorship. Ultimately, a mixed methods study may be ideal to capture all perspectives of the self-authoring process.

This study focused on eight participants that completed their first year as a peer mentor. But what about the student peer mentors who were in their second or third year as a peer mentor? Did their more extensive peer mentoring experiences and trainings promote their self-authorship even further? Demographic information, such as ethnicity or socioeconomic status was not considered in this study. Would those statuses influence their experience as a student peer mentor and ultimately their self-authorship development?

Different self-authorship developmental scores (or progress) may result if experiences from other contexts are considered (King et al., 2009, p. 116). In other words, multiple college experiences and activities can be effective in developing self-authorship. This study focused on eight participants who had participated in the honors program peer mentoring program as student peer mentors but what about those students

who do not have the opportunity to participate as student mentors? What activities support the self-authorship development of honors students who are not student peer mentors? A qualitative study comparing peer mentoring experiences of those honors students who participated as peer mentors to those who did not participate in peer mentoring would provide insight into the different pathways college honors students begin developing self-authorship.

Finally, future research should also focus on participant backgrounds when using the LPM. While all participants appeared White to the researcher in this study, the researcher was unable to ascertain if they were Hispanic or Multiracial. Asking more demographic questions in the future would be advantageous, creating a more thorough context for readers and consumers of the research.

Conclusion

The Learning Partnerships Model "holds substantial promise for transforming higher education to promote self-authorship during college" (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. 61). Baxter Magolda challenged researchers in her scholarly works to study self-authorship with the Learning Partnerships Model across paradigms and in different contexts (p. 89). This study probed a new context for self-authorship development by exploring the role that peer mentoring in a university honors program played in self-authorship development for the student mentors at a large research Midwestern University. Self-authorship was identified through participant responses identified in the three actions grounded in Baxter Magolda's (2001) Learning Partnerships Model: (a) validate students as knowers, (b) situate learning in students' experiences, and (c) define learning as mutually constructed meaning. This study showed that the honors program

peer mentoring experience positively influenced the development of self-authorship for the participants involved based on the LPM. The participants were "validated as knowers" by being selected as a student peer mentor and trained appropriately. The participants were "situated in a learning experience" by being placed with incoming freshmen student mentees for an eight-week period. Finally, the mentors were able to "construct meaning" by allowing the students to mold the mentor experience with their own individual strengths and personality. Evidence of all three actions or principles of the LPM were found through the interviews with eight student peer mentors at a large research Midwestern University.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

Printer Friendly Version

Sent By: IRB NUgrant System
Sent On: 10/07/2011 04:14 pm
Reference: Workflow - 72150
Subject: Official Approval Letter for IRB project #12086
Message: October 7, 2011

Samantha Mosier
Department of Educational Administration
339 Fletcher Ave. Apt. 6 Lincoln, NE 68521

Richard Hoover
Department of Educational Administration
119 TEAC, UNL, 68588-0360

IRB Number: 20111012086 EX
Project ID: 12086
Project Title: The Affect of Peer Mentoring on Self-Authorship

Dear Samantha:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as Exempt Category 2.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 10/07/2011.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (file with -Approved.pdf in the file name). Please use this f to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
* Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
* Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
* Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to th risk/benefit ratio of the research;
* Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
* Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB Guidelines and you should notify the IR immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticip problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB

Appendix B

Institutional Approval Letter

Nebraska
UNIVERSITY OF
Lincoln

September 12, 2011

Dear NU Grant,

I give permission to Sammi Mosier to use information provided by Ann Koopmann regarding 2011 Honors Program Peer Mentors. This information will include name, major, college and current contact information to complete her study.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Patrice Berger
Director, University Honors Program
Professor of History

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Identification of Project:

A study of the affect of peer mentoring on Self-Authorship development using Marcia Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship.

Purpose of the Research:
This is a research project that will be used to explore the affects on Self-Authorship development of students who have participated in the   Honors Program Peer Mentoring Program for two to three years. You were selected for this project because you have participated as a peer mentor in the program for at least one year. The Honors Program Academic Advisor .
provided this information to me. The research will be conducted October through November 2011. The research will lead to a thesis, which should be completed by April 2012.

Procedures:
A one-on-one interview will be conducted with you in order for you to describe your experiences as a peer mentor in the   Honors Program. The interview will be audio-taped and will last no longer than 60 minutes and will be conducted at an agreed upon location (, or a study room in   t Residence Hall).

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks associated with this study.

Benefits:
This interview will allow you to talk about your experiences at   as a peer mentor. The results may be used in training of peer mentors in the future.

Confidentiality:
The information you provide will be used by the primary investigator in this study to write a master's thesis. Your name and information will be kept confidential and an alias will be assigned to the transcripts of the interview and in the thesis in order to maintain your confidentiality.

Observations made by the primary investigator during the interview may be used to describe findings in the research. The data will be stored on the primary investigator's personal computer and will be deleted two years after the collection. Audio recordings will be erased following verification of transcriptions.

Results may be published in a professional publication or potentially presented at a professional conference.

_____ Participant's Initials

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

Compensation:
There will not be any compensation.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:
If you have any questions about the research, you may contact the investigators at any time. Contact information is listed below. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or to report any concerns, you may contact the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965.

Freedom to Withdraw:
Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time throughout the interview. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your relationship with the investigators or the

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ Initial if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Signature of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Research Participant   *Date*

Name and Phone number of investigator(s):
Sammi Mosier, Principal Investigator   Phone: (719) 510-1028
Richard Hoover, Secondary Investigator   Phone: (402) 472-3058

Appendix D

Recruitment Email

Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

My name is Sammi Mosier and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. I have also been a peer mentor and a peer mentor leader in the Honors Program peer mentoring program.

I am currently conducting research for a master's thesis and I need your help! The topic being studied is the effect of peer mentoring on a student's self-authorship development at Midwestern University. You are a student who has been selected for this study because you have served as a Honors Program peer mentor and are between the ages of 19-21.

A one-on-one interview that will last no longer than 45 minutes to one hour will be conducted in order to describe your peer mentoring experience, and how your experiences may have affected your self-authorship development. The interview will take place in an agreed upon location such as the Union, Multicultural Center, or a study room in the Honors Residence Hall.

Would you be willing to be a part of this study?! Please contact me at (719) 510-1028 or sammimosier@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Sammi Mosier
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix E

Follow-Up Email

Reminder Email for Interview

Dear _____,

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my study! Your interview date, time, and location is:

TIME
DATE
LOCATION

Attached is an informed consent form you will need to sign in order to participate in this study.We will discuss it in more detail prior to your interview. Please set aside an estimated time of 45 minutes to one hour for this interview.

Please contact me at (719) 510-1028 or sammimosier@gmail.com if you have any questions. I am very excited to meet you and discuss your experiences as a peer mentor!

Sincerely,

Sammi Mosier
Graduate Student
Educational Administration

Appendix F

Interview Script

Interview Script

      Thank you for agreeing to meet with me! My name is Sammi Mosier and I am a graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. Before we begin visiting about your honors program peer mentoring experience, let's first review this informed consent form. I will need your signature before we can proceed with the interview.

[WALK THROUGH PURPOSE OF RESEARCH, PROCEDURES, RISKS AND/OR DISCOMFORTS, BENEFITS, CONFIDENTIALITY, COMPENSATION].

If you agree to this point, please initial here.

[WALK THROUGH OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS, AND FREEDOM TO WITHDRAW].

Do not hesitate to stop me at any point throughout the interview to ask questions or to ask me to clarify.

[WALK THROUGH CONSENT, RIGHT TO RECEIVE A COPY].

Please initial here if you agree to be audio recorded. Please sign and date here if you agree to be a part of this study. Thank you for signing! Here is a copy of the informed consent form for your records. Let's get started!

QUESTIONS

This concludes the interview. Thank you so much for your time and answers. I really appreciate your help with my study! Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions and look for an email about the focus group in the next couple of weeks.

Appendix G

Interview Protocol

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Questions are derived from each of the four phases of Self-Authorship development based on Dr. Marcia Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship.

1. How did you get involved in peer mentoring in the honors program?

   Probe: Why were you motivated to mentor in the honors program?

2. What does it mean to you to be a peer mentor?

3. In what ways has this peer mentoring experience influenced you?

   Probe: In what ways have you changed from when you started mentoring to where you are today?

   Probe: What caused these changes?

4. Describe a particular experience as a peer mentor in which you found your role to be difficult, unclear, or hard to fulfill.

   Probe: How did you deal with this challenge?

   Probe: How did your training as a peer mentor help you in this situation?

   Probe: If you were to be faced with the situation again, would you handle things differently? How?

5. Describe a particular experience as a peer mentor in which you had to go off book or had to deal with.

   Probe: How did your training as a peer mentor help you in this situation?

   Probe: Were you comfortable solving this problem yourself, without assistance?

6. Were relationships with your mentees a priority for you during your time as a mentor? (If yes, then continue)

   Probe: Did you enjoy getting to know and working with your mentees? How many mentees have you worked with?

   Probe: Did your mentees develop relationships with each other?

   Probe: Do you still keep in contact with your former mentees? What feelings does this ongoing relationship generate for you?

7. Were relationships with the peer mentor leaders and Ann Koopmann a priority during your time as a mentor?

   Probe: What kind of relationship did you have you the peer mentor leaders and the honors program advisor through this experience?

8. Did you work with other mentors to coordinate events? (If yes, continue)

   Probe: What kind of event did you and the other mentor plan?

9. If you had to single out one significant outcome from being a mentor, what would it be?

   Probe: Did that make you feel accomplished? Did that make you want to come back and mentor again for another year? (If yes, then continue)

   Probe: Why do you think that significant outcome gave you those feelings?

10. From your perspective, how did the mentees respond to you being their mentor?

    Probe: Did your mentees enjoy all of the activities you planned for each week, including the icebreaker?

11. Relative to your whole mentor experience, what would you do again and what would you do differently in your approach to this process?

    Probe: Were you provided with appropriate training? (If no, then continue or if they answer yes, but with some improvements)

    Probe: How would you have changed the way you were prepared?

10. Is there anything you would like to add about your peer mentoring experience?

Appendix H

Phone Script

Phone Script for Recruitment of Participants

Hello _____,

My name is Sammi Mosier and I am a Masters degree graduate student in the Educational Administration Department. I am calling to see if you are willing to participate in my study with the Honors Program peer mentoring program. Are you interested in hearing more? (If yes, then continue)

I am currently conducting research for a master's thesis and I need your help! The topic being
studied is the effect of peer mentoring on a student's Self-Authorship development at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You are a student who has been selected for this study because
you have served as a Honors Program peer mentor and are between the ages of 19-21.

A one-on-one interview, that will last no longer than 45 minutes to one hour, will be conducted in
order to describe your peer mentoring experience, and how your experiences may have affected your Self-Authorship development. The interview will take place in an agreed upon location such as the Nebraska Union, Gaughn Multicultural Center, or a study room in Neihardt Residence Hall.

Would you be willing to be a part of this study? (if yes, then continue)

What is your email address?

When would be a good time to conduct the interview? I will send confirmation at a later date. Thanks for your time and I look forward to working with you!

Appendix I

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Statement

Confidentiality Agreement
Transcription Services

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Sammi Mosier related to her study on The Effect of Peer Mentoring on Self-Authorship. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Sammi Mosier;

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;

4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Sammi Mosier in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) _____

Transcriber's signature_____

Date _____

Appendix J

List of Codes

THEMES AND CODES

1. Giving back to the university honors program

Impact mentors can have on students:
To me, my peer mentoring experience means that I was able to take students who were kind of lost when they came here to UNL and get them settled and give them an identity and give them a safe place so that they could start their journey at college. (Rob)

Getting mentees situated:
"Just helping them get situated, like for freshmen, getting them situated at the university." (Larry)

Encouragement to apply to be a mentor:
"…my teacher just kind of talked about how we can be honors peer mentors… so I filled out an application." (Kim)

"Somebody at Honors Ambassadors mentioned that everybody should become a peer mentor so I'm like it would be kind of fun to talk to younger students." (Jake)

Past positive experiences in the program:
I decided to get involved in peer mentoring because I - - as an incoming Freshman I had a peer mentor who was absolutely awesome. She did a great job making me feel comfortable with the Honors Program. And, I really liked the way that the Honors Program had that program for me and I wanted to give back to other students that could - - - so I just wanted to give back to them because it was such a positive experience form. (Rob)

Peer mentoring stuck out to me because when I was going through the program, my peer mentor was an English major. She wasn't very helpful in answering questions for me about my major and specific questions there. So I figured I would do a favor to the incoming freshmen and be a resource to them. (Larry)

New benefits the mentees would gain:

> Adjustment and security (Rob and Larry)
> Providing new perspectives (Lily and Cheryl)

2. Significant personal outcomes after the peer ment

Participants	Identified Outcome
Kim	"…felt like I had a sense of importance."
Lily	"I could be a really good leader in the honors program."
Cheryl	"…being able to say I've taught these students."
Pam	"She (a mentee) came in as undeclared, but then throughout the weeks, she had a more clearer picture of what she liked. I helped with one of the pieces of the puzzle."
Rob	"… to know that my time was actually worth something and actually made a difference was really fulfilling."
Jake	"I felt pretty good that everybody kind of liked being together."
Jack	"Appreciation for people who have done it for me."
Larry	"the self-satisfaction that I helped some freshmen get set in their college career – giving them very valuable information that they'll hopefully go on and do something with."

   a. I was challenged

Positive challenge (Rob)

"It gave me an appreciation for, or made me realize how difficult it is to organize something for people who don't realize how important it is." (Jack)

   b. Leadership opportunities

Experience in leading groups (Jake)

"… it [Peer mentoring] definitely takes a more leadership role to prepare and present this information to the freshmen. Also, taking the information they [honors program peer mentor leaders] give me and tailor it to my group of freshmen." (Larry)

Looking for other leadership opportunities on campus

…it was one of my first positions at UNL as a leader – like in a leadership position, like me, actually being in charge of these nine Freshmen by myself, with no one watching me.

And so that, like really gave me the confidence I needed to apply for more leadership positions. (Lily)

c. Looking back now

Taking old mentors advice (Cheryl and Lily)

Making them proud (Kim)

3. I am a role model

Transforming into a role model
"I looked up to my peer mentor when I was here and I feel like, hopefully, you know, they look up to me and so, definitely I think I've transformed to more of a role model." (Kim)

Influence (Cheryl)

Caring for mentees
I sort of have this sense of like protection, you know, of like someone in the honors program kind of authority, but not really, but sort of just knows a lot about this stuff and so that could sort of be of guidance and so, I just kind of see myself as more like a leader now that needs to help people. (Lily)

Sharing personal views (Cheryl and Rob)

4. Training Impact

Training was affirming
"A lot of training kind of just reaffirmed the other things that I have learned from doing stuff." (Jake)

Training was positive and helpful
…what was expected of us, and the material is very, very comprehensive and gives us a lot of resources that we don't necessarily have to pass on to the mentees unless they ask. It's very good having things like that and guiding us to where we can find the answers to that. (Rob)

"Everything was covered and it was never like I was out on a limb and not sure what to do about it. That was really helpful and comforting." (Pam)

Formal training can't teach everything
I think the training is really important, but a lot of it, you just kind of have to think on your feet. Sometimes training can't always help you. You have to be really outgoing and sometimes it depends on your personality. (Kim)

"They can' teach you how to tailor it because that will be individual to you and your group and what they need."   (Larry)

Training experience as a barrier (Jake and Jack)

Separating personal beliefs from mentoring (Rob and Pam)

5. Improvising during peer mentor meetings

Unplanned events (Jack and Kim)
…there was one time I went to give blood and I got really, really sick and like couldn't go to a meeting and it was like one of our last meetings and a bunch of kids had tests and we couldn't re-schedule it. So, I kind of just had to like give them their information through an email. (Kim)

Interjecting personal style and personality (Lily, Larry and Rob)
More than just going over the curriculum, we sort of talked about ways to every peer mentor experience different. And so, by doing different types of icebreakers and by – just sort of just adding your own personality into how you taught and how you interacted with your students, like they sort of taught us about that too. (Lily)

6. Relationships with peer mentees

Relationships with mentees (Kim, Cheryl)
…your relationships should be like your number one thing. Because some of them are coming here with no friends. You know, this is an opportunity to, like, make a friend which is like a huge deal and I want to be someone that after the eight weeks – if they have a problem, they can still call me. You know, it shouldn't end at that period. It should a four-year long deal. (Kim)

Getting mentees connected
 "After we spent time talking about the information for that week, we just spent time talking about how to get involved and what that would look like as a freshman in college." (Larry)

"I did try to get to know my mentees a little bit, like several of them were political science majors and that's what I am so I tried to tell them about political science opportunities that I had." (Jake)

Maintaining mentee relationships after the program ends (Cheryl, Pam, and Larry)

Table 2

Final Themes

Themes
1. Giving Back to the University Honors Program
2. Significant Personal Outcomes After Serving as a Peer Mentor
3. I am a Role Model
4. Training Impact on the Peer Mentor Experience
5. Improvising During Peer Mentor Meetings
6. Relationships with Peer Mentees

Appendix K

External Audit Attestation

External Audit Attestation
Christine K. Timm, Ph.D.

<u>Audit Attestation</u>

Sammi Moser requested that I complete a methodological audit of her qualitative case study thesis entitled "Creating Experiences that Matter: A Qualitative Study Exploring Honors Program Peer Mentoring and Self-Authorship Development." The audit was conducted in February and March of 2012. The purpose of the audit was to determine the extent to which the results of the study are trustworthy.

The audit was based on materials that Sammi provided for review. These materials provided evidence for the research process and were the basis for determining the extent to which the thesis findings were supported by the data. The following materials were provided primarily via email:

- IRB protocol submission, recruitment procedures, and interview protocol
- Electronic media files of participant interviews, each labeled with participant number.
- Transcriptions of all participants, with researcher notes and emerging themes
- Documents indicating codes and themes derived from interviews
- Draft version of thesis chapters one through four
- Complete version of thesis chapters one through five, references and appendices
- Printed and signed copies of informed consent documents
- Signed transcriptionist confidentiality statement

<u>Audit Procedure</u>
The audit consisted of the following steps:

1. Initial meeting to discuss project and possible audit role
2. Receipt of requested files as noted above
3. Review of IRB protocol submission
4. Listen to random sample of media files to ascertain accuracy to print transcriptions and note possible emerging themes
5. Review of random sample of transcriptions with independent coding to note possible emerging themes
6. Review of researcher identified themes and comparison to themes from auditor review and coding
7. Read first draft of thesis manuscript with special attention to the consistency in purpose, questions and methods between the IRB proposal.
8. Read final version of complete thesis.
9. Write and submit the signed attestation to the researcher.

The below information details the auditor procedure and findings.

Initial meeting

      Sammi was a graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a participant in the Student Affairs cohort. We interacted in professional capacities at different times during her graduate studies. In late February, we met specifically to discuss the thesis and her interest in an external audit. Following the meeting, Sammi delivered research materials in a combination of print and electronic form.

Review of proposal

      The IRB protocol submission was reviewed to gain an understanding of the original intention of the study and to later compare against the actual methods used in the study. The research was conducted as described in the protocol submission, with the only exception being the final research was with eight participants instead of the proposed six. The researcher explained this change in the thesis manuscript.

Raw Data

      Transcriptions. The auditor reviewed files containing transcriptions from the recorded interviews of all eight participants. The transcriptions noted the interactions between the researcher and the participants. The auditor randomly selected four of the eight transcriptions and independently noted codes and emerging themes on a separate document while reading each transcription.

      Media files. The auditor listened to the media files of four participant interviews and compared the content to the printed transcription. The transcriptions accurately reflected the interview content.

      Coding documents. The researcher submitted a summary file of codes, themes, and subthemes. She also submitted her copies of the transcriptions with written codes and reflections of emerging themes.

Identification of Themes

      The researcher's identified themes were compared to the coding by the auditor. The themes were consistent.

Thesis Manuscript

      The thesis manuscript was reviewed to ensure that each chapter consistently noted the purpose of the study, that the methodology was consistent with the informed consent, and that the findings were supported by literature and participant statements. The manuscript was well supported by documentation and followed consistent processes.

Conclusion

Having reviewed the materials outlined in this audit, I submit the following conclusions regarding the process that was used and the product that was produced:

Process. It is the auditor's opinion that the process of the study was consistent with accepted qualitative research practices. The researcher fully described her process, noted study limitations, and established a basis of understanding allowing others to replicate this study. The focus of the study remained consistent with the proposed focus. The stated purpose and major questions remained consistent.

Product.   It is the auditor's assessment that the trustworthiness of the study can be established. The findings are supported by the data. The researcher carefully designed the study and employed several verification strategies (member checking, clarification of researcher bias, and external review). The researcher provided a background of each of the participants and a context as to their selection and involvement in this study. After recoding the transcript, I conclude there is support from the data for the themes presented.

Attested to by Christine K. Timm this 18 day of March 2012.

Christine K. Timm, Ph.D.

Associate Director, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Career Services
Assistant Professor/Courtesy Faculty, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Educational Psychology Department