5-2015

Making the Difference: Exploring the Perceptions of Student Affairs Administrators and Their Mentoring Relationships

Paublo Martinez Jr.
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, pjmart26@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss

Part of the Higher Education Administration Commons

Making the Difference: Exploring the Perceptions of Student Affairs Administrators and

Their Mentoring Relationships

by

Paublo Martinez, Jr.

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Major: Educational Administration

Under the Supervision of Professor Corey Rumann

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 2015

Making the Difference: Exploring the Perceptions of Student Affairs Administrators and

Their Mentoring Relationships

Paublo Martinez, Jr., M. A.

University of Nebraska, 2015

Adviser: Corey Rumann

This qualitative research study explored the perceptions of student affairs administrators at a Midwest institution, and how they perceived their mentoring relationships with undergraduate students. The study investigated the perceptions of six participants as they reflected on past and present mentoring relationships, and the impact the relationships had on them during their time in student affairs. Based on the analysis of data collected using a semi-structured interview with each participant, four themes emerged that described the participants as mentors: relationship builders, professional contacts, encouragers, and self-reflectors. Throughout the research process it was apparent that the participants involved in this study truly want to make a difference in the lives of students.

In addition, the study helped identify ways student affairs administrators can be mentors to undergraduate students. The implications of the research challenge administrators to engage in professional development opportunities and become involved in areas where students are most present.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my wife, Kristen. Without your continued support, encouragement, and love, this thesis would not have been completed. Marrying you towards the end of this graduate program was the best decision I ever made. I finally have you by my side and no longer will we have to be in a long distance relationship. Because of all we have done, and all that we will do, I dedicate this work to you!

like to be an administrator who cares in making a difference in the lives of all students. Also, thanks for having an open door and allowing me to eat all of your chocolate!

To Seth Barnes! That is all I have to say. Honestly, thank you for hosting me during graduate interviews, pushing me to attend this program, and being my big brother during your time as a second year.

I do not think I would have been able to survive this process and graduate school in general if it was not for the friendships I made during my first week of school. To the seven best friends: Brian, Zac, Brock, Quint, Kim, Sam, and Shannon, we did it! Thanks for "Reading Group Sundays" and being my support while I was there, and even when I left. I am still so grateful that you traveled to Texas to my wedding. You all mean so much to me.

To my family as well as my sister and brother-in-law, thank you for your constant support and always loving me. I am blessed by having parents and siblings like you. Thank you for allowing me to follow my dreams, and embarking on new journeys. Also, thank you to my in-laws. I appreciate your support from the beginning.

Once again, I am extremely thankful for my wife Kristen. Thanks for listening to me whine and complain about this work, but always pushing me to get it done. I love knowing that no matter what, you will always be proud of me. I love you!

Finally, and certainly most importantly, I want to thank God for blessing me with all of these opportunities and important people he placed in my life. You gave me strength when I thought I could not do anymore. You have never given up on me.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Chapter 1: Introduction

Hillary, a participant in this study, shared this tale with me because she felt it represents what being a mentor means to her:

> There was an old man walking down the shoreline one morning. In the distance from when he looked up, he saw what he thought was a dancer – arms and legs reaching into the ocean. As he moved closer to the young woman, rather than dancing, he noticed she was picking up starfish off the sand and throwing them back into the water. Coming closer he stopped and asked her what she was doing. She responded by saying that she was throwing the starfish back into the water so when the sun came out they would not burn. The old man looked around the shoreline and said to the young woman, "There are hundreds of starfish, how can you possibly make a difference?" The young woman reached down, picked up another starfish, threw it into the water and said, "It made a difference to that one."

From the woman's viewpoint, she felt it was her duty to make a difference for each starfish. Though she was not affecting the masses, affecting one starfish truly mattered to her.

Wickman and Siodin (1997) stated that the role of mentors dates back to Greek mythology with Odysseus and his son, Telemachus. During the time Odysseus went off to war, he entrusted the care of Mentor, a close friend, to look after his son. For 10 years, Mentor cared for Telemachus while Odysseus was gone. He taught Telemachus lessons, gave advice, and guided him during the time of adolescence. From then on, "the word mentor – meaning a wise and trusted teacher or counselor – has been with us ever since"

(Wickman & Siodin, 1997, p. 1). Since the beginning of Greek mythology to now, mentoring has been an act of guidance in order to make change for an individual. "A mentor is someone who helps us learn the ways of the world, someone who has our best interests at heart. A mentor is a friend who gives time and knowledge without asking for anything in return." (Wickman & Siodin, 1997, p. 2).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate how student affairs administrators at a large, public land-grant institution in the Midwest perceive mentoring and their mentoring relationships with undergraduate students. Using semi-structured interviews data were collected to help understand how participants made meaning of their mentoring roles and the influence they had on mentees through those relationships. Four themes emerged from the data which depicted participants' collective experiences as mentors: relationship builders, professional contacts, encouragers, and self-reflectors.

Research Questions

This qualitative study explored the following primary research question: How do student affairs administrators at a large, public, research institution in the Midwest perceive and define their mentoring relationships with undergraduate students? The study also explored a secondary research question during the interview-based approach: What are student affairs administrators perceptions of how mentoring can influence the college experience?

Research Design

This was a qualitative research study that allowed the perceptions and views of mentoring to be heard from the perspectives of student affairs administrators. The

population and purpose of this study were chosen because of my personal experience as a student and how much of an impact mentors had on my undergraduate and graduate education experience. Six participants were interviewed for this study: three men and three women. All of the participants were student affairs administrators at the same large, public, research institution located in the Midwest.

The interview protocol used in this study allowed administrators to express their thoughts and reflect on their own ideas of what it is to be a mentor. Each participant was interviewed within an hour time frame. Once interviewed, transcriptions were completed by the researcher and reviewed by the participants. Afterwards, data analysis was completed in order to fully understand the responses of the individuals and to identify themes.

Definition of Terms

Mentee. A student who is advised by a mentor and given knowledge, advice, and opportunities from the mutually beneficial relationship; also seen as a "protégé" (Johnson, 2002).

Mentor. "A mentor provides emotional support, information, and advice; shares values; facilitates access to key networks; motivates; is a role model; protects; and provides the type of interactions that allow for the transfer of knowledge and skills" (Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez & Ballou, 2002, p. 90).

Mentoring. The process whereby two people are engaged in a mutually beneficial relationship where advice is given and received in order to better the position in life.

Student Affairs. Student affairs is the aspect of learning outside of the higher education classroom by providing programs and services directly related to the institution (Chambers, 1987).

Student Affairs Administrators. Student affairs administrators are personnel associated and employed specifically in the field of student affairs (i.e., coordinators, assistant directors, and directors). These individuals also coordinate and supervise the programs associated with student affairs departments.

Significance

This study focused primarily on the perceptions of student affairs administrators and their role as mentors for undergraduate students. From their past experiences and the relationships they have created from their jobs as administrators, participants shared why mentorships are crucial to the personal and professional development of not only students but administrators as well.

There is ample literature regarding mentorship and how valuable it is for students (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011; Coles, 2011; Darwin & Palmer, 2009). There is, however, a gap and a small amount of literature regarding mentoring relationships focused on student affairs administrators. In this instance, it is important that this work fill the gap because it will inform student affairs professionals about the benefits of mentoring relationships.

The findings of this study will hopefully influence personnel in student affairs to find opportunities to create mentoring relationships with students at their institutions. From my perspective, once they begin a mentoring relationship, they will build relationships that challenge, support, and encourage students to succeed at the institution.

The findings of this study help understand how student affairs administrators can make a difference in the lives of their mentees by being part of a mentoring relationship.

Delimitations

This study focused on the mentoring experiences of six participants who are student affairs administrators at the same institution of higher education. Data collection was limited primarily to one semi-structured interview with each of these participants. Additionally, this study focused solely on student affairs administrators and did not include student affairs professionals' who are not in administrative positions.

Limitations

Time restrictions must be considered a limitation for this study. With most graduate programs, a final deadline must be set in order to complete a thesis. This project needed to be completed in a specific time frame in order to meet the requirements for graduation. Additionally, data were gathered from six participants at one institution so readers should not generalize the findings to all student affairs administrators at all institutional types. With more time follow-up interviews or the recruitment of additional participants at different institutions may have been possible. Finally, my positionality as the researcher may be considered a limitation because my personal experiences with mentoring likely influenced my interpretation of participants' experiences. However, I believe these experiences enhanced the study and helped me more effectively conceptualize and design the research process.

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the idea of mentorship dates back to the time of Greek mythology with the connotation of a mentor being seen as a "wise and kindly elder, a

surrogate parent, trusted adviser, an educator, and guide" (Colley, 2001, p. 182). This study examined the perceptions of student affairs administrators and their role as mentors for undergraduate students. The literature review in chapter two provides a more detailed review of past research on mentoring. In addition, formal and informal mentoring, mentor benefits, and theoretical approaches are introduced in the literature review. The research methodology is presented in chapter three which includes a description of the data collection and analysis processes. Chapter four presents the themes that emerged from data analysis: relationship builders, professional contacts, encouragers, and self-reflectors**.** Chapter five includes a discussion of the findings and connects them with the literature as well as identifies implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and limitations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to focus on the roles of student affairs administrators in their mentoring relationships with undergraduate students. The purpose of this literature review is to provide themes and examples within the realms of student affairs that will provide context for the reader. The term "mentor" as a whole can be seen through many different lenses. To begin, what identifies a student affairs professional as a mentor?

Jacobi described a mentor as a "non-parental adult who take a special interest in the lives of youths. They step outside their boundaries of a typical role to take special interest in a young person, offering advice and support to help the young person find his or her way in the social environment" (as cited in Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, Jr., 2007, p. 346).

They act as a resource and source of support for younger individuals. Understanding this definition of a mentor will help readers understand how mentoring works with undergraduate students.

In order to understand the foundations of why student affairs administrators agree to become mentors, this literature review will bring to the forefront a brief history of student affairs and mentoring in general, the role of mentors in student affairs, as well as the concept of informal and formal mentoring, benefits of being a mentor, and an overview of theoretical approaches that helped guide the development of this study.

History of Mentoring

Mentoring at Institutions

Combining student affairs and the idea of mentorship dates back to the beginning of higher education. During the Colonial period and during the formation of institutions of higher education, educators were not only seen as faculty and tutors geared toward the academic mission, but they were also expected to be a part of the co-curricular activities in which the students took part (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Colonial college presidents and the faculty acted *in loco parentis* to ensure student social, moral, and intellectual development. Once the idea of higher education became more popular and grew throughout time, the roles of presidents and faculty began to grow. Colleges were then in need of student personnel administrators to handle the student unrest, discipline issues, and housing administration the faculty and presidents could no longer manage themselves (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Between 1900 and 1950 the concept of student life began to develop and the experiences outside of the classroom became more apparent.

The concept of student personnel work has changed throughout time. Administrative personnel were seen as the caretakers who looked after the welfare needs of students. Administrators were "expected to serve in the place of parents, ensuring that students adhered to rules that would continue their development and encourage behaviors and values appropriate for college individuals" (Dungy & Gordon, 2011, p. 67). With enrollment increasing and the request for more staff, personnel administrators were more focused on the guidance of students rather than their management and their role of making sure they were behaving in a manner appropriate for the institution. To sum up the idea of student affairs and personnel associated with the university, "student affairs

educators must be concerned with the learning and success of the students in their charge, making the education of the whole student at the forefront of their daily work on campus" (Dungy & Gordon., 2011, p. 68).

History of Mentoring in Student Affairs

Based on the brief history described at the beginning of this literature review, one can see the duties associated with college personnel consisted of frequent interaction with the students at the institution. The frequent interaction could have easily sparked the formation of mentor/mentee relationships. This section will provide the history of mentorships in student affairs and provide reasons as to how easily accessible it is to become a mentor for an undergraduate student.

Mentoring was a concept before higher education institutions were prevalent (Summers-Ewing, 1994; Johnson, 2002). Summers-Ewing (1994) provided an informational description of mentoring:

> The practice of mentoring has a long and distinguished history dating back to ancient times. Derived from Greek mythology, the word mentor implies a relationship between a young adult and an older, more experienced one for the purposes of imparting knowledge, support, and counsel. Mentoring is actually the relationship that unfolds to support the young protégé's personal and professional development, enabling them to address the challenges encountered throughout adulthood (p. 3).

This portrayal of a wise protector, nurturer, and role model sets the foundation of an administrator who cares for and guides the development of someone younger and/or less experienced than themselves (Carr, 2009). Studies have shown that young college

students entering the stage of adolescence are looking for meaning and purpose during their time in college (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011). Student affairs administrators are potentially one of the key resources that provide the instruction and support for these individuals.

<center>**Mentoring and Student Affairs Administrators**</center>

As previously mentioned, one of the primary roles for student affairs administrators as mentors is to provide students with the resources necessary to succeed while at the university. Healy, Lancaster, Liddell, and Stewart (2012) described administrators as moral mentors in their field of work (p. 83). The concept of being a moral mentor is described as "a professional practicing in the field of student affairs, concerned holistically with student development, of which a significant part is moral development" (Healy, Lancaster, Liddell, & Stewart, 2012, p. 84). The moral coach, or mentor, must "communicate and inspire hope in a student, to maintain belief and pride in the person" (Healy & Liddell, 1998, p. 41). These professionals must be willing to invest in the lives of the students in which they interact with on a daily basis and provide ethical, logical, and proper support to help them feel like they are a valuable part of society. Their role must be grounded in relationships with students because these administrators can be seen as a retention tool for students, and can offer students a valuable sense of self for development. Student affairs educators or faculty members must be willing to "live out loud"- to be authentic, genuine, and evaluative without being viewed as judgmental when discussing dilemmas and decisions (Healy et al., 2012, p. 86). "At the same time, they must discern the appropriate boundaries for themselves and

the students" (Healy et al, 2012, p. 86). If the expectations of "living out loud" are met, the role of a mentor is completed.

Professional Competencies Related to Mentoring

The American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) are the leading professional associations for student affair professionals. They provide opportunities for learning and networking in the field of student affairs. Both associations also publish professional resources to support the development of members. They created a joint publication called "Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners" which defines the "broad professional knowledge, skills, and in some cases, attitudes expected of student affairs professional regardless of the specialization within the field" (ACPA/NASPA, 2010, p. 3). The document contains ten competencies deemed essential for student affairs practitioners. The ten competencies are: advising and helping; assessment, evaluation, and research; equity, diversity, and inclusion; ethical professional practice; history, philosophy, and values; human and organizational resources; law, policy, and governance; personal foundations; and student learning and development (ACPA/NASPA, 2010, p. 6-27). These competencies are then divided into lists of characteristics student affairs professional are expected to demonstrate. The lists are categorized into basic, intermediate and advanced levels in order to recognize the various levels of skills professionals might have. At a minimum, in order to be a competent professional in the field of student affairs, it is necessary to be in the basic level of competency in all areas.

In regards to competencies, this section of the literature review will focus closely on the first competency, advising and helping. Based on the competency area, advising and helping provides counseling and advising support, direction, critique, referral, and guidance to individuals and groups (ACPA/NASPA, 2010, p. 6). Along with the previous definition, Reynolds (2009) wrote that helping students is an essential aspect that deals closely with student affairs.

> "Helping students is central to the history, goals, and responsibilities of student affairs work, and it is vital that student affairs professionals develop the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to assist college students with all aspects of their curricular and extracurricular lives" (Reynolds, 2009, p. 8).

In the basic core competency it is essential that professionals establish rapport with students and groups, while also maintaining an appropriate degree of confidentiality. In order to be at the advanced level, the counseling aspect of student affairs comes into play. This advanced level is evident when direct counseling services are being provided to individuals, (ACPA/NASPA, 2010, p. 7). It is important to note that counseling is not equivalent to helping. Helping is associated with those who do not have a counseling degree. Counseling, on the other hand, has more of an academic understanding. Helping from a broader perspective, encompasses the idea of developing tools and abilities that will aid in moral mentoring with students. Helping is understood more as having skills, such as listening, having an active ear, and providing advice. These skills are appropriate and important when creating mentoring relationships with individuals.

The helping competency of student affairs is relevant to mentoring simply through the administrators' guidance of students. Administrators can participate in the

mentoring/helping competency process through life lessons and materials, whether tangible or intangible, that will grant them opportunities to succeed. Mentoring can be done through the help of conversation, specifically moral conversation.

> A commitment to moral conversation is a commitment to an examined life through relationship with self and others as a lifelong process. We have an obligation to continuously search for a wide range of perspectives, and this search is developed through conversation. (Healy et al., 2012, p.87).

Student affairs administrators can help and support, especially mentor, through discussion, and participating in deep, meaningful conversations. Through conversations with students and potential mentees, administrators have opportunities to develop an awareness of the needs and knowledge that their students are seeking.

College is a time when undergraduate college students begin thinking about what they want to do and accomplish in their lives. This entry into adolescence invites opportunities for making big life decisions and determining what occupation is necessary to realize a set of dreams and goals that have been set in place. These opportunities and quests for answers are less arduous when the help of student affairs administrators supports them. Summers-Ewing wrote that "mentors assist their mentees in the socialization process (college student attitudes, values, and actions of being at a university), with an institution or professional association, inform them of opportunities for their personal and professional development, and coach them on how to be successful" (as cited in Reynolds, 2012, p. 238). The keys for mentors in the field are to provide guidance and insight, which in turn may motivate students to succeed. This supervision, mentoring, and other related behaviors allow for the connection with others

and gives opportunities to respond to the personal, professional, and career-related needs of students (Reynolds, 2012).

Formal and Informal Mentoring

Research has shown there are two different dimensions in determining what specific types of mentorship are successful when it comes to student affairs administrators. The two dimensions of mentoring can be classified as either formal or informal. Student affairs work takes place in a variety of settings – some informal, some structured (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, Jr., 2009). Whether part of formal or informal mentoring relationships, individuals may find opportunities to serve as moral mentors where they "communicate and inspire hope in a student, to maintain belief and pride in the person" (Healy & Liddell, 1998, p. 41). The following sections will provide what research says regarding both dimensions and which is most suitable for the relationship between student affairs mentors and their mentees.

Formal Mentoring

Rhodes described formal mentors as most often adults who the staff of mentoring programs matches with adolescents and then provides a venue and/or schedule for their interaction (as cited in Carr, 2009). This type of arrangement takes place within a formal organization where both parties decide to sign up for this opportunity. This type of mentoring is beginning to grow in organizational settings (i.e., businesses and universities) in order to help people gain career management tools specifically career/professional development and career advancement (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz & Lima, 2004). Formal mentorship opportunities are generated through the implementation of mentoring programs such as scholarship programs, educational enrichment activities,

and one-on-one assigned mentors. These programs are planned and very systematic

(Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey, 2005). These formal mentoring relationships "require

concerted effort and can exist without the relationship providing the intended function"

(Carr, 2009, p. 309) in which it may have planned. In other words, when two people are

paired together, there is no guarantee that the relationship will accomplish what is

intended (Carr, 2009). In the end, there may not be a relationship where deep personal

connections are formed and trust is created. One of the intended functions is to create a

relationship, but it may not happen.

Girves, Zepeda, & Gwathmey (2005) identified a number of potential hindrances

to participating in mentoring programs including, "people are too busy to participate,

some feel vulnerable and fear that information may be used in the evaluation process, and

because they view development programs as remedial and therefore potentially harmful

to their advancement" (p. 455). This seems as if student affairs administrators are

cautious in embarking in a formal mentoring relationship. They are hesitant about the

amount of time that may be required in order to make the relationship worthy and

successful.

Formal mentoring does not necessarily produce the intended results. A change in

the way some people choose mentors provides a stronger voice for those who are

participating in the mentoring relationship. "Practitioners typically suggest that formal

mentoring programs be designed so that participation is voluntary and participants are

given some voice as to who will be their mentoring partner" (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006,

p. 128). Allen et al. (2006) explained often voices of the participants who are acting as

mentees are few. They do not have the opportunity to suggest who should be their

mentor. If mentees' needs are considered have a stronger or louder voice, they have the opportunity to be fully connected and inspired by those individuals who are assigned as their mentors. This natural approach for the mentor/mentee relationship could be translated into the informal approach of mentoring.

On the plus side, formal mentoring grants opportunities for students who are not specifically heard, for example, disadvantaged, "at-risk" or underrepresented groups of students. Girves, Zepada, and Gwathmey (2005) noted:

> Structured efforts can help disadvantaged or underrepresented students gain access to mentoring activities; they can expand the benefits to more students than traditional one-on-one faculty to student relationships; and structured mentoring can provide the training and support that participants need to develop effective relationships. (p. 457)

Shuh, Jones, and Harper (2011) claimed, "students enrolling in institutions of higher education continue to be increasingly diverse" (p. 537). The authors stated that student affairs education "must abandon one-size fits all programming models and recognize the need to redesign long-standing activities and environments" (Shuh et al., 2011, p. 544).

Formal mentoring programs can help prepare underrepresented students for college and support them once they are there. Gupton, Castelo-Rodriguez, Martinez, and Quintanar (2009) described engagement strategies that would benefit underrepresented students: "From an organization of university professionals dedicated to enhancing and supporting the college experience of low-income, first-generation students, especially the specific populations who are identified as underrepresented" (p. 256). Universities are working to support underrepresented populations. For example, the McNair Scholarship

Program offers programs for "either first-generation college students with financial need, or members of a group who are traditionally underrepresented in graduate education and have demonstrated strong academic potential. The goal of the McNair Scholars Program is to increase graduate degree awards for students from underrepresented segments of society" ("McNair Scholars," n.d.). Additionally, students are placed into formal mentoring programs and are connected with faculty/staff at the university ("McNair Scholars," n.d.). These programs which include mentoring aspects assist in the development and success of low-income, first generation or underrepresented students at the institution.

Informal Mentoring

Different than formal mentoring, informal mentoring takes on a more natural approach. Formal mentoring takes place in the programmatic area where mentors are assigned a mentee. The informal approach tends to be less official, but still has a significant influence on the mentee. Carr (2009) defined informal mentoring relationships with youth as "influential relationships with adults who are part of their naturally occurring social networks" (p. 309). Once this type of naturally occurring relationship begins to develop, that important individual is considered a mentor. Because of the social network provided by the university, students have access to a number of different individuals when it comes to identifying a potential mentor. Evidence shows they learn more effectively when they are intrinsically motivated, or when they have internalized a learning goal (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is connected to informal mentoring relationships due to the influential learning that can take place. The challenging tasks provided from the mentors allow mentees to become engaged in the

relationships even if it was not formally intended. The intrinsic motivation can come from the natural approach of informal mentoring. Mentors and protégés see informal mentorships as being more effective and meaningful (Johnson, 2002).

Ragins and Cotton (1999) completed a study of 309 men and women protégés and examined the effects on the specific type (formal or informal) of relationship that was more beneficial to them. After conducting a quantitative study, they found that informal relationships allowed protégés to gain a greater sense of career development tools (sponsoring, coaching, challenging perspectives) and provided more psychosocial functions (support, role modeling, friendship) compared to formal mentorships. Cooper and Miller (1998) issued a survey to student affairs professionals asking who had a significant impact on their professional development as a student affairs administrator. Results showed that respondents viewed informal relationships as opportunities to "enhance self-esteem, challenging-growth enhancing experience, and an exemplar to observe and emulate" (Cooper & Miller, 1998, p. 60.) Research indicates informal mentoring grants mentees opportunities for educational growth and psychosocial functions.

Having common interests can be the connecting factor that creates a relationship between a mentor and a mentee. In some instances, informal mentoring relationships can occur if a student is interested in the particular field where a potential mentor works, or if they happen to stop and talk through passing at the institution. The majority of these relationships form due to the nature of accessibility or how often mentees interact with their potential mentors (Summers-Ewing, 1994). Mentees generate interest due to professional circumstances, inspirational occurrences, and even shared interest:

Personal characteristics will play an important part in the relationship but a

protégés' self-esteem, level of motivation, and clarity regarding career goals will

be more important determinants in successfully obtaining a mentor. A mentoring

relationship will also be more likely to develop between two individuals who have

common interests, personal or professional (Summers-Ewing, 1994, p. 4).

Mentees tend to look closely for mentors who are perceived as intelligent, desirable,

caring, and appropriately humorous (Johnson, 2002). These mentors are informal,

supportive, and encouraging. These words are closely associated with informal

mentoring because they deal more closely with the social/emotional issues (psychosocial)

compared to the structured requirement-based formal mentoring process (Desimone,

Hochberg, Porter, Polikoff, Schwartz, & Johnson, 2014, p. 91).

Benefits of Mentoring for Mentors

Mentees receive intrinsic and extrinsic rewards while being in a mentoring

relationship. Mentoring provides advantageous opportunities (e.g., psychosocial growth

and career development) for students who are in a mentoring relationship. "Often,

mentors serve dual interpersonal roles, acting as an outlet for protégés to discuss

confidentially their personal concerns and fears and to facilitate informal exchanges of

information about work and non-work experiences" (Noe, 1988, p. 66)

Psychosocial includes aspects of the relationship which enhance a protégé's sense

of competence, identity, and effectiveness in their professional role. Career

functions are those aspects of the mentoring relationship, which enhances career

advancement as a result of the mentor's experience, sponsorship, protection, and

influence. The best mentoring relationship includes both psychosocial and career

functions (Summers-Ewing, 1994, p.3).

On the flip side, mentoring also has benefits for the mentors. Ragins and Scandura

(1999) stated "experienced individuals were more likely to report that mentors gain a

sense of satisfaction and fulfillment from mentoring relationships" (p. 504). Though

mentees experience growth through mentoring relationships, mentors, too, experience

satisfaction and a sense of personal, self-development from their mentoring relationship.

Additionally, "by providing technical and psychological support, protégés can provide a

loyal base of support from which the mentor may improve his or her job performance"

(Ragins & Scandura, 1999, p. 494). Johnson added that mentors receive "reaping

extrinsic rewards, such as accelerated research productivity, greater networking and

enhanced professional recognition when mentees perform well" (as cited in Darwin &

Palmer, 2009, p. 126). "Mentors are on their own journey which, hopefully, they gain

self-awareness and perspective" (Reynolds, 2012, p. 239). In regards to higher

education, student affairs administrators have the opportunity to define themselves as

"moral mentors" (Healey et al., 2012, p. 83) and create opportunities for open discussion

and growth for students at the university.

Fostering Growth

Kathy Kram (1983), a researcher in the field of mentoring developed phases that

are seen in mentoring relationships. In her research, Kram studied 18 developmental

mentoring relationships and investigated the characteristics and outcomes of the

relationships. Out of the study, she identified *cultivation*, a process where mentoring was

beneficial for both the mentee and the mentor. Cultivation described how the mentoring

relationship continues to grow and unfold, discovering the real value of relating to each other (Kram, 1983). One of the mentors in her study described how the "young manager has grown to provide technical and psychological support" (Kram, 1983, p. 617). At the end of her study she found that the overriding benefit for the older, senior manager was empowerment. "Not only is the senior manager able to open doors, but s/he also is able to transmit values and skills that enhance the young manager's capacities. The activities give rise to personal satisfaction and provide a unique avenue for expressing oneself through the next generation of managers." (Kram, 1983, p. 617).

In addition to cultivation, mutuality between the two individuals creates a stronger relationship (Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou, 2002, p.97). In their research, Beyene et al., (2002) asked 133 college student participants questions regarding their mentoring relationships and asked them to focus on the relational elements of the relationships they created. In regard to mentors, they found that protégés see their relationships as one that also gives something to the mentor (p. 97). They found 90% of the participants agreed that mutuality is important to a successful mentoring relationship" (Beyene et al., 2002, p. 97). Learning is achieved by both mentors and mentees through the relationship. Mentoring can be seen as advantageous from a mentor's perspective. In order for the relationship to be successful, there should be a commitment to mutual learning.

Cultivation and mutuality could be related to higher education in which student affairs administrators have the opportunities to grow as professionals and be influential in the lives of their students. Healy et al., (2012) suggest ways that can benefit and lead student affairs administrators to becoming mentors that create a sense of cultivation and mutuality. Administrators must learn to sit with discomfort and engage in conversations

that may be uncomfortable for both the learner and mentor and being content with conflict that may arise from opposing views (Healy et al, 2012). Through mentorship, administrators gain the opportunity to be a morally serious person (Healy et al., 2012). Student affairs administrators are comparable to a moral serious person because of features provided by Markham (Healy et al., 2012). Above all, his most important point and matter that can be beneficial to mentors, is the *commitment to moral conversation* (Healy et al, 2012, p. 87). They explained this concept:

> Commitment to Moral Conversation is a commitment to an examined life through relationship with self and others as a lifelong process. We have an obligation to continuously search for a wide range of perspective, and this search is developed through conversation. (Healy et al., 2012, p. 87).

Student affairs administrators have the opportunity to benefit from their mentoring relationships where they serve as the mentor. Reflection, renewal, and regenerations are nurtured through a mentor's own growth and development (Zachary, 2000). In these relationships they see a sense of cultivation and mutual growth. All in all, they create opportunities for learning to listen and embark on conversations that not only challenge the student, but also themselves as student affairs administrators.

Theoretical Approaches

When researching a specific phenomenon, it is useful to understand the groundwork for which the study is created. The frameworks and theories associated with the study allow for a better understanding of what is going on, and grants a better grasp at understanding the roots of the subject. Theory provides a description or conceptualization of what is happening (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010)

and for this study will provide more information in regards to mentoring. In this section of the literature review a description of the theories used as a framework for the study will be described: Erikson's identity development theory, social exchange theory, and Sanford's challenge and support. These theories will provide connections with mentoring and provide a framework for understanding how mentors may influence the development of undergraduate students and their success.

Erikson's Identity Development Theory

Erickson was a clinical psychologist who discussed and introduced the identity development journey from infancy through adulthood noting that the journey is influenced by the external environment (Evans et al., 2010). The theory is widely known as Erikson's identity development theory. His theory consists of eight different stages with each stage consisting of a crisis (i.e., a turning point) that needs to be resolved by balancing the internal self and the external environment (Erikson, 1968). The eight stages include: basic trust vs. mistrust; autonomy vs. shame and doubt; initiative vs. guilt; industry vs. inferiority; identity vs. identity diffusion (confusion); intimacy vs. isolation; generativity vs. stagnation; and integrity vs. despair. Each stage brings forth a challenge and what can be done in order to beat this challenge.

In terms of mentoring and student affairs administrators, it is appropriate to first understand the stage of which the majority of mentors are assumed to be a part of. Due to the age of student affairs administrators in comparison to their younger students, it can be perceived that the administrators are in Stage 7 of development: generativity vs. stagnation. According to Evans et al. (2010), this stage occurs during midlife when adults are actively engaging in giving back to society and deciding what legacy they want

to leave behind (p. 51). This definition links closely with what a mentor is perceived to be. "In their personal lives, adults are concerned with cultivating the next generation, which includes directing efforts toward providing opportunities for others through mentoring and activism." (Evans et al, 2010, p. 51) In other words, administrators who are in this stage provide mentoring functions because they derive personal satisfaction or some type of intrinsic benefit from the mentoring relationship - generativity (Summers-Ewing, 1994).

It is also appropriate to describe and understand the situation as to where the students/mentees are in relation to Erikson's stages of identity development. College is perceived to be the time where traditional aged college students are undergoing a transition into adolescence. During this time of adolescence, the traditional aged college students are in the stage of identity vs. identity diffusion (confusion) – Stage 5. This is a time where they begin to create their own sense of identity. According to Evans et al., (2010), individuals in this stage become more independent and begin to deal with the complexities of life, and seek answers to the question, "Who am I?" The Identity Diffusion aspect of the stage comes from the idea of not knowing exactly what to do with the rest of life and the reason they are in college. Erikson found,

> The growing and developing young people, faced with psychological revolution within them, are now primarily concerned with attempts at consolidating their social roles. The are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of other as compared with what they feel they are, and with the question of how to connect the earlier cultivated roles and skills with the ideal prototypes of the day (Erikson, 1980, p. 94).

It is evident that during this time of transition from high school to college, adolescents are unsure of their identity. They are still searching and finding meaning for their lives. King and Magolda (2011), wrote:

> Student learning in post-secondary education is more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also to understand the sources of their beliefs and values, and to establish a sense of self that enable them to be participants effectively in a variety of personal, occupational, and community contexts (p. 207).

Though academia is important while attending an institution, students' understanding of their self-identities is valued just as much. When academics are completed after the completion of college, it is important that students understand who they are in society. This concept can be learned during their time at the university.

"Mentoring relationships have the ability to create affirming growth- and learning-focused environments whose positive effects transcend the two individuals involved" (Reynolds, 2009, p. 239). Mentors and student affairs administrators can instill lessons and values that would be beneficial in helping students develop their sense of self and leave a legacy that will grant their students opportunities of growth.

Social Exchange Theory

Blau and Homans' Social Exchange theory provided a theoretical framework for this study. Blau (1964) described Social Exchange theory as a function that "is limited to actions that are contingent on rewarding reactions from others" (p. 91). Additionally, Homans (1958) described social behavior as "an exchange of goods, material goods, but also non-material ones, such as symbols of approval or prestige" (p. 606). "Persons that

give much to others, try to get much from them, and persons that get much from others are under pressure to give much to them" (Homans, 1958, p. 606). A mentoring relationship can be seen from Blau's and Homan's perspectives of Social Exchange theory, where mentors give much (e.g. advice, trust, teaching, and lessons) to their mentees in hopes that they get much (e.g. satisfaction or a new mentoring relationship) in return. Advice, trust, teachings, and satisfaction are examples of intangible/non-material resources associated with mentoring relationships.

Social Exchange theory also brings into view the reciprocity seen between both parties. Benefits are given and received in both ways. In regards to being a mentor, a mentee could enhance the career of the mentor, but also a mentor can provide a sense of their own learning (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001). Being an effective mentor involves facilitating the learning of the mentee, rather than simply transferring knowledge (Searby, 2009). According to research, when it comes to choosing a mentee/protégé, a mentor looks at what desirable attributes and competencies the individual could bring to the relationship (Allen et al., 2000). On the other hand, mentees receive a level of support, advice, and critical information that could guide them in the right direction towards success (Ensher et al., 2001).

Sanford's Theory of Challenge and Support

Reynolds (2009) referring to the work of Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller said "providing a proper balance of challenge and support ensures that students are challenged to do their best, yet feel supported enough to make mistakes" (p. 15). Nevitt Sanford's Theory of Challenge and Support is a phenomenon that can be used to help understand the role of mentoring in college. Challenge and Support is one of the first developmental

theories that paid attention to the idea of student development by introducing the concepts of readiness, challenges, and support (Evans et al., 2010, p. 30). Readiness begins with the concept that students will possess certain behaviors when they are ready to do so. In order to foster personal development, challenge is needed from others, but must have the same amount of support in order to be effective (Sanford, 1966). If both challenge and support are equal, then growth of the students will occur. This concept shows that if a student experiences a challenge, there will be resources (mentors/student affairs administrators) that will support the student as they learn from   the specific experience. Mentors can be readily available when these instances occur.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of literature that focused on understanding the idea of mentorship and how it relates to student affairs administrators and their mentoring relationships with college students. It then focused closely on student affairs administrators and how the literature describes them as mentors. With this description, the two types of mentors were introduced (i.e., formal and informal), giving to light that informal mentorship creates a more natural relationship compared to formal mentoring. Mentoring can also provide benefits for mentors through cultivation and mutuality, specifically with student affairs administrators. To round out the literature review, the theoretical frameworks were connected with mentors, mentees, and their relationships. Erikson's Identity Development Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Sanford's Theory of Challenge and Support allowed the researcher to consider how mentoring can be influence mentors and mentees in college. The next chapter will describe the methodology used in order to gather and analyze data for the thesis project.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In order to understand participants' experiences with mentoring, it was important to approach this research using a qualitative research design. Perl and Noldon (2000) described qualitative research as a study which "values individual voices and aims to understand individual cases" (p. 38). Qualitative research uses an inductive approach where the methods "allow a researcher to get a richer and more complex picture of the phenomenon" (Mertens, 2010, p. 265). Qualitative research is appropriate for this study because "qualitative research provides an in-depth description of a specific program, practice, or setting" (Mertens, 2010, p. 225). This in depth approach was necessary to understand the complex nature of the mentoring relationship.

To better understand the practice of mentoring from the participants' unique perspectives, participants were interviewed and asked open-ended questions, in hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of participants' experiences in mentoring relationships where they were the mentor. In order to investigate how participants viewed their mentoring roles and relationships this study addressed the following research question: "How do student affairs administrators perceive their roles as mentors to undergraduate students?"

Phenomenological Research and Design

Phenomenological research is intended to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participants with the subjective experiences at the center of the inquiry (Mertens, 2010). This type of approach allowed me to understand the in-depth experiences of the participants by listening and focusing closely during the interview sessions. The key aspect in phenomenological studies is the idea of self-interpretation. It

is important that the "researchers not make assumptions about an objective reality aside from the individual, but rather focus on understanding how the individuals themselves create and understand their own life spaces" (Mertens, 2010, p. 235). What the participants shared allowed me, as the researcher, to reflect, interpret, and understand the experiences they encountered while being mentors as student affairs administrators at a university.

I approached this study from the constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm by understanding the people who are part of the research process and comprehending the knowledge they construct through from living in society (Mertens, 2010). This approach allowed me to understand the participants' meaning making process towards mentoring. The participants' accounts of mentorship and their personal perceptions helped to shed light on the mentoring process that could potentially be used by other individuals in student affairs. Interviews were used as the primary data gathering method because they allowed me to grasp the meaning of the mentoring relationships. In this instance, experiences and learning outcomes from the participants' perspectives allowed for self-reflection and self-meaning making of what mentorship means to them.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Prior to the beginning of this study, it was important that I find a topic that I was passionate about and an experience that was important to my experience during my undergraduate experience. Once the topic was discovered, the process of approval began. In order to begin the study, I completed the Consortium for Institutional Review Board Training Initiative in Human Subjects Protection (CITI) in order to properly investigate

and interview human subjects for the research. After completing this training, an

application describing the research process in detail was submitted to IRB for approval.

Approval was granted in October 2014 by IRB and research/collecting data commenced

(see Appendix A). Before data collection began—but following IRB approval—potential

participants received an email (Appendix B) describing the study and recruiting

participants to be interviewed.

At the beginning of their interview, each participant was given an informed

consent document (see Appendix C) and asked to sign their name indicating their

understanding and voluntary participation in the study. Each participant was given a

pseudonym and the interviews were recorded via audio recorder. Interviews were either

done in person, by phone, or via video chat through the Internet in a private, secure space.

Research Site

The study was conducted with student affairs administrators at a large, public,

four year, land grant and research extensive university located in the Midwest. The

university enrolled approximately 25,000 students during the time of the study. All

administrators who were participants in the study are employed at the same institution.

This study focused closely on administrators in the division of student affairs at the

research site. A more in-depth description of participants will be provided later in this

chapter.

Context of Student Affairs Administrators

The term *student affairs administrator* can be interpreted in many different ways.

From my perspective and for the purposes of this study, student affairs administrators are

those individuals who are employed specifically in the field of student affairs. As

previously mentioned, student affairs is the aspect of learning outside of the higher

education classroom by providing programs and services directly related to the institution

(NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 1987) especially outside

of the classroom experience. The functional areas associated with the field include, but

are not limited to: academic advising, admissions, career services, counseling, financial

aid, Greek affairs, international affairs, leadership education, multicultural affairs,

residence life, student orientation, student involvement, and campus recreation. For the

purpose of this study, those who coordinate and supervise the programs associated with

these departments are identified as *student affairs administrators*. Length of tenure or

employment at the university does not define a student affairs administrator in this

specific study. The participants in this study held the title of either director or assistant

director of their department.

<div align="center">**Participants**</div>

A purposeful sampling strategy was used to recruit participants for this study.

Purposeful selection/selective sampling is described in many ways: the time a researcher

has available, the interests, the framework, and the restrictions of the researcher's

observations (Coyne, 1997). The researcher "selects people according to the aims of the

research" (Coyne, 1997, p. 624). Additionally, the method of purposeful selection

allowed me to discover representativeness of the individuals selected which means that

participants all were associated in different areas of student affairs, which allowed for

different mentoring experiences. Maxwell (2013) stated that allowing for this

representativeness provides more confidence in the theories associated with the study.

Maxwell also stated that though the goal is to find homogeneity between the participants,

it is also important that they provide a sense of heterogeneity (difference) in order to show that though the experiences may be similar, their viewpoints can be different. This difference represents the entire range of variation. In this study, participants had similar experiences in which they found a mentor and developed a sense of trust, but each had different viewpoints on what they learned and how they used advice as teachable moments.

The participants recruited for the study were student affairs administrators who worked at the research site as either a director or assistant director. Each participant worked at a different department on campus. Due to my interactions with these individuals, I was able to create relationships based on experiences I had previously at the university. Due to my experience, I was able to observe the participants in action and see the influence they had on the university. The observations of these individuals prior to being participants were helpful in determining who would receive recruitment emails. Once I generated my own list using purposeful sampling by observation and personal judgment, a recruitment email was sent to participants asking them to voluntarily be part of the research process.

Six participants volunteered for the study, three men and three women, who came from the pool of student affairs administrators who I observed and had interactions with at the university. From my assumption and personal observations, these individuals had a consistent wave of student interaction, which in turn possibly created mentoring relationships. The pool selected was diverse in gender, age, race, and number of years working at the university (Table 1). From the six participants who volunteered to be part of the study, each received a recruitment and informed consent email that discussed the

information (e.g., duration, confidentiality, potential questions, voluntary participation,

etc.) about the participation in the study. Fortunately, all six of the participants agreed to

be interviewed for the research. In order to protect anonymity all participants were

assigned a pseudonym: Frank, Fred, Hillary, Michael, Monica, and Rebecca.

Table 1

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Years at Institution
Frank	Male	Caucasian	9.5 years
Fred	Male	African American	7.5 years
Hillary	Female	Caucasian	33 years
Michael	Male	Caucasian	25 years
Monica	Female	Latina	6 months
Rebecca	Female	Caucasian	5 years

Data Collection – Interviews

Mertens (2010) noted that qualitative researchers "almost always include

interviewing as an important method of data collection" (p. 370). Collecting data through

interviews allowed me to have an in-depth discussion about personal experiences and

beliefs about mentoring from the participants. The interviews were conducted using a

semi-structured format. This format gave me the opportunity to ask the open-ended

questions based on the interview protocol (see Appendix D**)**. It was appropriate to follow

the list, but if responses sparked interest for another question, there was flexibility to let

the participant discuss issues and experiences that were not directly related to the

question asked. This flexibility also allowed for questions to be re-ordered. The informality of re-ordering questions during the interview process "made the researcher open to following leads from the respondents" (Mertens, 2010, p. 371). It allowed participants to speak their minds and took away the sense of power between the researcher and the participants. Because of the flexibility of the interview process, I was able to steer away from the formality of a structured interview. I asked follow-up questions if it was necessary, or skipped questions that were answered from a previous question. This allowed the interview sessions to be more like conversations rather than interrogations. Overall, the questions explored the mentoring perceptions of the administrators, and it allowed them to reflect on their personal mentoring experiences. It also allowed them to consider the personal and professional growth they gained from mentoring undergraduate students.

The interviews took place within a span of three months: November, December, and January 2015. Each interview lasted between 20 to 30 minutes each. Due to changing geographic locations during the study, three different formats were used for interviews: in-person, video chat, or phone. In-person interviews were used for Monica and Hillary. Rebecca and Fred's interviews were completed via video chat (Google Chat or Skype) and audio recorded by placing the computer near the audio recorder. Finally, Frank and Michael's interviews were completed by phone with the phone placed near the audio recorder so the interview could be recorded. Two of the participants felt it would be easier by phone rather than through video chat because of potential technological glitches that could occur during the interview, as well as phone being their preferred method of interviewing. Each of the interviews was held in a private space to protect

anonymity. The in-person interviews were held in the offices of the participants with doors closed. For the other four interviews, sessions were held in the privacy of my own home via Internet through Google Chat and by phone. At the start of each interview, I made sure to notify the participants about the informed consent form and provided a synopsis of the study. I also notified them of the fact that they were being audio-recorded for transcription and research purposes. Audio recording allowed me to be fully engaged with the participants and to truly be present during the interviews. During the interview sessions, I also notified the participants that I would be taking notes on a notebook to write down thoughts that came to mind. If I was not making full eye contact or there was silence, it was due to writing down thoughts. I then transcribed each interview verbatim in a secure location for confidentiality purposes. All audio recordings and interview transcriptions were kept in a password-protected computer, as well as in a private room in my own home.

Each strategy that was used for data collection (in-person interview, video chat, or phone), allowed me to hear the experiences participants had with mentoring. I found it important and necessary to include video and phone interviews as platforms because it provided a sense of personal contact compared to sending a questionnaire via email. I may have not physically been in the space for four of the interviews, but I was able to connect and feel the experiences during the interviews with those participants. Though I did find it more beneficial to host interviews in-person and through video chat, the interviews conducted by phone still resulted in sufficient data because the data was very similar to the other interviews, and all questions from the interview protocol were thoroughly answered. For me, seeing the participant allowed for more of a connection

because I was able to see their reactions when questions were asked. The process was not a challenge due to the different methods, but more of an opportunity to develop listening skills that would allow me to pay more attention to what the participants said. I felt comfortable performing the three different strategies with the participants due to having been able to establish some sore of relationships beforehand, which allowed me to establish rapport.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed audio recordings of the interviews verbatim. The formal data analysis process began once all the interviews were transcribed. However, prior to officially beginning the formal process, I informally began collecting my own thoughts during and after interviews by writing down and reflecting on possible/potential themes that could be relevant to the study in a notebook. I was constantly thinking about and reflecting on new ideas as each interview took place. Mertens (2010) described the data analysis process as "ongoing" and not everything can be learned at once (p. 424). Though the actual coding process was not taking place, hearing the accounts from the audio recordings helped me begin to conceptualize and interpret participants' experiences that could be used for the analysis process. For the formal data analysis process I followed three steps provided by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (as cited in Mertens, 2010, p. 424):

1) Preparing the data for analysis,

2) Data exploration phase, and

3) Data reduction phase.

Preparing the data for analysis assumes that the researcher has been reviewing and

reflecting on the data as it is collected (Mertens, 2010, p. 424). As I was transcribing

data, I would make mental notes and jot down thoughts in my notebook where I felt there

were similar views that participants shared. During the transcription process, I would sit

in a private space with my personal computer and audio recorder in hand. In order to

protect confidentiality, I used headphones to review the audio taped interviews. If there

were times where I was unsure what the participants were saying, I would replay the

audio recording. The audio recorder was useful for the process because it allowed me to

pause and re-wind interviews of the participants, which made it easier to transcribe the

data. After replaying the recordings multiple times, I noticed potential themes emerged

from the playbacks. Listening and typing the words of the participants allowed the

experiences to come to life as they were put on paper. Transcribing research data is

interactive and engages the researcher in the process of deep listening, analysis, and

interpretation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, as cited in Mertens, 2010, p. 424). The method of

transcribing data allowed me to connect with the data early on and actively engage with

how participants described the mentoring process and the influence those interactions had

on them as student affairs administrators. Additionally, the data got to the point where it

reached a point of saturation so additional recruitment of participants was not deemed

necessary. There were consistent themes that emerged from the data; therefore it was not

necessary to look for more participants.

In order to keep a more organized process, once interviews were transcribed, they

were printed on paper to offer a tangible source that was helpful in reading the

transcriptions. Once printed, pseudonyms were handwritten on each interview packet

with a specific color for each participant. This gave me clarification and made it easier to mentally remember what pseudonym correlated what color. After reading the transcriptions numerous times, I became familiar with each participant's experiences and memorized the pseudonym for each individual.

According to Hesse-Biber & Leavy (as cited in Mertens, 2010, p. 424), the data exploration phase and the data reduction phase work together when analyzing. Exploring is the process in which one thinks about what is important for the study, while reducing is intended to define the coding process. What starts out as big procedures (thoughts, ideas, and memos) reduces to codes and labels that are easier to comprehend. During this process, I wrote down my thoughts after reading each transcript three times. Reading the transcripts multiple times allowed me to reflect more deeply on the conversations and explore possible themes based on participants' collective experiences. As I read responses from each participant, I would make note of experiences that were similar and/or possessed key words that were said multiple times throughout the interviews. The key words that related to mentoring and were repetitive throughout interviews brought forth potential themes. In order for me to organize the themes and responses, I set apart pieces of colored construction paper, hand-cut out responses from the printed transcriptions, and glued the responses to a specific color that was designated for a certain theme. In addition to having colored construction papers, the responses that needed more consideration on deciding which theme was appropriate were placed into plastic sandwich bags with potential themes written on them.

All of the responses were noted by using codes that I felt were relevant to mentoring. The coding system identified common themes that were representative of

participants' meaning making process. Throughout this time, I found it important to keep my codes simple and easy to identify because it allowed me to categorize between themes and subthemes. They were useful in helping create my own interpretation of themes and how they related to each other which in turn helped me create my subthemes. All of the codes consisted of abbreviations of words (i.e., ADV, TRU, SELF, PROF). If I felt one response was appropriate for a certain theme, I would write the code on the back of the paper and make a mental note of the specific theme/subtheme. The thematic findings based on the data analysis process will be described in detail in chapter four.

Ethical Considerations

With any research study, ethical situations are bound to arise. It is important that the researcher be aware of ethical issues that may arise and act upon the potential risks. In order to protect anonymity, all interviews and transcriptions were completed in a private space with a closed door. All documents (i.e., transcriptions, audio recordings, notes, and emails) were filed and saved in a password, protected personal computer that was accessed only by the researcher. There were no known risks for the participants of the study. Prior to being interviewed they were emailed an informed consent form detailing the voluntary interviews. Participants were given the opportunity to opt out of the study at any time if deemed necessary.

All participants of the study were of legal age of majority and older than me. Having participants older than myself diminished the potential risk of there being a sort of coercion or power during the interview session. I was able to decrease the possibility of participants being swayed to respond in a certain way that would be beneficial to the study by offering questions that would generate their own thoughts and experiences.

Additionally, all participants hold titles (Director, Assistant Director, Associate Director) that possess a sense of hierarchal power with the university. Therefore, due to my position/status as a student, I did not portray a sense of power as an investigator in the same way that another researcher might because there were other ways that these participants were established in student affairs that I have not yet. From my perspective and responses from the interviews, participants felt free to provide responses without pressure from me to respond in particular ways.

Limitations

As is the case with all research this study was not without limitations. First, although not the goal of this study, readers should not generalize the findings to all student affairs administrators at all institutional types. The experiences and findings do not account for all student affairs administrators in higher education and findings are based solely on the viewpoints of the six participants in this study.

Time was also a limitation. Due to this thesis being a requirement in order to graduate from the master's program, it was necessary to complete this work by a specific date and time. If more time would have been available, more interviews could have taken place with participants, which could have provided a more formal member checking process. In addition, due to my out of state residence not all interviews could be done face-to-face. Though sufficient information was provided by other methods, in-person interviews could have allowed consistency through the process, and would have allowed me to see the visual aspects the participants were portraying, like body language.

Finally, some may find my personal bias on the phenomenon of mentoring to be seen as a limitation for this study. Due to my past experiences and the positive impact

mentoring has had on my life, my personal bias influenced the interpretation of this study. However, I believe this enhanced the study and helped me to effectively think more critically on the idea of mentoring relationships and aided in the formation of questions asked during the interview sessions with the participants.

Validation Techniques: Credibility and Transferability

Throughout the course of this study certain validation strategies were used in order to strengthen the credibility and transferability of the findings. When discussing the concept of credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term "credible" as demonstrating "truth value" (p.296). Credibility for research becomes a two-fold task: first, to carry out the chance that the data may be credible for the research, and second, to demonstrate the credibility of the findings "to have them approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 296). In order to strengthen credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided activities that could be used during the research process including prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and triangulation (p. 301).

> If the purpose of prolonged engagement is to render the inquirer to open to the multiple influences that impinge under the phenomenon being studied, then persistent observation is to identify characteristics and elements of the issue while very descriptive and detailed. Prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent engagement provides depth. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304).

Using these strategies, it is important to spend sufficient time in the specific field of research. I was able to utilize prolonged engagement and persistent observation throughout my time at the university, and interacting with these specific individuals. The

time I spent as an observer for a year and half allowed me to see how they worked with undergraduate students and gauge their involvement with the university.

Peer debriefing increased credibility of the study. Peer debriefing "is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Prior to beginning the thesis process, conversations of topics and ideas would be shared with close members of the graduate cohort who were in the same process as myself. As the analysis process began, we would share thoughts of steps that would be appropriate for the methodological design. Peer debriefing provided me ways on how to see other methods my peers were using in their research processes. They would give opinions and give feedback that would improve the study.

Lincoln and Guba described transferability as the parallel concept that enables readers of the research to make judgments based on similarities and differences when comparing the research situation to their own (as cited in Mertens, 2010, p. 259). Thick, rich descriptions are important to the concept of transferability. "Thick description allows the inquirer to provide the widest possible range of information for the purposes of inclusion" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). Mertens (2010) described rich, thick descriptions as "extensive and careful description of the time, place, context, and culture" (p. 259). During the interview process, I was able to gather data that helped me interpret and share participants' experiences in a meaningful and rich manner. The questions during the interview process allowed participants to provide their own contexts of what mentoring meant to them. Due to the trust that was created from prior relationships with

the participants and personal interviews, I had the opportunity to understand the culture

of the participants. I was able to see a day in of the life of the participants, and their

placement at the university setting. From my point of view, in depth descriptions of the

experiences from each participant allowed readers to determine if they had any similar

mentoring experiences. In depth descriptions are crucial in providing think, rich

descriptions. Gertz described thick, rich descriptions, as the "need for qualitative

researchers to provide sufficient details about the context so that readers would be able to

understand the complexity of the research setting and participants" (as cited in Mertens,

2010, p. 259). The words and descriptions from the participants created a rich

description that allow readers to formulate and reflect on their own sense of mentoring.

These descriptions give readers the opportunity to compare what they read to their own

situations/experiences. In addition, to address the researcher's biases, it was important

for me to reflect deeply on my position as the researcher and my past experiences with

research.

Researcher Reflexivity

Research can be filled with the researcher's biases and the unconscious beliefs

based off of lived experiences. The use of reflexivity allows for an opportunity to

"critically reflect on the self, and openly express how his or her own subjectivity has

progressively been challenged and transformed" (Mertens, 2010, p. 262). This section

will allow me to express my opinions, biases, and experiences to allow readers to

understand why mentoring in the student affairs profession is important to me as a

researcher.

To begin, I am a Latino male from the dry lands of west Texas. I grew up in a nuclear family with an older sister. My family believes heavily in education so it was important and not really a choice when it came to attending college. My mother and older sister each earned a bachelor's degree so it seemed fitting that I earn a degree as well. I was admitted to a private, Christian university in central Texas and found an idea of self-identity while being there. People say that college is a time where you truly find out about yourself and develop a sense of growth. I would say though I never have really grown up, the idea of who I wanted to be and what I wanted to become definitely took place while being in college. I also met my wife in college, so that was a plus.

Growing up in a Christian household, accountability, community, and guidance, from my beliefs, are key to ensuring a life of goodness. In times of despair, I would look to my community of friends for words of encouragement and wisdom. In time of joys and happiness, I had people in my life that would celebrate my accomplishments and little successes. For me, this was the reason I was successful in college. Though I had my community of friends and people who were able to relate, it was important that I find a person who was willing to invest in my time, and guide me through the most crucial points of development in my life. From the start of my first year, I was set on being a pediatrician and embarking on the pre-med journey as a student. That summer, I also participated as an orientation leader for the university. I was able to influence incoming freshmen and had the opportunity to reflect on exactly what I wanted to do as a student at the university. My boss during that time set me up for success and allowed me to see my potential as a student leader for the next summer. Throughout the school year I saw myself constantly going to his office seeking guidance and support. Our meetings

consisted of learning, laughter, and challenge. He asked me questions that made me think, and he helped me to truly find my passion. This man encouraged me to leave behind the dream of being a pediatrician and embark on the journey of being a student affairs professional. He encouraged me to apply for graduate programs, wrote letters of recommendations, and gave me advice on what to do with the next two years of college. In other words, this individual, my boss, was my mentor, and still is to this very day.

Entering graduate school, I still considered my boss a mentor. To me, people can have multiple mentors throughout their life. During my time in graduate school, I was away from my fiancé (now wife), and I was no longer living in Texas. The past two years were definitely a time of change. Luckily, after seeking guidance and support, I was able to find the influential people that would make my time in school meaningful. My assistantship granted me the opportunity to have the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs as a supervisor. Though he had a position of power, I felt as if he saw me as a person of equal status. Like my boss in college, he challenged me by forcing me to make decisions on my own, with the intention of enhancing my professional development skills for the field of student affairs. This person was known throughout the university, and he presented himself in an outgoing and authentic manner. I am fortunate enough to say that he too, is my mentor.

These people that I look up to and consider as my mentor are key stakeholders for my development as an individual. If it was not for my boss as an orientation leader, I would not have been interested in student affairs. My supervisor in graduate school further provoked my passion for students and how they can succeed with the help of guidance and act of mentoring. With their help, I created a sense of self. Due to these

experiences, my biases for mentoring were shaped.   It is evident that I firmly believe mentoring plays an influential part in the success of undergraduate students. Because it was such an influential time in my life, I assume it is the same for students and the mentors they have. This is the reason I chose to study the perceptions of mentoring relationships from student affairs administrators' perspectives.

It is apparent that mentoring is seen as a huge part of my life. From my perspective prior to this study, I believed the tale of the woman and starfish related closely to the idea of mentorship. I too believe it influenced the role of student affairs administrators and how they perceive mentoring to undergraduate students. After the investigation of the study and examining the participants' experiences, it is truly evident that the idea of making a difference encompasses their perceptions of their role at the university. I believe student affairs administrators have different reasons as to why they want to mentor students. Some may believe it naturally happens. Others may believe it is a matter of having a job at the university. Whatever the case, my goal of this study was to find the reasons student affairs administrators think their roles of being mentors is such a value to themselves and the students they work with on a regular basis. As previously mentioned, my mentors have played a crucial role in my development as an individual and sparked my interest in exploring the career of student affairs. For this study, I hoped to gain an understanding of what mentoring is based on the research I explored and the experiences the administrators had while working at their numerous universities. The mentoring relationships I created gave me the opportunity to find my passion, and develop skills that would mold me into a professional that can influence others like I was influenced.

Conclusion

This chapter addressed the research process and the strategies I used to strengthen the credibility of the study. Additionally, ethical considerations and my role as the researcher played significant roles in how the research was conducted. Using a qualitative research design and phenomenological approach was consistent with the primary research question and purpose of the study. In the next chapter, the findings of the data are presented. Themes and subthemes as well as the participants' experiences that are relevant to the study will be described.

Chapter 4: Findings

The beginning of this thesis introduced the story of the woman and the starfish. Though the woman knew she would not be able to rescue all the starfish found along the coast, she knew that the ones she threw back into the water were saved. Even though she could not save them all, she knew she made a difference to one. The idea of impacting and saving one life was important to the woman. She believed it was her duty to make a difference.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the mentoring relationship from participants' perspectives, and their experiences as mentors while working as administrators in student affairs. The research question that guided this study was: "What are the perceptions of student affairs administrators and the mentoring relationships that influence the college experience?" In order to get a full range of answers, I wanted to focus closely on the participants' experiences and how they felt their roles as mentors benefitted the students engaged in a mentoring relationship through their student affairs position. The interview protocol allowed me to discover these answers (see Appendix D).

Review of the Study

For data collection purposes I interviewed six participants: three women and three men. All interviews were held in private locations and each interview was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Once data collection and transcriptions were completed, I analyzed data by using a coding system (i.e., letter systems, color codes, and grouping). Through that process I identified themes that were consistent with the participants' mentoring experiences and their meaning making process.

Anonymity of Participants

This study focused on the experiences of six student affairs administrators: Monica, Hillary, Rebecca, Fred, Michael, and Frank. All individuals have different administrative positions at the university where the research took place and all worked at other institutions before their current job. Participants were eager to share their perspectives on mentoring and seemed comfortable sharing their experiences throughout the interviews. In order to maintain anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms have been used for their names as well previous institutions, mentors, and students who they mentioned during the interview.

Overview of Themes and Subthemes

During the data analysis process themes emerged that were representative of participants' collective experiences. These themes became more and more apparent as the words and experiences of each participant were analyzed. Four thematic findings emerged from data analysis. Additionally, there were nine subthemes identified each one connected to one of the three themes (Table 2).

During the data analysis process, I created a plan that would help me in identifying emerging themes from the interview data. When determining the four themes, it was necessary that each theme serve as an umbrella' term that would encompass the actions and experiences of each participant. Each theme should work in the form of a noun that describes what a mentor is. The theme should complete this sentence, "Mentors perceive themselves to be…" When the theme is attached to this sentence, the reasons as to why I took this approach are easier to comprehend. For me,

the themes are terms that best describe the perceptions of mentors from the viewpoints of the participants and their real-life experiences.

The theme, *relationship builders,* describes how mentors provide opportunities for one-on-one, intentional connections that benefit students from the perspective they can come to the mentor for help. The subthemes that coincide are *trust,* and *advice.* The second theme, *professional contacts,* describes how participants viewed themselves as job references and professional connections in student affairs. The sub-themes connected are *job references* and *student affairs connections.* The third theme, *encouragers,* describes how mentors have the opportunity to challenge students and inspire them to discover their true identity. *Challenge*, *support*, and *positive encouragement* are sub-themes associated with encouragers. The final theme, *self-reflectors*, describes what mentors received and learned from their current or past mentoring relationships. The subthemes that emerged from the self-reflector theme are *past mentors, two-way teaching,* and *difference makers.* The themes and subthemes are described in detail in this chapter.

Table 2: *Themes (T) and Subthemes (S)*

T1. RELATIONSHIP BUILDERS	T2: PROFESSIONAL CONTACTS	T3. ENCOURAGERS	T4. SELF-REFLECTORS
S1. Trust	S1. Student Affairs Connections	S1. Challenge	S1. Past Mentors
S2. Advice		S2. Support	S2. Two-Way Teaching
		S3. Positive Encouragement	S3. Difference Makers

Themes and Subthemes

Relationship Builders

The first theme found throughout the interviews is *relationship builders.* Data analysis showed that the participants perceived one of the primary mentoring roles as "relationships builders" for undergraduate students. The participants saw they had an opportunity to help students while building relationships with them. Participants in the study mentioned that being mentors for students and helping them during their time at the university, especially through one-on-one discussions where the students need a form of guidance. During the interviews participants shared part of their experience as a mentor, included establishing *trust* and providing *advice* as they took the role of relationship builders.

Trust. Participants saw themselves and the students as instilling a sense of trust in the relationship. Hillary believes "a mentor becomes that [person who instills trust] when you find that person you connect with and you feel comfortable with and you trust to have conversations about almost anything." Participants found that when there was trust, students would come to them seeking advice regarding personal issues such as family and relationships rather than just school business. Rebecca saw this in her mentoring relationships:

What started as a professional mentoring relationship; how do I do my student

development job or programming job or my work study job, build into…this is

what's happening [personal issues]. What started as a job giving responsibility

grew into knowing more about family, like how is your family? How is your

grandma? To family illnesses or divorce or the death of a parent. You know that

kind of stuff and again that grows into a personal relationship, that personal

friendship.

Frank saw a similar instance with the president of the organization he advises. He

believes this is how a transition from a formal to informal relationship is created.

I meet every other week with the programs president. And I use that as an

opportunity…we do programming business of course but because that's our time

where we set the agenda together for the upcoming meeting. And so, we do that,

but I also use that as a time to check in with him or her. This year it's a male. We

talk about how classes are going. We talk about struggles that he might be

having. And I just really give him an opportunity to talk about anything.

It is apparent that what began as a professional relationship, transitioned to a meaningful

relationship all because of the sense of trust. Michael found that this was also apparent in

his relationships, especially with his male mentees:

And it's the man/male student who seeks me out. And that's where you're getting

into more life issues. I view most of the time when you're hearing this story, the

father strayed and often when they were in high school. There's still a little bit of

a gap there with trust between father and the son. I've sort of, as I've gotten

older, sort of become that replacement father in some of that. That's who seeks

me out the most.

Michael played the father figure role for his mentee because of what occurred at the

student's home. Due to their close relationship, Michael felt his mentee was comfortable

enough to share private information. Michael was willing to help because the student

was in need of mentorship. Monica believes that authenticity is important in order to

have connections with the students she mentors. Like Rebecca, Michael, and Frank, she
views these instances as a time to dive deeper into personal issues and show a sense of
caring:

> It's more about building those more genuine/authentic relationships with students
> and it leads to them coming and being in your office for hours at a time…They
> don't recognize that it's a mentorship but they realize that you're there for them
> and they can ask you questions or you know dealing with some personal issues
> that they trust you enough to have those conversations…that's really important
> for me to be able to, at the first level, to be able to have those real conversations to
> know that someone does care about them.

These participants felt that a mentor not only knows the surface level problems but also
can help with the more personal issues.

Based on participants' responses a sense of trust is critical to the mentoring
relationship. As Rebecca said: "One thing administrators have in common; these people
love students, these people love young professionals. People that you know, who I got to
know in a different way, and as that relationship developed, the more trust we gained.
That would be mentoring." The development of trust allowed participants to help
students who were in need of guidance, and who wanted some sort of advice or help. As
Fred noted, "As a mentor I think it is important that your mentee trusts you. They feel
like they can come to you to talk about anything and know that they're going to get
honest feedback."

Advice. Participants viewed their roles as mentors to be helpers who give advice.
The participants saw that many of the students who considered them mentors came to

them seeking guidance and simply wanting to know more about their career and personal life situations. When the participants were intentional about speaking with students and found a connection with them, they felt the students were more comfortable seeking advice from them. Participants reflected on their past experiences in deciding what caused them to be intentional with students in need of help. Monica put herself in the students' shoes. She described her role as one of intentionality:

> One of my favorite sayings is "You don't have to make the mistakes to learn the lessons." So, I felt like being important and intentional for those [students] who are coming to always have that in mind, and helping to share the information that potentially I would have liked someone else to share for me.

It is important to Monica that she provides information that would keep her mentees from making a mistake that could cause them to fail. Whether that is life long lessons, past experiences, or old advice, she feels it is important that she lets them know. With advice she has the power to stop potentially damaging mistakes from happening. Fred described a mentor as "somebody who you can look to for advice as well as to where they show me who I am. That person who can give me the feedback that maybe someone else couldn't give me." From the perspectives of the participants, the action of seeking advice all seem to stem from the ideas that the student takes initiative and is intentional about finding the mentor that could provide him/her with the answers. Michael added, "The best mentors are those who you sort of seek out to get help that you need."

The participants noticed that their mentorship has evolved over time; from students to colleagues, to actual friends, and they are still providing advice for their students/mentees. Due to their close relationship and sense of trust, the participants still

saw themselves as mentoring students after the students graduated college. When speaking about giving advice, Hillary shared that even after graduation her students still call her in times when they need guidance.

> They might call me and say 'Hey, what is going on?' 'Let me talk this through with you.' 'What do you think?' You know, that kind of thing. Or, if holidays are coming up, it's just a natural time for those connections to come back."

Michael saw that his advice seekers and the reasons they sought help changed throughout time. "But what I think they talk to you about and what they want advice on, changes a little bit over time. Most of the time, at least, during my younger career was more about personal issues, now, it's life issues in regards to career."

Giving advice and offering a sense of trust are ways in which mentors perceive their mentoring relationships for undergraduate students. Being able to form a sense of trust by giving advice that leads to success is helpful when creating a mentoring relationship.

Professional Contacts

In addition to being relationship builders, participants believed that mentors can be the *professional contacts* that can help students get their feet in the door when it comes to applying for new opportunities. Frank believes that it is his duty as a mentor to provide these opportunities. "We want to make them more marketable when they go into the work force." Many of the participants noticed that mentees would come to them asking to be references for job opportunities. Most of the time, references are the people who have a personal connection with the individual. Participants saw that being a reference for students was a constant occurrence for them with the mentoring

relationships. Frank noticed, "I found that I end up being references for these students most of the time. And so it's a great opportunity to try and get them to see that they have somebody that is a support." Additionally, Hillary said, "There are times that person may contact you, and say "Hey, I need a reference. Would you be willing?" You know it's that kind of thing."

Student Affairs Connections. Some of the mentors noticed that students came to them wanting to know more about their profession in student affairs. Rebecca noted: "Whether that's knowledge about something in particular. Maybe you work in a field or maybe your mentor works in a field you want to go into. There is something you can gain that way. You gain an interest in an area and you want to learn more about it."

Monica was able to think of two instances where she was able to help students who had an interest in student affairs. Both instances originated from NASPA-Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (commonly referred to as NASPA). NASPA is a national organization whose mission is to be "The principal source of leadership, scholarship, professional development, and advocacy for student affairs" (NASPA, n.d.). Through NASPA, Monica was able to provide hands-on, job shadowing opportunities to her mentees.

> I think about, say for instance NASPA and their idea, their NUFP [NASPA
> Undergraduate Fellows Program], which is for undergrad fellows and they
> connect them with a mentor and that is to be intentional about helping undergrads
> to see what the world of student affairs looks like through the eyes of a mentor.
> Being intentional and sharing with them what all that encompasses and providing
> opportunities for them to get hands on experience is what's important.

During the interview, she was more specific about a mentee she had mentored while working with the NASPA Undergraduate Fellowship Program (NUFP). NUFP is a program designed to create opportunities for underrepresented student populations who are interested in student affairs.

> Seeing that from when he was an undergrad until now being a professional and being intentional about each process of the job search. He was my NUFP, and you know getting him connections with internships as soon as he became a NUFP. Helping him to apply for grad school. Helping with the personal statements, you know making sure there was a scholarship; all of those kinds of steps along the way. And now, as he was going off to apply for his first professional role, I was able to be a reference for him.

Participants believed that creating bonds with other individuals in student affairs allowed them to personally create connections that would be important to them in the future. The connections they created were so useful during their time at the university, the participants wanted to share their knowledge and connections with their mentees. Because of her connections with the university, Rebecca has the opportunity to show her mentees the importance of connections and networking within student affairs.

> I also think the students who see their value in the mentoring relationship say, "Wow, Rebecca has something to offer. Rebecca knows a lot of people at the university. Rebecca knows people around the country and I want to work in her field. She knows a lot of people at the university so I want to use them as a resource." People you form a relationship with and who want to make themselves better.

Networking and getting the opportunity to meet more people in important when it comes to finding jobs in student affairs. Rebecca saw herself doing just so. Due to the connections and involvement both she and Monica had in the area of student affairs, their mentees were able to benefit from their mentoring relationship. They provided the professional connections that allowed them to understand what student affairs was like. Rebecca was able to realize that even though she was a mentor for her student, she would be a connection and networking tool if her mentees needed any form of help. There will always be a sort of influencing aspect with this professional connection. Rebecca sums up the idea of mentoring and professional connections by noting:

> I hope outside of this, that the mentoring, there will always be a connection and that may turn into, what do you think about this job? What do you think about this school? What do you think about me changing jobs? You know I have former students that I know that they view me as a mentor and they're no in school anymore and I'm not at that institution anymore. We're still connected. I would call them friends. I think if they described, they would call me a friend, but also say, "Oh my God, you're definitely a mentor!" The relationship continues and grows, and expands sort of into an influencing type of thing.

Participants believed professional connections, specifically in the field of student affairs, can be created when it comes to creating opportunities for their mentees.

Encouragers

The third theme that emerged from data analysis is the term *encouragers*. Participants described behaviors that were consistent with Sanford's (1966) theory of challenge and support. Evans et al. (2010) described the theory as a "way to encourage

development by providing a challenge and supporting individuals as they go through adolescence while being in college. "The amount of challenge tolerated is a function with the amount of support available" (Evans et al., p. 30). This form of support can be found by the use of positive encouragement. Therefore, it is important to understand that *encouragers* is evident when presenting students with challenges and seeing the outcomes that could benefit them in succeeding. As *encouragers*, mentors provide *challenge*, *support*, and *positive reinforcement* which were identified as sub-themes of encourager.

  Challenge. Challenges occur when people ask the hard questions. The hard questions are the ones that make students think outside of the box and the questions that involve critical thinking and self-reflection. For example, questions like, "What are you doing well, that is keeping you from doing the best?" "What do you truly want to be and do?" "What keeps you from following your dreams?" are some inquiries that could be asked in a mentoring relationship. These difficult questions allow students to think intuitively and create opportunities for mature development. The hope is that with these challenges self-growth can occur. Participants described themselves asking the hard questions to their mentees. They also believed it was important as a mentor to ask these kinds of questions in order for mentees to develop and gain an opportunity to use their critical thinking skills for further development. Frank mentioned the times when he and the president of the organization met for their weekly meetings and how he asks questions that the president may have not thought about:

    I'm very fortunate, he's a very bright man. What I try to do with him as well is

    get him to think about what are the outcomes of this decision. Are there places

there's going to be conflict? Are other people that you need in support of

decisions? So I try to get him to think about the greater impact of the

conversation versus looking at it in a simpler way.

Frank noticed that his mentee developed due to his support as mentor and advisor:

When he came in to be president of the programming board, he looked at it as if

it's one of those things you put as a line on your resume. And now he

understands that there is a greater responsibility and a greater learning that's

going on by him being in that position than what he thought in the front end. And

so now he understands some of those skills he's gaining and those opportunities

that he's had to influence decisions and participate in discussions that he never

thought about before.

Michael viewed the intervention of being challenged and developing by providing

mentees with projects and duties that allowed them to learn a lesson or a little piece of

information that would potentially help them in the future. He gave an example of his

mentee/supervisee from a formal mentoring relationship:

Most of the time what you're trying to do, is to mentor, is to help someone go to

that next stage where they're…you know, I'm working with [a student], which is

more formal, but I've given him a project. So I've said, "Here's the first piece for

you to read, and when um, let's, by this day I'm going to have this back." In a

way that's mentoring but it's also asking how do you look at things? How do you

do it so you can be on your own in another year? So, we've talked about where

does he search for information and where does he look for it. I gave him an

example today of a discussion. So he might have a discussion with other people.

Michael knew that the tasks he gave his mentees were beneficial in their development and learning experiences.

Based off these experiences, it is evident that participants wanted students to understand who they are by putting them in situations where they have opportunities to grow. Participants felt it was an opportunity to challenge their mentees by seeing different perspectives and understanding ideas below the surface level view. Participants did not provide every resource, but challenged students to create their own tools that could help them throughout the process. To them, this allows the student to grow and create their own sense of development. Monica firmly believes that mentors create these opportunities for growth by helping students create their own sense of self-identity:

> When I think about a mentor, holistically, I think about it as a role in which you are promoting others to do something that will promote them further on and their growth. I think there are a lot of advantages to mentoring. I mean overall, helping you figure out things you don't know about yourself. I mean, if there's anything I want my students to learn in their undergrad is not only what they're studying but also who are you? What is that identity that you have? I really think a mentor can help to do that even if you're doing it through the same process. You're still learning about yourself. When you have someone to pull things out on you, it's really significant overall.

This understanding of self-identity is created when the participants asked their mentees to think critically about who they were as an individual. This critical thinking in regards to the self is connected to the idea of *challenge.*

Support. The participants described that being an active listener is what the majority of their time consists of while being a mentor. The participants believed the most impactful form of support they could provide is to simply listen and empathize with what the mentee needs. Some students may need an individual who can share experiences and wisdom during their conversations. These conversations could consist of a student disclosing personal details about their own lives or struggles that may be affecting them. The participants felt that due to their close and nurturing relationship with mentees, they were able to listen and provide feedback that was not necessarily trying to change the individual, but to show a form of support.

Fred noted that listening is a major part of being a mentor. He realized that some of his mentees really need a place for venting and someone to hear them. This is why he feels it is important for him to exhibit strong helping skills, particularly being an active listener. "I'm really trying to improve myself by becoming a good listener…sometimes people don't really want mentorship, they just want somebody to talk to." Though the student may not have wanted a mentoring relationship, the authentic and intentional connection they created through the act of listening cultivated a mentoring relationship. Rebecca was put into a formal mentoring relationship where her mentee had to meet with her to fulfill requirements for her scholarship. Over time, their connection grew and what started out as simple surface level conversations, turned into deep personal conversations about family and life:

> I'm in a formal mentoring relationship right now with a student because she is on
>
> a scholarship. And part of her requirements is that she has a mentor at the
>
> university to fulfill her requirement. So, we were put together. We didn't know

each other, with the intent that I help to provide support for her to be successful in college. Along the way, we are getting to know each other personally, which has been really cool. She comes to me and we talk about her things.

She learned that these types of conversations and relationships provide that support for students. "Maybe you're just trying to help them, trying to make them successful and allowing them to grow. I guess that's something I didn't take into consideration. That's crucial right?" During this time of conversation, Rebecca listens to what her mentee is going through and thinks about how she could be the support that student needs.

Michael viewed his role of supporting by listening to what one of his mentees, who is not a current student, is experiencing. Because of his position at the university and the different people he comes in contact with, he sees all of his mentees as students, especially if they are not a typical student's age. His mentee is a lot younger than him, so he views her as a student because of the age difference and the short number of years she's worked at the university. His job is to not tell her what to do but help guide her and support her in the direction he believes would be beneficial:

> I'm trying to mentor a colleague through a difficult time. She is unhappy in her job situation and she sought me out on what she should do in order to, you know, make things better. She really needs to figure out that she needs to look for another job. She's not going to change her boss. My job is to help her figure that out.

His mentee came to him seeking guidance and he is helping her figure what to do by simply supporting her through the situation. It is evident that the continued support, like Michael with his mentee demonstrates a strong connection between the mentor and the

mentee. Michael's experience with a current employee of the institution is relevant to the

study because it describes how the participant is still portraying a mentor and voicing his

perspective of certain ways on how he mentors younger people, especially students.

Hillary noticed that after her mentees graduated, they still called her seeking

support and a listening ear. It was her constant connection with her mentees that created

these opportunities.

> I think it comes back to identifying the value of the relationships formed and the
>
> fact that you do stay connected. I think knowing that each of you want to continue
>
> having conversations with each other even if it's just about what happened in their
>
> family, new child, new marriage, new location, new whatever.

Possessing this valued connection shows that the sense of support carried throughout the

years continues even after the completion of school. The availability to listen is clearly

seen as the foundation to support mentees. Fred sees this as an important characteristic as

well. "I would describe a mentor as someone who is a support system or a supporter, or

part of a support system. Someone who motivates."

Positive Reinforcement. Participants described experiences where they provided

positive reinforcement to mentees, which they believe, helped students be successful.

Hillary sees each interaction she has with a mentee as a chance to find the good in a

situation. "And I think that positive piece or that opportunity to always see, what's the

good that could come out of this, even though it doesn't seem like a good situation. Let's

talk about what you are learning from this." Trying to find the good in a situation can

outplay the bad characteristics for participants in their mentoring relationships. This

provides positivity for the situation and encourages the mentee to see their situation from a different perspective.

Focusing on the positive aspects of a situation, mentors can then provide a sense of importance and value to their mentees. Finding the good allows somewhat of a weight to be lifted off the shoulders of the student. Michael feels that once students have figured out the good of the situation, they can work on solving the problem while holding onto their self-worth. "So, I think that's my job when I'm doing that mentoring. It will never be easy, so how do you make it tolerable? How you make you feel good about yourself is the most important thing!" His goal is to show how important his mentees are by helping solve the situation and still showing that they are special to him.

Participants wanted their mentees to feel good about themselves. They wanted them to possess a sense of courage that would allow them to conquer their anxieties. For instance, Fred wants to show his mentees that they are better than who they think they are:

> You know, you lift them up if they're feeling down or there's times where…You know, I've have mentees who shortchanged themselves. Who didn't know how good they really are, or how good of a job they are doing. So, sometimes they just need that reminder. That positive reality. That wait a minute, they're much better than they think they are.

In other words, when a student possesses these characteristics of self-worth and positivity, they feel more confident about their ability to be successful.

The term *encouragers* describes how students affairs administrators perceive themselves as mentors for undergraduate students. As encouragers, they *challenge* by

asking student questions that will help them think more critically. They *support* by listening and letting the students vent. Mentors provide *positive reinforcement* to give their mentees a sense of self-worth and belonging. These opportunities can allow for a successful undergraduate experience.

Self-Reflectors

During the interviews, participants were asked questions that addressed what they believed mentoring looked like for them. Answering those questions allowed them to reflect on their own experiences as mentors and reflect on the mentors in their lives who inspired them in their careers. Most of the findings described in this chapter have focused on what mentors can do for students. This theme will describe how being in a mentoring relationship personally gives participants satisfaction and how they learn lessons from their experiences. Questions in the interviews were geared towards past experiences; therefore, it gave participants the chance to self-reflect. Mentors have the opportunity to *self-reflect* while being in a mentoring relationship. They self-reflect by examining their *past mentors*, realizing their *personal growth*, and coming to the conclusion that they are destined to be *difference makers*.

Past mentors. Each of the participants had people in their lives who inspired them to follow their dreams. Each of the participants had multiple mentors through different phases of their lives. Some mentors were in high school while some were found while in their current profession. Some of the past mentors were close relatives, while others were professionals they met during their time in college. No matter the case, each past mentor taught valuable lessons that the participant hoped to instill on the students

they are mentoring now. The participants realized they could be mentors because of the mentors they had while they were younger.

Hillary spoke about how her major mentoring influence was her grandmother while growing up:

Well if you go way back, I think my first major influence, especially as a female was my grandmother, who is way ahead of her time. She was one of those people that would say, "Go do it! Go try it." She wouldn't judge people. She was just one of those people that generally cared about everyone else's success. I say that and it's so funny. You know, she lived at home, on the farm, gathering eggs. I mean that's the kind of person, but if you sat down and had a conversation with her, you realized how much more deep she was than that stereotypical lady on the farm, gathering eggs kind of thing. I think that was a really big influence.

She also believes that she was able to learn her act of listening and having an open door policy from her coaches while in high school. Now, it is important from her perspective that her mentees come into her office and feel comfortable to talk about anything.

When I was in high school, one of my coaches was pretty influential. She was one of those people I would go to, sit down, I remember in this teeny, tiny, little office with stuff everywhere. I would go in and sit on the floor and just have conversations with her if I was concerned about something or had an issue. I probably had conversations with her more than I did with my parents.

Rebecca also found her major influences to be her coaches while in school. "My mentors have changed all the time. So when I think of life changes, mentors change. I would

identify my basketball coach when I was in high school." She also identified her hall

director as mentor that influenced her while she was a student:

> But she challenged me. I can remember a situation in college where I was having
>
> a lot of problems with my hall director in some situation and I was really at a lost.
>
> I didn't know what to do. I remember going to Kristen, which meant I was going
>
> to my boss' boss but that was who I trusted. I remember saying, I don't mean to
>
> put you on the spot or in the middle, but I don't know what to do here. And she
>
> didn't do it for me. She told what she expected. She gave me options. We
>
> eventually found some happy ground, but she did let me off the hook. My
>
> mentors had higher expectation for me than I did…by doing more, they
>
> challenged me and they got me.

In terms of learning valuable lessons that can be applied to students currently, Fred has

been able to use a technique his mentor used with him:

> There is one mentor I can think about today. I remember one conversation he and
>
> I were having and he was very direct. I was telling you how I went to lunch with
>
> my mentors, and I said something, and he said to me directly, basically "Don't
>
> ever say anything like that again. It's not true to who you are and don't think
>
> about yourself that way." So, I think about, not necessarily about the content of
>
> what I said, but more so his approach and how was teaching me indirectly. It
>
> wasn't in a rude way, it was really kind of just, um, just "checking me," I guess.
>
> And so, I think that's something I don't have to do very often, but it's also
>
> something I'm not afraid to do. To able to say to a mentee, hey let's put a hold on
>
> what you're thinking and not think about yourself in a negative way.

Fred wants to be sure his students have that sense of positive encouragement given to them. If it was not for his mentor who "checked" him, it is possible that he would not find this as an important lesson for his students.

Participants also noticed that their mentors were the individuals who informed them about the profession of student affairs. Whether it was in passing, during meetings, or at lunch, their conversations with past mentors sparked their interest in student affairs. Frank considered his mentor as the reason he chose to pursue his current career:

> Absolutely! I was finishing my undergraduate and had no idea what I wanted to do. I was getting a degree in Bachelor of Science in recreation, with an emphasis in program planning and leadership. I was planning to attend a regional conference for programming and it was conversations through [my mentor]. And on the ride back to our home campus that the light went on and said, "Hey, people do this for a career." And [my mentor] had started to mentor me at that time and he has been a mentor of from really late undergraduate and even today to some extent.

Similarly, Monica had the opportunity to find her mentor informally like Frank. It was during a luncheon where she became inspired to pursue a career in student affairs:

> To make a long story short, I just happened to be at a luncheon one time, and it was when I was a counselor and I happened to be sitting at a table my VP [Vice President] was sitting at. I was just talking to him telling him about what I was interested and passionate about, never even knowing what student affairs meant. I had no idea. But he thought I would be really good in a position and so I applied and I got the position! He as a mentor had a way of being there and promoting us

as staff without doing it intentionally. He was the one that he could say something and you did it. The meaning behind what he was doing and was really trying to say was promoting us in a professional growth.

Unlike Frank and Monica, Michael found one of this mentors through a formal process in which he was assigned a person to meet with while in graduate school. Even though it was formal, he still learned about the idea of student affairs and what it entails to be an administrator in the field.

When I was in graduate school, you were assigned a mentor who was not your supervisor or a faculty member. My mentor was, the person assigned to me was the Assistant Director of Financial Aid. And I really learned. He taught me things that were not in the book, and I would say, now that I'm thinking back, how that was valuable to me. He really gave me some pointers on how to be an administrator, which was a really great thing.

Each of the participants viewed their mentors as someone they could go to for help, guidance, and learning. It was evident that those past mentors influenced the current mentors in their current positions. There is a cycle that is present between these relationships; the current mentors learned from their mentors, and they are now teaching what they learned to their mentees.

Two-way teaching. Though participants learned valuable lessons from their mentors, they found that they were able to learn new ideas from their mentees. The relationships were beneficial to both parties. The mentee/student was learning, and the mentor/administrator was learning just as much. Each were teaching valuable lessons,

whether it was noticed or not at the time. It was evident that the relationships benefitted both parties. Hillary stated, "I think there's plenty I can learn from my mentees." Additionally, she brought up the idea that she learns a lot about herself during this time. She thinks her students teach her just as much as she does to them:

> I don't think it's only a one-way street. I believe strongly that it is a two-way street. A quality mentoring relationship is where both people benefit from the conversations and the dialogue and learn from the experiences of both people. I think the best way to describe it [mentoring], is a partnership between two people that enter into a relationship that one or ideally both have something to gain.

During these two-way learning opportunities, there is a time when the mentee can become a mentor. I noticed that through this research process, the participants were able to become a current mentor for their past mentor as time progressed. What was seen as a mentoring relationship turned into a friendship, but yet lessons were still taught and learned. Frank talked about how this role reversal happened with his mentor:

> [My mentor] was the person I would pick up the phone and call if I had a problem. I would drive down to Waco and spend the morning with him and have lunch. Spend some time with all his staff. Have some one-on-ones with him and come back. He was my mentor there. Interestingly, the relationship turned and there were a couple of times where he picked up the phone and called me and asked me my opinions on some things. And so, it was like wow, the mentee became the mentor, and my opinion was valued in how we had done whatever he was asking about. So that was a real enlightening time in my professional development and "Oh, wow I can do this for somebody even older than me."

Like Frank, Fred saw the way development occurred between him and his mentees.

During this time he was also able to witness that even as he got older, a mentor was still

needed for a sense of guidance. At his older age, Frank's mentor sought guidance and re-

assurance. Fred is able to do the same with his mentors, as he got older and more

experienced in his profession.

> It's almost this assumption that once you make it past your first year, you don't
>
> need a mentor anymore. And I remember, this being recent, even as a director
>
> and now with my promotion, I still need mentorship. I still need a mentor. At the
>
> same time, it's a reality check for me that you can never be too old to have a
>
> mentor.

> This two-way learning is beneficial and can have significant impact on how

mentoring relationships are for an individual in the years to come. The reciprocal

learning allows mentors to create better mentoring relationships, while the mentees have

the opportunity to inspire their mentors.

> **Difference makers.** Participants chose to pursue a career in student affairs to

make a difference and impact the lives of students. They have an even greater

opportunity when they create mentoring relationships with college students. It gives

them pleasure to watch the growth and development of their mentees. Frank found it as

his duty to personally impact students:

> I like the opportunity to do that. I would like to think that some of the
>
> experiences I've had might benefit some of our students. I'm genuinely interested
>
> in students. I said this just last week to a friend, "The reason I get up and come to

work everyday. It's the students." It's an opportunity to have a positive impact

on their lives and help them, and shape them.

Rebecca's coaches in high school and college shaped and molded her into the person that

she is today. Because of the time and personal investment from her mentors, Rebecca

considers it as a pay it forward opportunity for her mentees.

I had coaches who were willing to put in their time and effort. I saw that and I

had those people. People that were there in rough times. In my times and they

were right there. And so, it's that kind of pay it forward type of thing. People

gave to me, so I need to give to them [mentees]. And, people want to do that.

Mentors find reward influencing the lives of the students they mentor. When they see

personal growth in students, they know they have been part of a successful mentoring

relationship. Monica said it frankly; "Knowing that I had a little part in their success is

why I continue to want to help others."

For the participants in this study it is apparent that being a mentor and difference

maker is a role that goes along with being a student affairs administrator. Frank said, "I

see being a mentor as, or the role of it in student affairs, is that we all have a

responsibility to try and mentor students." In other words, having an opportunity to make

a difference comes with the job. For these individuals, they are the ones who get granted

the privilege to make a difference in the lives of students. Hillary described her view as a

mentor:

You know, I think people who are naturally mentors really just care about making

a difference in people's lives. You know you've heard me tell the starfish story.

To me, that is an easy way to sum it up. It's not about affecting the masses. It's about affecting that one person at a time.

Mentors perceived themselves as *self-reflectors*. Their *past mentors* allowed them to remember the valuable lessons that were taught and that can instill on their mentees. Due to these mentoring relationships, an opportunity for *two-way teaching* is apparent. Both the mentee and the mentor learn from each other. However, above all else, these participants can be seen as *difference makers*. The idea of self-reflection allows for them to see their self-worth.

Conclusion

The four themes that emerged from these data analysis were described using umbrella terms that represented student affairs administrators perceptions of their mentoring relationships to undergraduate students. *Relationship builders*, *professional contacts, encouragers*, and *self-reflectors* are key terms that successfully describe their mentoring relationships and experiences. As student affairs administrators, it is essential to create a mentoring relationship not only that benefits the students, but also benefits the self. The next chapter, chapter five, will connect the research findings with research found in the literature of mentoring relationships. Implications, recommendations for further researcher, and limitations will be explained in that chapter as well.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of student affairs administrators and how they perceive mentoring relationships with college students during their undergraduate experience. A qualitative research design and semi-structured interview protocol were used to investigate the perceptions of the participants and address the over-arching research question: What are student affairs administrators' perceptions of how mentoring can influence the college experience? Throughout the study and from data analysis, four themes emerged that depicted how student affairs administrators described themselves as mentors:

- relationship builders, providing advice, and instilling a sense of trust to their students,

- professional contacts, assisting with job opportunities during and after college, and connecting students with other professionals in student affairs,

- encouragers, offering challenge and support for students, and giving positive encouragement to students, and

- self-reflectors, personally reflecting on self by identifying past mentors, recognizing two-way teaching that occurs between mentor and mentee, and realizing they are difference makers in the field of student affairs.

This chapter will discuss and review the findings found in Chapter 4, and link them to mentoring literature as well as developmental theories described in Chapter 2: Literature Review.   I will also describe implications for future study in regards to student affairs administrators and mentoring, and I will provide recommendations on how student

affairs administrators can create potential mentoring relationships with college students. In addition, I will identify limitations of the study.

Summary of Themes

Four themes emerged from data analysis that helped describe the perceptions and experiences of student affairs administrators in their mentoring relationships: relationship builders, professional contacts, encouragers, and self-reflectors. All of the participants shared their voices, experiences, and characteristics of their mentoring relationships and what they learned from them. The major takeaways from the findings are detailed below:

- Student affairs administrators have the opportunity to build relationships by offering advice to the students they mentor;

- Mentoring relationships involving student affairs administrators must possess a deep level of trust between the mentee and the mentor;

- Student affairs administrators assist students by helping with résumés, references, and potential job opportunities;

- Student affairs administrators work with students who are interested in pursuing a career in student affairs;

- Student affairs administrators are mentors because they challenge and support individuals by helping hone in on their identity and offering positive reinforcement;

- Student affairs administrators learned lessons from their past mentors that they hope to instill in their current mentees;

- Student affairs administrators benefit from the mentoring relationship, and

- Student affairs administrators want to make a difference in their role as mentors.

The thematic findings: relationship builders, professional contacts, encouragers, and self-reflectors, were consistent with past research on mentoring. The next sections will connect the themes found in the study with past research, as well as link related theories mentioned in chapter two.

Links to Literature

Mentors are relationship builders. Dungy and Gordon (2011) described the history and evolution of student affairs personnel, characterizing them as developers of the whole student while they are enrolled at a university, whereas Healey et al. (2012) described administrators as "moral mentors." These moral mentors inspire and instill a sense of hope to students as they develop during their time in college. They guide the students to a holistic development and provide assistance based off past experiences that have happened to them. The findings from this study indicated that the participants in this study do that in their roles as mentors. For example, the participants described providing guidance to students they mentored by offering advice and instilling a sense of trust between them and the students. All of these actions are demonstrated through personal conversations between the mentor and the mentee.

Healey et al. (2012) described that people have an obligation to discover other perspectives and lessons through the help of conversation. Participants found that when they were able to have deep, meaningful conversations with their mentees, they had the opportunity to create trust where students could talk to them about personal and private issues. For example, Hillary believed that the relationships where you feel comfortable

talking about different issues are the most salient. When trust was established, all

participants said their students came to them to talk about issues they were experiencing.

Listening, being authentic, and helping were apparent in all the discussions of the

participants.   The moral coach, or mentor, must "communicate and inspire hope in a

student, to maintain belief and pride in the person" (Healy and Liddell, 1998, p. 41). This

study confirmed that building relationships is central to mentorship. Fred noted, "As a

mentor I think it is important that your mentee trusts you. They feel like they can come

to you to talk about anything and know that they're going to get honest feedback." In

Fred's instance, trust is created, advice is given, and hope is communicated to his mentee.

  Mentors are professional contacts. Participants described their mentoring

relationships as opportunities to be professional contacts for students. They saw

themselves providing assistance when it came to applying for jobs while being in school,

and jobs after they graduated. Reynolds (2012) described the helping relationship as an

opportunity for mentors to provide "supervision, mentoring, and other related behaviors

allow for the connection with others and gives opportunities to respond to the personal,

professional, and career-related needs of students." (p. 238). The professional and career-

related needs of students are what participants believed was one of the more important

sources of support they could provide students through their mentoring role. In addition

to being professional contacts, participants said they created mentoring relationships

through students' interest in pursuing a career in student affairs. Summers-Ewing (1994)

noted that mentoring relationships are likely to form when two individuals share similar

personal or professional interests. Rebecca and Monica's experiences were consistent

with this belief as they saw the interest of student affairs in their students and wanted to

help their mentees decide if student affairs was a good fit for them. With Monica's

participation in NASPA, she was able to create formal mentoring relationships through

the NUFP program that was offered. With NUFP, she was able to provide students with

professional connections with other student affairs professionals, and give students

hands-on experience through internships at universities. The NUFP program provides

opportunities for underrepresented populations and first-generation students to explore

the student affairs profession. This formal program assigns students with a mentor in

student affairs. The NUFP program relates closely with Gupton et al.'s, (2009) call for

providing programs for university professionals to create programs that enhance and

support the college experience for underrepresented students. With her involvement in

the NUFP program, Monica has the opportunity to be a professional contact by providing

connections and opportunities to students who are interested in student affairs. The

students she supported in the NUFP program are also her mentees and she has kept up

with them in their future endeavors as student affairs professionals. This study supports

what is already documented in the literature that mentors are professional connections

and contacts.

Mentors are encouragers. Participants described opportunities where they were

able to support students by being encouragers during their mentoring relationships. They

provided a sense of challenge and support with the students they mentored. Considering

Sanford's theory of challenge and support, a student's development occurs when

challenges in the environment (e.g., academics, course schedules, looking for jobs) are

balanced by the environmental support they receive (resources/advice given from student

affairs administrators in this instance). A developmental change does not occur when

there is too much support, and not enough challenge, as well as when there is too much

challenge and not enough support. There must be the right balance of challenge and

support provided in order to be effective. The participants shared stories where they gave

mentees a challenge that could facilitate personal growth but also supported them when

they needed support. The challenges provided by the mentors generate critical self-

evaluation for the mentee. Cooper and Miller (1998) argued mentors provide

opportunities to "enhance self-esteem, challenging-growth enhancing experience, and an

exemplar to observe and emulate." (p. 59-60). Participants wanted to challenge students

to think on a deeper level and assist them in establishing their true identity.

Mentors were able to provide challenge, by helping mentees think more critically

and reflect on their choices, and challenging them through enhancing experiences.

Challenging students to reflect on their personal identity is consistent with aspects of

Erikson's theory of identity development (1968). This theory focuses on the

development spanning a person's entire life, and it is broken down into eight stages with

a "turning point" that must be resolved in order to produce a developmental change

(Erikson, 1968). In this specific instance regarding students, a traditional-age college

student enters higher education during the time of adolescence where they are leaving

childhood and entering into adulthood. This transition can be seen when students begin

making their own decisions, and begin living on their own, away from the

parental/guardian guidance they were once accustomed to earlier in their lives. Without

any form of guidance, students begin to create their own sense of identity by the

decisions they make and the environment around them. Traditional college-age students

are likely to be in Erikson's stage 5: identity vs. identity diffusion (confusion) stage.

This stage occurs during the time where individuals begin to ask themselves, "Who am I?" Individuals are concerned with how people perceive them, and their role/position in society. This stage and description correlates with the views and findings of the accounts of the participants in regards to their mentees. The participants found themselves being active listeners for their mentees who were in need of solutions related to either their personal lives or issues of future endeavors such as professional opportunities. They noticed their mentees asking for advice about jobs, and what they should do for the rest of their lives. Participants found it valuable to listen to what students were needing by providing them with challenges that could help them discover ways in forming their identity and their place in society. They provided critical thinking opportunities (e.g., self-reflection, engaging work experiences, guidance) that would lead to self-discovery of identity for their mentees.

In addition to participants providing challenge, they also offered students support. From the participants' perspective, listening was a major part in showing that they were available to support students. When the participants were actively listening, they noticed that students were willing to disclose personal details about their lives. This support allowed there to be comfort and trust between the mentor and the mentee. These opportunities to provide support also created a connection that would last years after the students graduated. For instance, Hillary's mentees still call her seeking support about situations that occurred in their personal lives, like marriage, a birth of a child, or even a new job. Ragins and Cooper (1999) found that informal mentoring results in more psychosocial functions (i.e., support, role modeling, and friendship). The participants were able to create friendships that modeled support from their mentoring relationships,

thus resulting in psychosocial functions that are consistent with Ragins and Cooper's findings. Participants said they still keep in contact with their mentees after graduation and years following their mentees' departure from the institution. Their informal mentoring relationships resulted in continued support throughout the years and friendships that would last a lifetime. The participants' informal relationships enhanced the psychosocial functions of their mentees when they listened and provided support. These specific findings support that being an *encourager* and providing challenge, support, and positive reinforcement are important to being in a mentoring relationship.

Mentors are self-reflectors. Participants also shared how they benefitted from mentoring. Through self-reflection, they were able to look back on their past personal experiences as mentees, witness two-way teaching, and realize that they are difference makers for the students they mentor while working in student affairs. Reynolds (2012) said that mentors are on their own journey, which allows them to gain self-awareness and a sense of perspective while being in a mentoring relationship. This self-awareness was generated through the process of looking back at past mentors who influenced their lives. Kram's (1983) *cultivation* phase occurs when the mentor is transferring knowledge and skills to the mentee, and the mentoring relationship is beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee. There is a degree of two-way learning between both parties. The mentor is not only transferring knowledge to the mentee, but also learning what could help them be a more effective mentor. Kram's *cultivation* phase connects with the findings of this study by acknowledging the knowledge and skills that were transferred from the participants' mentors to the participants. This transfer of knowledge allowed the same knowledge to be transferred to participants' mentees. Similar to their mentoring

relationships where the participants were mentors, their mentors provided information on the field and encouraged them to explore student affairs.

Social exchange theory (1976) describes how relationships produce benefits for both parties in the relationship. There is a reciprocity between the mentor and the mentee, and the different lessons they learn. The mentor provides information and knowledge, but the mentee can do the same for the mentor. A sense of two-way learning is introduced with this concept. Mentors are teaching and providing lessons to their mentees but are learning about themselves as mentors through their relationships with mentees. My findings show consistency with the concept of Social Exchange Theory by participants realizing that their mentees were teaching them valuable lessons as well. It is important to note that not only are mentors doing the teaching, but students/mentees are teachers as well. Mentors receive intrinsic and extrinsic rewards just like their mentee while being part of a mentoring relationship. From their mentoring relationships, participants were able to reflect on the concept that they too benefit from the relationship.

The participants in this study felt satisfied and fulfilled when describing their mentoring relationships and what they learned through the process. Ragins and Scandura (1998) reported that mentors experienced a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment from their mentoring relationships. The satisfaction and fulfillment is recognized from the participants perspectives as realizing they are difference makers while being mentors in student affairs. Erikson's concept of generativity vs. stagnation, describes the role of individuals engaging in society and deciding what legacy they want to leave behind. Evans et al. (2010) wrote that this stage occurs specifically in midlife of adulthood where these adults invest in their personal lives in hopes of cultivating the next generation.

Though participants in this study may not physically be in the generativity vs. stagnation phase, in retrospect to the institution, their role in actively giving back to the university and the student affairs profession is apparent and is similar to the description of this phase. They are hoping to cultivate the next generation of students and in some case student affairs professionals. For instance, participants were able to reflect on lessons they taught their mentees in hopes that the students could grow, and influence others like they did for the students. Evans et al. described the generativity versus stagnation stage of Erickson's as the one where "adults are concerned with cultivating the next generation, which includes directing efforts toward providing opportunities for others through mentoring and activism." (Evans et al., 2010, p. 51). This stage is consistent with the findings by showing that participants found value in their mentoring relationships because they knew they were giving back to the students they mentored. They were making a difference and leaving a legacy for their mentees to follow. They hoped they were inspiring their mentees to make a difference in other people's lives. Mentoring and activism allowed for mentoring relationships to be created and differences to be made. Hillary mainly spoke about the concept of truly making a difference on one's life. She sees her duty as not affecting the masses, but affecting one person at a time, and making a difference in the lives of her students.

The experiences and themes found in this study confirm and are linked to the research of mentoring. The findings helped to recognize the importance of mentoring relationships and how they allow mentors to build relationships, provide professional opportunities, encourage, and reflect. These findings added to the research that is already available.

Implications for Practice

The participants' experiences allowed me to understand their views and the way they perceive mentoring. Based on the findings of this study, the following implications for practice are offered that could be beneficial for current student affairs administrators and others who are involved in mentoring relationships:

- In order to begin the mentoring process, student affairs administrators are encouraged to get involved with professional organizations such as NASPA – Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education or ACPA – College Student Educators International that offer formalized mentoring programs where mentors and mentees are assigned. The findings indicated that having a structured gateway to mentoring opportunities allow for mentoring relationships to be created. These relationships can then later develop into an informal relationship that has less of a formal structure.

- NASPA and ACPA provide professional core competencies to broaden the professional knowledge of student affairs administrators (ACPA/NASPA, 2010). One of the core competencies of student affairs is to possess the skills of advising and helping. With this knowledge, not only student affairs administrators, but university employees and professional staff should possess and continue to develop helping skills, specifically active listening. From the study, active listening has been shown as an important characteristic of mentoring. Like the participants, developing these active listening skills might help people become better mentors.

- Participants found that being part of a mentoring relationship was important in their life as student affairs administrators. It is apparent through the findings that mentoring can have an influence not only on the students, but to student affairs administrators who serve as mentors as well. Individuals should consider being in mentoring relationships because of the benefits that can occur while in the relationships. This can influence the administrators in becoming a better student affairs professional. For example, becoming an advisor or assisting with a student organization on campus could provide opportunities to mentor students at the institution. Other than being an advisor, simply participating in informal opportunities and being creative in ways to receive student interactions (e.g., inviting students to eat lunch, participating as a guest speaker, or simply conversing with students) could offer chances of becoming a mentor and creating a mentoring relationship. In other words, while recognizing that student affairs administrators work in a quick paced atmosphere and have busy schedules, it is encouraged that they be proactive and engage with students in a way that encourages mentoring relationships to develop. In addition, I would encourage leaders in student affairs departments to reward professionals who are in mentoring relationships. This opportunity allows for the professional development of individuals and allows them to find value in the profession as they reflect on their understanding of what being a mentor is like.

Due to the experiences and interviews of the participants, these implications could be helpful in establishing mentoring relationships for student affairs administrators.

Recommendations for Future Research

There is a vast amount of research and literature exploring mentors, mentees, and mentoring relationships. From youth mentoring programs, teacher mentoring, and mentoring in the field of business student affairs administrators can see the popularity of mentoring, and the effects it has on people who are in mentoring relationships. There could, however, be more research geared towards mentoring in the field of student affairs and the administrators who consider themselves as mentors, specifically on the benefits they receive out of the mentoring relationships. This study identified that mentors are self-reflectors, however future research could focus on specific approaches they use to self-reflect. More research on the benefits mentors receive should be further investigated.

Additionally, there are multiple theories regarding identity and personal development through the span of life. Individuals go through life figuring out their identity and what role they play in society. Mentors assist mentees in establishing their identity as well. More research could be done in order to show the role identity plays between mentors and their mentees, and whether identity plays a role in a mentoring relationship. For example, future research could investigate potential benefits and challenges of mentoring students of a different gender or race. Additional research could focus on all aspects (not only gender or race) of identity, and investigate the dynamics between individuals who possess different social identities.

Lastly, the findings of this study showed that formal mentoring programs allow increased accessibility to mentors for undergraduate students. Participants noticed that the formal mentoring relationships they were in eventually turned into informal mentoring relationships. Meetings were not scheduled and mandatory, but set solely for

the purpose of understanding and learning more about each other. The participants in this study noticed the informality of the relationship. What is not known is if this switch from a formal to less formal mentoring relationships is a common phenomenon for other mentors in and outside of student affairs. Research in the specific area would be beneficial in determining the importance of formal relationships and how they can be different or similar to informal relationships.

Conclusion

This study was important in understanding student affairs administrators' perceptions of mentoring. The hope was to focus on how student affairs administrators see themselves as mentors, and what influenced them to be mentors for undergraduate students. From the study, four themes emerged that described student affairs administrators as mentors: relationship builders, professional contacts, encouragers, and self-reflectors. When these themes were apparent and utilized with mentees, the participants' mentoring relationships were successful. As mentioned in the beginning of this study, the woman who was throwing starfish back in the ocean's goal was to save not all the starfish, but make a difference to one starfish at a time. This is a prime example of what being a mentor is like. Student affairs administrators serve as mentors not only to affect the lives of individuals, but also to affect their personal and professional lives as well.

References

About. Retrieved from mcnairscholars.com/about.

Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., Poteet, M. L., Lentz, E., & Lima, L. (2004). Career benefits associated with mentoring for protégés: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *89*(1), 127-136. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.89.1.127

Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., & Lentz, E. (2006). The relationship between formal mentoring program characteristics and perceived program effectiveness. *Personnel Psychology, 59*, 125-153.

American College Personnel Association (ACPA) & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). (2010). *Professional competency areas for student affairs practitioners*. Washington, DC: Authors.

Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2011). *Cultivating the spirit: How college can enhance students' inner lives*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Beyene, T., Anglin, M., Sanchez, W., & Ballou, M. (2002). Mentoring and relational mutuality: Protégés' perspectives. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education & Development, 41*(1), 87-102.

Carr, D. (Ed.). 2009. *Encyclopedia of the life course and human development*. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA.

Chambers, J. (1987). A perspective on student affairs. Retrieved from NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

Coles, A. (2011). The role of mentoring in college access and success. Research to Practice Brief. Institute for Higher Education Policy. Retrieved from

http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/the_role_of_mentoring_ in_access_and_success_final_spring_2011.pdf.

Colley, H. (2001). Righting rewritings of the myth of Mentor: A critical perspective on career guidance mentoring. *British Journal on Guidance and Counselling, 29*(2), p. 177-197.

Cooper, D. L., & Miller, T. K. (1998). Influence and impact: Professional development in student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services, 84,* 55-69.

Coyne, I. T. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research: Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 26*(3), 623-630.

Darwin, A., & Palmer, E. (2009). Mentoring circles in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development, 28*(2), 125-136.

Desimone, L. M., Hochberg, E. D., Porter, A. C., Polikoff, M. S., Schwartz, R., & Johnson, L. J. (2014). Formal and informal mentoring: Complementary, compensatory, or consistent? Journal of Teacher Education, *65*(2), 88-110. doi: 10.1177/0022487113511643

Dortch, Jr., T. W. (2000). *The miracles of mentoring: The joy of investing in our future*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Dungy, G., & Gordon, S. A. (2011). The development of student affairs. In Schuh, J. H., Jones, S. R., Harper, S. R., & Associates (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession* (61-79). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social exchange theory. *Annual review of sociology, 2*, 335- 362.

Ensher, E. A., Thomas, C., & Murphy, S. E. (2001). Comparison of traditional, step-ahead, and peer mentoring on protégés support, satisfaction, and perceptions of career success: A social exchange perspective. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 15*(3), 419-438.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis.* New York, NY: Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle.* New York, NY: Norton.

Erickson, L. D., McDonald, S., & Elder, Jr., G. H. (2009). Informal mentors and education: Complimentary or compensatory resources? *Sociology of Education, 82,* 344-367. doi: 10.1177/003804070908200403

Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido, F. M., Patton, L. D., & Renn, K. A. (2010). *Student development in college: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Girves, J. E., Zepeda, Y., & Gwathmey, J. K. (2005). Mentoring in a post-affirmative action world. *Journal of Social Sciences, 61*(3), 449-479.

Gupton, J. T., Castelo-Rodriguez, C., Martinez, D. A., & Quintanar, I. (2009). Creating a pipeline to engage low-income, first-generation college students. In Harper, S. R. & Quaye, S. J. (Eds.), *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations* (243-260). New York, NY: Routledge.

Healy, M. A., Lancaster, J. M., Liddell, D. L., & Lazarus Stewart, D. (2012). The role of the campus professional as a moral mentor. *New Directions for Student Services*, 139, 83-92. doi: 10.1002/ss.20025

Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology,*
    63(6), 597-606.

Jacobi, M. (1991). Mentoring and undergraduate success academic success: A literature-
    review. *Review of Educational Research, 61,* 505-532.

Johnson, W. B. (2002). The intentional mentor: Strategies and guidelines for the
    practicing of mentoring. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 33*(1),
    p. 88-96. doi: 10.1037//0735-7028.33.1.88

King, P. M. & Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2011). Student learning. In Schuh, J. H., Jones,
    S. R., Harper, S. R., & Associates (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the*
    profession (207-225). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academy of Management*
    Journal, 26(4)*,* 608-625.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Markham, I. S. (2007). *Do morals matter: A guide to contemporary religious ethics.*
    Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd ed.).
    Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Mertens, D. M. (2010). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology:*
    Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (3rd
    edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Noe, R. A. (1988). Women and mentoring: A review and research agenda. *The*
    *Academy of Management Review, (13)*1, 65-78.

Perl, E. J. & Noldon, D. F. (2000). Overview of student affairs research methods: Qualitative and quantitative. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 108*, 37-48.

Pope, R. L., Reynolds, A. L., & Mueller, J. (2004). *Multicultural competence in student affairs.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ragins, B. R. & Cotton, J. L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology, (84*)4, 529-550.

Ragins, B. R., & Scandura, T. A. (1999). Burden or blessing? Expected costs and benefits of being a mentor. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 20,* 493-509.

Reynolds, A. L. (2009). *Helping college students: Developing essential support skills for student affairs practice.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ryan, R. M. & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definition and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Pyschology, 25,* 54-67. doi: 10.1006/ceps.1999.1020

Sanford, N. (1966). *Self and society.* New York, NY: Atherton Press.

Searby, L. (2009). "But I thought…" an examination of assumptions in the mentoring relationship. *Adult Learning, 20*(1-2), p. 10-13.

Schuh, J. H., Jones, S. R., Harper, S. R. & Associates (2011). *Student services: A handbook for the profession.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Summers-Ewing, D. (1994). *Mentoring: A vital ingredient for career success.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 378 519).

Wickman, F. & Sjodin, T. (1997). *Mentoring: The most obvious yet overlooked key to achieving more in life than you dreamed possible.* Chicago, IL: Irwin Professional Publishing.

Zachary, L. J. (2000). *The mentor's guide: Facilitating effective learning relationships.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Appendix A: IRB Approval

November 17, 2014

Paublo Martinez
Department of Educational Administration
2740 Fair Street Lincoln, NE 68503

Corey Rumann
Department of Educational Administration

IRB Number: 20141114783EX
Project ID: 14783
Project Title: The Perceptions of Student Affairs Administrators and the Mentoring Relationships that shape the Undergraduate Experience

Dear Paublo:

This letter is to officially notify you of the certification of exemption of your project. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and 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 Exemption Determination: 11/17/2014.

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 the 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 IRB immediately of any proposed

changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated 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: Recruitment Email

<u>**Recruitment Email:**</u>

Hello (name of participant),

I hope this message finds you well! I am conducting a research study on the approaches student affairs administrators use to become mentors for the undergraduate students they see during their collegiate career. The purpose is to see the perceptions of Student Affairs administrators and their mentoring relationships with undergraduate students. Participation for the project will be a total of two interviews lasting an hour within the next couple of months. If you are interested in participating, we can set up a one-on-one meeting to discuss further details, set the date and time for the actual interview, and discuss any questions you may have about the project. There are no known risks involved in this research and all materials/information will be kept confidential during the research process. If you are interested in participating, please respond to this email.

If you have any questions, please let me know.

I appreciate your time and I look forward to hearing from you!

P. J. Martinez

P. J. Martinez
Graduate Assistant | Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs
Graduate Assistant | Wellness – Campus Recreation

Appendix C: Informed Consent Document

Title of Research: The Perceptions of Student Affairs Administrators and the Mentoring Relationships that shape the Undergraduate Experience

Purpose of Research: This study will investigate the perspectives of student affairs administrators and their understanding of how mentoring influences the college experience.

Procedures: You were selected to participate because of the administrative position you uphold at the university. Participation in this study will require approximately two hours of your time. You will be asked to partake in two one-hour semi-structured interviews. Participation will take place in your office or whatever location you prefer. If necessary interviews may be conducted via phone or Skype but only if you feel comfortable using either of those formats.

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

Benefits: The results of this study will allow for better understanding of the mentoring experience of Students Affairs professionals as well as seeing how mentorship influences the undergraduate college experience.

Confidentiality: Responses during the interview process will be audio recorded. All files will be stored confidentially in a secure location from a password-protected computer. Once transcribed, the audio recordings will be erased after the conclusion of the study. Data collected will only viewed by the primary and secondary investigators and no identifying information will be contained in the transcripts or report or the findings.

Opportunity to Ask Questions: You may ask any questions concerning this research at anytime by contacting P. J. Martinez at ███████████████ You may also research Corey Rumann at ███████████████ If you would like to speak to someone else, please call the Research Compliance Services Office at 402-472-6965 or irb@unl.edu.

Freedom to Withdraw: Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

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.

Signature of Participant:

_____   _____
Signature of Research Participant   Date

Name and Phone number of investigator:
P. J. Martinez   Dr. Corey Rumann

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Research Questions:

1. How do student affairs administrators at a large, public, research institution in the Midwest perceive their mentoring relationships with undergraduate students?
2. What are their perceptions of how mentoring can influence the college experience?

Interview Questions:
***broken into 2 sessions, if necessary.

1. How do/would you describe the role of being a mentor?
2. What does it mean to you to be a mentor?
3. What is important to you as a mentor?
4. What motivates you to become a mentor?
5. How do you see yourself as a mentor?
6. What change, if any, have you seen in students you have mentored?
7. What approaches do you utilize to become a mentor for students?
8. Anything I didn't ask you would like to add or include?

Additional Questions:
1. How often do you meet one-on-one with students?
    a. In your meetings, what do you discuss?
    b. How often do you get asked to submit letter of recommendations, references, etc.?
    c. Personal discussions?
    d. Student involvement?
2. How would you describe the mentoring relationship?