

**Contrived Relationships and the Power of Support:
An Exploration of the Mentoring Process**

by

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Abstract

In this study, I am exploring the multiple perspectives both mentors and mentees hold of the mentoring process as they are experiencing it. The focus is on the mentorship of university students within an academic support program at a Canadian University. These students have failed at the end of their first year but have been permitted to return the next year on certain conditions. These conditions are that they take only three courses and attend a twice-weekly academic support class. My work attempts to gain insight into the effectiveness of such support programs and whether their mentoring components show themselves to be meaningful. I also sought to try to understand the dynamics of the mentoring process through the eyes of both participants in the mentoring relationship.

I have designed an interpretive methodological approach that seeks to understand how others (mentor and mentee) make sense of their lived experience. The focus is on the shifting dynamics of these dyadic relationships. A series of semi-structured open-ended interviews were used to understand the participants' experiences.

The mentoring relationship has shown itself to be powerful in the lives of the participants. Meaningfulness of the mentoring relationship was demonstrated when the relationship had shown itself to be worthwhile for the parties involved.

Mentees had expectations that their mentors fulfill roles of knowledge giver, role model, counsellor, advisor, and perhaps surrogate parent. In all cases, the mentor was able to provide one or some of these roles for the mentee. The mentee, in turn, accepted this support and benefited in some way from it. Program recommendations were made for the future mentors as well as administrators.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Mentoring has a long history and can be traced to Greek mythology (Adams & Adams, 1997; Beech & Brockbank, 1999; Dondero, 1997). This study focuses on mentoring in relation to student development at the university level. I have chosen to study the mentoring relationship for many reasons, some of which are a desire to want to help students in need, to make some perceived difference in the students' lives, to know if the mentoring relationship is meaningful and to improve upon the mentoring relationship with goals for further study.

There has been a multitude of research done on the mentoring process over the last ten years. Much of this research focuses on the relationship between senior and junior individuals within professional organizations (Allen & Poteet, 1999; Gibb, 1999; Jensen, 1995; Kram & Isabella, 1985; McManus & Russell, 1997; Murrell, Crosby, & Ely, 1999; Phillips-Jones, 1999), gender effects in mentoring (Burke & McKeen, 1996) mentoring between peers (Carr, 1998; McDougall & Beattie, 1997; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999), mentoring within graduate school and professional schools (Lichtenberg, 1997, Luna & Cullen, 1998; Shalonda & Schweitzer, 1999; Willis & Diebold, 1997) and between disadvantaged young people and a secure, more knowledgeable senior individual (Baldwin Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Blinn-Pike, Kuschel, McDaniel, Mingus & Poole Mutti, 1998; Dondero, 1997; Holland, 1996; Hughes, 1997; Kagee, Naidoo, & Mahatey, 1997; Rogers & Taylor, 1997; Royse, 1998). This study will focus, instead, on the nature of the mentoring process within an academic support program in a university setting.

Formal and informal mentoring are increasingly visible in business organizations (Phillips-Jones, 1999), community organizations and schools (Dondero, 1997; Riverview High School, 1999). The mentoring relationship has been described as a nurturing process,

The mentoring relationship is vitally important in life and is dynamically complex. The essentials of the mentoring relationship include the mentor's ability to call forth and validate the ideal in the student, to inspire a searching and inquisitive quality for knowledge, and to have an awareness of the developmental phases of the student and himself or herself to make successful teaching interventions (Davis, Little & Thornton, 1997, p. 70).

Mentoring is an old and valued idea. A mentor has come to be defined as a caring, mature person who forms a one-to-one relationship with another person who needs care, advice, information, and to share career and life experiences. Mentoring is unlike classroom practice in that it takes into account their "own style of thinking and learning, so that every problem solving contributes to self-building" (Nicola, 1997, p. 149). Mentors are perceived as especially valuable to young people requiring assistance. "Mentors represent a commitment to values, and they promote a sense of personal worth, foster self-realization, help broaden opportunities, and assist in making intelligent choices" (Dondero, 1997). The valuable nature of the mentoring process is that the mentor provides a social support system for the mentee. Thompson (1995) clearly defines social support as social relationships that provide materials and resources that the recipient values. Mentors can aid young people in applying their academic knowledge to their everyday life and improving their academic abilities. As

well as assisting in academic development, the mentor must also be able to express empathy for the mentee in times of need. Blinn-Pyke et al. (1998) noted that besides providing expressive, instrumental and intangible supports, the mentor also provides quasi-parenting in many cases. They define a quasi-parent as someone who gives the support generally assumed by the family, someone who is informed by the mentee of the intimate details in his/her life, and someone who is involved in both the exciting and mundane aspects of the mentee's life.

There is no single profile that a mentor must match. Mentors can be selected from the corporate world, small businesses, non-profit organizations, government, and higher education, just to name a few. However, more important than the resource pool for finding mentors are the mentor's personal characteristics. A mentor should have a stable personal life and if applicable, professional life. S/he should also be willing to offer advice, friendship, confidence, and empathy. In essence, the mentor must accept the mentee as a special person and perhaps be comfortable with extreme differences (Dondero, 1997). Allen and Poteet (1999) discuss ideal mentor characteristics. The results of their content analysis study showed that the ideal mentor should possess, among other attributes, listening and communication skills, patience, knowledge, ability to understand others, honesty and trustworthiness, genuine interest, self confidence, and be people oriented. It is also important that both mentor and mentee try to make the most of the mentoring relationship. When asked about effective mentoring, the participants in the Allen and Poteet study responded overwhelmingly with the need to establish an open communication system. Other responses were setting standards, goals

and expectations, establishing trust, allowing mistakes, and being flexible (Allen & Poteet, 1999).

These techniques are thought to be important in establishing an effective mentoring relationship. However, it is obvious that neither all mentors nor all mentees will possess all of the skills and techniques that contribute to an effective mentoring relationship. It is important that the mentors are well intentioned and that characteristics which are lacking could be addressed through mentor orientation and training. These training and orientation sessions should cover many topics such as scheduling meetings, resource and support personnel available for guidance and information, how to improve listening skills, mentor strategies, the benefits of mentoring, liability issues, as well as program limitations and student confidentiality.

Purpose of Study

The objective of this research is to examine the nature of the mentoring process within an academic support program at a Canadian university. My research question is:

What is it in the nature of the mentoring process that makes it meaningful?

Meaningfulness will be demonstrated if the relationship is worthwhile for the parties involved and both parties benefit in some way. A set of terms used throughout the study will now be clearly defined. It is important that clear meaning is attached to the definitions.

Definition of the terms

Mentoring Relationship – a developing relationship occurring between a less experienced person and a more experienced person, a senior (in some way such as knowledge, age, life experience) and junior individual, or between peers that fosters a relationship.

Mentor – The mentor serves career and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1988). Career functions can include sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection and providing challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions include role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counselling and friendship. He or she is seen as guide, sponsor, advisor and /or perhaps a surrogate parent.

Mentee or Protégé – The mentee or protégé is the more junior individual (in some way, such as age, knowledge, life experience) who has the opportunity to gain friendship, counselling, acceptance and confirmation, sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenge, role modeling, and/or exposure and visibility. He or she is seen as someone who is a learner, novice or beginner in some aspect, who is under the care of the mentor.

Academic Support Program – A university mandated program for students who have failed their first year of university with a G.P.A. of less than 1.0. Individuals sign a contract to attend an academic support classroom session twice weekly, hand in assignments when due and participate in classroom discussion. These students must apply to take part in this program and pay a fee of \$1000.00 if wishing to participate. The students are also required to meet with a mentor once weekly for approximately one hour. If the individuals receive a GPA of 2.0 to 2.5 (depending on program) or

greater at Christmas, then they are free to make arrangements with their instructor about whether or not they will continue to participate in the classroom aspect of the program. However, it has been strongly suggested that these students continue their mentoring relationship regardless of their early success. Students making less than the 2.0 GPA will stay within all aspects of the program until April. In January, there will be an opportunity for other 'at risk' students to become part of the academic support program for the second semester. This program will be called the student success program. It has been decided that these new students will not be paying the \$1000.00 fee because they are entering mid-year.

Dysfunctional or Troubled Mentoring Relationships – relationships that change over time and become dissatisfying and/or destructive as individuals needs, interests and/or circumstances change. Dysfunction or trouble occurs when the relationship is not working for one or both of the parties involved. One or both of the parties' needs are not being met and one or both of the parties are suffering distress. The dysfunctional or troubled mentoring relationship may be characterized by pleasant or unpleasant interactions between the individuals involved but ultimately fails to achieve the desired actions or goals of the relationship.

Personal Narrative

This is my story. Many individuals told me that personal stories are easy to write because they are about oneself. However, this has not been the case for me. I thought about my choice of thesis topic – why did I choose to focus on mentoring and why mentoring in relation to an academic support program?

Until I came to university, I had no concept of what it felt like to be ‘lost’ in school. What I mean by lost is that feeling of floundering that we get when we are not sure why we are in a place and we don’t know what to do while there. Inevitably, that feeling of being lost comes if you don’t feel you belong. I may have had one or two experiences when I didn’t feel I was prepared for a test or an exam. However, it was only a test or an exam and being 99% prepared was enough to feel like I could survive.

Looking back, I can almost see who was lost in my elementary school classes. What did I think of them then? Why would the teacher break the class into the “fast group” and the “slow group?” Were those the words of the teachers? Were those the words of the students? All I really cared about was that I was in the fast group. Yet, my heart ached for those other students. However, that was not enough for me to want to give up my place. This brings all kinds of questions to my mind. Was this just an acceptable practice at this time? Where were these children’s parents? Were they not aware of the situation? Did they just accept this stigma as the fate of their children? Did they not know they could do something about it? Could they not do something about it? Did they, perhaps, try and fail? Why do I still remember these pictures so vividly in my mind? Do I feel guilt? Could I, as a child of 6 to 11 years, do anything about this? I don’t know the answers to these questions but that does not mean the questions retreat to the back corners of my mind.

I have thought about these issues since I was in elementary school. I felt fortunate to be in the fast group. Yet, I feared it was possible that at any time I could be pulled into the slow group. It is also interesting to note that no one ever crossed the boundary. No one came over to ‘our side’ and we did not go over to theirs. I often

wonder if these children thought as much about the possibility of breaking out of their caste and crossing over as I had fear about being put into their group. Was there hope for them? Maybe they did not even feel separated. Yet, I remember those faces. Is it a coincidence that my best friends were in the smart group? Most of the class was invited to each other's birthday parties, but we knew who our best friends were. I also asked myself why only three girls were put into the "slow group" and why only one boy was put in the "fast group?" There were probably thirty children in the class. Why is it mostly boys in academic support programs?

Our teachers had us leave the class when it was time to work on "fast group" activities. We would go to the French room and work on our language arts. When finished, we could talk and do other things. I remember writing a play in grade six. The teacher gave us time in class to rehearse for the play. Only the "fast group" got to take part in the play. The others sat in their seats and watched us swing our swords and dance around. To this day, I feel badly about that play. I felt badly then as well. I did not predict the end results. I watched these same things go on all through grade school.

When I began university, it was my turn to feel lost. I could not believe this was happening to me. I can't even say it brought me back to reality because I was aware of the reality the whole time. It may have been that I was homesick, it may have been that I didn't like my courses, or maybe it was both of those things. I began to know what it felt like to be drowning on dry land on a day to day basis. I did not know what to do. It did not seem there was anyone at school to help. I was at a huge university. It was then that I realized how fortunate I was to be so close to my family. They were there to

support me so I didn't feel so lost. Unfortunately, not everyone is so lucky. However, this gave way to large telephone bills.

I could have let my academics slip. I know I felt like it. I'm not sure I knew that would be acceptable. It was part of who I was to do well. What if I chose law? What if I chose graduate school? I needed good grades to get into these programs. I needed good grades for me! I was miserable. I studied all the time without many breaks. Who expected this from me? I realize now, only myself. Why was I in this frame of mind? Did it have something to do with my past school experiences?

Graduation approached and came and decisions had to be made. I decided I wanted to be a teacher. It seemed like a safe choice, a lot safer than three years of law school. After all, I had always liked school and I liked working with children. I was surprised by my teacher education. I actually enjoyed what I was learning. Most of the information seemed real and useful. I could take it into the world and use it. I began to see light in that university darkness.

When I began my practice teaching, I saw what that feeling of being lost looked like on other people. I wanted to help. I wondered if the support was there for me in university and I just wasn't aware of it. Maybe people just weren't aware support was needed, especially if you didn't have a real problem. It amazes me how quick others are to judge the seriousness or lack of seriousness of other people's issues. There is always the financial dilemma. Some people will not take on extra responsibility without funding and/or support.

Many of the students I worked with were learning disabled. I wanted to foster a connection with these students so that life would be more enjoyable for them. I wanted

them to want to come to school. I was able to connect with some of these students and they opened up before my eyes.

After I graduated, I became involved in a program where I helped develop curriculum and courses for learning disabled students. I didn't start out there but I was willing to show my perseverance and energy to get where I wanted to be in the school system. In the process, I taught many courses I did not enjoy teaching but I did what was required of me to reach the next level. I was qualified to do the job; these just weren't the ideal jobs. Throughout this time, I was seeing what it looked like to be lost. There was a sea of lost faces. Eventually, I reached the point where I was qualified and ready to be where I wanted to be at that time. I waited what seemed like a long time to do something not many of my colleagues wanted to do anyway! I know this because I taught in twenty-seven schools my first year as a substitute teacher.

It became obvious there was a need for a program that could give students academic support to succeed. Many of the eligible students were learning disabled and floundering without any assistance outside their regular classroom environments. Some had academic and social weaknesses in one area or another that were causing them to lag behind. The school board wanted these students to have the opportunity to successfully finish high school. The board, with the help of the special services division, decided to develop a course. It was a learning strategies course and the Department of Education approved it as a locally developed pilot program in the 1996-1997 school year. The feedback was so positive from parents, students and administration that they decided to draft a level II and level III of the course. This way it could be offered to grades 10, 11 and 12. I was fortunate enough to be involved in the

planning of level II. When I left the board in the summer of 1998, level II had been approved and was in place in the schools. I have since talked to teachers from other school boards and was pleased to hear that the program was being offered to L.D. students in their boards. The only weak link seemed to be the teachers. It required extra work on their part to fill out evaluation forms and surveys on a regular basis. There is still much work to be done.

I finally decided I could best meet the needs of the students I worked with if I was willing to be formally trained as a counsellor. I wanted to have the option to give one to one assistance. I struggled with this idea for a long time. My answer actually came to me one morning shortly after my grandfather died. I woke up and I just knew there were no more decisions to make. Why? I don't know. Maybe because life is short? Maybe because we should be happy? Even in my learning strategies classes, I sometimes had 12-16 students. Counselling was a way I thought I could offer so much more.

I began to think about my thesis last April. I recounted my experiences and realized that it would benefit me most if I was able to help students who were considered "at risk." However, at that time, it was a mystery where I could go from there. I still hadn't settled on any topics when I started the program in July. I wanted to research something I was interested in because I would be spending more than a year at it. One day in July, I had the opportunity to speak with a person about academic support programs. She explained the importance of having mentors for the students who had failed out of university the previous year. These students were going to be given a second chance, for a price. I wondered if many second chances in life came

with a price attached? I began to think about the program she described and the individuals that would be involved. It made me think about my learning strategies students. We tried so hard to make the high school experience a successful one for these students. What about transition planning? There was some, but not enough. In consultation with the school counsellor, we looked at universities that would be willing to offer extra support. We sent these students into the great wide open and then they disappeared. Did they succeed? Was any follow up done? None of which I am aware. I suppose the students who went on to post-secondary studies did succeed in high school. However, the thing about learning disabilities and emotional difficulties is that they don't prevent you from going to university. They may prevent you from finishing your first year successfully.

There are many reasons why the students in the academic support program failed last year and learning disabilities are just one. But this made me realize that sometimes, just getting into university is not enough. What happens when they get there? I think support makes a difference. I believe mentors can make the university experience better, if even for only one person. Then it came to me – I wanted to study mentoring.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The Roots of Mentoring

Adams and Adams (1997), Beech and Brockbank (1999), and Dondero (1997) discussed the roots of mentoring as lying within Greek mythology. Odysseus gave the care of his young son, Telemachus, to his old friend, Mentor, so he could prepare himself for his long sea travels. The name has since taken on the meaning of a more experienced person who forms a relationship with a less experienced person. The more experienced person is able to provide the lesser-experienced person with advice, support and encouragement (Beech & Brockbank, 1999; Scott & Adams 1995). Bauer (1999), Chao (1998) and Kram (1988) identified the two broad functions of mentors in today's society. First, they serve career functions such as sponsorship and coaching and second, they serve psychosocial functions such as friendship, counselling and role modeling.

Opportunity for Growth

Davis et al. (1997) stated that the mentor nourishes a dream in a student and this will set the student into creative flight, tempering idealism with the wisdom of experience. It would not be an overstatement to say that mentoring relationships are extremely important for educational and professional growth. The goal of the mentor should be to recognize a student's potential, have faith in the student's potential, and lastly to inspire the potential to take form. The mentor should want to foster a safe place for the student so that the student will feel free to expose his/her true self, so the vulnerable position of unknowing can become bountiful (Davis et al., 1997).

Qualitative Literature

The themes that emerged from the qualitative literature suggested that business settings have focused a great deal of attention on mentoring relationships. Kram (1988) interviewed, at length, thirty young managers between the ages of 25 and 35 about their career histories which enabled them to reflect on their experiences and relationships. To make the circle complete, the senior managers also took part in a sequence of interviews. This stimulated new questions about the role peer relationships. One or two significant others identified in the primary sample were interviewed. The final research sample consisted of twenty-five relationship pairs. These developmental relationships were found to provide functions in two broad categories. Career functions are the aspects of the relationship that enhance career advancement. These are sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions are the aspects of the relationship that enhance a sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role. These are role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counselling, and friendship.

Beech and Brockbank (1999) conducted a case study of mentoring relationships in a hospital setting. The hospital was undergoing program change with an investment in management development. The research presented focused on observations, interviews, and research-focused discussions with managers and other participants in the mentoring aspect of the management development program concentrating on the nature of the mentoring process and the relationship.

Kram and Isabella (1985) conducted a biographical interview study of 25 relationship pairs which indicated that relationships with peers offer important

alternatives to traditionally defined mentoring in career development. McDougall and Beattie (1997) considered the positive effects of peer mentoring for managers and professionals. These non-hierarchical developmental relationships provided a valuable source of learning for those involved. A qualitative typology of peer mentoring relationships was presented and explored. Allen and Poteet (1999) presented the results of a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews and a three step content analytic procedure that investigated the characteristics that the ideal mentor should possess and the ways the mentors and protégés can make the mentoring relationship more effective.

Hughes (1997) discussed the results of an exploratory study that collected data in a non-business setting where 20 young adult inner city males were interviewed extensively. The respondents felt they had a greater chance of reaching young children who had experiences similar to their own. However, its small sample size and lack of a longitudinal component limited the study.

Quantitative Literature

An examination of the literature demonstrated the effects of mentoring within graduate and professional schools. Luna and Cullen (1998) discussed the results of a survey study administered to graduate students at a large comprehensive university. The results strongly supported the significance of mentoring. Eighty-three percent of survey participants felt that mentors were important and 81 percent said they would be willing to mentor a peer or junior college student. Shalonda and Schweitzer (1999) detailed the results of a study on mentoring within a graduate school setting. Six hundred seventy participants completed a questionnaire for a response rate of 60.8 percent. As predicted, the results revealed that having a mentor improved perception of

academic life and academic climate. In a study by Larose, Bernier, Soucy, and Duchesne (1999) a model was tested positing that attachment style dimensions affect the individual's support network orientation and influences the process of seeking assistance from college teachers. Data from two independent samples of college students using global and dyadic interaction reports of the quality of their help seeking behaviors were used to assess the model.

Mentoring between a secure, more knowledgeable older person and a disadvantaged young person was also prevalent in the literature. Rhodes, Haight, and Briggs (1999) examined the influence of a mentoring program (Big Brothers – Big Sisters) on the peer relationships of foster youth in relative and non-relative care. The youth involved, 959 adolescents, aged 10 through 16, were randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group and changes in peer relationships were examined after 18 months. Foster parents were more likely to report that their child showed improved social skills, greater comfort and trust interacting with others. Peer relationships of all nonfoster youth remained stable whereas treatment foster youth reported improvements in prosocial and self-esteem enhancing support. Royse (1998) examined mentoring as an intervention for at-risk teens. Self-esteem, attitudes towards drugs and alcohol, grades, school attendance, and disciplinary infractions were examined using an experimental design, which necessitated random assignment of eligible youths to either a control group or the group matched with mentors. The study did not find quantitative evidence that mentors had a beneficial impact upon mentees. Baldwin Grossman and Tierney (1998) documented a random assignment evaluation with findings that suggested young people participating in a Big Brothers-Big Sisters program were

significantly less likely to have started using illegal drugs or alcohol, skip school, or participate in violent behavior towards others.

Kalbfleisch (1997) presented three studies that examined perceptions of communication strategies used in response to conflict events between mentors and protégés. These studies identified the frequency of perceived conflict events and protégé preference in response to disturbing social relations with their mentor. Conflict events comprised of negativity, embarrassment, and disagreements were predictive of provocative and distancing responses while conflict events comprised of disagreements approached significance in predicting pragmatic appeasement responses.

Bauer (1999) and Burke and McKeen (1996) detailed gender effects in mentoring. Bauer (1999) examined perceptions of fairness of mentoring relationships. A total of 124 male and female participants were asked to fill out a survey. Several individual factors such as past mentoring experiences, having mentoring needs met, and interactions with gender were related to ratings of fairness. Burke and McKeen (1996) examined mentoring relationships of managerial and professional women. The data were collected from 280 female business graduates of a single university using questionnaires. Comparisons were done of women having female and male mentors. Similar experiences were reported with both male and female mentors. A hierarchical regression analysis indicated that mentor gender had no effects on levels of mentor functions.

Mixed Empirical Studies

Gibb (1999) provided a substantive theoretical analysis of formal mentoring. Social exchange theory and communitarianism theory were developed as a number of

small case studies and one major longitudinal study case study was conducted. The research methodology mixed surveys and structured interviews with qualitative data collection from the author's active participation in helping develop the formal mentoring scheme. Findings indicate that formal mentoring is effectively impractical across a whole organization.

In another mixed methods exploratory study, Blinn-Pike et al.(1998) described the process that occurs in relationships between volunteer adult mentors and pregnant adolescent mentees. Case records from 20 mentors were analyzed. In qualitative narratives, content analysis indicated the mentors provided expressive, instrumental, and instructional support. A checklist provided quantitative data indicating issues identified in the adolescents' lives. Topics checked most frequently included infant/child care and interpersonal issues.

The Phases in the Mentoring Relationship

Kram (1983) documented four phases in the mentoring relationship. These are initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. In the initiation stage, the mentee and mentor go through the selection process. The mentor is assigned a mentee or in some cases a mentor is selected by a mentee. During this stage, the initial interactions involve learning things about one another. The next stage, cultivation, involves the mentor and mentee in career functions, such as sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments and psychosocial functions, such as role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counselling and friendship. This is the stage where loyalty sometimes develops and the mentor gains valuable knowledge and support from the mentee. During the separation phase, the relationship will end. This

could be for many reasons such as relocation of one or both parties. The redefinition phase happens when the mentor and mentee develop more of a peer friendship.

Adams and Adams (1997) also indicated the transition stages within the mentoring process but their focus was on the mentorship of university students. The first stage is apprehension. This stage occurs at the beginning when both parties feel anxious and uneasy. This is natural and an expected part of the process. As these are formal pairings, the parties involved must get to know one another. It is important that the mentor know that it is his/her responsibility to break the ice. The second stage is testing. Many of the students involved in the formal mentoring process have been disappointed by adults regularly in their lives. The mentee may be expecting the usual treatment which can range from inconsistency to lack of commitment. They will try to protect themselves from disappointment by missing appointments, not returning telephone calls or e-mails, and angry behavior. This phase is usually short lived. The next phase is trust. Gaining the mentees trust can occur early in the relationship if the mentor can show the mentee that their goals and dreams are important. The fourth stage is goal setting. This occurs after the mentor has gained the mentees' trust. The mentor can help the mentee establish and accomplish his/her goals. The last stage is predictability. The mentor is someone the mentee can count on. This sets the stage for accessing the mentees thoughts and feelings.

The Benefits of the Mentoring Relationship

When above stages are followed by mentor and mentee, it provides for positive mentoring relationships. A study by Reeves (1996) indicated that mentors were able to provide both emotional support and academic advising. The closeness that developed

allowed a variety of topics to be discussed such as adjustment to college concerns and more complex interpersonal issues. These discussions were able to take place because the mentees perceived their mentors met their expectations of the ideal mentor and the mentor was able to use teachable moments to their advantage (such as assisting during a crisis). The combination of the above helped the mentees to trust their mentors so they would feel comfortable sharing their experiences, frustrations and needs. As one mentee commented,

I wasn't comfortable telling her things at first, because everyone puts up those walls...Once I kind'a sorted out what I felt about my mentor, I then decided, hey, I want to sit down with her more and talk to her...I could tell her just about anything...I'm more open with her—a lot more open, with every aspect of my life...Now she's my friend, who's my mentor...(mentee, cited in Reeves, p.165)

Formal and Informal Mentoring

There are differences between formal and informal mentoring. Chao, Walz and Gardner (1993) suggested that both mentors and mentees prefer the informal type of mentoring. Murray (1991) defined formal mentoring as:

...a structure and series of processes designed to create effective mentoring relationships, guide the desired behavior change of those involved, and evaluate the results for the protégés, the mentors and the organization with the primary purpose of systematically developing the skills and leadership abilities of the less experienced members of the organization. (p. 5)

While in informal relationships, the mentee may select a mentor or the relationship may develop naturally. Allen and Poteet (1999) and McManus and Russell (1997) stated

that protégés perceived greater psychosocial mentoring in informal relationships. Lefler (1996) indicated that many programs are set up for formal mentoring.

Lefler's (1996) study of at-risk Indian youth compared sobriety success among two groups of adolescents and young adults who were paired with a mentor and those who were not paired. The inter-generational contact once provided by the extended family is often not readily available to Indian youth today. By providing mentors for these young people, they were able to confide in a trusted adult outside the traditional kinship system. The mentors provided much needed positive role models. A mentor from the program writes,

I have a chance to work with children every week...[I'm] saying, look I'm going to be here even tho [sic] you wish you weren't. I try many ways to stimulate the children in a positive way. ... What these children need is a chance to prove to their parents and the chance for their parents to acknowledge...All we can do is be available...and to give one another positive stroks [sic]. (p.26)

The number of participants who followed through with this project was small (36.3 %), yet, the results were promising.

As indicated earlier in the review, Hughes (1997) conducted another study that examined the role of the mentor within a mentorship project, and the life courses of certain individuals. It seemed that by studying the life courses of individuals it lead to the discovery of important information about how certain attitudinal and behavioral changes take place. The adolescent and early years are ages when anomie or normlessness is most likely to happen. This is partly due to the lack of socially structured roles and the uncertainty with their futures (p.403).

In the exploratory study, 20 young adult inner city males made up the sample. The sample was very diverse with respect to population. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with the males. The purpose was to use information from the participant's interviews to explore their lives to induce from the stories they told the factors that facilitated their decision to make behavioral changes.

Gove (1985) suggested that maturation might have played a role in behavioral change, since the sample consisted of young adults. Another issue playing a role in behavioral change was fatherhood, while still another was that of mentorship, though, not as having mentors themselves, but instead playing the role of a mentor to others. All respondents talked about "giving back to their communities" (Hughes, 1997, p.410). Their plans of giving back appeared to be directly related to helping young children. Their interviews were plagued by deeply negative memories of their childhood. These memories gave way to great concern for young children in their home communities. One respondent even reported that the sole reason for his change in lifestyle was his concern for young children. The desire to change seemed to relate back to their drug dealing and how it would affect the children. They felt that young children with life experiences similar to their own could be reached because they shared the feelings and experiences that the children were going through.

Dysfunctional Mentoring Relationships

There has also been a growth in recent literature with regard to the negative or no effect relationship that develops between mentors and mentees. Some authors, such as Bauer (1999), Beech and Brockbank, (1999) Kalbfleisch, (1997) Royse (1998) and Scandura (1998) focused on mentoring relationships that had no effect or possibly some

negative effects for the mentees and mentors. Myers and Humphreys (1985) suggested that some mentors are tyrannical and selfish. Scandura (1998) suggested that mentoring relationships run into trouble when the interests of those involved in the relationship change. This could be due to differences in judgments or when the relationship becomes overly personal. Mentors and mentees may become too involved in one another's personal lives and this may cause discomfort or disagreement. Another issue addressed by Scandura was the role of envy in the mentoring relationship. The author discussed the problems that arise when the protégés clone themselves into a younger version of their mentors. The mentors become envious and block the rising star from getting anywhere within the organization.

Scandura (1998) discussed the problems that may occur when a mismatch is formed between a mentor and mentee in a formalized mentoring process. Kizilos (1990) noted that formal mentoring could bring about feelings of discontent, resentment, and even suspicion. These feelings can result in termination of the relationship. Scandura discussed the dysfunctional reasons for termination of the mentoring relationship. These were (1) highly destructive relationships which were often characterized by jealousy, (2) the mentee becomes dependent upon the mentor and the mentor begins to feel suffocation, (3) the lack of support for the mentee and the mentor's unrealistic expectations (p.453). These relationships ended negatively and the dysfunction was the clear reason for termination.

Scandura (1998) and Lankau (1996) noted that dysfunction occurs when the relationship is not working for the mentor, the mentee, or perhaps not working for both. The needs of the unhappy individual are not being met. Duck (1994b) designed a

typology to explain dysfunction in mentoring relationships. The four types of destructive behavior in the typology are (1) negative relations, (2) sabotage, (3) difficulty and (4) spoiling. Negative relations were defined as bullying and making enemies. The power the mentor has over the mentee is used in an exploitive and egocentric way. Sabotage was defined as taking revenge on the other person or by ignoring the person in an attempt to try to evoke some type of response. Difficulty was defined as occurring when one of the dyad has good intentions but that there are psychosocial problems in their relationship. Difficulty also occurs when one person puts the other in "binds." Binds cause difficulty because one or the other is giving ultimatums or demanding the person make a choice. This could very easily result in stress and anxiety for the mentee. Spoiling was defined as the situation that arises when problems in the relationship are related to career/vocational issues. The good relationship goes sour from some perceived or real betrayal and emotions of regret and disappointment are felt.

Scandura (1998) discussed some mentor-mentee interactions that can be viewed as dysfunctional behavior. These are submissiveness, deception and harassment. The mentoring relationship implies an imbalance in power. Mentees offer submissive behavior in exchange for rewards mediated by a more powerful mentor. Often times, the mentoring relationship is terminated because of over-dependence. It is possible that the mentoring relationship can be affected by unresolved parent-child or family conflicts. (Hay, 1997; Scandura, 1998). These forces may bring about a real or perceived fear of being overwhelmed by more controlling persons. Deception occurs when mentors or mentees manipulate information so the other will be more agreeable.

Some of these behaviors are agreeing with the mentor, even if you don't agree, waiting to talk to the mentor when the mentor is in a good mood, stretching the truth, and flattering the mentor. These behaviors indicate there is dysfunction in the relationship.

Harassment (including gender, race, or sexual) is an indication of serious relationship problems between the mentor and the mentee. Sexual issues have been dealt with in mentoring literature (Kalbfleisch, 1997; Scandura, 1998). Four of 163 participants in Kalbfleisch's study reported having sex with their mentor. The people involved in these intense relationships often do not see them as dysfunctional because of the emotions involved. Phillips-Jones (1982) compared the feelings to an intensity of emotions not unlike falling in love. They often lose sight of the fact that these are working relationships. It must be remembered that sexual harassment is dysfunctional because it is about power (Scandura, 1998). Diversity of race and sex also might contribute to dysfunction within the mentoring relationship. Women and minorities need access to the more powerful members of organizations as well. Scandura described these negative implications as "not pretty" (p.463).

Diagnosing Problems

Very often we focus on the positive aspects of the mentoring relationship. Studying the darker side of the mentoring process can help us to be more aware and better able to diagnose problems that obviously do sometimes occur in the mentoring relationship (Scandura, 1998). As cited earlier, Beech and Brockbank's (1999) study with four pairs of mentors and mentees focused specifically on mentoring process, relationships and outcomes. The attempt was to understand and interpret the meanings the people involved had established. In-depth open-ended interviews were done to help

the respondents focus on the aspects of the mentoring relationship that held meaning for them. The interviews were carried out up to a year after the mentoring relationship had ended and lasted up to two hours in some cases. It is of interest to note that all four mentors were women and two mentees were women and two were men.

Judith, one of the mentors, expressed that, "...I think I was probably suffocating her - a bit too intense..." (Beech & Brockbank, 1999 p.12). Yet Hannah, the mentee, did not experience any of the intensity of emotion that Judith did. The relationship seemed to prove deep and significant to Judith, as expressed in her intense emotions. While Judith was concerned with the psychodynamics of the personal relationship, Hannah was primarily concerned with the knowledge she received from Judith. As she felt Judith's knowledge decline, so did her faith in the relationship. This would be an example of difficulty in the mentoring relationship that Duck (1994b) discussed in the typology of dysfunction in the mentoring relationship.

In another dyad, Hazel and Jane were part of a mentoring relationship. Jane played the role of mentor with Hazel as mentee. Hazel felt that Jane did not play a great role in her life, though there was mutual respect between the two women, "my needs were met because they were few" (Beech & Brockbank, p.15). Yet Jane believed she was indeed playing a nurturing role, "...you look after people that work for you, you are sort of a buddy to them...to support them, to give advice..." (p.15).

In the third relationship, Jackie was the mentor. Her mentee was Hillary, a male. Hillary says, "In hindsight, I wouldn't have picked her...We get on...as subordinate and boss, but it is definitely hierarchical" (Beech & Brockbank, p.16). Jackie, it seemed, lost her confidence early on, and was feeling under valued. This was

unfair to Hillary and another example of difficulty causing dysfunction in the mentoring relationship.

In the final pairing, Juliet was the mentor of Harry. Harry was feeling “negative vibes” from Juliet from the very beginning of their relationship. He felt he gained nothing from the relationship that was of any help to him. Juliet spoke of the criticism that Harry handed her, yet Harry spoke of nothing of the sort. Her reaction to his criticisms was to threaten his job security. This could be an example of the spoiling that Duck (1994b) discussed in his typology of mentoring dysfunction. “Juliet behaved like an angry and vengeful critical parent...” (Beech & Brockbank, 1999 p.18).

It is obvious that there was significant dysfunction within these mentoring relationships. None of the four pairs were able to reach the envisioned stages of development (Scandura, 1998). In these cases it would seem as if the mentees would suffer psychosocial dysfunction but instead it was the mentors who were negatively affected (Beech & Brockbank, 1999). This example demonstrated that mentors can suffer dysfunction as well. The explanation put forth by the authors, Beech and Brockbank, is that there are possible reasons for this dysfunction. Firstly, there is the role conflict for the mentor of being both a supporter and an assessor of the mentee. Secondly, if the relationship were to be successful, eventually the mentee would have to depart from this relationship. Thirdly, there may be a level of hidden withdrawal on the part of the mentees, which can be unsettling for the mentors .

If the mentoring relationship appears to have no perceived effect, it can be viewed as dysfunctional. As briefly mentioned earlier, Royse (1998) discussed mentoring as an intervention strategy for high-risk minority youth. The research focus

was on a four year mentoring project that looked at self-esteem, attitudes towards drugs and alcohol, grades, school attendance, and disciplinary infractions of African American adolescents using an experimental design. The mentors in this particular case were African American males who were typically college graduates and the mentees were African American adolescents between the ages of 14-16 living in an impoverished household headed by a female. At the end of the funding period, almost four years later, 24 young people and their mentors were still involved in the program. Yet, the study did not find quantitative evidence that mentors had a beneficial impact upon mentees.

Again, it is significant to discuss the work of Kalbfleisch (1997). The author used three studies that examined the perceptions of communication strategies used in response to conflict events between mentors and protégés. In the first study, the author identified a set of conflict events that protégés/mentees selected as occurring between themselves and their mentor. Research participants designated as protégés were asked to report past conflict events in their relationship with their mentor. The study discussed strategies protégés used in response to the conflict that arose between themselves and their mentors. The second study gave an assessment of the likelihood a response strategy was used. A questionnaire was developed for this study from the responses that were given by the respondents in the first study. In responses to conflict events, females were expected to identify fewer conflict producing events while males were hypothesized to use more provocative conflict response strategies when in disagreement with their mentors. The third study tested the responses of the mentors to the communication strategies that were found in study one and tested in study two. The

mentors were asked to respond with regard to how much the mentors perceived that these strategies would give way to reconciliation with regard to forgiveness, increased respect, esteem, reduced anger and conflict.

The results of the study were interesting. In the first study, 26 of the 50 research participants identified hurtful statements by their mentor. Thirteen of the 24 females reported conflict, as did 13 of the 23 males and none of the respondents who did not identify their sex reported any conflict. In the second study, males reported arguing more with their mentors but they also reported making a greater degree of sacrifice for their mentor than did the females. Males also reported a great deal of compliance with their mentors. Yet females reported a propensity to cry in front of their mentors. In the third study, it was found that the responses that received the highest degrees of reconciliation response from mentors were (1) the protégé tries to work harder, (2) the protégé tries to do a better job, (3) the protégé admits he or she was wrong, and (4) the protégé says he/she will not make the same mistake again (Kalbfleisch, 1997). It is interesting to note that the mentors' perceptions of the conflict events were not considered. We are left to wonder if the mentor would even perceive some of these events as disturbances in social relations and it is just as possible that the mentor may purposely disturb the relationship to illicit a certain response from the mentee (Scandura, 1998).

Critical Research within the Mentoring Context

It is not easy to locate critical research within the mentoring context. McIntyre and Lykes (1998) discussed the problematic and very challenging nature of feminist mentoring. They proposed the need to rethink and take action against the exclusionary

practices that exist in organizations and in society as a whole. Research strategies and mentoring relationships need to be developed that will change our exclusionary practices and bring about social change. Their research looked at their experiences as a graduate student and dissertation director within a participatory action research project. The project looked at a group of young white privileged females that sought to problematize whiteness. The main focus of the research was how the participants made meaning of whiteness. Feminist mentoring was looked at in the context of a challenging nature while conducting participatory action research. This research opens the possibility of strategies for white educators and researchers who wish to rethink the meaning of whiteness and mentoring relationships by creating liberatory research methodologies.

The mentor-mentee relationship was described again as a developmental process where the mentor assists the protégé in attaining her dream and developing a new sense of self, perhaps personally and/or professionally (Davis et al. 1997, McIntyre & Lykes, 1998). Feminist scholars, however, have criticized the traditional hierarchical model of mentoring and suggest the model for mentoring needs to be reinterpreted (McIntyre & Lykes, 1998). Friere, Fraser, Macedo, McKinnon and Stokes (1997) suggested that mentoring be defined as a deep personal relationship between recipients who work together in joint enterprise as representatives of their own acquired knowledge. McIntyre and Lykes looked at the mentoring relationship by examining multiple contexts such as expectations of one another, power relations, complimentary and conflicting agendas, whiteness, social class and gender.

University Level Mentoring Relationships

When returning to a university focus, Reeves (1996) presented an in-depth discussion of the implications for mentoring programs at the university level. University faculty and administrators are faced with a number of factors when implementing mentoring programs. Some of these factors are such things as selecting committed participants, orienting and training participants, tracking development of the mentor-mentee relationship and evaluating program effectiveness. These factors lead to certain questions that must be considered. Voluntary mentoring programs can be helpful for participants. However, consideration must be given to the questions of whom the program will serve and whether such programs should be voluntary or mandatory. Every effort should be made to accommodate mentees in their preference for mentors. Mentees usually preferred to be matched with mentors who were similar to themselves.

Mentors should be carefully screened in terms of their willingness to commit and allocate time to their mentees. A mentor's lack of commitment to a mentee could have long term negative effects. If a mentor feels he/she can no longer commit, he/she should withdraw and not fear reprisal. It is essential that formal training programs or orientations be established for mentors. These training programs could involve such topics as improving interpersonal skills and application of crisis management skills. The mentors' interpersonal skills or lack thereof actually influenced the mentees' perceptions of the manner in which their mentors fulfilled their functions. It is clear that mentors are not expected to come in a ready-made package. Mentors may need training in communication and listening skills in order to achieve an acceptable level of effectiveness. In terms of crisis management, the mentees tended to wait until they

were in the middle of an academic or social failure before involving their mentors in the situation. Through collaborative or directive approaches, mentors can help their mentees find and put into action alternatives for coping with the events that occurred immediately before the crisis. This helps them to regain control. A mentee speaking about the process,

The first couple of weeks of school had been rough. I was homesick. I was feeling shy and wasn't meeting people. My roommate and I weren't getting along. My chemistry professor had me scared that I would flunk. ...I felt isolated. ...I was about ready to give up before I had even started. ...When I met with [my mentor], ...He encouraged me in my class work, told me not to give up...After our meeting, I felt a lot better. He helped me keep things in perspective. ...Before I met with him, I felt no one cared, but after our meeting, I felt that I now had one person I could turn to for help... (mentee, cited in Reeves, p. 243)

It would be helpful if program developers established a formal feedback system. It is very important to foster open communications and feedback between the program coordinator and the mentors and mentees. By having occasional contact with the mentors, it gives the program coordinator the opportunity to motivate the mentors, hear grievances and suggestions for change, answer questions, and make referrals. It is also important to have mentees provide their reactions to the mentoring experiences and whether or not their mentors are fulfilling their needs. This would provide the program coordinator with the opportunity to provide alternatives for mentees whose mentors did

not contact them or who did not meet their needs, which would in turn reduce the mentees' dissatisfaction with the program and the university.

Summary

The above research has addressed the major themes within the mentoring literature. The mentoring relationship has been discussed in depth as well as the characteristics that must be present for the relationship to be deemed worthwhile for the participants. The functions of the mentor in today's society were detailed as well as the necessary phases and transition stages of the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring can help foster a positive relationship between mentor and mentee. Although the literature indicated that those involved seemed to prefer the informal relationships, both formal and informal mentoring relationships were discussed. Whether formal or informal, mentors were able to provide emotional support and academic advising for their mentees. It appeared that the majority of mentoring relationships were set up for formal mentoring although it has been documented that mentees receive greater psychosocial mentoring in informal mentoring relationships.

There is a growing body of literature indicating dysfunction within mentoring relationships. This literature makes reference to mentoring relationships that had no effect or possibly negative effects and outcomes for the participants involved. The feelings ranged from discomfort and resentment to suspicion and jealousy. These feelings resulted in highly destructive relationships for those involved. The dysfunction was said to occur when the relationship was not working for the mentee and/or mentee for various reasons.

The very challenging nature of feminist mentoring was also discussed. In this case, the mentoring relationship was examined through multiple contexts such as expectations, power relations, whiteness, social class and gender. Implications for mentoring at the university level were also discussed. The issues faced by university faculty and administrators when implementing mentoring programs were addressed.

The literature provided a closer look at the mentoring relationship within many contexts. My intent was to seek an understanding of the mentoring process so that I would be able to determine what constitutes a meaningful relationship for the parties involved within this study. An understanding of the concept of mentoring has helped me to realize the importance of mentoring relationships. There undoubtedly will be an explosion in literature on the topic when mentoring relationships are accorded their appropriate importance as a method of improving people's lives.

Chapter 3

Methodology

I have chosen to draw on symbolic interactionism as the methodological framework for my research. I am interested in knowing how mentor and mentee define the situations they are in and how their perspectives influence their actions within the situation. I want to know how their perspectives change in relation to their interactions with others. These individuals will define their situations depending upon whom they interact with and this will influence the roles they play. By examining the perspective of the individual in relation to the reference group within which the individual identifies, I will be able to gain insight into how the individual defines the situation. In this case, what is the nature of the mentoring process that makes it meaningful? Their perspectives will help me to understand the individuals who are playing a role as a mentor and the individuals who are playing a role as a mentee.

There are many influences on the development of symbolic interactionism. To properly understand the concept, it is necessary to trace the evolution of the theory. Any discussion of symbolic interactionism would be incomplete without discussing the influence of George Simmel (1858-1918). Caplow (1968) believes Simmel is best known as a microsociologist who played a significant role in the development of small group research and symbolic interactionism. Simmel believed that it was the sociologist's job to study social interactions. Nisbit (1959) has succinctly presented Simmel's contribution to sociology,

It is the microsociological character of Simmel's work that may always give him an edge in timeliness over the other pioneers. He did not disdain the small and

the intimate elements of human association, nor did he ever lose sight of the primacy of human beings, of concrete individuals, in his analysis of institutions (p. 480).

Simmel believed that social structures come to have a life of their own. His analysis into the differences of objective and subjective culture illustrates this conception. Ritzer (1996) believes that in Simmel's view people produced 'objective' culture but because of their ability to reify social reality, the cultural world comes to have a life of its own. Our 'subjective' ability to absorb this objective reality becomes increasingly beyond the control of individuals.

Despite this rather pessimistic view, Simmel did believe that individuals had the ability to confront themselves in the mental sense. Ultimately, Simmel believed that the social world is created by individuals interacting with one another. Simmel was interested in this level of social reality.

We are dealing here with microscopic-molecular processes within human material, so to speak. These processes are the actual occurrences that are concatenated or hypostatized into those macrocosmic, solid units and systems. That people look at one another and are jealous of one another; that they exchange letters or have dinner together; that apart from all tangible interests they strike one another as pleasant or unpleasant; that gratitude for altruistic acts makes for inseparable union; that one asks another to point out a certain street; that people dress and adorn themselves for each other – these are a few casually chosen illustrations from the whole range of relations that play between one persona and another. They may be momentary or permanent, conscious or

unconscious, ephemeral or of grave consequences, but they incessantly tie men together. At each moment such threads are spun, dropped, taken up again, displaced by others, interwoven with others. These interactions among the atoms of society are accessible only to psychological microscopy (Simmel, 1908/1959, pp. 327-328).

Simmel did not coin the phrase symbolic interactionism. He did, however, pioneer the view that the world was created by individuals interacting with one another.

The University of Chicago was instrumental in fostering the intellectual impetus that would eventually spawn the ideas that came to form symbolic interactionism. In 1894, George Herbert Mead accepted a position to teach at the University of Chicago at the request of John Dewey. Mead is largely considered to be the most influential thinker in the advancement of symbolic interactionism. He taught in the philosophy department at the University of Chicago. Many of his philosophy courses were taken by graduate students at the University. Ritzer (1996) tells the reader that the Department of Sociology was founded at the University of Chicago in 1892 by Albion Small. It was through the convergence of philosophical and sociological thought that symbolic interactionism was born.

The philosophical aspects of Mead's approach differed from many of his students. Mead brought attention to the covert mental processes of the actors. Many of his students were concerned with the observable behavior of individuals. Ritzer (1996) believes that Mead called his basic concern social behaviorism to differentiate it from the radical behaviorism of John Watson. Watson was one of Mead's students at the University of Chicago. Radical behaviorists were concerned with the observable

behavior of individuals. Mead, on the other hand, recognized the importance of observable behavior but also believed there were covert aspects of behavior that the radical behaviorists seemed to ignore. Mead wanted to extend the empirical science to these covert phenomena.

For Mead, the unit of study is "the act," which comprises both overt and covert aspects of human action. Within the act, all the separated categories of the traditional, orthodox psychologies find a place. Attention, perception, imagination, reasoning, emotion, and so forth, are seen as parts of the act ...the act, then, encompasses the total process involved in human activity (Meltzer, 1964/1978, p. 23).

These theories were transmitted to students at the University of Chicago. Most prominent among these students was Herbert Blumer. Blumer is well known for his integration and interpretation of the symbolic interaction perspective. Blumer actually coined the term 'symbolic interactionist' in 1937. Charon (1998) summarized that Blumer was not the only good symbolic interactionist, but instead that his work represents the best integration and interpretation of the writings of other people. He was also able to put forth the social implications and insights of the perspective.

In both such typical psychological and sociological explanations the meanings of things for the human beings who are acting are either bypassed or swallowed up in the factors used to account for their behavior. If one declares that the given kinds of behavior are the result of the particular factors regarded as producing them, there is no need to concern oneself with the meaning of the things towards which human beings act (Blumer, 1969, p.3).

Symbolic interactionism has its main focus on the interaction of the individuals and not on personality or social structure. The human perspective is a dynamic one. As humans, we actively respond to our environments. The perspectives we have as individuals are learned through our communication. As individuals, we take on many perspectives depending on whom we are in contact with in society. Therefore, our whole society is built on individuals who are interacting with one another. We are not shaped by the society in which we live but instead take an active role in its development.

In our interaction with others, the self is a social object. Who we are is defined through our interaction with other people and how we think others perceive us and how that is consistent with how we see ourselves. The mentor and mentee are who they are in relation to one another. We, as individuals, are defined by others and the interactions we have with others. "I am a mentee." "I am a mentor." These individuals can come to understand themselves through their interaction with one another. As objects, our selves go through change when we interact. We define our selves through social interaction (Charon, 1998). The mentoring relationship involves social interaction in which the individuals define and redefine their selves.

Stone (cited in Charon, 1998) distinguishes between the different types of selves or identities. Some of these selves or identities are of central importance to the individual and some can be easily changed because they are not that important. Turner (cited in Charon) refers to the core identities as "role person manager or real selves" (p.89). Real self refers to who the individual believes s/he really is. Turner (cited in Charon) makes the point that this is not who the individual really is but who s/he thinks

s/he is. The individual's self conception is important to understand the social situation. By analyzing the situation, the individual is able to know what action to take. Each individual within the mentoring relationship will act toward the other based on how he/she believes the action might affect him/herself. Self-direction and self-control allow individuals to take part in any venture (such as the mentoring relationship). Individuality and freedom also depend on self-direction and self-control. And this self-direction and self-control depends on the other people we interact with in a given situation.

Examination of the concept of symbolic interactionism has assisted me in coming to an understanding of how each mentor and each mentee defined their mentoring relationship. Their perspective of mentoring and the mentoring relationship itself has changed and deepened with interaction with one another. The social world of mentoring was created by the interaction of the individuals within the relationships. The social world of this study was created by the interaction of the individuals involved within the study. Without the interaction of these individuals, without mentor and mentee meeting, the social world of mentoring for these individuals would not have existed. These meetings may have been pleasant and enjoyable or they may have been unpleasant and painstaking. Whether enjoyable or painstaking, the point is that the meaning came out of the interaction. This meaning was then translated by the unique perspective of each individual I interviewed. The interaction was then between the mentor and myself or the mentee and myself. The mentoring relationships could have existed without my interaction but it was only through my interaction with the participants that the analysis of the meaning could exist.

Through these interviews, I learned that the perspectives of the individuals are unique and depend solely on their interaction with one another and with myself. The individuals within the relationships have taken an active role in the development of each relationship. Each mentor was defined by his or her mentee as each mentee was defined by his or her mentor. It was found that each individual acted and reacted depending on their interaction with the other person in the relationship. A mentee was only who s/he was depending on his or her interaction with his or her mentor. A mentor was only who s/he was depending on his or her interaction with his or her mentee. This has also affected how these individuals see themselves within the mentoring relationship. Without this interaction between mentor and mentee and between myself and mentor and myself and mentee, analysis of the situation would be impossible. The question – What is it in the nature of the mentoring process that makes it meaningful? – can only be answered through the analysis of the interactions. Analysis would not exist without interaction.

Method and Procedure

Participants

The method for this study was a series of in-depth interviews with a small group of individuals involved in an academic support program and their mentors at a Canadian university. I attempted to understand the multiple perspectives of the individuals and how this helped to characterize their beliefs about the mentoring process. The participants were chosen in consultation with the instructor of the academic support program. There were 36 students in the class. Two-thirds of these students were males and one-third females. Two-thirds of the class were taking first year university courses

while one third were taking second year or beyond. It had been decided in consultation with the instructor that three mentees and their mentors would be chosen for the study. With their agreement to participate, two mentees were female and one mentee was male. The mentors involved were also two females and one male. In total, there were two female dyads and one male dyad. I also had the opportunity to interview two mentors whose mentees were not interviewed for varying reasons. It was impossible under the circumstances to have the mentees agree to participate. I decided it was important to interview the mentors because they experienced differing aspects of the mentoring relationships that were not experienced by the three pairs. Participants were selected between Dec. 1, 1999 and Jan. 1, 2000. The participants were asked if they would be willing to take part in the study. When they agreed, interviews began on a regular basis beginning in Jan. 2000.

The Interviews

I conducted at least two in-depth interviews with each mentee and two in-depth interviews with each mentor between Jan. 2000 and April 2000. These interviews were audio taped and then transcribed. I organized a list of relevant interview questions that were decided upon after careful review of topics addressed in the literature review (appendix A). I could not predict exactly what questions I would ask in subsequent interviews. I needed flexibility in the questioning process depending on the information discovered with each participant in the first interview. After a careful analysis of the initial interviews, I then decided upon the appropriate questions for the next set of interviews. This choice of data collection assisted me in obtaining a rich personal description enhanced by the feelings and emotions of the participants. Therefore, in-

depth interviews were chosen as the most appropriate means of data collection. This choice of method helped me to understand the personal experience and culture of the individuals in the study. Geertz (1973) stated, "Understanding a people's culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity" (p.14). In this situation, the cultural site was an academic support program within a university setting. I chose excerpts from these interviews that would expose the situations descriptively and accurately. To quote Geertz again, the description "...renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity" (Geertz, p.14).

These interviews took place in a neutral, private environment on the university campus. My goal was to establish an environment of trust and safety for my participants where they could reflect honestly and candidly about their mentoring experiences without fear of repercussion. Each participant knew my goals for the interview process before we began. I hoped my training as a counsellor would assist these men and women in feeling comfortable in my presence. I assured each participant that he/she would be given a pseudonym and his or her identity would be kept confidential. Initially during the first interviews I found myself and my participants watching the tape recorder. However, as I developed more skill as an interviewer, I became comfortable in the interview setting and so did the participants. My questions and their answers became more in-depth and personal. I wanted to learn about their mentoring relationships and they became willing to self-disclose. The structure of each interview changed to meet the needs of the participant. Participants intensely reflected on their mentoring experiences, which greatly assisted me in my questioning and subsequent writing. A set of questions always guided me but these questions were

adapted to the flow of the interview. I began to see emerging themes within the first set of interviews and this guided my questioning in subsequent interviews. The exception to this was the two individuals I interviewed separately and at the end of the university term. I developed a different set of questions for them knowing their circumstances were not the same as the three dyad's circumstances.

Building Rapport

Research participants were informed of their right to confidentiality, anonymity, and the right to end their participation at any time during the study. The participants were told of their right to view the transcripts, if they so wished. I tried to use my past experience as a teacher of high school students to help the young man and young women I interviewed feel at ease in my presence. It may also have helped that I am in my mid-twenties and could empathize with their experiences, having gone through many similar situations myself. The students seemed at ease with me and were willing to explore the mentoring issue in-depth. One female student, Alicia, was especially shy and I did my best to make the situation comfortable for her so she could be open and share her experiences with me. The young man, Richard, was easy going and seemed to adjust to the setting and to me immediately. The other young woman, Charlene, was also very easy going and very friendly. She was especially open and I appreciated the ease at which she shared her experiences with me. The five mentors were also open and willing to discuss their mentoring relationships, from conception to the present, from moments of trust, support and encouragement to moments of worry, confusion and disagreement. I was concerned that they would be busy and I would be infringing on their schedules. I was also concerned that they might not be willing to give me the real

details of the relationships; knowing that no relationship is perfect. I also wondered how they would perceive me in my interactions with them. Would they wish to share freely? Would they be overly cautious? What did I represent to them? How would I perceive their relationships? Would my perceptions be accurate? I also wondered if they felt I would be able or unable to understand their experiences. There was also the concern that the data would not yield enough information for the study. I knew I could not let my concerns about the interview process affect my ability to get the data collection done.

I realized soon after that my concerns were unfounded. I am thankful that I came to this realization or it possibly could have effected my ability to build a rapport with the mentors and mentees. Donna, as my very first interviewee, was patient and reassuring as I fumbled with my tape recorder, in fear that it may not be recording this very important information. Ironically, Donna was also one of my last interviews and the tape recorder actually did cease to function. Again, she was very patient, although she was giving up her lunch hour for me. When I did get the new recorder set up, she kindly repeated everything she had said earlier. My lack of experience as an interviewer did not seem to interfere in the process, although I did become more comfortable with each interview. When the interviews were complete, I was relieved that my data were collected but somewhat disappointed that the interaction I had with these people was coming to an end. I learned so much about relationships between different types of people and between different genders. I understood that mentoring relationships between two males were not the same as mentoring relationships between two females. I also saw the benefits and problems of having a mixed dyad.

Supervisory Meetings

I also attended the monthly supervisory meetings held for the mentors to air their problems and issues and to discuss their successes. Initially the meetings were well attended but attendance declined after Christmas when some mentors and mentees decided not to meet as frequently. I was able to hear the mentors' viewpoints of the mentoring relationships in which they were involved. I took notes during these sessions. It was interesting to hear the discussions that arose as the mentors shared similar and dissimilar experiences. However, after careful consideration, I have chosen not to disclose the information shared in these meetings for confidentiality reasons.

Myself as Analyst

When one is involved in the process of qualitative research, many issues come into play. I had to examine my own history, my own personal biases, my own anxieties and my own needs. In the process of learning much about other people's interactions with one another, I was able to learn much about myself. I knew the importance of taking my own history, bias, anxieties, and needs into consideration so that my increased self-awareness would not hinder the research process but instead, only enhance it. By becoming more aware of myself, I was able to develop a deeper understanding and awareness of my participants.

Analysis

As I interviewed my participants, categories emerged from patterns I began to see. Certain categories emerged again and again in analysis of the interviews. These categories eventually evolved into themes. It is easy to think one has found all the answers and to stop looking. I was constantly aware as I continued interviewing that

these categories and themes might change. Analysis of the information gathered from the first study was used to formulate possible questions for the second set of interviews. The questions for the second interviews changed depending on how the participants responded. I learned you can gather the best information if you proceed without putting restrictions on where you will go with your questions. Very often I discovered valuable relationship information from questions that arose from a participant's previous answer. These questions were not written down and I had not thought of them beforehand. I also realized that I was more comfortable using this method of questioning. In my initial interviews, I had written questions down that I planned to ask each participant. These questions did not always yield the thoughtful responses that unplanned questions very often did.

My goal was to make sense of the participant's personal experiences and interactions with one another in the mentoring relationship. I read the transcripts many times. The final analysis led me to five general recurring themes. These themes that emerged were facilitative strategies, dynamic interventions, liberators, troubled relationships and inhibitors.

Interpretation of the data was a challenge. It was essential that I read and reread what I had written and what was transcribed. Sometimes I would have to return to the actual tape-recorded session to hear the emotion in the voice of the participant. There were many times of confusion and what seemed like isolation because I knew no one could see what I had seen or understand what I understood because they were not present during the interviews. The interaction was only between myself and my

participants. My only consolation is that the data were analyzed thoroughly and comprehensively.

Chapter 4

The Relationships

I have spent several months talking to my participants about the mentoring process. These individuals have disclosed to me both the positives and negatives of the mentoring process as they see it. I will use excerpts from the in-depth interviews to give life to the experiences of the participants.

The participants for the study included three mentoring dyads as well as two other mentors whose mentees did not participate. The people who agreed to be interviewed included a male mentor and male mentee, as well as two female mentors and their female mentees. The extra participants involved were female mentors. The female mentors had been seeing male mentees. In total there were 8 participants who were interviewed. The mentoring dyads were interviewed twice each while the single mentors were interviewed only once.

In the Beginning

When asked why they volunteered to be mentors, the answers varied widely. One participant, Brenda, plainly stated that her goal was “to get the hours.” She and many of the mentors were enrolled in a graduate degree in counselling and were told they could use the mentoring hours toward certification. Another mentor, Paul, stated “I was interested in the whole concept of mentoring students.” The mentors were also asked if they had any concerns before mentoring. Brenda admitted that she felt some nervousness at the beginning,

DK: Did you have any concerns before you met Charlene for the first time?

Brenda: Umm...I'm trying to remember. ...maybe just a tiny bit of nervousness you know.

When I asked Donna the same question her response was similar in nature.

My biggest concern was that I'd never done mentoring before, and kind of what was expected of me, could I supply what was expected of me? What was going to be good for the student? Like would she be better off with another person?

Because I'd never done any mentoring. I guess those would be my concerns.

These feelings were common and understandable considering that the pairings were formal and the individuals involved had to get to know one another. The mentors felt pressure because they knew that as senior individuals it was their responsibility to break the ice.

Facilitative Strategies

However, once the initial stage of apprehension had passed, the mentors began to focus on the roles they expected to play in their mentees' lives. When asked:

DK: What role did you expect to play in your mentee's life?

Donna: Going into it I wasn't sure, but after the first couple of sessions, I felt like I was more of a sounding board, she would bounce ideas off me.

The mentor provides a sounding board for self-exploration. When I asked Brenda she answered, "I could sort of see the role I would play in her life almost like a ...I won't say big sister but similar to that...some older person who's sort of doing the same things that she's done." Brenda described the first several months of her relationship with Charlene as

...three and a half months of just confusion – just not even knowing what was going on or I would just show up and be with her for an hour and leave...she wanted to keep coming back and she kept telling Jan how great it was and how wonderful.

I asked Brenda how she felt in response to that and she expressed that “I didn’t feel any of that. I didn’t really understand why she was feeling that way.” The early stage of the relationship was characterized by confusion for Brenda although Charlene didn’t feel this way at all. While Charlene did express some apprehension initially, “I didn’t know what kind of a person I’d be with and I was kind of nervous, some person that was really uptight that I would be intimidated by...,” the progression of the relationship was smooth for her,

Basically the first couple of sessions was really trying to get to know one another, it was more of a get to know one another so I would feel really comfortable with her, so may be I could open up to her more and connect with her in different ways. She had familiarized herself with what I was going through. She knew where I was coming from. It progressed really well and I think if it was another person, it might not have went...I think personality wise, it’s someone I can say look at how she turned out, I can do that too.

Brenda, although not realizing it as that time, was helping Charlene establish and accomplish her goals.

When I asked Donna how she perceived her mentoring relationship to develop, she answered,

At the beginning we e-mailed each other. When we got together, ...we're both shy, but we began to talk, asking her about her courses, how things were going, we did branch out other topics as well, I kind of shared some shy times I had. We got along very well right from the beginning. I did not have to prod her to get any information, to chat and share things.

Alicia, who was Donna's mentee also felt very positive about the relationship from the beginning, "It was something to look forward to." The relationship between Paul and his mentee, Richard, was slightly different because Paul and Richard knew each other before their mentoring relationship began. Yet, their mentoring relationship, like all the others, was a formal pairing and Paul had concerns as well, "I was concerned [him] being very shy and not very demonstrative, and I told him to get in touch with me whenever he wanted...the demands he makes on my time are never unreasonable." Richard, like all mentees I interviewed, was full of praise for his mentor, "he seemed to be the only one that would really listen. ...It's a ritual thing to go see him." Paul was able to assist Richard in coping with his personal concerns more effectively.

The mentors were able to facilitate closeness with their mentees that allowed both general and complex issues to be discussed. These discussions could take place because the mentees perceived their mentors as meeting their expectations, both emotional and academic. As Richard states,

...piece by piece we'll just sit there and break the paper down. I've given him papers that I thought were pretty good and he's picked them apart...he doesn't want to hear anything negative, he'll say no, no you're a great student. He's

given me advice. We do a lot of school stuff, we talk about the odd thing...we can sit and talk for hours.

As a mentor, Paul assisted Richard by offering feedback. I also spoke with Donna on the topic.

DK: Do you believe you were able to assist your mentee with personal and academic issues?

Donna: Academic yes, because particularly where I'm reasonably computer literate. It did work. On other issues, yes, I proofread and was able to give her info on essay writing...trying to get her to look realistically at where she was going.

The mentees were able to trust their mentors and share experiences with them.

DK: So, you're able to share your problems and your feelings with her?

Charlene: I told her a lot of things people would never have guessed. I was the type of person that on the outside I kind of look whatever, but on the inside I have a lot of problems and you would never have guessed them. So I got a lot of stuff open, it made me become inside and outside the same, which I like now.

Charlene has developed a great trust and confidence in Brenda. Brenda has enabled Charlene to have more confidence by offering her encouragement,

And things she says to me, you know, and one of the things I kept driving home to her was you can say anything you want in here. You know, you can shit over who ever you want or you can tell me something terrible. ..Sometimes I try to be more of a counsellor with her. And sometimes I try to sit back and listen.

Brenda has also been able to express her weaker side to Charlene. This has helped to show Charlene that Brenda is human, real and not perfect. "And that's the other thing I try to do is show her my weaknesses and my inadequacies and you know that I've got three papers coming up and I'm scared ...". Donna has also used this method of self disclosure, "We're both shy, but we began to talk ...I kind of shared some shy times I've had." By sharing times of shyness, Donna was able to reach a new level with her mentee. "I did not have to prod her to get any information, to chat and share things...she felt comfortable with me."

Time has also been a factor in the progression of the mentoring relationships.

Brenda noticed a change in her relationship with Charlene as time progressed.

Six weeks ago there had been a big change. And I think normal progression, more trust on her part, more willingness to accept empathy on her part, it's more important for her to have...encouragement but also the exploration. I don't think she knows what exactly it is she wants so therefore she explores. To her I'm a role model...my diverse background, my diverse experience, my risk-taking. She'll talk about risks she can take. Her face will go clear and she'll say, well, what would you do?

Over time, Brenda was able to form a bond with Charlene that enabled Charlene to seek guidance and advice from her. This had lead to a relationship that offered trust as well.

DK: Is she asking you for advice?

Brenda: I think she's just asking me just to see what it would be like in my situation...I think she tells me stuff that she doesn't tell other people.

Donna also felt that her mentee has been “quite open” with her even though she considers her to be a shy person, “She’s very shy and not at all forward ... although she will talk on the one on one basis quite a bit.” Alicia stated simply, “I really like meeting with Donna, I really like it. I can talk to her and I trust her.” This trust has come from the understanding and support that Donna has offered to Alicia through the course of the mentoring relationship. Brenda has also been able to offer support to Charlene. Brenda tried to build up Charlene’s sense of herself and instill confidence in her,

And as soon as she passes it in ... she’ll know if she’s doing well or not and then may be the teacher will think she’s stupid and whatever...so I went through this whole thing with her and it took us probably about twenty minutes from the start of the conversation to the end and she’s looking at me going, “well, I don’t know”, you know and I say “what does it mean if she thinks you’re stupid?”

“What does it mean to you if that professor thinks you are stupid?”

Charlene also saw Brenda as an “independent woman.” Brenda was a role model for Charlene. As Brenda states,

Every once in a while she’ll ask me a question – a question out of the blue – like you know ... what was it first like when you went to South America? Or what was it like to live in Toronto? Or where have you traveled? You know and it would just be out of the blue. So I know that in the back of her mind that she is sort of looking at me. She’s thinking of things that I’ve done. ... She consciously wants to be more independent.

The mentor's attitudes, values, and behavior provide a model for the mentee. The mentee can discover valued parts of self by identifying with the mentor. Richard also felt that Paul has helped him become more confident in himself,

Paul's the type of guy you go visit and when you leave, you say, OK, I'm good again, gives me confidence talking to him, he makes you feel good by just talking to you, he was the only one who really supported me.

Paul was able to really make a difference in Richard's life. Without taking any credit, Paul said, "I think he (Richard) should be given support." The support Paul has given to his mentee has helped him to accomplish his goals.

Dynamic Interventions

The mentoring relationships often changed when the mentor felt that s/he could use dynamic interventions such as confrontation and challenge.

Brenda: Our relationship ...is more of a big sister relationship and I don't know if mentor is the right word or not. I don't really know what it means but I would say an older person that you know umm... a role model. ...Our relationship's a lot better. I confront her a lot. I tell her she's crazy a lot, you know so it's a very relaxed relationship. Sometimes I try to be more of a counsellor with her. And sometimes I try to just sit back and listen but I just keep going back to confronting her.

DK: So, confronting her works best for you?

Brenda: Works best for me and I think it's something she's not really used to because I confront her with the inconsistencies within her. Like she's a beautiful vivacious happy person and she's always worried about people not

liking her and I keep telling her she's full of shit. ...So I don't think she's used to that kind of confrontation and I think it's sort of, in my view, it's a safe place for her...

Many people might view Brenda's method of confrontation as harsh but it works for her and for Charlene,

Sometimes I think I talk way too much and she's like "talk if you want." I tell her about my ideas and she asks questions. It just gradually develops into everything. It's not really formal. It's a very relaxing environment. I see her on the street and I can say hi. We just kind of know each other more personally. It's helping me...she'll bring up things and I really like that. She'll say her opinion. She's not judging me but she likes that she can express her opinion with me and I think I can do that too.

Confrontation was used by Brenda to bring about a healthy challenge for Charlene. However, there were times when Brenda was concerned that perhaps she might unknowingly be trying to make Charlene into someone like herself.

Brenda: ...I am giving her a lot of my views. And that's a little bothersome because I think she's I think she might be a little bit impressionable. So, so sometimes I think I am trying to mold her into what I am.

DK: Do you think that she internalizes your views?

Brenda: I don't, I'm not really sure. I'm just, what I'm more concerned about is being wrong. You know, pushing her to be more independent, more verbose about things she doesn't like or if she's angry she can't – I don't think she's ever

shown anger in her life and she doesn't get angry very much but I've tried to make her angry...

Brenda's goal was not to harm or hinder Charlene but instead to bring her to a new level of self-awareness. I spoke to Charlene about confrontation in their relationship.

DK: So when you talk to Brenda, do you feel like she judges you at all?

Charlene: I like it when she gives me her opinion, I like it a lot. She'll say it in more of a constructive manner.

DK: Is she telling you what to do?

Charlene: No, but she's guiding me. I don't know; she just makes me open my eyes. So much has changed. My parents told me to go and take a certain degree. It wasn't for me. Totally the wrong thing to do, then I failed out. It was no big deal for me. I didn't want to do it anyway. Meeting with the mentor just gave me more of a one on one relationship with somebody that I really, really liked. My professors were supportive of me but I kind of felt intimidated by them.

Charlene not only enjoyed her meetings with Brenda but also respected Brenda's opinion and support. Although the relationship began as a formal one and Charlene was mandated to meet with her mentor, she felt she wanted to continue, "If I didn't have to see her, I'd probably still see her. ...It's someone to talk to who can understand, helping me along, telling me I can do it." The concerns Brenda had about "molding her into what I am" were unfounded. As Charlene so gracefully explained, "I don't want to be like her but she helps me to be me." She has become more of an individual through Brenda's help.

Donna has also used confrontation to motivate Alicia. The process was different but the end results were the same,

The only time there would have been a bit of friction, a couple of weeks ago when I kind of confronted her with her plans of what she was going to do. The possibility if she wasn't able to do that, does she have anything else? You know, she wasn't doing all that well in two courses and you can't take three courses a term forever. ...So I guess there was a bit of confrontation and she went without calling or e-mailing. I was concerned she was mad at me or upset about the whole thing, feeling a bit down on herself. But then she was feeling upbeat that she was able to approach some people about summertime employment to come up with plan B as to what she may do if this doesn't work out.

I asked Donna if her confrontation was motivational in nature and her response was a definite "yes." Donna and I discussed behavioral change and she thought it was the "suggestions" that were made to Alicia that were confrontational and in turn, eventually motivational. Donna felt that Alicia "had to think about something else if this didn't work out." In origin, Donna felt Alicia may have been slightly opposed to the idea and that was perhaps why she did not call or e-mail for a period of time. However, when I spoke to Alicia she shared none of this information with me. I inquired about her weekly meetings with Donna on two occasions. Each time she spoke highly and kindly of her mentor suggesting that Donna "helped me decide what I wanted to do." I even asked if at any time it felt pushy or uncomfortable and her answer was "no, not at all."

In conclusion, the confrontation was obviously positive for Alicia for it resulted in her being able to make conscious choices and future goals.

Paul also used challenge with Richard to effect a behavioral change. He felt that Richard “really liked for someone to help refocus him.” Richard described Paul as a “whip cracker” but in a “very positive way.” Paul believes that his mentoring relationship has enabled Richard to “become much more assertive.” While Richard has been able to put his academics in perspective, “Do your stuff and don’t put it off, if its got to be in March 15th, I want to see you March 14th. Do it now and get it done. ...He’s a straight to the point kind of guy.” Being a “straight to the point kind of guy” was obviously what Richard needed.

Liberators

Confrontation and challenge have been used in these mentoring relationships by the mentors to enact liberating behavior on the part of the mentees. In these cases it has been successful. After meeting for several months, Brenda noticed that “our relationship has taken a huge shift. I can see what’s happening and this is very recent. She’s made some major decisions which I didn’t really push her to.” At first Brenda was concerned because Charlene decided to take on the same occupation as Brenda but then she realized that these changes were healthy and productive for Charlene. Brenda laughs as she describes the scenario, “I mean, at first I thought Oh God – you know because she’s decided to become a teacher.”

DK: Because you’re a teacher?

Brenda: Yeah, so I was a little bit worried but now I don’t think so. I mean – I’m not – she might be choosing teaching for that reason but it doesn’t matter

because it's going to take her a couple of years to get there anyway. She's out of what she was the program she was in before. That makes her feel a lot better so she's feeling a lot more empowered and a lot stronger and a lot more independent.

Charlene has taken on the ability to acknowledge and praise herself through Brenda's assistance,

I don't really look at myself or pat myself on the back a lot and I can when I'm with her, I did good on my test and not feel really weird about it. I feel comfortable with her. It's a way for me to acknowledge what I do.

Brenda has empowered Charlene, "It's a way to get it out and know that I did something good, very positive outlook." There is great freedom of expression between Charlene and Brenda. Charlene explained to me that meeting with Brenda was "a way to get things off your chest..., a way to look at things differently too." Brenda has also given Charlene exposure to things in life she may not have had without their relationship,

She relates to something that I kind of want to be. I want to be strong. I look up to her in how far she's come; everything she's gone through. Because she's told me some stuff too that she's gone through just so I can relate better which is good, just little things. ...With me I can say anything.

Most important for Charlene was the inspiration and motivation that Brenda had given her. She spoke with emotion when she described her relationship with Brenda,

DK: When you say that Brenda is somebody you can talk to one on one, how are the conversations different from the ones you have with your friends?

Charlene: They just see me as some super happy person that's always smiling and always happy. Like if I cry one little tear they freak out like "what's wrong?" They would expect me to be a certain way all the time and she doesn't. Well, I just want to be myself. Too many questions from them, like I'm allowed to have feelings too. Sometimes before Christmas, the conversations [with Brenda] were pretty emotional. I was stressed. I was like "I really don't want to come back, I just want to give up." But everything did a total 180 and turned around. I don't want to do that. I know where I want to be and I see it all. She made me believe I could do it. I didn't have anyone around me and my parents weren't really... "you do this and you do that, you're going to university." I didn't want to do it anymore and he was so disappointed and disgusted. I kind of let my parents walk over me...

DK: So you talked to Brenda about that?

Charlene: Yeah, she wanted me to build up the strength to talk about talk to doing it. They [parents] knew I didn't want to be here but they didn't know the whole thing.

Charlene has credited Brenda as an inspirational force in her life that has enabled her to find strength to be who she wants to be and do what she wants to do,

I can accept compliments now, wow, I can say the littlest stuff now like "I have to go upstairs and study" "I have to go to the library." It's a big thing, she made me find out what I wanted to be. I told her everything I had trouble with and she kind of lead me to follow that path. She still helped me with what I wanted to

be, kind of like a big sister. I've never had a big sister, someone to look up to and admire, ...someone concerned for me...

Charlene looks up to Brenda as someone who not only cares about her but also someone who provides her motivation and empowerment. Brenda has cultivated a strength and independence in Charlene. By sharing herself as a person, as a big sister, Brenda has shown Charlene that she is authentically concerned for her well-being. The relationship has been extremely beneficial for Charlene but it also has been positive for Brenda as well, "I have great hopes for her. This is an incredible growth time for her. ...Our relationship has been interesting for both of us." This is an example of a successful mentoring relationship, where both parties have benefited from the experience.

Richard has also gained a sense of independence and strength from his meetings with Paul. Paul had spoken about a noticeable increase in Richard's independence, "he really enjoyed last term and he's becoming much more independent." One of Paul's goals in the mentoring process was "just to empower him." He was able to empower Richard in many ways, one of which was to "establish an equal relationship, a casual one. So we're really comfortable about meeting and he could say this is bothering me. I think he's gradually becoming his own voice." Richard stresses the fact that Paul is actively concerned for him and involved in his life, "He doesn't miss a thing, he takes an active role in my life and he's interested in what I'm doing. Hopefully I'll be getting 70s and 80s. It's good to have a mentor that's into the stuff you're doing."

Donna feels she cannot take the credit for the positive change in Alicia this past year. She believes that it has been a combination of the Academic Support Program and

the mentoring that has given Alicia the strength and independence she had been lacking.

Donna explained,

Alicia was delighted to have the help. ...All the help that Jan [academic support program coordinator] provided and that the mentoring provided. ...She's perhaps a little more confident, not just the mentoring but coming through the whole program, being taken by the hand and saying this is what you have to do, now go do it.

Alicia has proven to herself and to her mentor that she can do it. Donna spoke with pride at Alicia's accomplishments,

Getting the B's in her French the last week proves she can do it. I said:

"What did you do to get this?" and she did extra study. ...It shows you can do it. Take whatever you did and continue to do it. Once she shows herself she can do it then all she has to do is apply the same thing.

I asked Donna if she could recall any of the instances where Alicia has taken control of her situation and of her life. She explained that Alicia is now

approaching professors, which I think is a big change from last year. This year she's grown a lot. She seems to be getting stronger into herself to be able to do these things. It has been a growing year in many ways for her.

Alicia described her mentoring experience as "really great." Donna also described her experience in a positive light, "I think I've learned a little more about myself. Holding a mirror up to the student was like holding a mirror up to myself as well. It's given me a little more confidence. ...Yes, it has been positive."

Troubled Relationships and Inhibitors

However, not all within mentoring process is so positive. The bulk of the mentoring literature discusses the benefits of the process. There is potential for dysfunction within some mentoring relationships. However, scant attention has been given to dysfunction within mentoring because poor relationships do not occur as often as positive relationships. When they do occur, the results can sometimes be quite serious. Mentoring relationships can sometimes run into difficulty when the interests of the mentor or mentee change or when differences in judgment exist.

I was not able to interview a dyad that had problems within their mentoring relationship. One of the pair was always unwilling to discuss their relationship with me. I thought it necessary to represent the other side of the formal pairings; the negative side. I was able to secure an interview with two mentors who had difficulties within their relationships. Shauna and Elaine had been seeing male mentees. In both circumstances the relationships ended by Christmas. Elaine began our interview with a discussion about how her mentee had disappointed her initially and how this may have jeopardized their subsequent relations,

The starting point was that he missed the first and third sessions and I was pissed off and I didn't like being pissed off and I didn't think it would be helpful to him and it certainly wasn't helpful to me.

Elaine explained, "I was really glad that I got this early challenge on attendance. The first time I had talked to him on the phone, I was very critical although I was restraining myself." She admitted that she had not met her mentee at this point,

No, I hadn't seen him, he didn't show up so I talked to him on the phone and by that time Jan had gotten him on the phone. I said to him a few weeks later, "if you had an appointment to see the most beautiful girl on campus I don't think you'd forget," he conceded that that was probably true.

The problems in this mentoring relationship began when Elaine's mentee did not show up for his first session. Elaine felt her time and energy were being wasted when again on the third scheduled meeting the mentee did not show, especially since she was getting credit for the hours in which she worked with her mentee towards a course she was taking. Elaine felt it may be helpful to construct some type of contract with the mentee,

I asked him to make a \$30.00 deposit with Jan [academic support coordinator] and if he simply didn't show up and didn't warn me I would collect the deposit and he would have the option of replenishing the deposit. I gave him incentive, he could have gotten another mentor, he didn't have to do that, he agreed.

Elaine felt that this was a positive incentive for her mentee to come to the mentoring sessions. However, this was not the case. Her mentee did not show up for the next scheduled session. Elaine also felt that the program coordinator disagreed with the form of action that she had taken with her mentee, "Jan misinterpreted what I was doing. She thought it was a way of coercing him to show up for mentoring which I had no interest in doing. ...She disagreed with what I was doing." The problem seemed to originate from the lack of a perfect fit between mentor and mentee,

I wasn't willing to be a taskmaster. I was willing to be a motivator if that's what they wanted but I told my mentee I'm not really interested in doing that, you know. If you want me to do it, I'll do it but I'd rather talk about it.

Elaine did feel that Jan strived to find a fit at some level, "I think Jan probably tried to do that to some extent consciously or unconsciously." There was also the issue of being presented with a certain type of individual, "I think that being presented with a certain type of individual didn't help me through the initial period when he wasn't showing up. That would not be useful information for me." Yet, Elaine believed she met the needs of her mentee at some level.

DK: So, did you feel overall that you did meet the needs, at some level, of a mentor to your mentee?

Elaine: Oh, sure. ...I feel I understand that brand of academic dysfunctionality pretty well.

In her final report to the coordinator, Elaine said, "maybe you could find somebody new for him, somebody that wouldn't buy into the incorrigible loser persona." Strangely enough, Elaine still managed to enjoy her mentoring experience; "I really liked being a mentor. It's been a really interesting way for me to show support. I think it went perfectly fine even though he ended up hating Jan and me a little bit. And terminating mentoring." She also expressed support towards her mentee,

He made tremendous strides and like a lot of mentees he kind of arrived already having made some changes. ...In his case he worked long hours over the summer to pay for it [the academic support program] himself so he made some changes already.

However, that wasn't enough to make the relationship effective,

DK: ...Do you think there was any sense of betrayal?

Elaine: He did say he felt my hours were more important than his welfare.

DK: He said that to you?

Elaine: OK, "I am basically tired of feeling like I am part of her course and she's not part of my academic recovery." So if he didn't quite understand that by taking this program...I don't really want to try to figure that out. I think that...the one main thing I've learned from this is that when I did this thing with the money he and Jan and other people I talked to construed it as extortion...and it really wasn't so that language suggests that he didn't believe me in the first place...

Shauna also had difficulty in her mentoring relationship. She felt initially that there wasn't enough clarity around the role of the mentor,

...I felt there wasn't the clarity around it and then I said one of the things that I thought was really important was I said to her [asp coordinator] clarity on what the role of the mentor, the mentor's role, how do you do it, how do you be a mentor and I didn't ever see that come.

Her concern was her lack of personal mentoring experience, "I had never been a mentor officially, so here I was arriving getting this information about this student and thinking what am I supposed to do here?" She had feelings of confusion and discomfort entering into the mentoring relationship. She explains,

The very first night I got this sheet and on the bottom of this sheet there was some comment [about the mentee] that said – there was a written comment and

it was like - he's already missed classes, he's already been reamed out about it and it felt very uncomfortable and it felt like "why am I getting this information?" It felt like a breach of confidence.

She was also concerned about the formal aspect of the mentoring program. Shauna expressed frustration, "So here I was arriving, getting this information about this student and thinking 'what am I supposed to do here?' and it turned out I think that the mentee that I had, he was very angry about being in the whole program and he wasn't very intrigued about having to see a mentor." She felt she understood what he was feeling,

I think he felt some real "why does he have to do this type thing" and it was the mandatory part of it that was very hard for him but yet he was also the type of person who likes to be, who has the ability to present himself socially quite well. So it was in a very underlying way that the message was coming. It wasn't sitting down saying "I hate being here." He was very personable and that kind of thing but it took me a while to realize that he had real issues; that he was angry about it but he was playing the system because he knew it was something he had to do.

However, this made mentoring difficult for Shauna because her mentee was not interested in seeking any type of support from her initially. He was not willing to assist her in helping him,

... There was probably a lot of external pressure for him to return so he would have done the things he needed to do in order to get back into the university. But he - a lot of personal issues that get in the way of him being successful. But I think it made it really difficult for me because he did not want academic

support from me as a mentor. He did not want me getting the timetables from him. ...He didn't need another person in his life that was going to be sitting down and saying "so have you got your assignments done?" "How are you doing them?" and monitoring him in that way. And I didn't see a mentoring relationship either.

Shauna felt confusion around the mentoring aspect of the relationship as well,

I really saw it as this guy needed somebody that was going to support him through the year, somebody that was going to be here for him and that school wasn't the problem. I was trying to build a relationship with him and work towards – and maybe we could look at other things that were difficulties for him. So for me it was really ambiguous, I really didn't know what I was being told. I was getting the impression what I was being told didn't fit. And if I had done the timetable, he didn't really want that and if I had done that, it wouldn't have done anything for the mentoring.

I questioned her at this point asking:

DK: I'm wondering if he even would have come to the mentoring sessions?

Shauna: I wouldn't think so – no, and I also had to guarantee to him on a couple of occasions that what went on between him and I was between him and I because there was really unclear boundaries around how the mentoring role – mentoring relationship fit into the academic support program. I really felt that what went on between him and I was between him and I and if he wanted to share it with someone else than that was fine, but I really felt it was inappropriate sharing.

She saw that she was eventually able to show support to him and even provide an appropriate level of challenge,

I think what ended up happening in our relationship, for a time period, he saw me as somebody that he could come and sit and talk to, you know. I would call him on the conning he was doing and we sort of felt like we could really see each other and there were some strengths in that but I know that he really – he was doing the minimum, absolute minimum that he had to do to maintain himself in that program. And he was buckling under and accepting the manner in which the shit was hitting the fan kind of thing. Like the person that was running the program was on his back and he had a meeting with that person, the supervisor, the registrar – four of them sat down and had a meeting and he was very in an external way. He sat there and was very quiet and was nodding his head. Inside, he's calling them all kinds of names in the book.

Shauna sensed that there was a great deal of resentment on the part of her mentee toward the program and the fact that he was required to participate,

I think he was having a really hard time with the fact that this was an authority that was telling him how he had to do it, trying to break free and say, "I'm an adult and I'll do it my way" and they're saying, "doing it your way isn't working, do it like this" and he was really resenting that. The superficial layer that's there with him is very polite and gets along with people so he wasn't doing that. So he was getting to be really resentful of the way things were coming down the pipe at him. Not that they were wrong or right but it wasn't a strategy that was working for him. And I really saw that if I did that strategy

there wouldn't be any connection between us at all. So for me and a couple of times I said to him it feels like we just sit here and talk like "what is this?" and he said that "I really enjoy our conversations."

It is obvious that she was able to provide something that he deemed enjoyable. However, it was the confusion, lack of clarity and disrespect that made the relationship suffer,

It was just having another adult he could talk and he could be quite content to be angry about it openly, angry about things and talk to me about it and know it wasn't going to go any further. But I found it very difficult for me because I just sort of – it was like there just wasn't a clarity around it for me and it just really felt like it didn't fit. It was tiring and it took a lot of energy; a lot of energy and I found myself confused and at one point – he came in one time and he started talking in a way that I found really offensive and I was sort of like "what do I do here?" I'm here to listen and support him but now he's talking about women and white trash strippers. He was just sort of going in that direction and it was becoming apparent to me just how angry he was at different classes of society. I was starting to feel uncomfortable at the way he was talking and at one point I just sort of said to him – "you're a racist" – called him on it and he was doing drinking and I was concerned about drugs.

She was also concerned about the judgment toward her mentee and that, in fact, impacted on her desire to spend time with him,

...I didn't want to go, I do remember the time that we met was Wednesday afternoon ...and I would always find myself dragging – myself to go and just – I

don't want to go and you know the supervisor sort of helped me to see that maybe that was his anger underneath it I was picking up on.

Shauna had an overall feeling of discomfort throughout the period she was meeting with her mentee. This discomfort was not only associated with her mentee but also with the program itself,

...He was already slotted into a category that wasn't going to make it right off the bat. He was slotted into that category and he wasn't going to make it. He was going to screw it up. I found that really unsettling, you know, because I saw that there was a person here and he was making bad choices and unhealthy choices and he was making mistakes and ...it felt like there was a lot of judgment that came from the very first day when I got a piece of paper with comments on the bottom. It made it difficult and there just wasn't clarity around what I should be doing with this guy.

Shauna also felt a great deal of discomfort at the monthly meetings the mentors were supposed to attend,

...I remember going to one of the supervisory meetings, which I hated, I had no appreciation for those meetings at all. I thought they were a waste of time, a breach of confidentiality and ...at one meeting, I remember saying "It's been hard work, I'm tired, you know. It's not a pretty picture that everyone's been painting here, you know." I was one of the last people to speak and I had listened to what had gone on and thought the information that's coming from the coordinator to everybody else and the information that's coming from the mentors too is inappropriate. This just didn't feel right. It felt wrong. It didn't

seem to be clarity around the confidentiality issue, around the mentors, the relationship and I found this person a really difficult person to work with and there was one person, a support person, but I don't know if that person was really set up to be a support person for the mentors. It might have been through another avenue I was able to go and talk to that person around some support but I wonder about the people who were having difficulties in their relationships with their mentees, where were they turning for support? I don't think there was anything in place for that. It comes back to clarity of the role and it also comes back – I don't think that the mentorship should be mandatory.

Shauna proposed that the program itself could be mandatory but having the mentorship aspect of the program mandatory puts an undue amount of pressure on the mentors when their mentees do not wish to be present, “[the mentorship] should be voluntary because it puts too much pressure on the mentor and you're looking at somebody who's dedicating a certain amount of time ...and if you've got somebody who's hostile about being there ...” However, at one point Shauna did express some hope,

But then on the flip side I don't know if the mandatory part of the first relationship ...maybe it did do something for him, I don't know. So if it hadn't have been mandatory, maybe he wouldn't have had that experience.

Overall, she describes her experience, “I found it a very tiring, difficult experience to go through.” Although the relationship was difficult, she tried to contact her mentee after Christmas,

So then I did manage to contact the mentee and set up a meeting and maybe he could meet with me. And he e-mailed me and told me he couldn't but he would get in touch with me again. And he never did get in touch with me again.

Time passed and at the end of the term she happened to run into him,

I did see him about a week or two ago and he said he was finishing up here and moving. ...When we talked, he was the pleasant person that he is but he did seem eager to continue to talk and I seemed eager to go. I would have liked to have been able to say to him "let's go for a coffee or something" but I really feel like I put the ball in his court around doing something and he didn't initiate something. ...He'd had some real, personal difficulties. He did e-mail me to say "I need to get some stuff off my chest and you seem the appropriate person to do that." He never ...that was it. I haven't had anymore contact. The last time we actually met was before Christmas with the agreement we'd meet after Christmas. We might have had one or two e-mail contacts but that was it. So for me I felt unsupported. I felt a lack of clarity and there were no boundaries around confidentiality. I felt he was classified and put into a category and that was unfair and wrong.

I asked Shauna if she would be willing to be a part of the mentoring process again,

In the same circumstances it was in the fall, definitely not. But if the changes were made, and there was clarity around that, I guess I'd have to recant that. Out of all the troubles and struggles I've had with the mentee, I did enjoy the relationship and there was a time when he and I where we saw each other as

human beings and I think he was able to share with me something he'd never shared with anyone.

Although Shauna experienced difficulty in her relationship, she was able to reach a place with her mentee that others were not able to reach.

Summary

In the beginning the mentors and mentees experienced some level of apprehension and nervousness. This was understandable given that the pairings were formal. Most mentors had not done any mentoring before. The mentees were mandated to attend while the mentors had varying reasons for choosing to mentor. These ranged from "getting the hours" (toward counselling certification) to plain interest in "mentoring students." Once initial feelings of nervousness had passed, the mentors began using facilitative strategies with their mentees. These strategies included but were not limited to guidance and advising, helping/making a difference, role modeling, support, protection, encouragement and trust. These strategies did not appear immediately for the pairs. First it was important that mentor and mentee "get to know one another." Once this familiarity occurs, the relationship could progress to the point where the mentor could offer the above noted strategies to the mentee. These strategies facilitated closeness so that both complex and general issues could be discussed with ease. In most cases this facilitative stage was enjoyable for both mentor and mentee. Time was an important factor in this stage. The pairs needed time to develop the level of comfort necessary to bring forth benefits.

As time progressed, the mentoring relationships progressed to a new level. The relationships moved to a new level when the mentor felt that s/he could use dynamic

interventions such as confrontation and challenge with the mentee. Confrontation was used by the mentors to bring about a healthy change for the mentees. The mentees appreciated the challenge but never felt forced or pushed even though the mentors sometimes felt they may be pushing too hard. It has been described by one mentee as “guiding.” Although the same scenario was described by the mentor as “confrontation.” The mentee explained guiding as “she just makes me open my eyes.” Another mentor used confrontation in the form of “suggestions.” The mentee’s response to the suggestions was positive, “helped me decide what I wanted to do.”

These dynamic interventions were used by the mentors to enact liberating behavior on the part of the mentees. These liberating behaviors took the form of inspiration, empowerment, motivation, self-esteem, independence/strength, freedom of expression, respect, exposure and humanness/authenticity. As one mentee explained, meeting with the mentor was “a way to get things off your chest, ...a way to look at things differently too.” This mentee had developed the ability to acknowledge and praise herself, “I don’t really look at myself or pat myself on the back a lot and I can when I’m with her...” The mentors provided these mentees with liberating behaviors they never had before. Knowing that they could instill such positive behaviors from their mentees has also proved to be a positive experience for the mentors, “It’s given me a little more confidence...yes, it has been positive.”

Unfortunately, not all of the mentoring relationships were as successful or as positive. Like all types of relationships, mentoring relationships can sometimes run into difficulties. The difficulty varied from troubled relationships to relationship inhibitors which prevented either the mentor or mentee, and sometimes both mentor and mentee,

from experiencing primarily positive outcomes. The inhibitors ranged from feelings of uncertainty, confusion, frustration, dependence, self-protection, worry/concern and fragility to troubled relationships characterized by self-sacrifice, discomfort, disagreement, submissiveness, arrogance, non-reciprocal relationship, unrealistic expectations, incongruence, selfishness, displeasure, compliance and judgment. These behaviors, whether exhibited on the part of the mentor or mentee, generally lead to dysfunction within the relationship and impede the relationship from any healthy progression.

It appeared that troubles often began early when, for example, a mentee did not show for the initial meetings. Often resentment builds and it appears the relationships are stalled from the onset. In most cases, the good intentions are there but the individuals have difficulty relating to one another. In other words, there are psychosocial problems. Inevitably this results in disappointment which leads to stress and anxiety. It is difficult for either party to benefit under such circumstances. Lack of clarity can also result in an inhibited relationship. In one case, in particular, the mentee felt resentment toward the academic support program that he was mandated to attend. He then transferred this resentment into his mandated mentoring relationship. This led to confusion and disrespect. It also impacted on the mentor's desire to spend time with her mentee, "and I would always find myself – dragging myself to go." This mentor proposed voluntary mentorship even though the academic support program was mandatory. This would alleviate the pressure the mentors feel when their mentees do not want to be present. Overall, the experiences of the participants varied. No

relationship could be characterized as perfect. Although all relationships experienced some instances that proved positive and meaningful.

Chapter 5

Discussion

I have learned from my experience as an interviewer that:

relationships are composed of two individuals who come to one another with some linguistic, cultural, human, and individual baggage, but nevertheless can proceed, through their interaction, to create substantial shared understandings of the world, which they frame in their talk with one another... (Duck, 1994a).

When I first read this quote, I believed it pertained to the mentor – mentee relationships. However, as the study progressed, I realized that this statement applies to all relationships between two individuals, including my relationship with each of my participants. It truly opened my eyes and my mind so I could more clearly see and understand the interchange between two people involved in a relationship.

Each relationship began as a formal pairing. This, of course, was not easy for either the mentor or the mentee. Adams and Adams (1997) have discussed the initial stages of the mentoring relationship. The first stage has been termed apprehension. This is natural given the formality of the pairings. These people were complete strangers to one another and had to come together as a working pair. One mentor, Brenda conceded "...a tiny bit of nervousness..." before her first meeting with Charlene, her mentee. These concerns arose out of not knowing what was expected of them in the role of a mentor. Many mentors were new to the process, "My biggest concern was that I'd never done mentoring before. ...What was going to be good for the student?..." Kram (1988) has proposed that this initiation stage of mentoring can last from six months to a year.

The relationships progressed naturally and the mentors began to use facilitative strategies with their mentees. It was during this time that the mentor was able to provide a sounding board for self-exploration (Kram, 1988). When asked what role she expected to play in her mentee's life, Donna responded, "Going into it, I wasn't sure, but after a couple of sessions, I felt like I was more of a sounding board, she would bounce ideas off me." The mentor often offers personal experience as an alternative perspective (Kram, 1988). Charlene described the relationship with her mentor, "...I think personality wise, it's someone I can say, look at how she turned out, I can do that too." Charlene obviously had entered into the stage of goal setting discussed by Adams and Adams (1997).

The mentors were also able to provide their mentees with feedback and active listening as discussed by Kram (1988). As Richard stated about his mentor, "piece by piece we'll just sit there and break the paper down. ...He has given me advice. We do a lot of school stuff, we talk about the odd thing. ...We can sit and talk for hours." Charlene spoke of the significance of the one to one relationship, "...Meeting with the mentor just gave me more of a one to one relationship with somebody that I really, really liked. My professors were supportive of me but I kind of felt intimidated by them." Larose et al. (1999) expanded on the idea that many students often believe that to ask for assistance or to seek help from a teacher "constitutes a public admission of failure" (p. 243). However, she felt comfortable with the relationship she had established with her mentor. Counselling is a psychosocial function that was often present in the mentoring relationships. The mentors helped the mentee to explore personal concerns that might interfere with a positive sense of self. By offering this

assistance in a counselling role, the mentor is feeling productive and helpful (Kram, 1988). As Brenda stated, "...Sometimes I try to be more of a counsellor with her. And sometimes I just try to sit back and listen..."

The most frequently reported psychosocial function reported by Kram (1988) was role modeling. The mentee benefits through the discovery of valued parts of him/herself. The role model also assists the mentee in developing a greater level of self confidence. Paul felt that his mentor was the only person who really supported him and helped him to develop confidence,

Paul's the type of guy you go visit and when you leave, you say, "OK, I'm good again," gives me confidence talking to him, he makes you feel good just by talking to you, he was the only one who really supported me.

Acceptance and confirmation enable a mentee to experiment with new behaviors (Kram, 1988). The mentor tracks the mentee's concerns, helps the mentee to identify his/her strengths and is confident in the mentee's ability to face and overcome uncertainty (Davis et al., 1997).

The mentoring relationship is vital and significant if both mentor and mentee benefit (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Alicia has described her experience as a mentee as "really great." Donna, Alicia's mentee also benefited from the experience, "I think I've learned a little about myself. ...It's given me a little more confidence. ...it has been positive."

The bulk of the mentoring literature discusses the benefits of the process (Scandura, 1988). However, there is potential for dissatisfaction within some mentoring relationships. Kram (1988) discussed the possibility of dysfunction within the

mentoring process. However, scant attention has been given to dysfunction within mentoring because poor relationships do not occur as often as positive relationships. When they do occur, the results can sometimes be quite serious (Scandura, 1998). Mentoring relationships can sometimes run into difficulty when the interests of the mentor or mentee change or when differences in judgment exist (Hennefrund, 1986). Elaine's mentee had disappointed her early on and this led to difficulties as the relationship progressed, "The starting point was that he missed the first and third sessions and I was pissed off...." Elaine felt it would be helpful for both herself and her mentee if some type of contract was constructed. However, even though her mentee agreed to the contract, he did not hold up his end of the bargain.

I asked him to make a \$30.00 deposit with Jan (the academic support coordinator) and if he simply didn't show up and didn't warn me I would collect the deposit. ...I gave him the incentive, he could have gotten another mentor, he didn't have to do that, he agreed.

Her mentee did not show for the next session. Elaine and her mentee differed in their views regarding incentives. I asked Elaine if there was any sense of betrayal. She responded, "He did say he felt that my hours were more important than his welfare." Duck (1994b) describes these problems as difficulty and spoiling. Difficulty occurs when the person has good intentions toward the other and there are psychosocial problems in the way they relate to each other. Problems can arise and the relationship is characterized by conflict and/or disagreement on the judgment of the other or by placing the person in binds. Binds occur when ultimatums are given or the person demands the other make a choice. Despite good intentions, these unpleasant scenarios

sometimes do occur and can cause serious stress and anxiety. Spoiling of a potentially positive relationship can occur when an act of actual or perceived betrayal occurs. This betrayal can evoke feelings of disappointment and regret by the person who invested in the relationship. Scandura (1998) acknowledges that because there is a power differentiation in mentoring relationships, they “are quite possibly more potent in terms of the potential intrapsychic damage that might be done than the literature acknowledges” (p. 456).

Another issue that might possibly contribute to mentoring dysfunction is the formal aspect of the relationships. There was no choice for these students. They were mandated to attend the academic support program and the mentoring component of the program if they wished to get back into their regular program of study. Although many mentoring programs are set up for formal mentoring (Lefler, 1996), Chao, Walz and Gardner (1993) suggest that both mentors and mentees prefer informal mentoring. Shauna expressed a great deal of frustration with the situation,

...I think that the mentee that I had, he was very angry about being in the whole program and he wasn't very intrigued about having to see a mentor. ...I think he felt some real “why does he have to do this type of thing” and it was the mandatory part of it that was very hard for him...

Her mentee was not interested in seeking support from her and this made the relationship difficult, “...But I think it made it really difficult for me because he did not want academic support from me as a mentor.” The relationship between Shauna and her mentee was difficult yet she felt that she found a place in her mentee that she might not have found if the relationship had not been mandatory, “...maybe it did do

something for him...so if it hadn't of been mandatory, maybe he wouldn't have had that experience." As thoughtfully explained by Duck (1994b), "As well as being an ever-present thread in the rich tapestry of our lives, the 'dark side' is not always dark in its effects. ...In learning to cope with relationship disasters, some people grow stronger, more resilient, and better able to deal with others..." (p.5).

Chapter 6

Synopsis, Recommendations, and Conclusions

Synopsis

This study has shown that there are many benefits to the mentoring relationship and that the relationships will be effective if these benefits are present for the parties involved. Much must be taken into consideration when constructing a successful mentoring program in a university setting. Reeves (1996) suggested that administrators must be aware of a number of factors such as selecting committed participants, orienting and training participants, tracking the development of the mentor-mentee relationship, and evaluating program effectiveness. In a perfect world, these factors would be met without any concern. Unfortunately our world is not perfect and neither are the people in it.

Recommendations

However, through program evaluation and communication with participants, it is possible to improve upon something that has already been seen to be successful at many levels. Many of the participants in this study had no suggestions for improving the program. However, some were able to make some recommendations that they felt would improve the program and enhance the success of the mentoring relationships. Donna suggested,

some kind of workshop, maybe a couple of hours would help a whole lot. A little more training would have been helpful. I think in other mentoring situations, you know the person, seek that person out, which obviously didn't happen here and I'm not sure if it could happen.

Reeves (1996) proposed that formal training programs or orientations could be established for mentors that would possibly enhance their interpersonal skills and application of crisis management skills. It is a known fact that it can't be expected that mentors come in a ready made package. Elaine also felt that some type of training program should be present to bring about awareness, "these are the ways you could be as a mentor." She also suggested that it would not have to be time consuming, "I don't know if it has to be very long. I don't think you're going to educate people to do a role that they're not comfortable with but making it at least a choice." It is expected that mentors may need training in communication and listening skills to make them more effective (Reeves, 1996). Shauna felt that clarification would greatly assist the mentor in making decisions,

I think ...if there was stuff ...written out, that was stated, and the mentee doesn't show, first time contact the mentee, mentee doesn't show second time, contact the mentee with a copy to the coordinator, doesn't show a third time, meeting with mentee, mentor and coordinator. So that there's set stages so that people know what the process is to go through ...and I actually requested that.

Tracking the development of the mentor-mentee relationship is helpful in sustaining a meaningful relationship. It is important that program developers establish a formal feedback system. This feedback system can help foster open communications between the program coordinator, mentors and mentees (Reeves, 1996). For Shauna this would have eased her confusion,

I just don't think it was clarified at the beginning. If I had known exactly what I was supposed to do, ...back to the coordinator with the mentee, like let's meet

together. There's none of that where it needs to be a separate meeting. It's my impression that as mentor that this isn't really what this person needs. It's my impression that this is not what they're looking for...OK, what is it that this person really needs that will make them successful...? And that the mentee wants and not what is mandatory. And clarity and straightforward, open, useful discussion with the parties at play, to make the lines clearer. Change the format, the actual discussion should happen with the mentees and the coordinators ... clarity on the roles, mentor's roles, mentee's roles, support for the mentors, clarity around the process – if a mentee wants to fire a mentor, what's the process?

Shauna suggested that there be clarification with regard to meeting the needs of the particular mentee,

To me there were some big issues he needed to look at and I wasn't sure that I was the person to be doing that because it was sort of for me he needed bridging to a counsellor instead of bridging to a mentor. That was something that has become prevalent for me with this program. Where does the bridging need to go? And who's supposed to do what? If you've got someone who needs academic support and the bridging is to an academic mentor. If you've got someone who needs counselling, then the bridging needs to go to a counsellor, under the auspices of a counsellor and not under the auspices of a mentor. And I think that was one of the mistakes that happened for me. I ended up counselling my ...mentee but it was under the auspices of a mentor. I don't even know what a mentor's supposed to give. I would say for improvement to stick to the idea

that you're there as a mentor and you're not to be doing counselling and if it moves, be referred.

Reeves (1996) suggests it is important to have mentees provide their reactions to the mentoring experiences and whether or not their mentors are fulfilling their needs. This would assist the program coordinator with providing alternatives for mentees, such as counselling, whose mentors did not meet their needs.

This program has been successful for its first year. As Donna noted, "I think the mentoring experience has been a growing experience for me as well. I had not done it before...very interesting." It has shown to be meaningful for many of the participants involved. Although participants, such as Shauna, experienced difficulties, they attribute these difficulties to the newness of the program. Shauna summarizes,

In fairness to the program and in fairness to the people running the program, it's the first year this has happened so it's quite typical that these kind of things get put into place. You know, you can't think of everything ahead of time. I think the program has a place here. I think the program is beneficial. It will grow and improve and I see anything I say as points of weaknesses that could be strengthened, by just examining and putting things in place. ...It's a new program as well. I've been involved with brand new programs many times and that's not an easy task.

Shauna also expressed concern for the coordinator of the program who has taken on many roles above and beyond the call of duty,

You have to have someone who's a visionary to do that and that's not an easy task. ...She's (coordinator) dedicated and really dedicated to what she's doing

but I think the weaknesses in the program are weaknesses within the person that does it. I've been concerned about the amount of counselling she's been doing and she's teaching plus she's coordinating. The amount of roles she's taken on are above what she expected to do. It doesn't surprise me...

I suggested, "With that amount of pressure, she needs an assistant." Shauna responded, "Considering it's a new program and one person doing her role."

The interview with Shauna was honest and candid. She discussed what she felt were the strengths and the weaknesses of the program with ideas for improvement. Her concerns and experiences remind us that mentors should also benefit from the mentoring relationship. The mentor should gain a sense of personal satisfaction and a feeling of accomplishment when acting in the role of a mentor (Dondero, 1997). There should be some opportunity for exiting the assigned mentoring relationship if it does not work out (Scandura, 1998).

Conclusions

What is it in the nature of the mentoring process that makes it meaningful?

The mentoring process has shown itself to be meaningful when both parties (mentor and mentee) have received benefit in some way. This mentoring program has experienced challenges in its first year of delivery. The program has been both praised and challenged by its participants. This is the natural progression for any new program. There have been successful relationships and there have been relationships that have been dysfunctional at some level. It has been demonstrated that the success of formalized mentoring programs depends on many factors, most importantly the successful matching of mentor and mentee. "To summarize, the jury is still out on the

efficacy of formal mentoring programs. Despite continued practitioner interest in formalizing the mentoring process, the research literature indicates that such programs have limitations” (Scandura, 1998, p. 451). However, this program and its coordinator must be commended for standing up to the challenge and finding success for many of its participants. It is important that problems between mentor and mentee be examined to bring forth an understanding of interpersonal difficulties. Training programs must be implemented where there is open and frank discussion of the possible outcomes of both effective and ineffective mentoring relationships. Gibb (1999) outlines the main elements that institutions should take into account when setting up formalized mentoring programs. These are (1) targeting learners who need mentoring, (2) defining mentor competency, (3) selecting mentors who can provide help and support, (3) matching mentors and learners, (4) develop guidelines for meetings and (4) providing training for mentees (p.1058). While providing this opportunity to learn may not prevent relationship dysfunction, it will at least prepare the individuals involved to better deal with such challenges. However, looking on the brighter side of the issue, “dysfunctional mentoring relationships don’t occur as often as good ones” (Scandura, 1998, p.464).

The main concern put forth by the participants that I interviewed was that a mentor training program should be put into place. This would certainly bring about the clarity that both Shauna and Elaine felt they were lacking. This would also answer the often asked questions: How do you do it? How do you be a mentor? Overall, the mentoring component of the academic support program has been successful and has shown itself to be meaningful for most of the parties involved.

It is obvious that the mentors involved within this study initially had varying reasons for entering into the mentoring relationship. However, during the course of the relationships, these men and women have shown themselves to play a counselling role. In essence, at one time or another they became counsellors offering empathy, guidance, support and trust. They were also able to provide an environment for the mentee that was not unlike a counselling office; a place where self esteem could be fostered and where true feelings could be expressed. It would be helpful for prospective mentors to partake in a basic counselling skills workshop where communications and human relations are emphasized as part of their mentor training program. Many mentors naturally take on the role of a counsellor and feel comfortable in that role. However, some may feel ambiguity around such skills and expressions and a workshop would assist them in achieving greater comfort and clarity in their roles. In the event that issues arise that are serious in nature, the mentor must feel free to refer to an appropriately trained individual. In the interim, mentors can provide their mentees with assistance that is comfortable and natural to them. A counselling workshop will only enhance their already natural inclinations to help. In many ways, the mentoring relationship is also a helping relationship.

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Appendix A

Questions for Mentors – Interview 1

1. What motivated you to volunteer to be a mentor?
2. What were your major concerns before mentoring? During mentoring? Why?
3. What role did you expect to play in your mentee's life?
4. How did you perceive your mentoring relationship to develop?
5. Do you believe you were able to assist your mentee with personal and academic issues? How?

Questions for Mentees – Interview 1

1. Are you satisfied with your mentoring experience? In what ways?
2. What are the benefits of having a mentor?
3. Do you share problems and feelings with your mentor? Why or why not?
4. How has contact with your mentor changed your outlook?
5. What role does your mentor play in your life?

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Research Project – The Nature of the Mentoring Process

Researcher – Darlene Kyte

This consent form will help to inform you of what this research is about and what your participation will involve. With this study, I will attempt to gain insight into the mentoring aspect of an academic support program at a primarily undergraduate university. This research is being done in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Education in Counselling at Acadia University. Please read this form carefully.

The information obtained will be used to improve upon the present mentoring aspect of the academic support program. You have rights with regard to your participation in this study.

1. Participation in each taped interview will take approximately one hour. There will be two of these one-hour interviews occurring at a time convenient for both you and myself at an undisclosed private university location.
2. You may refuse to answer any question I may ask at any time in either interview.
3. You may cancel your participation agreement at any time, if you so wish.

All your responses will be anonymous and confidential. These responses will be heard by only me and will be transcribed shortly after each taped interview. You will have the opportunity to view the transcription for accuracy. Excerpts from your taped interviews may become part of the final research project. No identifying qualities will be part of such excerpts. Your name will at no time be used in any part of this study.

You can contact me, Darlene Kyte, or my thesis supervisor, Dr. David MacKinnon, at any time regarding any of the above stated information. My telephone number is 542-0459 and my e-mail address is darlene.kyte@ns.sympatico.ca. Dr. MacKinnon can be reached by telephone at 585-1394 or by e-mail at david.mackinnon@acadiau.ca.

I, _____ acknowledge that I have read the above stated information and understand what I have read. I have been informed of the purpose of the study. I also understand that information I give will be kept anonymous and confidential. I am aware that I am able to contact Darlene Kyte about any aspect of the study at any time that I so wish. I am also aware that I am able to withdraw from the study at any time and without consequence.

I acknowledge that I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Signature of Participant _____ **Date** _____