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In Their Words: A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of the Mentees in the Citizen Scholars Program

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In Their Words: A Phenomenological Study of the Experience of the Mentees in the
Citizen Scholars Program

By
Margaret Kane Lee

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Margaret Kane Lee under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Dedication

Philippians 2:3-4 *Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

This dissertation is dedicated to the students in the Citizen Scholars Program: Your potential is immeasurable and your futures are bright. Always believe in yourself!

This dissertation is also dedicated to the mentors, administrators, and all those who have invested their time, energy, and resources in the hope of making the Citizen Scholars vision a reality. Through your dedicated efforts, the lives of our youth are enhanced.

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Last but certainly not least, I must acknowledge and thank my dear family. To my husband Sanders, your unwavering support and encouragement kept the hope alive that the finish line would be reached. To my daughters Katie, Beth, and Barbara Caroline, your patience and reassurance allowed me to move forward with confidence. To my parents, your constant love and support always made me believe I could accomplish my goals. Your example of faith and humility continues to guide my life.

Abstract

In Their Words: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of the Mentees in the Citizen Scholars Program. Lee, Margaret Kane, 2017: Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University, Mentoring Relationships/Academic Achievement/Self-Efficacy/Economic Achievement Gap/Mentee Experiences

This phenomenological study examined the mentoring experience of five students involved in a community-based mentoring program developed to guide high ability, low-socioeconomic students from sixth grade through high-school graduation and on to college acceptance and graduation. This study explored, from student perspectives, how each student experienced and interpreted their personal mentoring relationship. Additionally, it explored each student's perception of how the mentoring experience influenced his or her academic achievement and academic self-efficacy.

The study followed an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach and was guided by Rhodes's mentoring model and Bandura's work with self-efficacy. Following the analysis protocol developed by Jonathan Smith, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used as the data source. The researcher conducted several readings of the interview transcripts in order to identify emerging themes. Connected themes were organized into higher-level superordinate themes. A complete analysis was conducted for each interview transcript before moving to the next transcript. After all transcripts were analyzed with themes and superordinate themes having been identified, the researcher looked for connections and patterns between the transcripts as a whole. The quality of mentoring relationship emerged as the most significant superordinate theme, as it influenced the other superordinate themes of mentee social-emotional, cognitive, identity, and self-efficacy development. The superordinate theme of external moderating influences included the mentoring program, the individual mentee's dispositions, and the mentees' parents shaped the atmosphere that either facilitated or hindered the mentoring relationship. Few studies have examined the mentoring experience from the mentee's perspective, particularly as it influences self-efficacy and academic outcomes. As such, this study addressed the gap in the literature as it relates to student perspectives of mentoring outcomes.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

In 2014, the United States had 15 and a half million children under the age of 18, 21% of all children in this country, living at or below the poverty level (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015). The outcomes associated with poverty are substantial. They include lack of quality healthcare, poor nutrition, a transient lifestyle, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, higher dropout rates, and overall lower levels of academic achievement (Hodgkinson, 2003; Lawson, 2015; Rumberger, 2013; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). As stated in a report from The National Center for Children in Poverty, poverty impedes upward mobility and thwarts one's ability to achieve the American dream (Fass, Dinan, & Aratani, 2009). Research tells us that poverty at birth is an indicator of adult poverty and the longer children are poor, the worse their adult outcomes (Fass et al., 2009; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010). Furthermore, regardless of innate ability, children living in poverty will not experience the same level of academic achievement as those born into more affluent households (Hodgkinson, 2003; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006).

The number of children living in poverty in this country remains at high levels. Table 1 depicts the recent 8-year poverty rate for children under the age of 18. The national numbers have not decreased (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). From 2000 to 2014, the percentage of children living in poverty has grown from 17% to 22%. In real numbers, that equates to an increase from 12,209,000 to 15,686,000 children living in poverty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016).

Table 1

Percentage of U.S. Children Living in Poverty (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016)

Year	2000	2002	2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014
Percent	17%	18%	18%	18%	18%	22%	23%	22%

While the negative facets of poverty are well documented and many initiatives have been promoted to reduce the effects, the percentage of children living in poverty simply has not decreased and, as such, the number of children not reaching their full potential remains alarmingly high (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015; Olivares, 2011).

When searching for solutions to end the cycle of poverty, we turn to education as a probable answer. Graduates entering the work force with a college degree are more likely to earn a higher income (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). As such, for a child of poverty, a college degree can be the facilitating factor that will move that child out of the cycle of poverty. This belief in the empowering potential of education is a foundational principle in our education system. In his 1848 report as the Secretary of Massachusetts State Board of Education, Horace Mann stated, "Education, then, beyond all other divides of human origin, is a great equalizer of conditions of men—the balance wheel of the social machinery" (para. 6).

Education is viewed as the equalizer (Payne, 2008), yet even with public education available to all children, poverty remains a cyclical trap. Children from higher socioeconomic strata are more apt to complete higher levels of education and subsequently realize higher incomes (American Psychological Association Task Force on Socioeconomic Status, 2007). In addition, children from lower socioeconomic strata complete lower levels of education and subsequently realize lower incomes (Brady &

Stockwell, 2014; Rumberger, 2013). The level of family income and a child's level of educational attainment have a strong correlation (Brady & Stockwell, 2014; DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015).

Below, Table 2 presents the percent of individuals living in poverty in Spartanburg County, South Carolina, and nationally (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). The poverty rate for Spartanburg County, while equivalent to the state percentage, is slightly higher than the national percentage.

Table 2

Percent of Individuals below Poverty, 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a)

	Spartanburg County	South Carolina	United States
All residents below poverty	18.3%	18.3%	15.6%
Children (under 18) below poverty	26.7%	26.9%	21.9%

Table 3 shows the percentage breakdown of the educational attainment for individuals living in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). In South Carolina, only 4.8% of those individuals living in poverty had earned a bachelor's degree, while 31.7% did not have a high school diploma. As education levels increase, the percentage of individuals living in poverty declines. From this, one could infer that the likelihood of being in poverty as an adult will decrease as one attains higher levels of education. Spartanburg County and South Carolina percentages are consistent with national percentages; the threat of poverty decreases as one attains higher levels of education. As such, one is led to conclude that poverty can be "both predictor of low educational attainment and an outcome of low educational attainment" (Brady & Stockwell, 2014, p. 25).

Table 3

Percent of Individuals in Poverty by Educational Attainment (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a)

	Spartanburg County	South Carolina	United States
Less than high school graduate	31.7%	31.4%	27.6%
High school graduate or equivalent	16.6%	16.4%	14.2%
Some college, associate's degree	9.3%	11.3%	10.5%
Bachelor's degree or higher	4.8%	4.3%	4.5%

When looking at a child's earning potential, high school graduation is used as a threshold. In order to attend college, a student must first graduate from high school. College graduates have a higher earning potential and are more employable (Brady & Stockwell, 2014; Rumberger, 2013). The national median income for an individual who has a bachelor's degree is $50,515. The median income for an individual who does not complete high school is $19,954 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). The graph in Figure 1 illustrates the clear progression of income as students further their education (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). In South Carolina, the median yearly earnings for a student who does not finish high school is $19,575. This amount is 75.3% of what a high school graduate would earn and 43.6% of a college graduate's income. The difference between not graduating from high school and earning a bachelor's degree is $25,313 a year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). Totaled over a 10-year time frame, this difference equates to $253,130 in additional earnings. Taking that 1-year difference over a 30-year time frame would equate to $759,390 in additional income. Clearly, higher levels of education translate into higher earnings and produce a sizable impact on an individual's earning

potential during a lifetime.

Median Annual Earnings by Educational Attainment
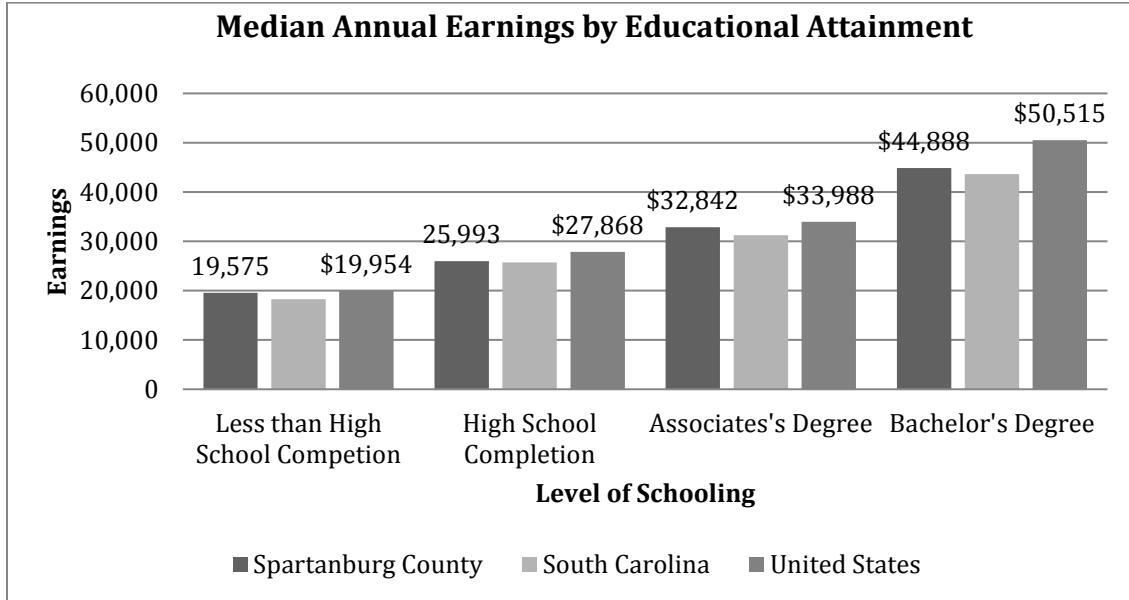
Figure 1. Annual Earnings by Educational Attainment for Ages 25-34 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

With national childhood poverty levels hovering at 22%, the importance of combatting the correlation of poverty and low achievement remains a national concern (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2014, 2015; Walsh et al., 2014). Strategies targeting the correlation of poverty and low achievement include school and classroom interventions. Classroom interventions include teaching with a consideration of student learning styles (Olivares, 2011) and integration of arts and movement into instruction of core subjects (Gorski, 2013). Classroom interventions, coupled with a school-wide culture of high expectations for all students regardless of economic status, help lift the achievement levels for low-income students (Gorski, 2013).

Although classroom instruction directly impacts student learning, studies indicate that student achievement is still most strongly correlated with socioeconomic status (SES; (Walsh et al., 2014). Thus, in addition to in-school, supplementary programs,

interventions for low SES students often include moving beyond or outside the regular classroom boundaries. Support systems created to address nonacademic concerns can ultimately prove to positively influence achievement (Gorski, 2013; Walsh et al., 2014). Those supports include school-based behavior management programs and social-emotional interventions. In a 10-year longitudinal study of City Connects, Walsh et al. (2014) found that providing a continuum of nonacademic services increased student achievement. City Connects is an intervention program developed to address nonacademic barriers that impede the academic success of students living in poverty (Walsh et al., 2014). Individualized student plans are developed to address academic, social/emotional, health, and family concerns (Walsh et al., 2014). Based on the plan, students and families are connected with the appropriate school- or community-based services or enrichments (Walsh et al., 2014). Services include afterschool and summer programs, health and wellness classes, academic support, social skills interventions, family counseling, and adult mentoring (Walsh et al., 2014). The study of 3,423 elementary students in 13 Boston area elementary schools found that City Connects' students had higher report card scores and higher language arts and mathematical standardized test scores than students without the interventions (Walsh et al., 2014). When contextual factors are addressed, academic achievement increases (Walsh et al., 2014).

Increasing school connectedness is another strategy employed to increase academic achievement. Students connected to their schools have lower truancy rates, stay in school longer, and have higher grades and test scores (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). Rudasill, Niehaus, Crockett, and Rakes (2014) found that increasing school connectedness for

students of poverty reduced the occurrence of risky behavior and as a result improved school motivation. A positive school environment, positive peer relationships, and strong adult support reinforce student school connectedness. School connectedness is strengthened when students believe the adults and peers in their school take an interest in both their learning and them as people (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

Mentoring has become a popular intervention strategy whose purpose includes improving student educational outcomes (Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2013; Cavell, Elledge, Malcolm, Faith, & Hughes, 2009; DuBois & Neville, 1997). Mentoring can improve educational outcomes by influencing student perceptions and attitudes toward self and school (Bayer et al., 2013). Mentoring can be a school- or community-based intervention. It can also be a combination of the two. Regardless of where it is based, the positive influence on educational outcomes creates a larger window of opportunity for a child to move out of poverty (Cavell et al., 2009).

As more students and adults become involved in mentoring programs, it is important to examine the effectiveness of the intervention, yet there is a lack of research related to program outcomes (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001). Instead, research in this area has focused on the process of mentoring (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001). The lack of research on mentoring effectiveness and outcomes can be attributed, in part, to the added expense of evaluating a program (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001). Mentoring itself does not require a large financial output and is an intervention employed when financial resources are scarce; however, the process of evaluating requires time and financial resources that program administrators would prefer to apply toward services and resources (Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001). In addition to

lack of financial resources, Thompson and Kelly-Vance (2001) stated that program outcomes are difficult to quantify. While mentoring has become a widely accepted practice and rapidly growing intervention, the impact of mentoring relationships has not been widely examined (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001).

As stated above, national and local mentoring programs have grown as a means to assist students from low SES backgrounds. Similar to the national statistics on poverty, Spartanburg County has a high student poverty rate, with 26.7% of its children under the age of 18 living below the federal poverty level (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2015). The number of children living below the poverty level has increased annually since 2007 (Brady, 2015; Brady & Stockwell, 2014). Figure 2 shows the 5-year poverty rate trend for children under the age of 18. The percentage has grown each successive year, both nationally and in Spartanburg County (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a).
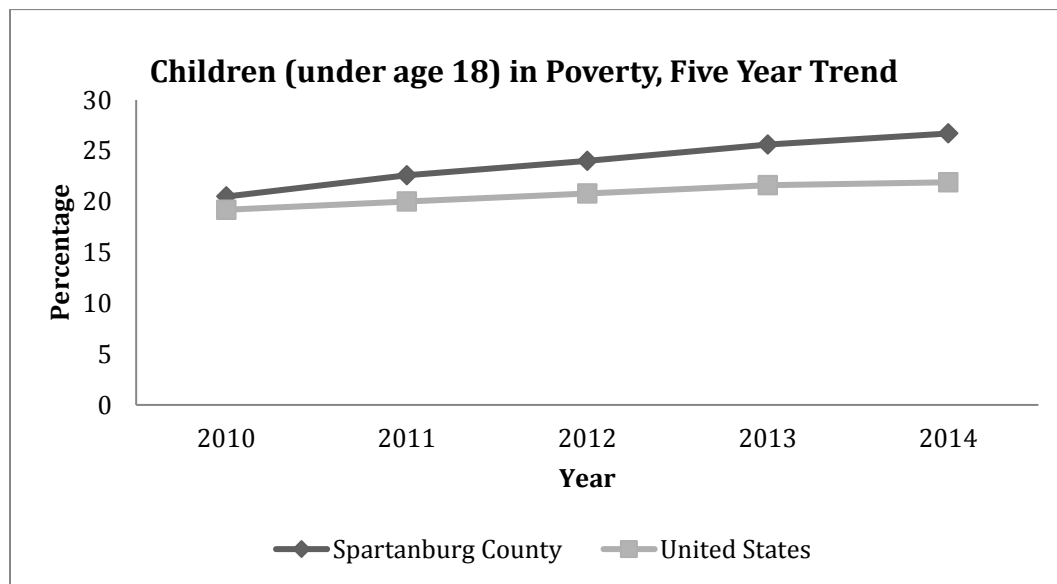

Figure 2. Children under Age 18 in Poverty, 5-Year Trend (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a).

For the majority of children raised in poverty, their parents were also raised in poverty, thus highlighting the difficulty of breaking out of the cycle of generational

poverty (Brady & Stockwell, 2014). In 2001, 20,000 children attended first grade in Spartanburg County. Twelve years later, approximately 18,000 students graduated from the county's seven public high schools. With the high school graduation rate for economically disadvantaged students being 67%, many students are not reaching their academic potential (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014). The dropout rate is a national concern and a concern in Spartanburg County as well. Logically, students are not utilizing education as an equalizing force if they are not graduating from high school.

The Spartanburg County Citizen Scholars Program is a privately funded community initiative developed in response to the need to increase the educational levels of students growing up in low SES households. Through a combination of one-on-one mentoring and developmental programs, Citizen Scholars strives to guide economically disadvantaged students through the middle and high school years and, ultimately, to college enrollment and graduation. Even though Citizen Scholars includes enrichment and developmental instruction, it is the mentoring component that was the focus of the program's development. As such, this study sought to explore the impact of the program's mentoring relationships.

An Overview of the Mentoring Program

Qualitative research requires that the researcher provide details regarding the setting and context of the study (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, in order to provide a broader understanding of the Citizen Scholars Program, a description of the program with its goals has been included in Chapter 1.

The Citizen Scholars Program is a privately funded, community-based scholarship and mentoring program developed to assist at-risk students who, without the assistance of this program, would likely not attend college and possibly not finish high school (Citizen

Scholars Program, n.d.). The Spartanburg County Citizen Scholars Program is located in the upstate region of South Carolina. In 2015, the county population was approximately 297,000, with 24% of the population under the age of 18 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015b). The median household income for the years 2010-2014 was $43,555, while the national average for the same period of time was $53,482 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015b). The county has seven school districts that serve its students from Grades K-4 through 12. There are seven colleges and universities in Spartanburg County ("Spartanburg County, South Carolina: Official website," 2016).

As stated in the Citizen Scholars: Be a Mentor! (Spartanburg County Foundation, 2013) brochure, the program mission is "To provide disadvantaged youth, through mentoring and program support, with the life skills, knowledge and character development needed to obtain college scholarships, complete college, and become contributing citizens" (p. 4). The program was established in 1996 to assist academically promising students who have financial need with postsecondary education expenses. Students are selected at the end of their fifth-grade year. Participating students are considered active members of the program until graduation from college. Students participate in developmental program activities throughout their middle and high school years. During this time, mentors make contact with their scholar on a weekly basis and meet in person at least once a month. There is no program requirement for meeting with the mentors once the scholars have graduated from high school, but mentoring relationships often continue into and beyond the college years. Upon graduation, students are eligible for a $10,500 scholarship to be applied toward their college education. The scholarship is distributed on a semester basis, with $2,625 distributed annually during the 4 years of college. During college, students check in with the

program director and/or assistance director at least twice a year. As a part of the bi-yearly review, the student's academic progress, challenges, and successes are reviewed.

History of the program. The Citizen Scholars Program was started under the auspices of the Spartanburg County Foundation with eight students who were beginning their first year in junior high school. The selection of the scholars took place during the summer after their sixth-grade year. Four of the eight scholars were from Spartanburg School District 7, and four of the scholars were from Spartanburg School District 6. The next year, there were nine scholars with four being from Spartanburg District 6 and five from Spartanburg District 7. Fall of 1998 had nine new scholars entering the program. Mentors for the first three cohort groups were recruited from local churches.

Each student was matched with a mentor, with one mentor who also served as a class coordinator. Scholars were selected each subsequent year with the exception of 2000, when the program went through a restructuring plan. In 2000, a director was employed to manage the program and a program advisory board was created. Advisory board members participated in subcommittee work that included reviewing existing standards and scholar participation agreements as well as outlining and establishing guidelines and standards for future scholars. During this development phase, an expansion of the program was made to include all seven school districts in Spartanburg County.

Since 2001, the selection of scholars has followed a rotation between the seven school districts. Each spring, a new cohort of scholars is selected as the district's previous cohort finishes twelfth grade. After the middle school model was adopted by school districts, the program began selecting students at the end of their fifth-grade year. As such, the program moved from 6 years of active scholar participation to 7 years of

active participation.

The Spartanburg County Foundation and the County Foundation Board oversee the operations of the Citizen Scholars Program. The Citizen Scholars Executive Director reports to the Spartanburg County Foundation Board. Class coordinators work with the executive director and with their district's scholars and mentors. The coordinators are the liaisons between the program director and each district's mentors and scholars. Mentors receive between 2 and 4 hours of training upon entering the program.

Scholar selection process. Nomination of potential scholars begins at the school level. Elementary school teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators submit a written nomination for those fifth-grade students they consider to be potential candidates for the program. Students who are nominated must have at least a "B" average in math, language arts, social studies, and science. As a minimum, they must have scored in the 65th percentile on achievement tests in math and language arts. Candidates must have good attendance at school and show a strong desire to attend college. Students must prove financial need through Medicaid or have a family income at the poverty level. Students selected by their schools fill out an application and are interviewed by a selection committee. The selection committee narrows the pool to a maximum of 14 students.

Expectations and learning experiences. After being selected as a Citizen Scholar, a student remains in the program until he/she graduates from college, as long as the student continues to meet the required criteria of the program. During middle school and high school, the criteria include maintaining a 3.0 grade point average in the core courses of math, language arts, science, and social studies. The scholar must participate in the enrichment programs and attend classes that teach life skills and help prepare the

scholar for college success. Scholars also complete a minimum of 15 hours of community service a year. After being selected for the program, the scholar is matched with a mentor. During the duration of the program, the scholars and mentors communicate weekly and meet at least once a month.

Upon selection into the program, parents or guardians guarantee their child's participation in Citizen Scholars Program activities and ensure that school attendance will meet school requirements. They also give the program and mentor full access to the scholar's grades.

Connection with schools. A strong connection between the Citizen Scholars Program and the students' schools is paramount if the program is to reach its intended goal of enhanced student achievement. As stated in The Citizen Scholars notebook, "The schools are a vital link if students are to be successful." Each district designates an individual to serve as the contact for the mentors, Citizen Scholars staff, parents/guardians, and the teachers in the district. This person is also the district liaison during the scholar selection process for parents, teachers, and students. The contact person acts as an advocate for the scholars.

To summarize, the Citizen Scholars Program was developed to be a long-term mentoring program. Its purpose is to support and guide a select group of high ability, low SES students whose parents did not attend college. Students enter the program in the beginning of their sixth-grade year and are considered active through high school graduation, college acceptance, and college graduation. During college, the students remain in contact with the program director and assistant director. Although not required, the mentoring relationship often continues through college.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to explore how the students, the mentees, perceive their mentoring relationships and the impact of those relationships on their self-efficacy and academic achievement. Students from low SES backgrounds do not reach the same levels of academic achievement as students from more affluent backgrounds. Research confirms that higher levels of income correlate with higher levels of schooling (Hodgkinson, 2003; Rumberger, 2013; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). As such, the likelihood that those students will remain in the cycle of generational poverty is great. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013), in 2013, only 9.2% of the families receiving government assistance had a member in the family with a bachelor's degree or higher. Therefore, the majority of students living at or below the threshold of poverty did not have a parent who went to college (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Students whose parents did not attend college have lower educational expectations and are less likely to enroll in a postsecondary program than their peers (Choy, 2001). Furthermore, even if students do attend college, they are less likely to have taken the rigorous coursework necessary for college success (Choy, 2001). Obtaining a college degree can lead to a job with a higher income which, in turn, can provide the boost that would enable a child to move out of poverty (Hodgkinson, 2003; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). Without a parent who has maneuvered the college path, a student is in a disadvantaged situation (Choy, 2001). An adult mentor can assist with this process. A mentor can help guide at-risk students toward positive educational and life outcomes (Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Mentoring is an intervention strategy that has, in recent years, become a popular intervention (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). In order to capitalize on the full potential of mentoring relationships,

further research must be conducted.

Simply stated, while the goals and objectives of mentoring relationships may vary, they seek to guide a young person toward a purposeful and positive life experience (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014; DuBois & Karcher, 2005a). A successful mentoring relationship can profoundly impact the life course of a child. MENTOR, The National Mentoring Partnership, estimates that currently there are 4.5 million at-risk youth involved in structured mentoring relationships (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Twenty years ago, that number was 300,000 (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). With the rapid growth of mentoring relationships and the large number of children impacted by these relationships, it is imperative to closely examine the mentoring phenomenon. Further, due to a lack of literature exploring this phenomenon from the mentees' perspective (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014), additional research is needed. As it is the students who are being impacted, their voices must also be considered.

Adults participating in mentoring programs attempt to address this problem by providing academic and emotional support and guidance in the hope that students will develop a sense of empowerment, achieve academic success, and ultimately move toward positive life outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

This purpose of this study was to investigate how students reflected upon their mentoring relationship and to explore their understanding of its influence on their academic achievement and self-efficacy. Using in-depth interviews, the mentoring experiences for the students who made up the class of the 2016 Citizen Scholars college graduation cohort were examined. As such, this study provided insight into the mentoring relationships for the students involved in the Citizen Scholars Program. This

phenomenological study examined, from the students' perspectives, how each individual student experienced and interpreted their Citizen Scholars mentoring experience. Additionally, it explored how this experience influenced each student's perception of his or her academic achievement and academic self-efficacy.

Research Questions

The research questions that guided this case study were

1. What are the themes that emerge from the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience?

2. What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' academic achievement?

3. What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' self-efficacy?

Significance of the Study

Mentoring has become a widely used academic intervention strategy. While the ease of implementation and recognition of mentoring benefits are often expounded, the actual outcomes derived from the mentoring relationships have not been as clearly studied (Cavell et al., 2009; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001). In order to explore the impact of mentoring relationships, an understanding of the mentoring phenomenon from the mentee's perspective must be established (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). This study is significant because it explored the mentoring relationship from the mentee perspective using a phenomenological methodology, specifically interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA).

This study is significant to the stakeholders involved with the Citizen Scholars Program. The Citizen Scholars Program is 25-years old, and this will be the first in-depth

examination of the scholars' mentoring experiences. Furthermore, for the larger mentoring community, this study will provide insight into the mentee perspective of the mentoring experience and the impact of the mentoring experience on self-efficacy and academic achievement.

Conceptual Base

In order to discover and frame the themes associated with the mentoring experience for the students involved in a community-based mentoring program, this study utilized two theoretical frameworks. The first theoretical framework was based on Jean Rhodes's work on mentoring relationships and outcomes. The second framework was based on Albert Bandura's work with cognitive learning and self-efficacy.

Rhodes's mentoring theory draws upon the theory and research of child, adolescent, and relationship growth and development (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Belle, & Noam, 2006). Rhodes suggested that mentoring relationships could positively impact youth through three interrelated domains: (1) social and emotional well-being, (2) development of cognitive skills, and (3) identity development through modeling and advocating. Each of the three mentoring outcomes is based on the research within its domain (Rhodes, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006).

The Rhodes model identifies additional factors that impact the mentoring experience and the mentoring outcomes for the mentee (Rhodes et al., 2006). Those factors include the length of the mentoring relationship, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the quality of the mentee's relationships outside of the mentoring relationship. Rhodes (2005) contended that these additional factors influence the three domains and create different levels of success for the mentoring relationship.

In addition to Rhodes's mentoring model, this study was grounded in Albert

Bandura's work on cognitive learning. Bandura's social learning theory and his later work on social cognitive theory address cognitive and behavioral functioning. In his work, Bandura postulated that human functioning was a combined result of a reciprocal interplay of behaviors; personal influences that include cognitive, affect, and biological factors; and environmental influences. Through it, individuals actively interact with their environment and seek understanding of their circumstances (Hackett & Lent, 2008; Pajarus, 2002).

Later, Bandura introduced another determinant for successful social learning: the component of self-efficacy, one's belief in his or her own ability to succeed at a given task or behavior (Hackett & Lent, 2008). One's self-efficacy directs whether a task or behavior will be untaken. It impacts the amount of effort put forth to achieve or complete the task or behavior (Hackett & Lent, 2008; Piirto, 2007). Furthermore, as one experiences task success, personal efficacy will increase and lead one to undertake more challenging tasks. As such, self-efficacy can be a predictor of future behavior (Hackett & Lent, 2008).

When describing self-efficacy theory, Bandura noted the difference in self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Self-efficacy is one's belief in one's ability to successfully complete a task or behavior (Hackett & Lent, 2008). An outcome expectation is the anticipated belief of what will come about as a result of successful completion of the task or behavior (Bandura, 1994; Hackett & Lent, 2008). Goal setting is also identified as a component of behavioral learning and regulation. Goals help keep one focused on a task even when the outcome benefits are long range or difficult to achieve (Hackett & Lent, 2008). Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting all work toward shaping behavioral functioning and motivation. Motivation and behavior

impact goal realization (Hackett & Lent, 2008).

A person with high self-efficacy believes in his or her ability to accomplish a task using his or her own skills (Bandura, 1977, 1994; Hackett & Lent, 2008). Motivation and academic performance are both influenced by self-efficacy (Lunenburg, 2011). Bandura identified four factors that help develop individual self-esteem. The influencing factors are mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal (Bandura, 1994; Hackett & Lent, 2008). This study examined the impact of mentoring relationships through the lens of Bandura's and Rhodes's theories. A more detailed discussion of these two theories is included in the literature review.

Research Design

This study used a qualitative approach in its research design. Qualitative research seeks to describe a phenomenon through a verbally descriptive, in-depth analysis (Smith, 2003). The research questions addressed in this study seek to explore the experience of mentoring from the mentee's perspective. As such, a phenomenological research method was used. Specifically, this study employed IPA. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to examine how individuals make meaning of a lived experience or phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2003). The use of this particular qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to be sensitive to each participant's experience of the mentoring phenomenon that was a central component of the Citizen Scholars Program.

The IPA methodology includes a two-fold process of interpretation (Smith, 2003). The researcher explored the participant trying to make sense of a phenomenon while being aware of the researcher's own interpretation of the participant trying to make sense of the phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2003). The phenomenon explored in this study was the lived experience of the mentoring relationship for four

Citizen Scholars mentees.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Spartanburg County has seven school districts, and each district has a single high school. A delimitation of this study was that although there are seven school districts involved in the program, there was only one school district and its high school represented in this study. Table 4 below provides a visual representation of the district selection rotation.

Table 4

District Scholar Selection and Graduation Timeline

	Spring Selection	First School Year in Program	High School Graduation	Projected College Graduation
District A	2008	2008-2009	2014-2015	2018-2019
District B	2007	2007-2008	2013-2014	2017-2018
District C	2006	2006-2007	2012-2013	2016-2017
District D*	2005	2005-2006	2011-2012	2015-2016
District E	2004	2004-2005	2010-2011	2014-2015
District F	2003	2003-2004	2009-2010	2013-2014
District G	2002	2002-2003	2008-2009	2012-2013
District A	2001	2001-2002	2007-2008	2011-2012

Note. * Study participants.

Districts select scholars on a 7-year rotation. Due to the rotating scholar selection process, each year's new cohort represents only one district, and each year only one district has a Citizen Scholars graduation class. Therefore, when conducting an in-depth focus on a single graduating class, the data collection was from only one district.

A second delimitation was that this study represented the cohort group from a

single year. While this was only a snapshot of the total number of scholars in the

program, it did provide a group of students who have experienced the same activities

within the Citizen Scholars Program. Those experiences can vary between cohort groups.

As each separate cohort experienced the same programming activities, the researcher

could more clearly focus on differences in the mentoring experiences.

A third delimitation of the study was the amount of time that had lapsed since

high school graduation. Middle and high school perceptions will likely have changed and

evolved during the 4 years between the students' high school and college graduations.

While a detailed recollection of mentoring activities was not as prominent in the mentees'

mind, a more mature insight and understanding of the impact of the mentoring experience

developed. As such, this added element of time allowed a more enduring interpretation

of the mentoring experience to surface.

A limitation of this study was the variance between the mentors themselves. The

program relies on volunteer mentors and some prove to be more dedicated to their

mentees. The differences in the quality of the mentors surfaced during the interview

process with the mentees. The differences were included in the discussion of the study's

results. A second limitation was that the researcher is a mentor and class coordinator in

the Citizen Scholars Program. While the researcher did not mentor any of the students

involved in the current study, the researcher does have a limited number of shared

experiences with the mentees in the study. In addition to being a mentor, the researcher

is an educator with personal beliefs about what should come about as a result of the

mentor/mentee relationship. As part of the IPA bracketing process, the researcher is

required to identify and remain aware of personal biases (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin,

2009). Hence, as both an educator and mentor, the researcher acknowledges placing a

strong value on education as a means to achieving positive life outcomes and believes

mentoring is an opportunity to help students move toward those outcomes. Furthermore,

the researcher believes that strong relationships are key to inspiring growth. Together,

these beliefs create a sense of responsibility toward the protégé and a bias with the

researcher's mentor expectations.

Definition of Key Terms

    Mentor. A mentor is a "more experienced caring adult who seeks to develop the

character and competence of a younger person by offering knowledge, insight, and

wisdom" (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990, p. 32).

    Mentoring.

    A relationship between an older, more experienced adult and an unrelated,

    younger protégé – a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance,

    instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and

    character of the protégé. Over the course of their time together the mentor and

    protégé often develop a special bond of mutual commitment, respect,

    identification, and loyalty which facilitates the youth's transition into adulthood.

    (Granatir, 2003, p. 3)

Youth mentoring is an ongoing, consistent, structured relationship for a youth with a

trusted individual aimed at developing a positive impact on the mentee (Rhodes,

Grossman, & Roffman, 2002).

    High achievement. High achievement is defined as a level of performance that is

higher than one would expect for students of the same age, grade, or experience.

Specifically, proficiency is demonstrated by successfully mastering content

(instructional) material beyond what is considered to be grade-level curriculum (Burney

& Beilke, 2008).

High potential. Students identified as high potential show characteristics of academic potential on the basis of academic success when exposed to challenging curriculum (Thomlinson & Jarvis, 2014).

First-generation students. Students "whose parents have not attended college and/or have not earned a college degree" (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006, p. 13).

SES status. SES status is commonly conceptualized as an individual's or a group's relative standing with regard to level of education, income, occupation, and access to resources (American Psychological Association Task Force on Socioeconomic Status, 2007).

Poverty. For 2015, the federal poverty threshold was $24,036 for a family of four with two children (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Participation in the Free and Reduced Price Lunch program is often used as a proxy indicator of poverty (Snyder & Musu-Gillette, 2015) and served as the criterion for the purposes of this study.

Perceived self-efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy is a person's belief in their capability to produce a level of performance that exercises influence over events that affect their life. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves, and behave (Bandura, 1997, 2006). It is one's belief in their own ability to succeed at a given task or behavior (Hackett & Lent, 2008).

At-risk. At-risk youth is used to describe youth who are in need of additional support in order for them to have realistic chances of success in both academic and social settings (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002). An economically disadvantaged background is considered an at-risk factor (Liang, Spencer, West, & Rappaport, 2013; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001).

Organization of the Study

   This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the introduction of the study which provides a broad picture of the larger societal issue. The first chapter also identifies the specific problem addressed in this study, the research questions, the significance and theory behind the study, and the limitations of the study. Chapter 1 gives the background of the program involved in the study and provides the definitions of the key terms used in this study.

   After a brief introduction, Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature associated with this study. The major areas of discussion included in Chapter 2 are the theories guiding this study, poverty, academic achievement, and the mentoring phenomenon. In order to provide a clear and thorough understanding of the literature, the major areas included in the study are divided into section subgroups.

   Chapter 3 presents an overview of IPA and the reasoning behind choosing a qualitative phenomenological study. Chapter 3 also explains the research procedures and methods used for data collection and data analysis as well as an overview of study participants.

   Chapter 4 reports the results of the study with an overview of the major themes identified in the study. The study concludes with the fifth chapter that presents the conclusion and study recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

      The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth investigation of the lived experiences of four low-income, high-ability students involved in a community-based mentoring program. The theoretical frameworks that guided this study were Rhodes's mentoring theory and Bandura's work with self-efficacy. As such, this chapter includes a review of the literature on Rhodes's mentoring theory, Bandura's social cognitive theory, the impact of poverty on academic achievement, contextual factors that impact a youth's academic achievement, student dispositions that influence their academic achievement, and the process and components found in mentoring relationships.

Rhodes's Mentoring Theory

      Rhodes's model theorized that mentoring relationships promote positive youth outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005b) through enhancement of social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development (Rhodes, 2005; Spencer, 2012). Figure 3 below provides a visual illustration of Rhodes's model of youth mentoring (Rhodes, 2005). According to the model, close mentoring relationships that address social-emotional development, identity development, and cognitive development will have the strongest positive impact on youth outcomes (Rhodes, 2005; Spencer, 2012). Mutuality, trust, and empathy are attributes that lend themselves to creating a close relationship between a mentor and mentee (Rhodes, 2005). Using survey data from more than 1,100 mentors in 98 mentoring programs, Herrera, Sipe, and McClanahan (2000) concluded that mentor/mentee bond development was a factor that determined the amount of impact the relationship held for the mentee. Results indicated that engaging in social activities and time spent getting to know the mentee helped nurture relationship development (Herrera

et al., 2000). While having a close relationship as a critical ingredient for positive

mentoring outcomes, the pathways for achieving a close relationship need to be more

clearly defined (Rhodes, 2005).
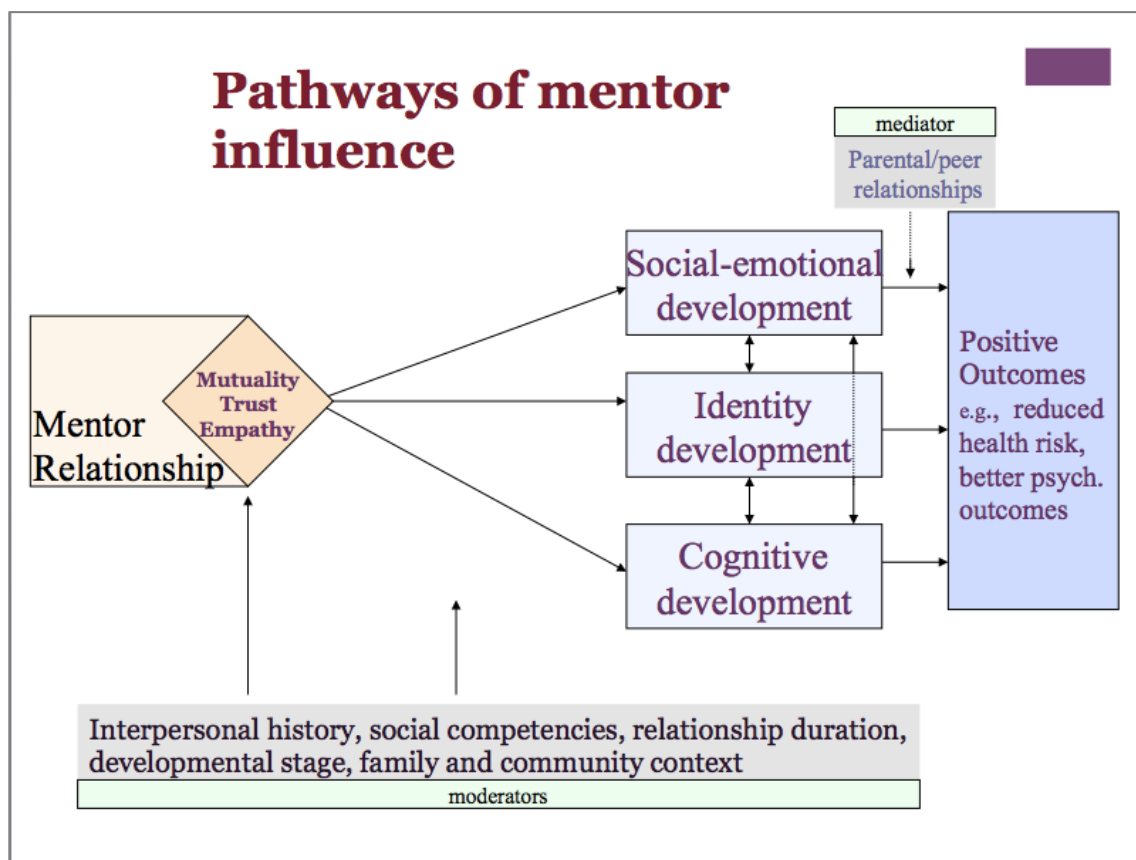
Figure 3. Pathways of Mentor Influence (Rhodes, 2005).

The mentoring experience positively impacts a mentee's social and emotional

well-being in three ways (Rhodes et al., 2006). Mentoring activities often involve social

and recreational experiences whose purpose is to strengthen the mentor-mentee

friendship through pleasurable leisure activities, thus strengthening the *companionship*

factor of the relationship (Rhodes et al., 2006). Mentoring activities can also provide

social experiences that develop the youth's perception of positive adult relationships and,

in turn, improve other adult relationships in the mentee's life (Rhodes et al., 2006).

Third, a positive mentoring experience can help mentees develop their ability to regulate emotions (Rhodes et al., 2006). This "emotional coaching" provides strategies to help mentored youth become more aware of their own emotions and the emotions of those around them (Rhodes, 2005, p. 33).

A second outcome pathway identified in Rhodes's model is cognitive development (Rhodes, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). In providing new experiences and perspectives, a mentor is broadening the mentee's horizons (Rhodes et al., 2006). Discussions and activities may provide opportunity for intellectual growth. In addition, the mentor may advocate for, support, and encourage the mentee's academic success (Rhodes et al., 2006).

Lastly, Rhodes's theory recognizes identity development as a pathway leading to positive outcomes (Rhodes, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). A mentor can be a positive role model and provide a vision of a possible future self for the mentee (Rhodes et al., 2006). A mentor may provide opportunities and experiences that expose a student to educational paths, professions, and careers that the student may not have considered or thought attainable, thus widening the youth's vision of his or her future (Rhodes et al., 2006).

The foundation of Rhodes's model is based on a mutually positive relationship between the mentor and mentee (Spencer, 2012). Rhodes (2005) identified mutual trust and empathy as necessary components in a positive mentoring relationship (Spencer, 2012), noting that not all encounters need to be profound but rather build a significant series of connections over time. The "mundane moments" where vulnerability can emerge create a more enduring bond (Rhodes, 2005, p. 32).

Bandura, Social Cognitive Theory, and Self-Efficacy

In the work conducted by Bandura and Walters (1963), a foundational premise

was that modeling and self-regulatory processes were instrumental in creating behavioral change. The word "social" was used in the context of observational learning, that is, seeing a modeled behavior, trait, or outcome (Bandura, 1994; Hackett & Lent, 2008). In addition to learning through observation, Bandura's early work emphasized cognitive control and reciprocal relationships with behavioral elements such as self-regulatory processes (Hackett & Lent, 2008).

Bandura's social learning theory and later his social cognitive theory addressed cognitive and behavioral functioning (Hackett & Lent, 2008). In his work, Bandura (1977) postulated that human functioning was a combined result of a reciprocal interplay of behaviors; personal influences that include cognitive, affect, and biological factors; and environmental influences (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Hackett & Lent, 2008). This triadic relationship involves an interrelated exchange with each of the parts influencing the other. Through it, individuals actively interacted with their environment and sought understanding of their circumstances (Bandura, 1977; Hackett & Lent, 2008; Pajarus, 2002).

As Bandura's work progressed, another key determinant for successful social learning was introduced. A critical component to learning is self-efficacy or one's belief in his or her own ability to succeed at a given task or behavior (Bandura, 1977; Hackett & Lent, 2008). Bandura et al. (1996) postulated that without the belief that personal efforts can produce a desired outcome, one has little incentive or motivation to act. Self-efficacy directs whether a task or behavior will be untaken and impacts the amount of effort put forth to achieve or complete the task or behavior (Bandura, 1994, 1997; Bandura et al., 1996). A student's belief in his or her ability to master higher levels of academics influences motivation, interest, and achievement (Bandura et al., 1996). The presence

and level of self-efficacy impacts goal setting, the strength of goal commitment,

motivation and perseverance, resilience, and problem solving ability (Bandura, 1994;

Bandura et al., 1996).

An individual's self-efficacy is not a personality trait but is task specific (Hackett

& Lent, 2008; Piirto, 2007). It is impacted by the level of difficulty of the task, the

strength of personal efficacy toward the task, and the generality of the efficacy (Hackett

& Lent, 2008). If the task efficacy is more general in nature, the personal efficacy lends

itself to more easily influence other areas of behavior and learning (Bandura, 1977).

Furthermore, as one experiences task success, personal efficacy will increase and lead

one to undertake more challenging tasks (Bandura, 1977, 1994). As such, self-efficacy

can be a predictor of future behavior (Hackett & Lent, 2008).

In his work with self-efficacy, Bandura (1994) identified sources that influence

efficacy development. Developmental sources include performance accomplishments,

vicarious learning or modeling, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal (Bandura,

1977; Hackett & Lent, 2008). Of the four areas, the strongest determinant was

performance accomplishments (Bandura, 1977, 1994; Hackett & Lent, 2008). As one

successfully completes a task or changes a behavior, there is a tangible sense of

accomplishment that increases self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1994).

Vicarious learning, also called modeling, influences personal efficacy but not to

the same degree as personal mastery (Bandura, 1977, 1994; Hackett & Lent, 2008). As

individuals see people similar to themselves achieve through their own efforts, self-

efficacy is strengthened (Bandura, 1994). Furthermore, people seek out models that have

the competencies they desire to achieve (Bandura, 1994). Effective models provide

experiences and situations that, while challenging, will bring about success; and effective

models avoid exposing the protégé to situations that are likely to cause failure (Bandura, 1994). Capable models transfer knowledge, skills, and strategies to the protégé (Bandura, 1994).

While not as significant as performance outcomes and vicarious experiences, physiological stimulation (emotional arousal) and verbal or social persuasion influence one's personal efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1994; Hackett & Lent, 2008). Verbal persuasion may persuade an individual to exert more effort and, as a result, achieve goals (Bandura, 1994). Social or verbal persuasion can also undermine perceived self-efficacy. When individuals are persuaded that they lack capabilities, motivation and resilience decrease (Bandura, 1994).

In psychology, self-efficacy is recognized as impacting human functioning through cognitive processes, motivational processes, affective processes, and selection processes (Bandura, 1994). Cognitive processes involve the assessment of personal abilities, the development of goals based on those capabilities, and the path formation of meeting goals (Bandura, 1994). High self-efficacy allows visualization of success and creation of mental guides to achieve success. Bandura (1994) stated, "A major function of thought is to enable people to predict events and to develop ways to control those that affect their lives. Such skills require effective cognitive processing of information that contains many ambiguities and uncertainties" (p. 74). A resilient sense of self-efficacy allows one to set and achieve challenging goals through application of creative, analytic, problem-solving skills, and perseverance through difficulties until goals are accomplished (Bandura, 1994).

Motivational processes were also identified as critical attributes impacted by self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Motivation is inherently a cognitive process involving an

assessment of outcomes and planning and executing a course of action in order to realize the outcomes (Bandura, 1994). Individuals with strong self-efficacy are less likely to lose motivation during difficult situations as they believe their effort ultimately determines success (Bandura, 1994).

Motivation is further influenced by an individual's belief in his or her ability to handle threatening conditions (Bandura, 1994). Bandura (1994) identified affective processes as an individual's belief in his or her coping capabilities during times of stress or difficult situations (Bandura, 1994). A strong sense of self-efficacy provides resilience and a sense of personal control that fortifies one's ability to persist through difficult situations (Bandura, 1994). Lastly, selection processes guide the life choices one makes in their selection of activities and environments. Individuals avoid activities they believe are beyond their capabilities and chose those they believe they can handle (Bandura, 1994). Career choices, educational choices, and social networks are made through a selection process guided by perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). These choices have a profound effect on the quality of one's life (Bandura, 1994).

One's belief in their ability to successfully complete a task impacts their expectation of what will come about as a result of successful task completion (Bandura, 1977). Bandura described this anticipated consequence of task completion as outcome expectation (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Figure 4 gives a visual representation of an individual's efficacy expectation and the expected outcome from performing the task.
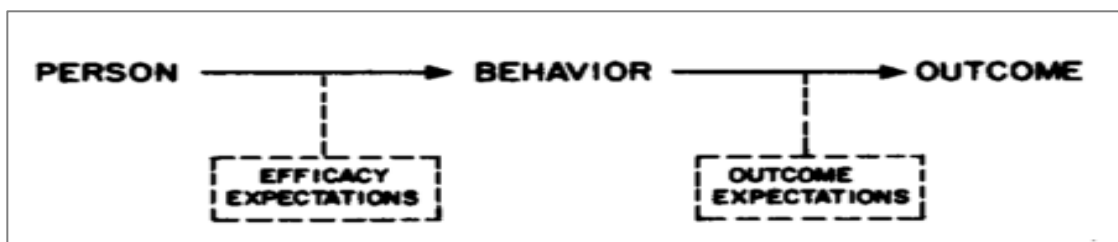
Figure 4. Representation of the Relationship of Efficacy Expectation and Outcome Expectation (Bandura, 1977, p. 193).

Last, goal setting is also identified as a component of behavioral learning and regulation (Hackett & Lent, 2008). Goals help keep one focused on a task, even when the outcome benefits are long range or difficult to achieve (Hackett & Lent, 2008). Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting all work toward shaping behavioral functioning and motivation (Bandura, 1994; Hackett & Lent, 2008).

A person with a strong sense of self-efficacy believes in his or her ability to accomplish a task using his or her own skills (Bandura, 1977; Hackett & Lent, 2008). Motivation, resilience, and academic performance are influenced by self-efficacy. Conversely, motivation, resilience, and academic performance can enhance self-efficacy (Lunenburg, 2011). Bandura (1994) identified performance accomplishments, vicarious learning, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal as factors that help develop self-esteem.

These theories provide the conduits in which to view the components that contribute to student success by framing the concept of mentoring, student motivation, academic achievement, and perceived self-efficacy (DuBois & Karcher, 2005b; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2005). Using these frameworks, one can view the attributes and supports required for student success.

Poverty can negatively impact a student's academic achievement, yet other factors can serve to move a child toward success. Both contextual elements and personal dispositions can hinder or assist a student as they move through school. In addition, the presence of a positive role model, a mentor, can prove to be a strong asset for a child's academic and life outcomes.

Poverty and Academic Achievement

In America today, high academic achievement in high school helps lead to a college education and a college degree which, in turn, can lead to higher lifetime earnings (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Students living in poverty simply do not experience the levels of academic achievement that their more affluent counterparts achieve (Abbott & Joireman, 2001; Burney & Beilke, 2008; Ladd, 2012; Ladd, Noguera, & Payzant, 2008). The relationship between poverty and achievement can be influenced by how long the family has been living in poverty, the level of family assets such as home ownership, and the family's poverty level when the child was very young (Rothstein, 2014).

More than 21% of our nation's children between the ages of 5 and 17 were living in poverty in 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a). This was a 4.3% increase from 2007 (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2014). Poverty impacts children's early learning experiences and their attitudes and motivations toward learning (Burney & Beilke, 2008). While poverty may not be a direct influence on early exposure to reading and a cognitively challenging environment, children from a low SES background are less likely to have experienced the same early learning opportunities as more affluent households (Baker, Scher, & Mackler, 1997). This lack of exposure to reading at a young age limits vocabulary and places them at a distinct disadvantage within their grade level peer group when they begin school (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Hodgkinson, 2003). Beginning school

behind in academic skill sets adds to a child's academic struggles and can ultimately hinder achievement in the upper grade levels (Ladd, 2012). When children living in poverty do not experience levels of academic achievement that correspond to their potential, their future educational and career opportunities are diminished (Ladd, 2012).

The majority of our country's public schools contain students living in poverty (Burney & Beilke, 2008). Much of government legislation attempts to improve the achievement levels of students living in poverty by focusing on the school environment and standardized testing results (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Ladd, 2012). In spite of strong school leadership and exemplary teachers, schools with a high percentage of its students living in adverse situations struggle to increase student learning as measured by standardized test results (Noguera, 2011). The strong influence of student SES backgrounds impedes academic growth in even the best of schools (Ladd, 2012). There is a need for a concerted effort to raise the achievement levels of at-risk students by addressing the limitations caused by poverty (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Ladd, 2012; Noguera, 2011). Decreasing the correlation between low achievement and poverty is a critical challenge for education's policymakers today (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012).

While there is much discussion on the need to close the economic achievement gap, little progress has been made (Ladd et al., 2008). In an extensive study of the correlation between family income and academic achievement over the last 50 years, Reardon (2013) found that the achievement gap between low and high SES households had grown significantly over the last 30 years. Additionally, while the racial achievement gap remains alarmingly high, it has seen some decrease since the 1960s (Reardon, 2013). The economic achievement gap has surpassed the racial achievement

gap in all academic outcomes (Reardon, 2013). The growth in the economic achievement gap was 40% larger from 1970 to 2001 than it was from 1950 to 1970 (Reardon, 2013). The educational disparity includes not only achievement as measured by standardized testing but also grades, high school completion, and college attendance and completion (Reardon, 2013). In addition to lower performances in testing comparisons, low-income, high-achieving students are less likely to attend college and significantly less likely to graduate from college (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012).

An analysis of multiple research studies by Putnam, Frederick, and Snellman (2012) found growing gaps in social and civic connectedness for youth from a lower SES. This connectedness included soft skills developmental activities such as sports and academic clubs and volunteer opportunities. Social and civic connectedness and soft skill activities enhance and can assist in positive life outcomes (Putnam et al., 2012). Children from lower income families are less likely to participate in activities that predict life success, including parental investment, social and civic engagement, and preparation for higher education (Putnam et al., 2012).

Contextual Factors that Influence Academic Achievement

While research has repeatedly documented that students from disadvantaged households do not perform at the same level as more economically advantaged classmates, eradicating or decreasing the strength of this correlation has proven to be a challenge (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Ladd, 2012; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012; Reardon, 2013). Even with a focused effort to eradicate this disparity, the gap between children living in poverty and high academic achievement has grown (Ladd, 2012; Reardon, 2013).

Parental influences. The literature continuously supports that the level of parental education and a child's level of academic achievement is strongly linked (Davis-Kean, 2005). Of the children living in poverty, 12% were born to teenage mothers who most likely did not finish high school (Hodgkinson, 2003). Mothers who do not finish high school are less likely to read to their children (Hodgkinson, 2003; Putnam et al., 2012). This lack of exposure to reading at a young age limits vocabulary and puts children behind when they begin school (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Hodgkinson, 2003). Children from low-income households are less likely to have been exposed to early literacy (Baker et al., 1997; Rothstein, 2008). Baker et al. (1997) found that 90% of children from middle income homes were read to by their parents on a daily basis, whereas only 52% of low-income parents read to their children daily. When parents read to their young children, it has a significant effect on the child's reading motivation and cognitive skills during their schooling years (Baker et al., 1997; Kalb & Van Ours, 2014). Positive literacy experiences in the home increase a child's motivation to read (Baker et al., 1997). Burney and Beilke (2008) stated that parents with a higher education read more to their children and have different conversations than parents with less education. A longitudinal study by Aikens and Barbarin (2008) found that home literacy environments contributed to differences in reading scores between low income and more affluent children when children entered kindergarten. Furthermore, the gap in scores grew as they progressed through school (Aikens & Barbarin, 2008). Children who experience a more cognitively challenging home environment are more intrinsically motivated and experience higher levels of achievement in school (Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 1998).

Parents who complete higher levels of education tend to value higher levels of

achievement for their child as well as being better equipped to create a home environment that supports learning and academic success (Davis-Kean, 2005). Conversely, a lower level of parental education is associated with lower student expectations and, ultimately, lower achievement levels for their child (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Davis-Kean, 2005). Davis-Kean's (2005) study of 868 students in households with two or more children found that a child's academic achievement was influenced by parent beliefs and expectations towards schooling. Parental beliefs and expectations toward schooling was influenced by the family economic status and level of education (Davis-Kean, 2005). Davis-Kean (2005) also found that higher levels of parent achievement could overcome the academic constraints associated with a low-income household. Limited parental education, particularly postsecondary education, coupled with a lack of financial resources, hinders even those students with high educational aspirations (Davis-Kean, 2005; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). While children may come to school with the same innate abilities, their parent's level of education influences how they begin their schooling and how far they advance in their schooling.

Enrichment experiences. In addition to lagging behind in reading experiences and vocabulary development, children from lower SES homes experience limited enrichment activities (Rothstein, 2008). Children living in poverty have not taken as many family trips, had visits to museums and zoos, had music or dance lessons, or participated in organized sports leagues (Rothstein, 2008). Enrichment experiences such as these help develop confidence and ambitions and broaden a child's knowledge base and background knowledge (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Miller & Gentry, 2010; Putnam et al., 2012; Rothstein, 2008). Children spend the majority of their time outside the classroom, and how that time is spent impacts school readiness and achievement (Ladd,

2012).

Students from low SES backgrounds have the ability to learn as rapidly as their more affluent peers during the school hours, but their lack of enriching life experiences diminishes learning potential. Out-of-school opportunities such as tutoring programs, music lessons, camps, and traveling, help position upper-class students for academic success (Ladd, 2012). Having the opportunity to participate in enrichment programs benefits students who have not had prior opportunities (Miller & Gentry, 2010). In a qualitative study of 113 students in Grades 1-6, Miller and Gentry (2010) examined student experiences and perceptions of their participation in a 12-week Saturday enrichment program. The Saturday classes included instruction in art, engineering, chess, writing, and web design. The researchers identified four major themes: opportunity for positive experiences, opportunity to learn new concepts, participation in interactive learning, and the experience of social support from instructors and peers (Miller & Gentry, 2010). Results from the study indicated that students enrolled in the program found a positive benefit that impacted their school connectedness (Miller & Gentry, 2010).

Quality of schooling and coursework. Even for students of high ability, the disparity between high-achieving, low-income students and high-achieving, upper-income students will grow over time (Wyner, Bridgeland, & Diiulio, 2007). More affluent neighborhoods have a stronger tax base and, as such, are able to offer more highly funded schools than lower income neighborhoods (Reardon & Bischoff, 2011). Furthermore, schools with a higher percentage of low SES students often do not provide the same level of rigorous coursework, so students may not be afforded the opportunity for higher level coursework (Ladd, 2012).

In their study of high-achieving, low-income students, Wyner et al. (2007) found that high ability, low SES students are repeatedly treated as underachievers who are brought up to an average level as opposed to their higher ability level. Lower SES students who do have access to rigorous coursework are often lacking the foundational skills needed for the more demanding coursework (Burney & Beilke, 2008). For those students who enroll in more challenging coursework, extra scaffolding and outside support is often necessary; advanced opportunities require advanced support (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Ladd, 2012; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). Additionally, parents of low SES students may be less likely to be involved in their child's school do to negative schooling experiences themselves, or they may not have the background knowledge needed to assist or guide their child through rigorous coursework (Burney & Beilke, 2008). While all parents want their children to succeed, parents of low SES students may have fewer supports to aid enhancement of their child's achievement (Burney & Beilke, 2008).

Peer relationships. Within some cultures, being a high-ability student is not always looked upon in a positive light (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). For some, it is an indication of abilities and a bright future. For others it can be a separating label with a negative stereotype not always accepted by the culture, race, or gender (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Madyun, 2011; Olszewski-Kubilius & Clarenbach, 2012). Students who fear their talents and abilities could lead to personal isolation may sabotage their academic success (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Fordham and Ogbu (1986) stated that such successes can be seen as a betrayal of one's culture. Educators must be aware of the social and emotional challenge that is sometimes associated with being labeled "smart" and must look for supports for those students who might be negatively affected by this

label. Olszewski-Kubilius and Clarenback (2012) recommended educating families about the benefits of challenging classwork and teaching students effective strategies to cope with negative responses from peers, group talks, role models, and mentors.

Having an awareness of and adhering to the implicit rules of a culture or peer group different from your own is often a required disposition for academic success (Bettie, 2002). In a qualitative study of upwardly mobile working-class girls, Bettie (2002) found that being aware of unspoken social norms and educational information proved to be an enhancing strategy for college acceptance. The girls in the study adhered to the norms of the students in their college prep class by following the unspoken rules of dress and taking the courses necessary to attend college (Bettie, 2002). Bettie stated,

> These girls' experiences of mobility are characterized by an early awareness of class distinctions, an awareness of having exceeded their parents' educational level, a related ambivalence about the meaning of mobility, an acute awareness of what kinds of occupations await them if they do not finish school, and their refusal to interpret mobility as assimilation to whiteness. (p. 416)

The correlation between low income and low achievement is linked to multiple factors including parental level of education, environments lacking rich language experiences, lack of enrichment opportunities, and negative peer pressure. Additionally, poor health, low birth weight, limited access to quality preschool education, and a transient life that moves a child from school to school influences achievement (Hodgkinson, 2003; Ladd, 2012; Rothstein, 2008). The barriers that poverty poses to achievement are many and highly complex; the impact of poverty is both profound and well documented. With the combination of hurdles and obstacles that students living in poverty must transcend, assistance and interventions are paramount in order for them to

achieve to their potential.

Student Dispositions that Influence Academic Achievement

Currently in the United States, the achievement gap is addressed by focusing on what can be most easily controlled, the school system (Ladd, 2012). Much of the attention is focused on low-performing schools. Often, those schools are found in neighborhoods with high densities of poverty (Wyner et al., 2007). Children from high poverty attend local neighborhood schools that are not of the same caliber as those found in more affluent neighborhoods, and standardized test scores are thus adversely effected (Wyner et al., 2007). While reform efforts have been implemented to improve school performance and student achievement, the connection between low income and low achievement persists (Ladd, 2012). Ladd (2012) contended that public policy has sought to increase the achievement levels of low SES students by zeroing in on school improvements and teacher evaluations. While some states have put forth money and effort in this area, the issue of poverty, the source of the discrepancy, has not been addressed. Knowing that poverty cannot be eradicated, the puzzle remains. How does one address poverty and achievement?

What are the positive dispositions that guide students from poverty toward high achievement? A review of the literature brought in terms such as "motivation" (Hollifield-Hoyle & Hammons, 2015), "resilience" (Bryan, 2005; Nakkula & Pineda, 2005), "problem solvers" (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011), and "self-efficacy" (Bandura et al., 1996). These terms were often connected with "opportunity," "enrichment," and "supports" (Hollifield-Hoyle & Hammons, 2015). The broad and connected nature of these factors points to the complexity of overcoming the persistence of poverty.

While serious obstacles prevent the quick and lasting eradication of poverty, some research shows areas of hope such as studies on the personal attributes of motivation and resilience. Motivation is considered a precursor to high achievement. When students with high ability have an awareness of their strengths, believe in their abilities, and pair them with motivation, high achievement occurs (Bandura, 1994). Being aware of one's abilities is not enough; it must be coupled with motivation to inspire the effort needed for successful completion of challenging coursework. In a study of 115 middle school students, Romero, Master, Paunesku, Dweck, and Gross (2014) examined whether student beliefs in personal intellectual growth mindsets impacted academic and emotional outcomes. Study results concluded that attributes such as motivation can change over time, thus creating an opportunity to increase motivation and, in turn, improve academic outcomes (Romero et al., 2014).

Dweck and Leggett's (1988) research model on the social-cognitive approach to motivation contends that adaptive or positive growth concepts influence goal setting and goal accomplishment and promote an increase in goal motivation. In turn, motivation begins with a belief about what one can accomplish (self-efficacy) and is driven by the subsequent outcome anticipation of goal setting and a planned course of action (Bandura, 1997). An individual's motivation increases when they believe they can achieve their goals (Bandura, 1994, 1997). Self-efficacy influences motivation of goal development, how much effort is put toward goal achievement, the level of perseverance, and the level of resilience during difficulties (Bandura, 1994). Achievement toward a goal may cause an individual's self-efficacy and motivation to strengthen and subsequently encourage work towards a more challenging goal (Hackett & Lent, 2008). As students experience success in academically challenging assignments, confidence and motivation grow

(Burney & Beilke, 2008).

Another disposition connected to successful at-risk students is "resilience." Kitano (2003) described resilience as a person's ability to survive and thrive in the face of an adversity that is typically associated with a negative outcome. Piirto (2007) identified resilient individuals as "being able to adapt and to bounce back with elasticity when the world provides great threat (p. 590). Werner (1995) defined resilience as "good developmental outcomes despite high-risk status, sustained competence under stress, and recovery from trauma" (p. 81). Werner's studies found that the resiliency in youth is consistently strengthened by a supportive adult relationship (Werner, 2012). In her longitudinal study of 698 at-risk youth in Kauai, Werner (1995) determined that resilient students had an internal locus of control and a positive self-concept and were willing to reach out to others for support. Resilience, like motivation, can be developed (Packard & Babineau, 2008; Werner, 1995). Furthermore, resilient students are able to use self-regulating strategies to assess difficult situations and avoid exposure to adverse situations and outcomes (Burney & Beilke, 2008).

Nakkula and Pineda (2005) identified external supports as a key mechanism that supports development of resilience. Caring and supportive relationships outside the home encourage development of resiliency and, as a result, motivation and self-efficacy are strengthened and educational growth occurs (Nakkula & Pineda, 2005). The belief that resilience can be strengthened has positive implications for low-income students (Packard & Babineau, 2008). As resilience grows, self-efficacy and confidence grow and motivation increases (Kitano, 2003). The components of motivation, resiliency, and self-efficacy create a cycle of adolescent identity formation that reinforces positive life directions (Nakkula & Pineda, 2005).

When paired with resiliency, above average test scores and grades indicate college potential and an increase in positive outcomes (Werner, 2012). When looking at low SES students, studies show that resilient students have a better chance of improving their circumstances (Werner, 2012). Furthermore, resilient children with higher intelligence have a stronger association with overcoming adverse situations (Werner, 1995). While high intelligence is not a precursor for resilience, it does support and lend itself to resilient behaviors such as problem solving and coping (Kitano, 2003). Longitudinal studies of resilient youth found that communication and problem-solving skills combined with academic competence had a positive correlation with overcoming adversity (Werner, 1995). Resilience, self-efficacy, and motivation are positive dispositions that help student success (Bandura, 1977; Kitano, 2003; Werner, 2012).

Mentoring

For the purposes of the current study, mentoring is defined as a relationship between "an older more experienced caring adult who seeks to develop the character and competence of a younger person by offering knowledge, insight, and wisdom" (Brendtro et al., 1990, p. 32). Mentoring programs pair a student, often a student with risk factors, with an adult who provides guidance and support through a caring relationship (Keating et al., 2002; Packard & Babineau, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006; Siegle, 2005). A mentor serves as a positive role model and is someone with whom the mentee can openly talk (DuBois & Karcher, 2005a; Siegle, 2005). Although mentoring relationships may be based in school, community, or faith-based programs, all have the overriding purpose of pairing a younger person with an older, more experienced person in order to create a relationship that will guide and support positive life trajectories (Thomson & Zand, 2010).

During the developmentally critical period of adolescence, mentoring relationships can be a positive life-changing force (Packard & Babineau, 2008). Through a positive mentoring relationship, students' senses of purpose and personal integrity are enhanced and their vision of the future is expanded (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Siegle, 2005). When a mentor broadens an adolescent's vision of a future self, motivation and movement toward successful behaviors increase (Packard & Babineau, 2008). Students who see themselves as future college students or as certain types of professionals are more likely to take the coursework that leads them towards that goal. It is important to introduce students to future opportunities at an early age so they can envision various future possibilities. Without that vision, they are less likely to enroll in the necessary coursework (Packard & Babineau, 2008). A mentoring relationship brings new perspectives into play for the student that can prove to be a positive life-altering force (Packard & Babineau, 2008).

Additionally, students who have a mentor to guide them are more likely to exhibit increased resilience (Packard & Babineau, 2008). Resilience is an importance outcome of adolescent development. An adolescent's individual belief in their personal capabilities is very malleable and, as such, attributes such as resilience can be enhanced (Packard & Babineau, 2008). Having one adult who believes in their capabilities can be a powerful motivator (Packard & Babineau, 2008). Packard and Babineau (2008) stated, "By providing exposure to positive role models who demonstrate the capability to persist in the face of difficulty, and possible strategies that can be used to problem solve, students may be more likely to persist" (p. 107).

Successful mentoring relationships are a combination of key elements including empathy, persistence, a blend of support, structure, and guidance (Rhodes, 2007). More

successful relationships tend to be youth-focused as opposed to relationships guided by adult goals. A successful youth-focused relationship must be flexible in nature while providing guidance to increase the development of positive life skills.

Background of mentoring. Historically, the concept of mentoring was derived from Homer's myth of *The Odyssey.* In this Greek myth, Odysseus appointed his loyal friend and advisor Mentor to guide and counsel his son Telemachus while Odysseus fought in the Trojan War (Dova, 2016). Later, Athena, the goddess of wisdom, assumed the role of Mentor as she assisted Telemachus in his search for Odysseus after the war (Dova, 2016; "Story of Mentor," 2016). The character Mentor illustrates the current understanding of the concept of mentoring. The word mentor has evolved to mean a guide, a trusted advisor, teacher, and wise person (Dondero, 1997). Historically, there are many examples of helpful mentoring relationships: Socrates and Plato, Hayden and Beethoven, Freud and Jung ("Story of Mentor," 2016). Mentors invest time, energy, and life experiences to encourage academic and social development for their protégés (Dondero, 1997).

The seminal report, A Nation at Risk, released in 1983 (United States & National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) influenced the rise in popularity of mentoring programs as a means to increase achievement (Dondero, 1997). In response to the report's dismal description of our county's education system, the formation of school and community partnerships were recommended (Dondero, 1997). Since the report's release, the formation and development of mentoring programs and the number of children being served through these programs has grown significantly (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Growth was also initiated as a result of George W. Bush's 2003 "State of the Union" address, when plans for a $450 million expansion of mentoring programs

were announced (Baker & Maguire, 2005; DuBois & Karcher, 2005b).

    Mentoring programs and supports. In the United States, Big Brothers Big

Sisters of America is one of the largest and most recognized mentoring organizations in

our country (Baker & Maguire, 2005; Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 2016;

Keating et al., 2002). An impact study of 1,000 students found that Big Brother/Big

Sister mentoring relationships reduced first-time drug and alcohol use, cut school

absenteeism by half, improved parent and peer relationships, improved academic

performance, and improved attitudes toward school (Tierney & Baldwin-Grossman,

2010). The study concluded that a meaningful mentoring relationship can make a

substantial difference in the life of the protégé (Tierney & Baldwin-Grossman, 2010).

The 100-year-old program currently serves 200,000 youth and 200,000 mentors in all 50

states (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 2016).

    Additional examples of national mentoring programs include President Barack

Obama's "My Brother's Keeper" mentoring program (The White House Office of the

Press Secretary, 2016). Launched in 2014, "My Brother's Keeper" mentoring program

addresses the persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color (The

White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2016). President Obama said the goals of his

mentoring program include "Helping more of our young people stay on track. Providing

the support they need to think more broadly about their future. Building on what works –

when it works, in those critical life-changing moments" (Obama, 2014, para. 45).

Community mentors help mentees attain the skills to go to college, earn good jobs, and

work to achieve their potential (Obama, 2014). Also, Michele Obama began a mentoring

program in 2012 matching disadvantaged young girls with female leaders in the Obama

administration. She believed the one-on-one in person relationship filled a void that

social media cannot fill (Curtis, 2012). Of the mentoring experience, Mrs. Obama said, "Even though our children are connecting in ways we never imagined, you've got an entire generation of young people truly in desperate need of a friend. Someone they can trust, an example they can follow" (Curtis, 2012, para. 6).

A necessary response to the growth of mentoring programs was the development of mentoring standards and tools to measure program effectiveness. MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership and The National Mentoring Resource Center offer best practice standards, tools, and resources to a growing community of mentor organizations (DuBois & Karcher, 2005b). The National Mentoring Partnership developed six evidence-based standards to help guide best practices for mentoring relationships and mentoring program development and operations (Garringer, Kupersmidt, Rhodes, Stelter, & Tai, 2015). The best practice standards include recruitment, screening, training, matching and initiating, monitoring and supporting, and closure (Garringer et al., 2015). Currently, more than 4,500 mentoring organizations in the United States (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002) serve students by providing opportunities for guidance, tutoring, career counseling, and financial support (Dondero, 1997).

Mentoring development and changes. With the proliferation of mentoring programs, the construct of mentoring has taken on different approaches and configurations (DuBois & Karcher, 2005b). Mentoring can be the result of a naturally occurring relationship or a formal relationship (DuBois & Karcher, 2005a). A nonparental adult relationship that occurs through a social acquaintance such as a coach or teacher is considered an informal or natural mentoring relationship. Informal mentors offer guidance, emotional support, and encouragement (Baker & Maguire, 2005). Organized mentoring programs rely on formal relationships for the formation of

mentor/mentee partnerships (Baker & Maguire, 2005). Formal mentoring programs offer mentor training, supervision, and ongoing supports to assist in their mentoring mission (Baker & Maguire, 2005).

Mentoring programs originated as community-based organizations, but more recently there has been a growth of school-based programs (DuBois & Karcher, 2005a). School-based programs offer easily available meeting locations with students meeting with mentors either during the day or after school. Results of a study of an urban afterschool mentoring program targeting sixth-grade high-risk African-American youth found a significant positive effect in academic achievement and behavior (Hanlon, Simon, O'Grady, Carswell, & Callaman, 2009). The mentoring program had 237 participating students with 241students at a comparison site. In addition to the mentoring aspect, the program emphasized school bonding, social skills development, and academic achievement. After 1 year of participation, improvement was seen in grade point averages and behavior for students involved in the mentoring program. Additionally, the study found greater parent involvement for the students in the mentoring program (Hanlon et al., 2009).

Community-based programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters are often formalized, centrally organized, and routinely administered by nonprofit agencies (DuBois & Karcher, 2005a). Mentoring sites have grown to include not only community locations but schools, workplaces, and faith-based locations as well (DuBois & Karcher, 2005b). The growth of location venues has allowed volunteers to reach a wider range of students. Schwartz, Lowe, and Rhodes (2012) stated that churches, particularly African-American churches, often play a critical role in providing disadvantaged youth needed encouragement and support through mentoring relationships. As mentoring popularity

has grown, new relationship configurations have been expanded to include group mentoring, team mentoring, cross-age peer mentoring, and internet mentoring (Baker & Maguire, 2005; Sipe, 2005).

Summary

Children from low SES households do not experience the same levels of academic achievement as children from homes with higher incomes. Level of parental education, schools attended, coursework taken, and enrichment experiences all influence a child's level of success in school. Regardless of economic background, a child's academic success can be enhanced with a strong sense of self-efficacy, motivation, and resilience. The presence of a positive mentor can enhance academic achievement and the development of these dispositions. Although the location or delivery model of youth mentoring programs may vary, their overall purposes are similar. Mentoring involves a caring adult working with a younger mentee for the purpose of guiding that protégé toward positive life outcomes. While all the difficulties associated with adolescence cannot be eliminated, the presence of a mentor can prove to be a substantial support at a critical time in the life of a youth.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach in its research design. Morrow (2007) stated that qualitative research is the appropriate choice when the researcher seeks to understand the meaning that a small number of individuals ascribe to a life experience and when one seeks to answer "how" or "what" research questions. Smith (2003) explained qualitative research as having a verbally rich, in-depth analysis of a phenomenon. Merriam (2009) described qualitative research as a search for an understanding of how people interpret their worlds and an understanding of the subsequent meaning attributed to their experiences. As the focus in qualitative research is on understanding and meaning, using a descriptive reporting of the data, a qualitative research design was deemed the most appropriate research method for this study.

Creswell (2007) identified phenomenology as a research method used in educational studies. Phenomenological research describes the meaning of a lived experience or phenomenon and provides an in-depth examination of how individuals perceive an experience or phenomenon (Breakwell, Hammond, Fife-Schaw, & Smith, 2006; Creswell, 2007, 2009). Based on the writings of Edmund Husserl, phenomenology has its roots in philosophy and has historically been applied to psychology, sociology, the social sciences, and health-related studies (Creswell, 2007). As a rule, a phenomenological study examines the meaning of a phenomenon for several individuals and searches for the shared experiences or themes for those individuals (Creswell, 2007).

Within the field of phenomenological research, there are two main philosophies of thought. The two major approaches to phenomenological research are transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Transcendental phenomenology is focused on a description of an experience with less

emphasis on the interpretation of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology adheres to Husserl's concept of *epoche*, or bracketing (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). During the process of bracketing, the researcher examines and removes personal attitudes, perceptions, and experiences with respect to the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Although the process of bracketing is difficult to achieve due to human interactions and the participation of the researcher, in its purest form, bracketing strives to remove all bias and preconceptions; the end result being the ability to treat the research findings as new discoveries (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994).

Hermeneutical phenomenology was the approach utilized in this study. Van Manen (1990) considered hermeneutical phenomenology a worthwhile approach to educational studies due to its ability to consider the lived experience within educational situations. This type of phenomenology recognizes the interactive process of dual interpretation that occurs as one studies the meaning individuals ascribe to their experiences (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the description of the experience or phenomenon includes the individual's interpretation and also acknowledges the researcher's personal understanding of that interpretation (Creswell, 2007). As with transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutical phenomenological research leads to a discussion of the essential themes discovered in the data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Using a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach, this study explored the individual lived experiences of the students involved in the Citizen Scholars Program. This approach acknowledges that individuals are actively involved in interpreting or

making sense of the events in their lives. This study employed a type of hermeneutic phenomenology called IPA. IPA examines an individual's experience and the meaning ascribed to that experience as perceived by the individual (Smith & Eatough, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Additionally, IPA recognizes that both the individual participant and the researcher are involved in an interpretation process (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

IPA's research method puts focus on the development of meaning or sense-making by the participant and the researcher (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The added element of recognizing the existence of the researcher's personal interpretation in the analysis of the data creates a double hermeneutic element within the study (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Thus, the two-fold IPA interpretation process acknowledges both the participant making sense of the phenomena and the researcher making sense of the participants' sense-making (Smith et al., 2009). IPA brings a depth of analysis that combines a description of the experience or phenomenon (phenomenology) and interpretation of the meaning ascribed to the event (hermeneutics; (Smith & Eatough, 2006).

Additionally, with IPA research, each participant's experience is treated as a separate study before consideration is given to the participants' combined experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2006). This ideographic examination of each individual experience is constructed as a singular case study (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The IPA approach weaves a study that includes phenomenology, hermeneutics, and ideography (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

To fully understand the impact of the mentoring experience and to improve upon those experiences, the sentiments of the mentees must be explored. A 2014 report by

MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, stated that the voice of the youth must be at the center of the mentoring experience to "Guide our understanding of the challenges faced by young people, the benefits they garner from mentoring, and how as a nation we can work to better support their transition from youth to adulthood" (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014, p. 11). The perspective of the recipient of the mentoring will give the truest account of what was experienced. No other person can accurately describe their experience or share their thinking. This IPA study allowed the researcher to explore, in-depth, the mentee attitudes, beliefs, and judgments pertaining to their mentoring experience.

This study provided insight into what aspects of their mentoring relationships students considered viable supports, and it highlighted those areas needing improvement. Therefore, in order to more fully understand the impact of mentoring relationships, this study explored from the students' perspectives (a) how each individual student interpreted their mentoring relationship and (b) how the mentoring relationship influenced each student's academic achievement and self-efficacy.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study sought to explore the individual student experiences of the phenomenon of mentoring from the protégé's perspective. The use of a qualitative phenomenological research approach allowed the researcher to be sensitive to each participant's experience of the mentoring phenomenon. Smith and Eatough (2006) recommended IPA research use open-ended research questions that seek to provide rich descriptions of the phenomena under study. Thus, the research questions that guided this case study were

1. What are the themes that emerge from the Citizen Scholars mentoring

experience?

2. What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' academic achievement?

3. What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' self-efficacy?

Research Design

This qualitative study used an IPA research design to explore the lived experiences of the students involved in the Citizen Scholars Program. The purpose of a phenomenological study is to examine how individuals make meaning of a lived experience or phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2003). The researcher explored the participant's understanding of a phenomenon while being aware of the researcher's personal interpretation of the participant trying to make sense of the phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2003). The phenomena being explored in this study was the mentoring relationship established through the Citizen Scholars Program. This type of qualitative research design is appropriate when the researcher seeks to understand the meanings individuals make of their lived experiences (Morrow, 2007; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2003).

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Gardner-Webb Institutional Review Board. Permission to conduct the study was received from the current Citizen Scholars Executive Director (Appendix A).

Going through the program's executive director, the researcher contacted the participants to set up an information session. The purpose of the information session was to give the participants an overview of the study, its purpose, the procedures the

researcher would follow, and an overview of the interview process. Additionally, the session would further inform the participants as to what to expect during the interview and provide the approximate time frame and the general subject of the interview questions (Smith et al., 2009). Rather than attend the session, participants chose to have the overview given during a phone conversation with further explanations given at the beginning of the interview session. During the phone conversation and at the beginning of the interview, students were told that participation was voluntary. At the beginning of the interview, each student received two copies of the letter of consent (Appendix B). A signed copy was returned to the researcher and the students kept the second copy for their personal records. The letter was signed before the interview began. The student participants had the option to participate in the study or to decline participation. Additionally, students were told they could withdraw from the study at any time.

As previously stated, the researcher is a mentor in the Citizen Scholars Program. As such, removing all bias through a bracketing process could not be realistically achieved. In keeping with Smith's (2008) IPA methodology, the researcher attempted to remove all personal bias but at the same time recognized that the qualitative interpretation process included some personal predispositions.

Participants

The participants in this study were the students in the Citizen Scholars 2016 college graduation cohort. These students were selected for the Citizen Scholars Program in the spring of 2005 and graduated from high school in 2012. The students were selected for the program at the end of their fifth-grade year and were assigned to a mentor before the start of their sixth-grade year. Students participating in the program were recommended by their guidance counselor, teacher, or school administrator. In addition

to a school recommendation, students were required to meet specified program criteria

for the duration of the program (Citizen Scholars Program, n.d.). The criteria included

- financial need (Medicaid, or family income at poverty level);

- at least a "B" average in math, language arts, social studies, and science;

- scored at the 65% or above on achievement tests in mathematics and reading;

- maintained good school attendance;

- involvement in a special interest or extracurricular activity;

- high level of motivation to attend college; and

- possessed a desire to work with a mentor and participate in program activities.

Eligible candidates participated in interviews conducted by a Citizen Scholars

selection committee, after which the students were chosen for the program (Citizen

Scholars Program, n.d.). Because only one district had students entering the program in

2005 and because the district has only one high school, the five students in this cohort

graduated from the same high school. All five students in this study graduated from

college in May 2016. The participants in this study experienced the same program

activities; but as the scholars had different mentors, each mentoring experience was

unique.

Data Collection

This IPA study used face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth interviews for its

source of data, based upon recommendations from several prominent researchers

(Creswell, 2007; Smith & Eatough, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith (2003) and

Creswell (2007) recommended that an IPA study use a small number of participants due

to the large volume of data incurred with each participant. Ten subjects is the

recommended upper limit, with three to six participants being the optimal number for in-

depth data analysis (Creswell, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2003). This study sought to interview all five scholars who were a part of the 2016 Citizen Scholars college graduation class. While the students have had the shared experiences of the Citizen Scholars programming activities, it was the unique individual mentoring experiences the researcher sought to explore.

Smith and Eatough (2006) recommended that the interview be participant-led but guided by the researcher, thereby allowing the researcher to probe into the experience and, at the same time, remain empathetic toward the participant. This study followed the interview structure as recommended by Creswell and included adaptations as recommended by Smith. Creswell (2007) stated that the process of interviewing can be implemented as a series of steps. The interview structure as recommended by Creswell (2007) is as follows:

1. Purposeful sampling determined interviewee selection;

2. Data were collected through one-on-one, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. All attempts were made to conduct the interviews in person;

3. All interviews were recorded for accuracy;

4. An interview protocol form (Appendix C) was used for the interviewer to make notes during the interview. Questions were open-ended and geared to inform the research questions shaping the study. Initial questions encouraged the participants to openly share their thoughts. Discussion and topic prompts were prepared in advance to assist in the interview;

5. Interview questions (see Appendix C for interview questions) were reviewed through pilot testing to ensure relevance, correctly framed wording, absence of bias, collection of needed information, and to allow some degree of

flexibility in discussion; and

6. Interviews were conducted in a quiet location that lent itself to promoting a comfortable environment for each participant.

According to Smith and Eatough (2006), the interview must encompass flexibility in order to draw the rich information needed for IPA analysis. Similar to Creswell (2007), Smith and Eatough recommended the preparation of open-ended questions but advised that careful attention be paid to the give-and-take needed to create a successful, in-depth interview. During the interview process, the questions guided interviewees toward openly sharing their interpretations of the mentor/mentee relationship and the experiences shared with their mentors. Following the recommendation of Smith and Eatough, the first question was general in nature and sought to create an atmosphere of trust. The researcher used "ice-breakers" as conversation starters for the interviewees who were hesitant to talk (Creswell, 2007). Interviews were audio recorded (Creswell, 2007; Smith & Eatough, 2006).

For this research study, an interview schedule was written in advance to allow the interviewer to set a loose outline for the interview, anticipate potential sensitive areas of discussion, and prepare correct framing of complex questions (Smith et al., 2009). Each interviewee participated in one extended interview. Interviews lasted approximately one hour, with variations running 45 to 90 minutes in length (Smith et al., 2009). Because the researcher was new to the IPA interview process, participants agreed to follow-up questions for clarification on comments after the researcher reviewed the interview transcript. After reviewing the transcripts, the researcher determined that no follow-up clarification was necessary.

During the interview, the researcher informed the participant that there were no

right or wrong answers and the purpose of the interview was to learn about their personal experiences and their perceptions of the experiences (Smith et al., 2009). As stated by Smith et al. (2009), during the interview process, "Do not assume that some kind of direct, unproblematic or 'true' account is accessed in such interviews – but we do set out from a commitment to understand our participant's perspective, and to take their claims and concerns seriously" (p. 57).

The interview schedule helped guide the interview. As the participant became more comfortable, the researcher allowed the participant's concerns to lead the discussion. The interviewer followed up on points even if they were not on the schedule (Smith et al., 2009). Per the recommendation of Smith et al. (2009), the researcher spoke slowly to phrase questions carefully and clearly and, in doing so, helped set the tone of the interview.

A primary goal at the beginning of the interviews was to establish a positive rapport, thus creating a sense of trust and comfort (Smith et al., 2009). Early questions were more general in nature in order to encourage the participants to engage comfortably. While still being open-ended, later questions were more closely connected to specifics related to the mentoring experience. The researcher was an active listener and gave the participants time to carefully consider their responses. The researcher respected brief periods of silence when the participants were considering their answers; this allowed the participants to fully reflect on their responses (Callary, Rathwell, & Young, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). When needed, the researcher asked probing questions such as, "How did that make you feel?" and "Can you tell me more?" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 65). During the interview, the researcher wrote notations of words or thoughts needing further clarification from the participant. In keeping with IPA recommendations, during the

interview, the researcher provided the opportunity for the participant to "think, speak, and be heard" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57).

Data Analysis

The data analysis employed in this study followed the protocol recommended by Smith (2003). Different from the specific structured analysis method of Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen's modification of the Moustakas approach (Creswell, 2007), Smith (2003) recommended a specific step-by-step approach be used as a guideline or framework. It is further recommended that personal adaptation occur as each researcher deems is most appropriate for the study at hand (Smith, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Following the IPA approach, the researcher focused analysis on one transcript at a time with a complete analysis being undertaken before moving to a new transcript (Smith, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003). For this idiographic approach, each interview transcript was thoroughly studied and interpreted in detail before moving to the next transcript (Smith, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003). This separate reading lent itself to treating each transcript as a separate case study (Smith, 2003).

In order to become familiar with the transcript, the interview transcript was thoroughly read multiple times (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This was considered a "free textual analysis," as there are no rules about what or how many textual notes are taken during these readings (Smith & Osborn, 2003). While reading, the researcher noted associations or connections, preliminary interpretations, use of language, similarities, differences, amplifications, and contradictions (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Passages rich in information were notated and transcript summarizing occurred (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

After multiple readings, the researcher began reading the transcript looking for emerging themes. Thematic notations were recorded. The purpose of this next level of

analysis was to discover the essential qualities of the statements (Smith & Osborn, 2003). From the completed thematic analysis, a list was compiled of the themes (Smith & Osborn, 2003). An additional analysis searched for connections between themes, noting themes that merged and clustered (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Following the thematic analysis, the researcher reread the original transcript to ensure that the thematic analysis aligned with the transcript and the researcher's understanding of the participant's interpretation of the experience (Smith & Osborn, 2003). A directory was compiled connecting themes and supporting phrases from the transcript. The researcher analyzed the compilation of themes, further grouping them into clusters or superordinate groups, giving each superordinate theme a unique identifier that aided in analysis and data organization. The identifier indicated where the theme could be found in the transcript. During this phase of analysis, the researcher dropped less significant themes from the analysis pool (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The same protocol was followed for each subsequent interview transcript (Smith et al., 2009). With each transcript analysis, similar themes were identified and new themes emerged (Smith et al., 2009). During analysis, the researcher "respected convergences and divergences in the data – recognizing ways in which accounts from participants are similar but also different" (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 73). After each transcript was examined, a final table of superordinate themes was compiled with only the most relevant themes included. While prevalence of themes may have impacted selection, other factors sometimes precluded prevalence (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The researcher included superordinate themes in a table and constructed a narrative using participant quotes and researcher analysis. The accuracy and validity of the findings were strengthened through the reporting of results using detailed descriptive language

and the triangulation of data sources (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) stated, "If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study" (p. 191).

To assist with the organization of the analysis, the researcher used the computer software ATLAS.ti to store transcripts, record connections of initial themes and superordinate themes, and assist with location of transcript examples. Creswell (2007) recommended the use of qualitative software such as ATLAS.ti for studies containing large amounts of data. The use of the computer software allowed for storage and organization of data, database searches and retrieval of information such as phrases and statements, and sorting of themes (Creswell, 2007).

Summary

This chapter included an explanation of phenomenology and the IPA approach to phenomenology. It also discussed the research design, description of the participants, and the research questions used to guide the study. In addition, this chapter focused on the appropriateness of the study's research design and the data collection and analysis procedures.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate how mentees reflected upon their mentoring relationships and to further explore their perceptions of the impact of those relationships on their academic achievement and self-efficacy. An IPA approach was used to analyze the data. The research questions that guided this study were

1. What are the themes that emerge from the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience?

2. What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' academic achievement?

3. What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' self-efficacy?

This chapter contains a discussion of the results of this study. The chapter introduction includes the review of the process followed for data collection and data analysis procedures, following IPA guidelines. The reader is then introduced to the participants through a series of vignettes. Each vignette describes the participant's current activities and circumstances and includes selected excerpts from their overall perception of their mentoring experience. A review and analysis of the research questions follows. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

In the case of this research, the phenomenon being investigated was the long-term mentoring relationship for four students involved in the Citizen Scholars Program. As recommended by Smith and Osborn (2003), data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Each interview was conducted in person and lasted between 45 and

90 minutes. Participants were told in advance the approximate length of the interview (Smith et al., 2009). Interviews were audio recorded to ensure an accurate transcription of the data.

As further recommended by Smith et al. (2009), interview locations were chosen by the interviewee with all locations being safe, familiar settings for the participants. Interviews were conducted at a local bookstore, a coffee shop, a downtown park, and in a study room at the local library. It was the goal of the researcher that locations be convenient, comfortable settings that would allow the participant to feel at ease while maintaining the need for interview privacy (Smith et al., 2009).

The researcher has known one participant as a mentor in the program for the past 4 years. Three of the participants did not previously know the researcher; therefore, an objective was to gain a level of trust before the interviews began. Likewise, for all the participants, it was most important to establish a positive rapport at the start of the interview. Meeting in a rather public place helped with the process.

The four interviews were conducted over a 3-week timespan. After the first interview, there was a 1-week window before the second interview was conducted. The third interview was conducted the day after the second interview. The fourth and final interview was conducted a week after the third interview. The researcher attempted to space interviews a week apart in order to provide time to reflect on the interview. Participants' jobs, school commitments, and coaching schedules ultimately determined the interview schedule.

As each participant arrived to the interview, the researcher and participant engaged in some general conversation. During that time, consent forms were signed and interview protocols were reviewed. Conversation included an overview of the purpose of

the study and general conversation about what the participant had done since graduating from college in May. Establishing an early sense of trust and comfort was an essential component for a successful in-depth interview (Smith et al., 2009). At the onset of the interview, participants were told that there were no right or wrong answers, as the researcher was interested in their impression of the mentoring experience (Smith et al., 2009). After approximately 15 minutes, the recorded portion of the interview began. During the course of the interview, questions were not always asked in the order of the interview schedule. Additionally, interview questions were sometimes answered without a prompt from the researcher; and when further exploration was needed, unplanned questions were posed. During the interview process, IPA recognizes that critical information is often gleaned from the unexpected or unplanned portion of the interview (Smith et al., 2009).

Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher listened to the recorded interview. This review gave the researcher an opportunity to reflect on the content of the interview and make notes to help with subsequent interviews. Recordings were sent to a transcriber. Upon receiving the transcribed recording, the researcher listened to the interview while reading the transcription to make any necessary changes or corrections. Being a participant in the interview, the researcher was able to discern voice and language nuances and decipher some of the less audible portions of the tape that the transcriber could not definitively recognize.

During the data analysis, each interview was treated separately, as recommended by Smith and Eatough (2006). The interview transcripts were analyzed in the order in which the interviews were conducted. In order to become familiar with the interview data and to gain an overall sense of the tone of the interview, the audio recording was

used during the initial readings of the transcript. The researcher noted interview tones, conversation nuances, the general feel of the interview, and impressions of the mentee's mentoring experience. While reading, the researcher included notes and observations in the margins of the transcript.

Following the initial readings, the transcript was uploaded into the Atlas.ti program for coding. During the next transcript reading, codes were assigned to passages and statements. As passages and statements were coded, the researcher's reflections on the statements were recorded as "comments" that were connected to the transcript's quotations. During the transcript readings, a reflection journal in the form of a "memo" was created in Atlas.ti to record researcher impressions, connections between codes, interview contradictions, connections to the literature, connections to the research questions, and reflections needing further consideration.

Subsequent readings included a review of the transcript codes and the grouping of codes into themes. During this part of the analysis, five major superordinate themes were identified that correlated with the major categories found in a theoretical framework guiding this study, the Rhodes Model of Pathways of Mentor Influence (Rhodes et al., 2000). Ravitch and Riggan (2016) identified a theoretical framework as a combination of theories that help shape the research. In the case of this research, data analysis was guided by Rhodes's mentoring model and Bandura's work with self-efficacy.

While guidelines have been provided for IPA analysis, it was recommended that IPA analysis be flexible, creative, and adjusted as needed for the research objectives (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). After a complete analysis of the first interview, the other transcripts were analyzed. The Rhodes model continued to assist in the organization and thematic grouping of the codes. While IPA research suggested an open-ended search for

themes, for the purpose of this dissertation, the Rhodes model guided organization of codes into themes.

Participant Vignettes

This phenomenological study explored the mentoring experience of the Citizen Scholars cohort group who were members of both the 2012 high school and 2016 college graduation cohort. A total of five students were members of both cohorts and all were contacted for participation in this study; four agreed to participate. The fifth participant declined due to a heavy work schedule that did not allow him time to be interviewed in person or by phone.

As this phenomenological study focused on the students' perceptions of the mentoring experience, a brief vignette was provided to give the reader a more complete understanding of the participants. Of the four former scholars who agreed to be interviewed, one is currently in graduate school, two have full-time jobs, and one is neither employed nor in school.

Adam. Adam is a White male. At the time of the interview, he was still looking for employment. He was most anxious to find a job and expressed uncertainty about his vocation. Currently, Adam is living at home with his parents. It appeared that Adam had a positive relationship with his parents, with most references being made about his mother. During the interview, he spoke of his mother when she objected to his mentor making comments about Adam's weight. He also mentioned that his mother and his mentor would have conversations. According to Adam, not making a weekly phone call to his mentor often precipitated these conversations.

Adam received a scholarship to a local private college. In addition to the scholarship, he took out school loans to help finance his education. During our

conversation, he mentioned concern about paying off loans and not yet having secured a job. He also expressed his parents' concern about the loans.

Adam was most willing to share his thoughts about his mentoring experience. During the conversation, his impressions of the experience vacillated back and forth between it being a good experience and a disappointing experience. The conversation began with a more positive outlook, but positive comments often ended with "I think." As the conversation progressed, he became less positive and appeared cautious when sharing negative feelings.

The overall feeling the researcher felt was a sense of disappointment on Adam's part. While he was hesitant to put blame on the mentor, he said they were not close. Adam would frame activities in a positive light and then finish with a less than enthusiastic discussion. Adam referred to peers who were close to their mentors. He commented that his relationship was not like theirs.

Lamar. Lamar is an African-American male. He attended a local public university and graduated in 4 years with a degree in accounting. During the interview, Lamar referred to his mother and his younger sister multiple times. From our conversation, I would surmise that Lamar is close to both his mother and his younger sister. No mention was ever made of his father.

During high school, Lamar was a good student. While Lamar and his Citizen Scholars mentor discussed school, he said he was a motivated student by his own accord. He played on his high school football team and basketball team. Lamar also ran track in high school, participating in the 100 meter, 200 meter, and long jump events. Lamar described himself as reserved and said his fellow scholars would agree with this description. Lamar said that his being quiet is not due to a lack of

confidence. During high school he stated that he "teetered between confident and cockiness."

During his time in the Citizen Scholars Program, Lamar had two different mentors; both were females. More than once, Lamar mentioned that it would have been a better experience if his mentor had been a male. Lamar explained that he and his mentor never did anything that appealed to him. They went to plays, operas, and took one trip to a museum. He said he would have enjoyed sporting events, stating that plays and operas do not necessarily appeal to a middle school or high school male. Lamar has not spoken to his Citizen Scholars mentor since his freshman year in college. He tried to contact her when he graduated from college, but she never responded to him. Lamar's mother did contact the mentor on Facebook to let her know that Lamar was graduating. His mentor responded with a simple congratulation.

Lamar does not attribute any lasting impact on his life as a result of his Citizen Scholars mentoring experience. However, Lamar did spend a great deal of time reflecting on a mentor that he had while in college. Lamar had a college accounting professor who reached out to him via email and asked Lamar to contact him after an uncharacteristically poor grade on an accounting test. Lamar was going through an emotionally challenging period as a result of his younger sister's cancer. Lamar stated that this professor showed an interest in him as a person and continues to support him in his life.

Becca. Becca is a White female. She attended and played softball for a private, 4-year, liberal arts college in a neighboring community. While the school had a 19% 4-year graduation rate, Becca graduated in 4 years. During the interview Becca mentioned that her mother and her mentor spoke often; but other than these comments, Becca did

not mention her mother.

While Becca was a good student, she said school was "not her thing." Becca was a softball player. During her high school years, her main focus was softball. Academics, while acceptable, did not require her energy or time. Becca credits her mentor with reminding Becca that an education would allow her to pursue a career of her choice.

Becca's mentor was an administrator in the district where Becca attended school. Becca said her mentor saw her "all the time" in the school. She would see her in the halls, in the cafeteria; she would even have Becca called to the office to see her. In addition to seeing her mentor at school on a regular basis, they met frequently outside of school. Becca's favorite thing to do with her mentor was to just "hang-out" at her mentor's house. They would grill out, take walks, and play Frisbee with her husband and their dog.

The interview with Becca was light and positive. From the tone of the conversation, it was most evident that Becca had a close relationship with her mentor. They recently had dinner and caught up on each other's lives. Becca predicts that they will remain in contact. Of her mentor, Becca said, "Honestly, I couldn't have asked for a better mentor."

Today, Becca is financially self-supported. She works as a security guard at her former college and is the girls' softball coach at a small private college. Becca also plays on a softball team for fun. She was leaving our interview to go play in a game. When asked about her future, Becca said she would like to continue to coach.

Trianna. Trianna is an African-American female. Similar to Lamar and Becca, she has a very busy post-college life. She is working full time for a public middle school and she is an assistant varsity volleyball coach at a private school. With Trianna's busy

schedule, it was difficult to find a time to meet, but she was willing to create an opportunity and appeared to want to share her mentoring experience. Trianna is a self-assured, well-spoken young lady. Of the four interviewees, Trianna went into the most depth when describing her mentoring relationship and experience. She described the relationship between her mentor and herself with ease and in a positive light.

Trianna lives with her parents, her grandfather, and her younger brother. From her discussion, it was evident that she is close to her parents. They believe in her education and they believe in her future. Trianna said she was taught to work hard. During her interview, Trianna would periodically refer to how her parents fit into the mentoring experiences and events in her life. Both of Trianna's parents work, except during the period when her father quit his job to care for her grandfather. Trianna described her father as having leadership roles in their community, saying that because of this, she was always aware of how others perceived her.

Vignette summary. The participants in this study experienced substantially different mentoring relationships. Since this study presents the mentee's view only, one cannot draw a definitive conclusion as to why the relationships varied in success. However, as the purpose of the relationship was to support and guide the mentee, the mentee perspective is critical. If the student did not perceive the relationship as positive, he or she was the one who experienced the void in the relationship. Conversely, in a warm and caring relationship, the student reaped the benefits of that experience. The following discussion of the research questions explores the impact of those relationships from the mentee's perspective.

Research Question 1

The first research question addressed in this study was, "What are the themes that

emerge from the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience?" Of the three research questions addressed, Research Question 1 provided the broadest overview of the mentee's mentoring experience. Codes assigned during transcript analysis were grouped into themes, and themes were grouped into superordinate themes. The study's theoretical frameworks guided and shaped analysis and subsequent thematic grouping. Table 5 below provides an overview of the superordinate themes and the related subthemes.

Table 5

Superordinate Themes and Related Themes

Superordinate Themes	Themes
Influence of Moderators	Program (Activities, peer relationships, administrators)
	Student's personal dispositions
	Family context
Mentor Relationship	Mentor bonding through activities
	Attunement and well-being
	Current status of the relationship
Social-emotional Development	Personal growth
	Emotional coaching
	Support
Cognitive Development	Broadening horizons
	School and academics
Identity Development	Self-efficacy
	Mentor as a role-model
	Guidance toward the future

Influence of moderators. The first of the superordinate themes addressed in this writing was the influence of outside moderators. Rhodes (2005) described moderators as the factors affecting both student outcomes and mentoring relationships. Outside forces such as individual, family, and contextual influences as well as the duration of the relationship can function as positive or negative elements in a mentee's experiences.

When students began the Citizen Scholars Program, they did not start with a blank slate. They come with personality traits; social competencies; and parental, peer, and community influences. These factors impacted the students' openness to engage in and be influenced by a mentoring relationship (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008). Additionally, moderators such as the program's purpose, organization, mentor training, and program leadership influence the mentee's mentoring experience (Rhodes, 2005).

    Program. During the interviews, the mentoring program itself was the most frequently identified moderating influence. Because the program was the facilitator of the mentoring experience, it made sense that it would be the predominate subtheme found within the "moderators" superordinate theme. When mentees discussed the program during the interviews, program administrators, program activities, and peer relationships emerged as subthemes. While all four participants spoke positively of the program director and assistant director, Adam referred to them with the most frequency. Adam's relationship with his mentor Bobby was not particularly strong and his relationship with the program administrators, Mindy and Melissa, helped supplement missing ingredients from his mentoring relationship. When speaking of Mindy in the interview, he said, "Mindy was like the one with the plan, and great to back you up." Mindy connected with Adam in ways his mentor did not. He stated,

> I think in general Mindy helped more like making me feel like I was great at everything, like that's what she did pretty much. I mean Mindy also motivated just because she scared the crap out of us, if we needed it. Like once you got on her good side that was the difference. Not that I didn't like talking to Bobby, it wasn't like that.

    While Mindy was a motivator for all the scholars, her relationship with Adam was

especially close. When Adam spoke of Mindy yelling at him, he always said it with a smile. Adam recognized a "scary me" side of Mindy that tried to keep him motivated, but he clearly knew that Mindy had his best interests at heart. Adam also referred to Mindy's fun side when he said,

> We would do sessions with the like, 'scary me' Mindy side. She would yell, and all that. But usually she was always at all the other events, like the fun things. So we would get to see the kid side of Mindy, and just do weird fun things and we could be a dumb kid with her. So I guess that kind of helped build that trusting relationship.

> When asked if Melissa and Mindy had ever helped with school, Adam stated, "No, they didn't, but I never asked them to. I'm sure if I would have asked them, they would have, but I never asked them." Adam also referred to Melissa in his interview saying he and Melissa were family friends, attended church together, and he had known her since he was born. Adam said he was most comfortable around Melissa. He said that knowing Melissa positively impacted his mentoring relationship, saying, "I guess that kind of helped because she knew all these people that I didn't know, and she trusted them. I was like, oh well, Melissa knows them." Adam's relationship with the program administrators was a positive force; it was a contrast to how he perceived his mentor and may have led to exceptionally high expectations for his mentor. Adam sought help from Melissa and Mindy and was able to use their relationships as foundations for trust. When speaking of Melissa and Mindy, Adam said,

> I always felt like Mindy and Melissa were like, they wanted us to be like the best we ever could, which is sort of Bobby's, but it was just a different feeling, like a different way about it, like, she would have done like anything to get us

anywhere. She got me into Wofford, I think was the reason obviously, but I can't explain it. It was just a different feeling with Melissa and Mindy, versus my mentor.

Like Adam, Lamar said Mindy and Melissa provided a support that his mentor did not. Lamar said, "I think Mindy and Melissa were good mentors, because the program definitely helped me a whole lot, where my individual mentor didn't." Lamar also said that while he did not go to Melissa or Mindy for academic support, he knew he could have if he needed help.

When speaking of Melissa, Becca said, "Melissa, I can still text her now, and she'll do absolutely anything for me, and I know that 100 percent." Similar to Adam, Becca knew Melissa before coming into the program and said, "I knew from knowing her before that I could go to her if I needed to." For Becca, the positive relationships in the program supported her mentoring relationship. For Adam, the close relationships with Mindy and Melissa were a contrast to his primary mentoring relationship with Bobby.

Another facet of the program mentioned by the participants was the scheduled program activities. The diverse activities had a variety of purposes. Activities targeted team building, peer bonding, pleasure, college and test-taking prep, and character development. The scheduled activities were met with mixed reviews from the scholars, but their memories of the activities were strong enough that all of the scholars referred to them. During their early years in the program, the students participated in Saturday classes, many of which revolved around a book study of Sean Covey's (2014) book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens.* The regular scheduling of highly structured classes during their early years helped students bond. When referring to the activities, Adam said the Covey book was his least favorite activity, but he also stated that much of the more

valuable instruction occurred when the students were in the upper grades. Adam said,

> Even for the program, like what it did, didn't really kick in until like, high school.
>
> Even like 10th grade, like that's when it really started hitting. Because that's when
>
> you're doing college SAT, or even before that, it's just a program I did all these
>
> sessions with. But that's what some of those sessions prime you for. But I don't
>
> feel like all of the sessions are useful. They don't do some of them anymore.

Adam further stated,

> The seniors had to go work with her (Mindy) like the whole year, working on
>
> applications for college. So it was kind of like we would do sessions and like
>
> figure out where we wanted to go with her, and like what would be the best
>
> choices, and money-wise, what we could do.

While Adam referred to the work part of the program, he also mentioned that there were the "fun" things. Adam stated, "I like doing all the fun things I never would have done before, and it did make me less shy."

> Neither Lamar, Becca, nor Trianna spoke at length about the program activities,

but they each made reference to different activities. Lamar referred to "skiing in Lake Lure and Wofford Camps and everything. It was a lot of fun. I wish I could go back." Upon entering the program, Trianna thought it would be centered exclusively on academic learning and encouragement. Trianna stated,

> I just thought I was going to be exposed to more academic learning, academic
>
> encouragement, which I definitely was, but I noticed there were a lot more things
>
> to do, like community service played a big role. And once I got exposed at
>
> Hatcher Garden, I am not going to lie, moving rocks all day was kind of
>
> discouraging, but it was definitely character building and a character learning

experience, and all of the plants that we worked with.

Becca stated,

We had the camp at Lake Lure. We did that a lot. And we had the SAT preps

with all the different groups. We had the groups at Hatcher Gardens. Yeah, we

did a lot of different stuff. So, it was good.

Overall, the students had activities they enjoyed, and they spoke more extensively about

those activities than their less-pleasurable experiences. Commenting that while they did

not necessarily enjoy some experiences, in hindsight, they understood the value of the

activity.

A strong positive moderating element of the program was the formation of peer

relationships. While these students may have been in different elementary schools and

may not have known each other when they entered the program, they developed

friendships and were supported by their peers. When speaking of the friendships, Trianna

said,

Just having a set of friends outside of school and having the camaraderie, I didn't

expect that. I thought I was just going to be with the kids that were in District 1,

with my group. But it was so much more.

Adam said there were things they would talk about with the other mentees that he would

not necessarily share with the adults. When asked whom he would go to in the program,

Lamar said, "I talked to my actual, like the people my age."

Lamar said his strongest relationships in the program were with the other

scholars, but he said those were not critical relationships that would help him through

difficult times. Becca had a different opinion on the peer relationships. When asked

what the most valuable part of the program was for her, she answered,

The relationships I formed with people, not just my mentor, but the relationships I formed with the other people within that program. . . . There are just some people you wouldn't have formed a relationship with if you weren't in the program, like you do when you're in it. So I think the relationships I formed with the people that were in my class, the people who were even in other classes, the mentors, the group that was already in college that came and helped out, the counselors, I guess you would say that group. So I think that was the biggest thing for me, just overall, relationships.

It is obvious Becca placed a strong value on the relationships she formed while in the program. For all the participants, the peer relationships created through the program formed a support system and added to their program experience.

Student dispositions. A mentee's personal disposition played a part in the success of the mentoring relationship. Without openness on the part of the mentee, an honest relationship could not develop and the mentor could not truly know the mentee. Lamar and Adam both said they did not share things with their mentors. Lamar stated, "I'm just not a person to talk to just anybody about my problems." Lamar said he was overly confident and not interested in sharing personal information with his mentor. Multiple times, Adam referred to himself as shy and not easily able to share personal thoughts and feelings. For Lamar and Adam, their mentors could not develop close relationships because Adam and Lamar did not disclose personal information. Becca also stated that she was shy, but both she and Trianna were more transparent and willing to open up their lives to their mentors. As such, they experienced much closer relationships.

Family context. An additional moderating factor identified by Rhodes (2005) was family context. While parental relationships can sometimes be strained during

adolescence, all four participants referred to their parents in a positive manner. When discussing a difficult family matter, Lamar spoke of his mother with great respect. Lamar's mother and mentor communicated occasionally by phone but more often kept in touch through Facebook. While Lamar may not have connected with his mentor, he observed positive interactions between his mentor and mother. When Adam spoke of his mother, she was often acting as the intermediary when Adam had not called his mentor. She also was an advocate when Adam's mentor made a comment to Adam about his weight and eating habits. More than once, Adam spoke of his parents' desire for him to find employment.

Trianna spoke of her parents throughout her interview. Trianna spoke of their excitement when she entered the program. Trianna's parents were a positive influence on her mentoring relationship. When speaking of her parents, Trianna said,

> I believe I was the only one, no, two of us, were the only ones with a two-parent household. Biological parents. And I think that makes a difference, especially working within a school system, I definitely see a difference. And so I have both of my parents pushing me so I can have more than what they have. That's kind of been kind of the motto we have, "You work hard to get what you want."

When discussing her college major, Trianna's parents were concerned about her switching to a major that might not provide the job they had originally envisioned for her. Although unsure of her decision, they supported her. Later, Trianna said,

> One thing my parents have taught me though, never let it be about the money, because they had to live lives where they worked for the money and they let me know right up front, if you need money, it will come.

Trianna shared that her father was well known in her community. His role in the

community, combined with her school leadership positions, were responsibilities for

Trianna. Trianna said that wherever she went, she felt someone was watching her. As a

sixth grader, Trianna had a negative experience with her initial mentor who had racial

overtones. Trianna's father became involved in the process of finding her new mentor.

Trianna said,

> My dad did say he wanted to be a part of this process in finding a new mentor. He
>
> did not want what happened with the first mentor to happen again. They (both
>
> parents) definitely didn't want my mentor, who would be guiding for the next six
>
> years plus, to see my color before anything.
>
> Trianna's parents supported and encouraged her relationship with the mentor she

had for the next 6 years in the program. Likewise Trianna's new mentor appreciated

Trianna's parents. Trianna said both families would occasionally meet. When describing

the experience of meeting her new mentor, Trianna said,

> I want to say our families went out to dinner, I think we went to dinner, because
>
> she firmly believed that my parents should know who I'm going to be spending
>
> time with and riding in a vehicle with, and just safety precautions. And she
>
> understood from a parent's point of view. And I am a daddy's girl, and so it was
>
> more like 51 questions instead of 21 questions, and she admired that about my
>
> father as well.

Clearly, for Trianna, this parent/mentor relationship was a win-win situation. Within

Rhode's framework, Trianna's parents, as a moderating factor, strengthened and

supported Trianna's relationship with her mentor.

> Becca's parents had gone through a divorce just as Becca entered the program,

and her father had recently moved to Pennsylvania. Becca referred to this as a difficult

time in her family. During her interview, the move was her only reference to her father.

Of this time, Becca said, "So while the divorce was still happening is when Nancy came

in. And she knew my mom." Becca spoke of her mother talking to her mentor and

asking how her mentor was doing. While Becca did not include as much discussion

about her mother, she said her mentor and mother had a good relationship. Becca's

discussion of her parent's divorce was a contrast to Trianna's discussion of her home life,

but this did not appear to hinder her relationship with her mentor. Instead, Becca referred

to her mentor as a second mom.

During their interviews, the participants commented on communication between

the parent and the mentor. Having their parents support their mentoring relationships

contributed to the success of the experience.

Quality of relationship. The quality of the relationship was the overriding theme

of this study. The mentee/mentor relationship impacted the amount of influence the

participants perceived as having occurred as a result of their mentoring experience. From

Lamar's perspective, the relationship was nonexistent. From Adam's perspective, it was

disappointing. Both Becca and Trianna gave a positive description of their mentoring

experience. Within the "quality of the relationship" theme, the most prevalent subthemes

were the bonding experience, mentor attunement, and the current status of the mentoring

relationship.

Mentor bonding through activities. While Citizen Scholars mentors spent time

with their mentees in structured activities planned by the program, the majority of the

mentor/mentee activities were not organized by the program. How much time and the

type of mentor/mentee activities were up to mentor discretion. Upon entering the

program, the mentor, mentee, and mentee's parents signed a contract. Mentors were

instructed to meet with their mentee once a month and make contact through emails or phone calls once a week. Program follow-up on contact was sporadic. Mentee experiences in the area of mentor contact differed greatly as did their perceptions of their mentoring relationship. Time spent together and how that time was spent was an indicator of relationship quality.

Activities mentioned by the mentees included dinners out, operas, family cookouts, football games, and a robotic competition. Table 6 provides a list of activities mentioned by the mentee. While the list may not include all the activities, it includes the activities referred to by the participants during their interviews.

Table 6

Mentor/Mentee Activities

Participant	Activity	Descriptor
Adam	Chucky Cheese Pizza	"To make me feel comfortable"
	Movies	"We went a few times"
	Shooting BB guns	"It was fun"
	Robotic Competition	"It was like really cool"
	Worked with bees	"Which I did not like"
	Made shelving	"It was cool for a lot of hard work."
	Worked in the garden	"I wanted to be in the kitchen and play games."
Lamar	Operas	"I did not like the operas."
	Plays	"I can't say nothing about my scholar mentor
	Movies	besides operas and plays. That's the only thing I remember."
Becca	Went to mentors house	"Are we done already?"
	Cook outs	"You could connect."
	Watched football games	"We would watch the game together."
	Picked up trash	"It turned out to be a good thing."
Trianna	Wofford sporting events	"I really really enjoyed it!"
	Plays	"She got me out of my comfort zone."
	Golf	"I never got the urge to go back."
	Dinners out	"It was spectacular."

While amount of mentor contact varied between students, most mentors met with their mentee on a monthly basis. Both Adam and Lamar expressed disappointment in the activities they did with their mentor, while Becca and Trianna enjoyed the mentor/mentee activities.

During the interview, Adam's comments vacillated between enjoying the activities and being disappointed in the time spent with his mentor. Going to Chucky Cheese was the first activity Adam and his mentor did together. Adam said this was fun and that his mentor chose this location so Adam would be comfortable. When asked what activity stood out in his mind, he said,

Well the coolest thing, he would take me to places I would never go to really. I'm a sort of wimpy. And it started when I was younger, but he took me to, I don't know what you call it, but it was some robot, he used to build robotics, but people who build robot and have like a competition thing, and it just blew my mind, because I was like a weird nerd, and I still am, but we just got together and see all these cool robots doing different things, and he like walked me around with all the booths, with little patch things for like the robot teams and stuff. And I have a bunch of them on my bed, but that's a big thing that we did, because it was a long trip. Back then I thought it was. It was like a two-hour drive I think. So it was far away from my mom at the time, but that's probably the most memorable thing, like early on, because it was like really cool and I was a little kid and went "Oh, yeah!"

The trip to the robotics competition included a 2-hour car trip and a competition that made a strong impression on Adam. Adam described it as the "coolest" thing they

did. During other periods of the interview, Adam would describe some activities as "weird." This adjective was not used when describing the robotics competition. Both the robotics competition and the Chucky Cheese pizza outing were discussed early in the interview. As the interview progressed and as Adam became more comfortable, the descriptions became less enthusiastic.

Adam stated that as he got older, he and his mentor did fewer "fun" activities together, saying,

> Once I was out of the kid phase, I guess, he kind of just like did more adult things, like we would just go eat and chat, and that's like an adult thing to do, and I can't blame him for it, but that's all we pretty much did.

Adam was not ready to give up the fun activities. During the interview, he stated that he was still a kid and enjoyed doing fun things. When asked if activities were based around growth and learning, Adam said,

> Yeah, kind of. But, I mean, I can't really remember what we did. We had to do things. It was seriously once a month. For the most part I wouldn't say it was exciting things. But that's not their job I feel like. Like they're not placed there to blow money on kids that aren't theirs. It should be a learning thing also, like, I don't know. Like for the balance.

Adam was aware of the need to provide educational support, but the element of fun was important to Adam; and in his opinion, fun was often missing.

Adam's mentor raised honeybees and he spent some time teaching Adam about the bees, which Adam said made him nervous. They also spent some time doing yard work; Adam remembers getting sunburned and being really hot. Overall, Adam was disappointed in the activities he did with his mentor, saying, "Like if you're going to

spend seven years with someone, like you're committed, but you all should have common interests or something." Adam also had to call his mentor every Sunday evening. When he missed phone calls, his mentor would call his mother. Adam said the purpose of the phone calls would be to check in. He said,

I did have to call every week. It isn't that terrible calling once a week, but when I'm like 10 years old, and not much is happening to my life. So he's like, "What happened?" "Nothing, I went to school." I mean it was kind of repetitive, but I don't know.

When reflecting on their time spent together, Adam stated, "My experience wasn't as fantastic as other peoples, I guess. But, it was just like the weird, we didn't really connect really, other than like being a support for school and stuff." Adam further stated,

Should it be something fun all the time? Because I want to do fun things, because I'm still young too, I think. But it's good to have this weird educational thing, because I remember it as more what me and Bobby did. Like it wasn't always fun, because like there were sometimes I didn't want to go.

Adam understood that the relationship needed to provide educational support, but he also thought the activities should be something he would enjoy. While Adam said that his relationship with his mentor was good and not a bad thing, Adam stated that there was a "disconnect" with his mentor and that other mentees had good relationships with their mentors.

Like Adam, Lamar did not experience activities that contributed to a bond with his mentor. Between his sixth-grade year and high school graduation, Lamar had two mentors. His first mentor was involved in the program for less than a year. Lamar said he did not remember doing anything with his first mentor. His second mentor stayed with

him until graduation. When asked about his second mentor, he said,

> I talked to her a lot more, but the things we did weren't as interesting as what I
> hoped. Like we would go to plays and operas and stuff. And some of them were
> fun, but some of them weren't, because a middle school and high school boy
> doesn't want to do certain things like that.

This statement was perhaps the most positive reflection of his mentor. Lamar played football, basketball, and ran track. When asked if his mentor came to see any of his games or attended any track meets, Lamar simply stated, "No." Lamar said his mentor did not know him. The activities they did together were negative experiences for Lamar. Sadly, his mentor did not reach out to try to find those areas that could strengthen her connection with Lamar.

> I can't say nothing about my scholar mentor besides the operas and the plays.
> That's the only thing I remember, the operas and the plays, and that one art
> museum. I like the art museum, but the operas, I did not like the operas.

When asked how important the activities and conversation were to the mentoring experience, he stated, "I think both are important, when you are in the 5th through the 10th or 11th grade, the activities as well, but once you get older, is more like about talking and things like that." Lamar said he would have "liked to go to a football game or basketball game or something like that." Lamar's mentor was a female, and he said this contributed to a lack of bonding in their relationship. He said, "Like I think it would have been better if I had had a male mentor."

Trianna's and Becca's experiences were a sharp contrast to Lamar's and Adam's experiences. While they both had occasional activities that they did not enjoy, the majority of their reflections were positive. The experiences they each shared with their

mentors strengthened their relationships. Becca said, "We did a lot of stuff." Becca also

recalled,

> We would go out to eat. When I would go to her house, we would grill out. They
>
> are big Carolina fans, and I'm a big Clemson fan, so we would watch the game
>
> together. If we weren't together she would always text me, 'Go Gamecocks!'
>
> whatever. One thing that we did a lot was the Twilight series. When they were
>
> coming out in theaters, as I was growing up. So we made sure every premier,
>
> we'd go and watch the Twilight series. So we did that a whole lot, as well.

When asked how she felt after spending time with her mentor, Becca said,

> Almost like I didn't want it to be over. Like your second mom. You don't really
>
> want to leave your mom. Most of the time we would spend all day together.
>
> Sometimes I would be ready to go back home and lay down and do something,
>
> but most of the time it was, "Oh, are we done already?" "That's all we're going
>
> to do?" So I think that was a good thing too.

Saying her mentor was like a second mom speaks volumes about the close and

caring nature of their relationship. Becca's mentor was an administrator in Becca's

school district, and Becca frequently saw and met with her mentor in school. Being in

close proximity to Becca on an almost daily basis provided an ongoing feeling of support.

Additionally, due to her experience in the schools, Becca's mentor had been exposed to

the trials and needs of adolescents. The experience that Becca's mentor had in the

schools likely contributed to the relationship's success. For Becca, it was the activities

that allowed her to get to know her mentor that she enjoyed most. Becca said her favorite

thing to do with her mentor was to go to her house and cook out.

> It would be just me, her and her husband and her dogs. We would go outside.

We'd play catch with the dogs. They live right near Lake Lyman, I think. So all

they had to do was walk to the end of their road and there was a dock at the end of

the road. So we'd go down there with the dogs. Just go to hang out at the lake

with dogs and grill out, and watch football and stuff like that. I think that was

probably . . . the inexpensive things were actually probably my favorite, just

because you actually could connect with somebody.

Like Becca, Trianna had a close relationship with her mentor; and like Lamar and

Adam, she had two mentors. Her first experience was not positive, but her second most

definitely was. Trianna said,

When I received Miss Karen and Mr. James, it was more than just I'm going to

pick you up for your plant sale or volunteer service this weekend. She went out

of her way, out of her way, raising young children at the time. Charles is 11 now

and Margaret, they're 3 years apart, so 8, and at the time they were babies. They

still needed a lot of attention, but they were right there with us, going to

basketball games, a car seat here and a car seat there and I'm in the middle. I

absolutely loved it.

Trianna spent time with the whole family. She spoke of Charles and Margaret

running up to hug her when they saw her. Like Becca, Trianna bonded with not only her

mentor, but also her mentor's family. Trianna talked to her mentor at least once a week

when she was younger and at least a couple times a month as she got older and more

involved in school. During our conversation, Trianna never referred to phone

conversations as obligatory. For Trianna, conversations with her mentor provided

support and strengthened their bond.

Lamar, Trianna, and Becca enjoyed sports. Becca and her mentor would watch

football games together. Her mentor was able to use this interest in sports to develop their relationship and strengthen their mentor-mentee bond. While Becca did not recall her mentor ever going to any of her softball games, she still expressed interest in their outcomes. Becca said, "She would always ask how they went. How did the game go? How'd this go?" Trianna's mentor attended Trianna's games; and when she did not make it to a game, she too would call and check on how it went.

Lamar's mentor never went to any of his sporting events and never inquired about them. Even though Lamar played three high school sports, his mentor showed no apparent interest in this part of his life. For Trianna and Becca, their mentors demonstrated an interest in this part of their lives; this interest strengthened the relationships' bonds.

Like Lamar, Becca thought the activities were important:

I think that the activities part is actually pretty important. I don't want to say you have to go out and spend money. But like we would go to her house, and we'd go to the lake, or we would watch football games. But as a kid, you don't want to just not do anything. You don't want to go sit in wherever and just absolutely do nothing. As a kid you want to do something. So I think the activities part, especially in the younger years of the mentoring program, I think is actually a big portion of it.

How a mentee and mentor spent their time influenced the development of the relationship. It increased a bond or it left the mentor and mentee as a formal relationship with no connection or bond development. One way to ensure that an activity was enjoyable to a mentee was to provide choice to the mentee. For the mentee, providing options helped create a sense that the mentee was also a contributor to the relationship's

success. Trianna reflected,

> She cared about my interests. She didn't just say, "let's go to dinner," you know.
> Do you want barbeque, or cheeseburger, what any kid would want, or some pizza?
> She asked me what I wanted. She'd say we have three things we could do, you
> choose.

Trianna's mentor would give Trianna two or three suggestions and then let Trianna pick from the suggestions. Becca's mentor sometimes made the activity choice, and sometimes Becca was given options. When asked if she was given options, Becca said, "Yeah, I mean she would, or some days she would be like, 'Hey, let's do this. This is what we're doing today.'"

Lamar's mentor did not provide options. Had options been provided, Lamar would not have attended operas and possibly his experience could have been more positive. While his mentor's intention may have been to broaden Lamar's horizons, it would have been more productive if a more established relationship had first existed. As Lamar said, it was not something a high school boy who plays sports is interested in attending. From Lamar's perspective, he could not relate to an opera and he was not interested in the experience. Additionally, Lamar was not secure enough in the relationship to let his mentor know that this was something he was not interested in doing.

For the participants in this study, the time spent with their mentor was key to relationship development. The types of activities either helped strengthen the bond or they decreased the potential for bond development. Lamar could only recall one experience he enjoyed with his mentor. Becca loved most everything but said it was the inexpensive things that were her favorite because she could connect with her mentor.

Becca used the word "connect" with her mentor and Adam used the word "disconnect" while describing his mentoring relationship. While Becca and Trianna's mentors exposed them to activities that would widen their horizons, the activities their mentees spoke of most often were those that were associated with the mentee's interests. Their mentors' focus was on building a relationship and not on developing the mentee for a single future outcome.

Attunement and caring. In order for a mentee to share his or her thoughts and feelings, a sense of security must exist. When mentees talked about their comfort level, they were indicating a sense of security and trust. Becca said that she had a high level of trust for her mentor; she said that trust still exists. When describing her relationship, she said,

> Basically she's like my second mom. Like I said, the personal relationship was a good thing for me. I honestly had a lot of trouble at home, but some aspects were worse than others. So she was like my second mom. She was somebody I could go and talk to, and be close with, and actually go do stuff with. So that was a good thing for me in the sense of having a second mom.

Becca's comment that her mentor was like a second mom indicates a strong sense of security. The trust Becca placed in her mentor was implied when she said she was close and could go and talk to her mentor in the midst of family difficulties. Becca also said her mentor provided a listening ear: "A sense of hey, somebody's here. I'm thinking about you. So I guess security would be a good word for that." Becca's mentor brought a sense of reassurance and refuge for Becca.

Adam did not feel comfortable talking about himself or sharing personal information about his life with his mentor. Adam referred to his mentor as a "stranger"

when they first started meeting. He said, "For a long time I was uncomfortable, not like in a creepy way, but you're still a stranger." When asked if his mentor could have done anything to increase his comfort level, Adam said, "I would probably say, 'No' just because that's how I am." He continued,

> I mean he wasn't a parent. I wish he would become a parent, but he's the same age as them, so he was just like it's kind of like a parent, but not really, so I wouldn't tell him things.

When Adam said his mentor was not a parent, it indicated a lack of comfort. When Adam's mentor made activity suggestions, Adam did not feel comfortable sharing his true thoughts:

> I mean from what I remember, when we would talk on the phone or be out eating one day, he would say like, "Hey, there's this thing coming up next month. Do you want to go to this?" And I was like, "Oh, yes! It sounds fun." Even if in my mind I'm like that sounds terribly boring, but I wouldn't tell him that. I wouldn't tell anybody that. I would go, "That's cool." Who knows, I might like it, but he wouldn't force me to do it. It was always like "Do you want to go?" I would just say yes. It was my fault. But I didn't feel comfortable telling him no.
>
> Even if Adam thought it sounded terribly boring, he did not feel comfortable

telling his mentor. Lamar, like Adam, did not feel comfortable telling his mentor his thoughts about going to the operas. He said, "I didn't like come out and say, 'I don't like going to opera.' I just didn't think that would be appropriate to say." A high level of comfort and security would have helped Lamar explain to his mentor his true thoughts on their opera outings.

Throughout her interview, Trianna spoke of how close she was with her mentor.

Even though Trianna and her mentor were not "of the same color," Trianna still felt

comfortable going to her mentor about a racial incident that happened to her during

college. This was a traumatic event for Trianna, but she trusted her mentor and knew her

mentor would support her. Trianna was also comfortable going to her mentor for small

things like asking "what dress to wear for a picture."

As the participants recalled experiences and conversations with their mentors,

there was a large divide in the level of mentor attunement. When asked how well their

mentors knew them, answers ranged from "not at all" to "I would hope to say pretty

good!" In order to be sensitive to mentees' needs, mentors had to know their mentee and

be empathetic to those needs. Adam said his mentor did not know him at all, but Adam

acknowledged that he was partially to blame because he did not share personal thoughts

with his mentor. Adam said he talked to his mentor about school, saying, "I know I

complained a lot to him about classes. It was always classes pretty much." When asked

what advice he would have for mentors, Adam said,

> I feel like it's kind of weird, because me and Bobby didn't have this, but I feel
>
> like being able to relate more with the kid is a huge thing, or that's how I see it,
>
> just from mine and his issues. Not like issues, but that was a big thing for us, like
>
> I just couldn't relate to a lot of the stuff that he was into, but just to understand
>
> that kids are kids, and they want to have fun, and school is like . . . (mentors)
>
> should help, like keep them on track, but at the same time like you're there to help
>
> them and in life in general, I feel like. They should be able to trust you and talk to
>
> you.

In this passage, Adam described what he thought a mentoring relationship should

look like. Adam stated that he did not have this with Bobby. Adam's thoughts indicated

that there may have been a lack of attunement and lack of understanding in the relationship.

Like Adam, Lamar felt he and his mentor had a surface relationship. Lamar stated, "I just think the main thing was we didn't connect." When asked if his mentor knew him, Lamar asserted, "Not very well. I mean, she met my family, so she could tell you like my family members' names and things like that, but not really." He continued, "I mean she knew I liked sports, but I don't think she really, I would say no, because if she did then we probably would have did other stuff." Lamar's interests were in sports, and his mentor took him to operas and plays. To Lamar, this indicated a lack of mentor knowledge about him and a lack of mentor attunement and empathy.

Both Becca and Trianna said their mentors knew them well. They looked forward to spending time with their mentors. When asked how well her mentor knew her, Becca reflected,

> I would hope to say pretty good, just because we were together a lot. She knew my love for sports. She knew how to push me academically. She knew my family. She just knew the little things about me that some people didn't really know. And that helped with my self-confidence a little bit, just because I knew I had somebody there that no matter what, I could go to.

At a later point in the interview, Becca said,

> I mean I just couldn't have asked for a better one, in the sense of the way I was treated and how much she cared about me. She cares about my family. She cared about all aspects of my life, and not just school.

Clearly, Becca felt that her mentor knew her well and cared about her. It was evident that her mentor understood what Becca needed in their relationship and she

provided for those needs.

> Trianna also had a mentor who understood and cared for her:
>
> Literally, if I was going through something, she knew about it, not just
> academically, but like I said there were times I didn't want to go to my parents, I
> went to Mrs. McCord. She knew when my games were and she would text me to
> say good luck or "Let me know how you did." She knew what my interests were,
> what I should have been exposed to, and was going to a place. She was all about
> bettering me, not just academically.

Trianna's strongest connection with her mentor was her Wofford connection, but her
mentor expanded their connection beyond Trianna's college goals. For Trianna, it was
inspiring to have an adult outside of the home who truly knew and cared for her.

Current status of the relationship. The participants were also asked about recent
contact with their mentors. Again, responses differed considerably. Continued contact
with a mentor would indicate a genuine connection. After high school graduation,
mentors are no longer officially involved in the program and mentees are involved in the
program to the extent of checking in with the administrators to receive the program's
scholarship money. After high school graduation, there is not a contact requirement on
the part of the mentor and mentee. Mentees have become immersed in college life and
may not be as accessible for their mentors. Trianna had the most frequent contact with
her mentor. When asked if they kept in touch, Trianna answered,

> And to this day, throughout college, we kept in touch and today and even if it's
> just a quick text or a Facebook message or a picture. She has 2 kids that I actually
> love, and every time we see each other, they still go to Wofford basketball games,
> and if I'm there, we run up to see each other, and embrace each other, so she's

been more than a mentor. That's really an understatement in my opinion.

Trianna's mentor graduated from Trianna's dream college and attended football and

basketball games. They would arrange to meet at the games. Trianna said,

> College, freshman and sophomore year. Every game they were very consistent
>
> . . . . We would wave from the sides because Charles and Margaret would slide
>
> down the long sides with their little cardboard boxes. And then during halftime
>
> they would come and they would park out in the same section every single time,
>
> with my parents, my family. And they'd come up and we'd hug, hug, hug and
>
> then we'd go get an Icee.

Trianna finished by saying, "Sometimes I would wait it out just for halftime,

because it would be really hot, those afternoon games. I just wait it out, just for a hug."

As a college junior and senior, Trianna said her mentor would send her texts that said,

"Hope to see you tonight. We'll be there. If you can, stop by."

When speaking of her current contact with her mentor, Trianna said, "You know,

it was just in or out of Wofford, or sometimes at the grocery store, and then so it was

good to just check up and see how everything was going. I really do appreciate that."

Trianna said she and her mentor will always remain in contact.

Becca recently reconnected with her mentor. They did not stay in contact during

college but met with each other after college graduation. Becca shared, "I actually just

went back out to eat with her a couple, about 2 months ago. I hadn't seen her since I

graduated from high school. And we went back out to eat, and we caught up." Becca

continued,

> It was good to catch up with her. And I found out that she's retired. Actually one
>
> of her dogs . . . it's kind of sad. One of her dogs that I'd grown up knowing,

actually passed away. So we talked about that a little bit. Talked about her husband, and talked about my family. It was good to reconnect.

During their conversation, Becca shared what she was doing and found out what had happened in her mentor's life. Their relationship was not one sided but a sharing of both lives. Becca said,

> We talked about it when we went out to eat. They got a new dog, so she wants me to come over and come see her husband and she actually said they redid their kitchen completely, redid it completely, and wants me to go and see her house and stuff like that, and go hang out. So hopefully we can do that sometime soon.

For Becca, it was good to reconnect. Becca is completely independent and although she is independent, she knows Nancy will continue to be a support for her.

Adam also met with his mentor during college. They would meet once a year for his birthday. When asked if he had talked or met with his mentor recently, Adam said,

> No. Since I started college, we would pretty much talk on, well, not talk, I mean, I remember it was pretty much on birthday type deals or start of the school year. He would call me; I mean I never call him, so it's my fault too. But, I kind of shied away I guess. But we would usually go out for my birthday. We would go out for my birthday and just eat like we normally would, and we'd catch up for that year, like, and just talk. It was pretty much it. I haven't seen him since last September, I think. About a year.

Although not frequent, Adam's mentor made it a point to stay in touch with Adam. Adam also stated that he never called his mentor, so he could be partially to blame for the lack of communication. When asked if his mentor knew he had graduated from college, Adam said,

Yeah, he texted me. And I feel awkward, and I thought he was wanting to come, but then he didn't. It was weird, but he texted me, and he was like I see the big date is coming up tomorrow. And I was like, "Yeah." And then he didn't come. But there was my family there. He probably had to work, I don't know. I just didn't push it.

Adam and his mentor met approximately once a year after Adam graduated from high school. When Adam's mentor took the initiative to reach out to Adam, it indicated that their relationship was more than a surface relationship. It is worth noting that it was Bobby who reached out to Adam; yet when in the program, Bobby required Adam to make the contact. Unfortunately, Bobby did not make it to Adam's college graduation, a life milestone and goal of the Citizen Scholars Program.

Lamar has not spoken to his mentor since his freshman year in college. He called to let his mentor know he graduated from college and would be attending graduate school, but he never heard back.

Of the four participants, Lamar has had the least amount of contact with his mentor since high school graduation. Lamar had the least information to share about his mentor, stating that their activities were operas and plays, placing an emphasis on the operas. He did not feel like his mentor knew him at all, yet he did spend time with his mentor doing various activities. For Adam, some activities were enjoyable, but some were not. Adam met with his mentor about once a year, but he did not appear to think this was significant. Becca had met her mentor and spoke about future plans for getting together, as did Trianna. Both Becca and Trianna had close relationships with their mentors and spoke in positive terms about their experiences with their mentors.

Social-emotional development. Rhodes (2005) identified social-emotional

development, cognitive development, and identity development as domains that are positively influenced by mentoring relationships. While three developmental pathways have been separately identified, they are closely linked and often overlap and influence the amount of development in another domain. Within the superordinate theme of social-emotional development, the themes of personal growth, emotional coaching, and mentor support are discussed.

Personal growth. For the mentees, there was great discrepancy in the area of emotional growth. Two of the participants did not attribute any personal growth to their mentor, but the statements made by Becca were so strong that this area warranted attention. Additionally, the lack of positive statements in a domain that the researcher expected to be a predominant theme should be noted. Lamar stated that his mentoring relationship had no impact on his development. Adam also said the relationship's main area of influence was on academics. During the interview, Adam discussed an incident with his mentor that may have been detrimental to his social-emotional development. Adam said he and his mentor "got in a spat one time." Adam elaborated,

> This was 7th grade, it had to be. But it was very early on. It had to be 7th or 8th grade. All I remember is that he said something or like, I don't know what it was. I know he and Mom argued about me one time, because he mentioned my weight. And I was gaining weight and he mentioned it to me. And it made me kind of mad, but at the same time, I was like, "I don't care." But not really, I did. And my mom got really mad and it was like none of his business, and he shouldn't be talking about my kid needing to lose weight, and what are you eating, blah, blah. And even Mindy got in on it, and it was a huge thing, and I didn't hang out with him for a few months, and then, Mindy talked to him, and told him it wasn't his

job to do that kind of thing. Like he shouldn't be strict and all that, but then

things went back to normal. I don't know. It was just a very big deal.

Adam finished his reflection by saying it was "weird, an issue, and that was one

of the big, clear things that happened." This confrontation did not move Adam's social-

emotional self-concept in a positive direction. While he did not say it had a negative

effect on him, he said it was a big deal and he clearly remembers what was said.

In contrast to Lamar and Adam's experiences, when commenting on personal

growth, Becca said,

> Socially, I would think in a big way. Just because like I said, when I first met her,
>
> I didn't know anything, like I just wanted that one person. I wanted to stick with
>
> what I knew. And she helped me grow out of my comfort zone a little bit and find
>
> different things that I liked doing, and I realized I actually can talk to somebody I
>
> don't know, and form a relationship with them.

Becca's mentor helped her grow socially and helped her grow out of her comfort

zone. Interpersonal relationships were a strength for Becca's mentor and she shared this

skill with Becca. Later, Becca commented on whether she had changed as a result of her

mentoring relationship:

> Yeah, most definitely. Now there were still times where I was still not going to
>
> talk to somebody if or not going to immediately open up to somebody that I don't
>
> know, but I feel like that's everybody in a way. But I would be more willing to go
>
> up to somebody and speak, rather than put my head down and walk on by and not
>
> make eye contact. So I was more willing to do that. My mom actually in my
>
> senior year in high school called me a social butterfly. And I was like, that
>
> wouldn't have been that way a couple of years ago. Just from being around her.

Becca continued speaking about how her mentor helped her grow:

Oh, just the shyness and standoffish part of me, but the standoffish part was what

she helped me with. Socially in high school I guess just because I was an athlete,

I didn't have much difficulty. I mean in a sense I was, I wouldn't say I was a

loner, or felt alone, because I was an athlete. I had people I could go to, but not

anybody I could truly trust. And that, I think, came from my shyness,

standoffishness, and that's where Nancy helped bring that through.

Trianna's mentor was also empathetic to the academic pressures Trianna felt as a

middle and high school student. Adam and Lamar said conversations with their mentor

usually revolved around school and academics, while Trianna's mentor, Karen, gave

Trianna opportunities to escape from those pressures. Trianna's parents put a strong

emphasis on academics,

I have both of my parents pushing me so I can have more than what they have.

That's kind of been kind of the motto we have: You work hard to get what you

want. And so like I said, academics were definitely a strong push. And Mrs.

McCord, she definitely pushed me academically, like I said, she was definitely my

advocate in the classroom whenever I needed her to be, but she was kind of like

my outlet away from the constant pressure.

Later, Trianna continued, "When I needed her just to, when I needed to step away

from all the craziness, what I thought was crazy at that age, she definitely served as a

great outlet, along with her family." Trianna's mentor helped Trianna with finding a

balance with her academics and provided needed times of relaxation.

Emotional coaching. Emotional coaching helps youth manage feelings and

negative experiences. Emotional coaching occurred through mentor support, feedback,

and affirmation. When asked if her mentor helped her through difficult times, Becca's reply was an example of emotional coaching. Becca said, "She just told me everything was going to work out eventually. Everything has it own way of working out. There's a reason for everything. (She) Just made sure that I was OK. Made sure to constantly check in."

When asked if she ever thought about how her mentor would advise her, Becca's response again reflected emotional coaching. Her mentor coached her on how to handle difficult situations and challenges.

> Yeah, sometimes most definitely. Especially things that are going to hit me hard emotionally. The biggest thing I learned from her was everything happens for a reason. So that is always in the back of my mind. But in the sense of like you said "resolution," I don't really think I think of it that way. Think of her solving problems that way, but the biggest thing I took from her, was everything happens for a reason. And I remember to think about that when something is not going my way that day.

Becca's mentor taught Becca to move forward when she encountered obstacles. After an injury that put her softball career on hold, her mentor told her to look at the big picture, to look beyond softball. She told her not to dwell on things in the past that could not be changed.

> Um, I guess you could just go off of moving forward. Her, I guess personality, really helped with the moving forward aspect, because she was always looking for what's going to happen next. She wasn't the type of person to look back at something and be like, "Well, I should have done this differently." So that's another thing I think I really picked up from her was you can't change what

happened before. So the only thing you can do is just keep going, and keep trying

to find a way to make it better, however it may be.

At different times in her life, Becca's mentor gave Becca advice to follow when

life was difficult or when "things were not going her way." First, she told her that

everything would be okay and that things have a way of working out. Secondly, she told

her that sometimes things happen for a reason. Lastly, her mentor said not to dwell on

the past and things you cannot change. Instead, look forward and move on. Furthermore,

her mentor not only coached her on these skills but, according to Becca, she modeled

them in the way she lived and that made an impression on Becca.

Strong examples of emotional coaching were also found in Trianna's description

of her relationship with her mentor. Trianna was an "A" student in high school. During

her junior year, she was having difficulty in one of her classes and Trianna's mentor

provided support and modeled how to navigate through the situation.

> I was taking a forensics class, and for some reason I just, I don't consider myself
>
> one of those students that cause much trouble, or any trouble at all in high school.
>
> But it was a class and I was not a C student at all. I was barely a B student,
>
> because my parents were very strict when it came to academics. And I just could
>
> not pull a B in this forensics class. It was an elective class. It wasn't needed. I
>
> was just taking it because it was something new, the first time they offered it, and
>
> I met with this teacher multiple times to try to figure out what I'm doing wrong,
>
> what opportunities could I receive, and my parents of course got involved, and of
>
> course Mrs. McCord knew about the situation, and she said, "I'm going to step
>
> in." And she came to the school and met with my teacher at the time, and she sent
>
> me follow-up emails bi-weekly, just checking on me, just to make sure . . . there

were some students who would say the teacher kind of picked on me. I don't want to play the victim card at all, but she definitely was an advocate for me. Not only academically but also socially and emotionally.

Trianna went on to say that her mentor stood up for her and "she didn't back down." Trianna continued,

The teacher kind of intimidated me as well, but I did feel like the entire time, up until it happened, I felt like I was wrong in the situation, and I'm going to do basically what my teacher tells me to do, just to make whatever I can better. But when I realized and Mrs. McCord told me, "You just keep doing what you're doing," I felt that maybe I'm not the wrong one in the situation.

Trianna's mentor reassured her and helped Trianna not lose hope when she was not able to maneuver the situation. Trianna stated that this grade and all her grades were important for her college applications.

But when Mrs. McCord told me, and she had that strong backbone and she let me know, "No, you're not doing anything wrong." Because that's really what I was afraid of, that I was doing something wrong. Because, I do not disrespect adults. I was not raised that way. And, by no means, I did not want anyone to think I was a slacker, especially in the classroom.

Trianna said her mentor's involvement, "felt very encouraging, and I felt very motivated. She kind of gave myself a backbone as well." When Trianna's mentor became involved, it provided support that Trianna needed and was a personal affirmation for how Trianna handled the situation. In addition to teaching Trianna that sometimes you need a strong backbone, Karen taught Trianna that when you have done what is required and when you have sought help, you should trust in yourself.

During college, Trianna discovered that a future legal career path might not provide the personal fulfillment she had hoped for in a job. Because she had no clear path ahead of her and because her childhood dream had been to be a lawyer, her parents were apprehensive about the change. It was her mentor who advised her to pursue what she would enjoy.

> I kind of had in my mind that I was going to grow up to be a lawyer, and nobody could tell me any different. But my reasons weren't the reasons that I wanted them to be. It's because the people around me encouraged it and wanted it, and kind of talked it up, so it would come to fruition and Mrs. McCord told me to "do what you want to do. You have to stick to it because this is your career. You're going to do this the rest of your life, and you have to enjoy what you do for the rest of your life."

> Changing majors was a difficult decision for Trianna. She struggled with an unknown career path as well as the thought of disappointing her parents. She said,

> My dad was a little upset to see his baby girl, first born, but also baby girl, you know, since she was a little 11-year-old girl, "I'm going to be a lawyer one day," and then change to, "I don't know what I want to do."

Trianna did switch majors, and it proved to be a good decision. Trianna reflected on her job as a middle school career counselor:

> I absolutely . . . I'm going to be honest . . . I told myself I cannot handle what I considered "kids," but literally I absolutely love, love, love my job, solely because of the students. And when teachers said that, I thought it was very cliché, because they said you teach because you love what you do, but mainly because you love the students. And I mean that's so true. That is the honest truth. I literally wake

up every morning . . . I don't care if I get 3 hours of sleep or 10 hours of sleep, I'm excited to go to work.

Trianna's mentor gave Trianna the strength and support she needed to leave a known career path and move in a new direction. It was the words, "Do what you want to do," that helped her sort through her decision. Trianna is in the early stages of applying to graduate school to get her degree as a school counselor. She said she is still using Karen's advice "to do what you want to do."

Support. A third theme falling under the social-emotional umbrella was the construct of support. Again, the participants had very different experiences. When asked if he ever went to his mentor during challenging times, Lamar responded, "No, I never did." At another point during the interview, Lamar said he just did not have that kind of relationship with his mentor. Lamar was not willing to ask for support or share details about his life. His mentor was not attuned to Lamar's interests. She did not approach the relationship with the quiet persistence that is necessary when attempting to create a mentoring relationship with a hesitant or passive mentee.

Adam's mentor may not have known Adam well, but when asked if he recalled times when his mentor may have advised him, Adam replied,

I mean, and I could just speak generically, like if I would have a problem with something in general, he was always supportive, no matter what. And he was never like, "Oh, you have to do this." Or "You should do that," or it wasn't like a "tell me what to do" kind of deal. It was more like, hear my side of things and try to help what would best for me, kind of deal. So if I did ever have problems or would have, or if, I don't remember, I know he was supportive about it, and helped me through it. I should have went to him for stuff I guess, but maybe I

didn't have the need to. I didn't have the issues, I don't know.

While not all of Adam's statements indicated a close mentoring relationship, Adam said he could go to his mentor for help. When he did go for help, his mentor was supportive and did not give a strong opinion. Other than school-related subjects, Adam could not recall specific instances, but his overall perception was that he could go to his mentor for support.

When Trianna's mentor tried to help Trianna by meeting with Trianna's teacher, she was providing academic and emotional support. Trianna spoke of meeting Karen during college and discussing challenges during college. Her mentor provided support through her presence and through emails and phone calls. Her mentor also provided support when she went to Trianna's basketball, volleyball, and softball games. Trianna described the support she received with her school athletics:

She would come and support me, especially basketball games. They were huge basketball fans, with schedule permitting. The kids, as they grew up and needed daycare or school, I guess. She did make it to a couple of volleyball games, a lot of basketball games, and one or two softball games. It was really hard to control the kids outside in an open area, so she didn't make it, and I completely understood, but she would call me. She wasn't a mentor that really texted, but I appreciate a call, but she would call me and say, "Good luck!" before games occasionally. She would call me after games to let me know how it went, let me know how you did, and things like that. So she was definitely, and if she wasn't there physically, she was definitely there in spirit.

Trianna felt great support from her mentor with her athletics and academics, and this support also encouraged Trianna's school connectedness. When reflecting on her

mentor's support, Trianna stated,

> I knew Mrs. McCord would be there, so I went to her. And just always having . . .
> every time I fall I'm going to land on a pile of pillows, because I'm not going to
> hit the ground. I'm not going to hit anything hard, because she's going to be there
> to help me no matter what.

Becca also spoke of the support her mentor gave her. Like Adam and Trianna, Becca's mentor provided academic support, but it was having the opportunity to talk about the issues in her life that gave her the biggest support:

> I think the biggest thing that we talked about through that was my parents'
> divorce. It was going on around when I met her. I think it was actually finalized
> my 6th grade year. So we talked a lot about that. We talked about the death of my
> grandfather when I was in 10th grade. And those 2 things, the divorce of my
> parents and the death of my grandfather were probably two of the biggest things
> that I went through, and she really helped me with that, just in the sense that all I
> had to do was talk to her.

Becca finished by saying that she did not share everything with her mentor because she "always felt like somebody else's problems are bigger than mine." While Becca shared her difficulties surrounding two big events in her life, she did not share the smaller issues.

Cognitive development. Rhodes et al. (2006) identified exposure to new opportunities, development of knowledge and skills, intellectual challenge and guidance, and advancement of academic success as avenues that will increase cognitive development. Similar to the avenues identified by Rhodes, themes contributing to cognitive development identified in this research were "broadening horizons" and

"school and academics." Discussion of these themes will be split between Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

   Broadening horizons. When a mentor introduces a mentee to new challenges, cognitive growth ensues. Shared activities and conversations exposed the mentees to new people and experiences and often opened their view of the world (Rhodes, 2005).

   The researcher cannot know for certain why Lamar's mentor chose to take Lamar to operas and plays. This activity introduced Lamar to a different genre of musical performance and theater and perhaps this was a motivating factor for his mentor. When asked why his mentor chose those activities and if they talked about the performances, Lamar said, "I'm guessing she liked it maybe. We would talk about it after, but during we just sat there and watched. But after we would talk about it and say like how it was and everything like that." This was the full extent of the elaboration given by Lamar when describing the activities with his mentor. Lamar did not enjoy these activities; so for him, his mentoring experience did not broaden his horizons.

   Adam's mentor did expose him to activities that broadened his knowledge base. Adam said, "He would take me to places I would never go really." When Adam described going to the robotic competition, he described it as a completely new experience that perfectly fit his interests. The robotic competition made an impression on Adam, he enjoyed seeing and learning what other students were doing in the competition. Adam later told me he still had the patches from the competition on the wall in his bedroom. They planned on going back to the competition but never made it.

   Adam said he learned to build things out of wood with his mentor. He also described building storage shelves with his mentor. It was built over a period of several weeks and was something he had never done before. Adam stated,

He loves to build stuff, and he had this shed thing outside his house, and he would

teach me how to build things out of wood. We built things with a saw and like

weird building tools. I'm not fit for building. I'm not good at anything, but I

built like a whole shelf thing in his barn, and he helped me like set it up. It was

cool for a lot of hard work. But it was something I'd never done before, and I

helped him in the garden too.

Although Adam did not choose this particular activity, he stated that it was

something he had never done. He further said, "It was a lot. It gave me something to do

at least. It was like a little project, because I had never done that before. It was weird,

but I liked it." This activity also provided a sense of success and accomplishment for

Adam. Adam stated that he was not good at anything, but he was able to accomplish

building the shelves with his mentor.

Adam did not readily embrace all the activities he did with his mentor, but he was

exposed to careers and hobbies that he otherwise would not have been exposed to. When

Adam and his mentor worked with his mentor's bees, it was a new experience for Adam.

While it was not a fond memory for Adam, he said, "I helped him with bees once, which

I did not like. Because he has bees, and like it's nothing to like hate really." Although

unpleasant for Adam, the experience did expand his knowledge of bees and beekeeping.

To summarize, Adam considered the activities a positive learning experience. He said, "I

think it was just like he was my friend and showed me like new things."

Becca also stated that she grew from her mentoring experiences. Becca

considered social skills to be her biggest areas of growth, but her mentor Nancy also

developed Becca in other ways, too. Becca said, "She helped me grow out of my comfort

zone a little bit and find different things that I liked doing." One time Nancy and Becca

went out and picked up trash on the road. Becca reflected that her mentor and her

husband,

> Picked up the trash on the side of the road. And so we went and did that, and I
>
> was like "Why are we doing this? I don't understand?" Of course, I wasn't saying
>
> that, but of course I was going to do it, but within myself I was thinking back and
>
> I'm like more people should actually do that, rather than not . . . just throwing
>
> stuff out the window and stuff like that. But actually it turned out to be a good
>
> thing.

Becca saw it as a community service project, saying, "I think she was also

teaching me to help, not just, not just necessarily help people, but to help in every aspect

you can." At the time Becca said that picking up trash was a very boring thing to do, but

she then stated that she understood why she and her mentor did it. Becca's mentor was

teaching Becca to look around and find ways to help. In hindsight, Becca saw the value

of helping in the community.

Trianna's mentor Karen also contributed to Trianna's cognitive development by

exposing her to new ideas and activities. Both of Trianna's parents worked and did not

have the time to do many extra activities. Karen was able to expose Trianna to other

opportunities:

> She not only guided me through high school . . . just random things that I
>
> probably would not have been able to do without her guidance, just because both
>
> of my parents worked. My dad worked at night, and so it was hard outside my
>
> school extra-curricular activities with the sports, was very hard to get out in the
>
> community and be exposed to opportunities that were in Spartanburg County.

Trianna expressed her apprehension before going to a play with her mentor. She

stated that sports had been her main outside activity, so she was not sure she would enjoy going to a play:

> She actually got me out of my comfort zone, and we went to the Peace Center at the time to see a play. And I said, "I don't want to do this Mrs. McCord, I don't want to do it." And she said to just try it. And we tried it. And you don't know if you'll like it. And so we went along with another scholar and her mentor, and I've been going to plays ever since!

Trianna shared, "I absolutely love it!" She now goes to plays and said she likes to support smaller theaters and productions. Trianna further reflected on her mentor pushing her comfort zone:

> You know, every time I was like, "Let's go to a basketball game," and then it opened up, and she had to kind of push me to "Let's go to a play!" And I think she read me right and I think she knew after that one time, I don't think she thought I would continue to go to plays throughout the years.

During their time together Karen took Trianna to activities that she was familiar with and enjoyed. These experiences helped develop their relationship. Then, she began to introduce Trianna to new ventures in order to broaden her horizons. Karen was aware of Trianna's love of sports and so she took Trianna to play golf. In doing so, she was broadening Trianna's knowledge within an area of interest. From that experience, Trianna found that golfing was not something she particularly enjoyed.

> It's a lot of walking, and I never got the urge to go back. . . . It was new. I tried it, and I realized, maybe not for me. I'll go eating on the golf course. That was my first time eating on a golf course. I just thought it was spectacular to eat, and have this beautiful view and beautiful weather.

Mentors can influence a mentee's cognitive development through activities and conversation. In addition, they influence a mentee's cognitive development through guidance in academics and school. This theme will be explored in Research Question 2.

Identity development. In the Rhodes (2005) model, a third construct influencing youth outcomes was identity development. By shaping and developing the mentee's vision of his or her personal strengths and future paths, the mentors were contributing to the mentees' identity development. Connecting mentees to community resources, introducing them to educational opportunities, and providing positive affirmation enhanced identity development.

The interview themes most closely related to identity development included self-efficacy, mentor as a role model, and guidance toward the future. These themes directly correlate with Research Question 3, "What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' self-efficacy?" As such, Research Question 3 includes the discussion of the themes.

Research Question 2

The second research question addressed in this study was, "What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' academic achievement?" In order to understand the impact of mentoring on academic achievement, this study examined student perceptions of the mentoring relationships' influence on their academic achievement. The Citizen Scholars Program is a mentoring program that promotes youth development, particularly academic achievement and college attendance. As such, the mentors were aware of the need to keep academics as a focus for the mentee.

During the interview, Lamar referred to the program not as a mentoring program

but as a scholarship program. For him, the ultimate goal of the program was to receive the scholarship associated with program participation. Conversations with his mentor revolved around school. Lamar said this was his only connection with his mentor: "We talked about school, and we basically just talked about school, and school related things, like where I wanted to go to college and stuff and what I wanted to do, but everything was basically school-based."

During the interview, there was little elaboration about his mentor. When asked about any possible long-term impact from his mentoring relationship, Lamar said, "Long-term impact, I wouldn't say so. Maybe school-wise, like motivating me to do my best." When asked how his mentor did that, he replied,

By telling me that my grades are basically going to take me where I need to go. Like without grades I wouldn't be able to be where I am right now. Because if I would have like failed back on my grades, were I behind in my grades, then I wouldn't have gotten to college and it wouldn't have gotten me into my master's program.

It was at this time that Lamar referred to a college professor who was a mentor to him during college. When the researcher commented that Lamar must have worked hard to get into the graduate program at Clemson, Lamar replied,

Yes, ma'am. I definitely did, and this doesn't have to do with the program, but I met one of my teachers at Upstate, was really . . . I would consider him like a great mentor that pushed me to where I am now. Like he actually had a long influence.

While Lamar did not care to elaborate on his mentor with the Citizen Scholars Program, he was most willing to share his experience with his college professor. When

speaking of his college professor, Lamar immediately became more engaged in the conversation. When speaking of this mentoring relationship, Lamar said,

> I think that's how it should be. Someone that can help you through actually like life, like things that actually happen, and go on. Like being there, like through the admission process, like getting into grad school, like a mentor should be able to help you with the admission process to get into college and things like that. Basically like a guidance counselor, but not a guidance counselor. That's how I feel.

Lamar continued, "It was more than just something about school. Like he actually cared for once I get out of school, like the plan and the route that I'm going to take for when I got out of school." From these comments, one can surmise that Lamar was aware of what a positive mentoring relationship should look like. It was not that Lamar did not want a mentor when he was in the program, he simply did not connect with his assigned mentor. In contrast to his Citizen Scholars mentor, Lamar felt that his mentoring relationship with his college professor would have a long-term impact on his life.

When asked if his academics changed or improved as a result of his program mentoring relationship, he said, "I wouldn't say I changed, because I was always a good student, I feel like. Because you had to basically be a good student to even get into the program." Students coming into the program had to meet certain academic requirements; and as such, if they were willing to do the work, they could be successful students. Lamar perceived his mentoring experience as having little or no impact on his academic achievement.

School was the main point of conversation for Adam and his mentor. Adam said

conversations with his mentor,

Made me more focused on school work, because I've always been just a kid, who just was always wanting to play games instead, but usually when we would go out and eat or something, every time I got a report card or report, I always had to call him and tell him about it, even though I think he got copies of it.

Adam recognized that his interests did not gravitate toward academics. His mentor was able to redirect Adam's attention toward his schoolwork. Adam continued,

So I would have to call him and tell him if my grades were bad, but he put a lot of emphasis on like knowing the grades, and keeping up and making sure I was doing fine. And if I was having a problem, tough time in a class, he'd be the first one to call and say, "We need to get him help" or something. But it was a support system for schoolwork, for sure. But before that I didn't care. High school wasn't hard for me. But it was nice having someone to help support me through that. So I'd know if I needed help or something, I could talk to him about it.

From this statement, one could surmise that Adam's mentor had a positive impact on his academic achievement. If Adam needed help in a class, Bobby would contact the program to get him help. Adam acknowledged that it was nice having someone support him with his schoolwork, yet when asked if his mentor helped him become a more successful student, Adam stated,

I mean, I don't want to sound conceited, but I mean, yeah, my grades were never bad at all. I never had to really study at school, except for like AP classes. That's when it really kicked in. But in college that's a whole different story. I think having like somebody to talk about it with still helps, because it helped me not slack off. I knew I could, I could get away with slacking off, and just not doing

anything, but it made me make sure I wanted As and Bs at least. Plus that's a requirement for the program. I think it was.

Similar to Lamar, Adam maintained grades to continue in the program. In contrast to Lamar, he felt that his mentor did provide academic support and guidance. Bobby kept Adam focused on his grades; and while he did not have to work hard to pass his classes, his mentor influenced his desire to make excellent grades. Adam said, "I think it was just like he was my friend and showed me like new things, and would make sure I was doing school work and stuff, which is always good." The perceived effect of the mentoring experience on Adam's academic achievement was through an increase in his focus on his schoolwork and, as a result, higher grades. Furthermore, without the high grades, it is unlikely that Adam would have been a recipient of a Wofford Bonner Scholarship.

Becca's discussion of her mentor indicated a strong relationship and a positive experience. When she came into the program as a sixth grader, she commented, "I honestly just expected somebody who was going to keep me accountable for my grades. Make contact with me every now and then." Becca said they did talk about school but also so much more. Becca did not struggle with academics; but softball was her focus, and she did not want to think beyond playing the game. Nancy helped her gain a perspective on the importance of her academics. Becca stated, "Nancy finally told me there's going to be more to life than softball after playing, even if you do go to college to play, there's going to be more to it. So that was a struggle for me." When asked if Nancy guided her through any difficulties, Becca answered,

> I think the biggest thing for me that I struggled with, like I said, was balancing
> sports and the scholarship program, and realizing, okay, school is way more

important. Because I was an athlete, but that's all I wanted to do. I didn't care

about school. I was good at school. I didn't study, but I was good at school. So

she helped me realize, hey there's more to it. You've got to focus on the

academics more than athletics.

When asked how Nancy did that, Becca continued,

She'd just tell me, "Hey, softball is not going to be there forever. School is more

important. And how's your grades." She'd always ask me, "How's your grades?

How are you doing? What are your classes like?" Just making sure that I'm

staying focused.

Nancy knew all of Becca's teachers and would call Becca up to the office to ask

how she was doing and inquire about Becca's grades. Becca said Nancy was always at

the school. For Becca, her mentor's presence was a constant reminder to maintain focus.

Later, when asked if her mentor had influenced her attitude toward her education, Becca

asserted,

Academically, like I said, I was good at school, but I didn't really like school. I

didn't have to study. I didn't have to do any of that. I just went in and I just

memorized it. But especially going through . . . when I got to college, it hit me,

like you're actually going to have to do something, and she definitely helped with

that, because I was like, okay, Nancy told me how it's going to be. You're

actually going to have to do something. You're going to have to focus. You

might have to put softball on the back burner. School is always is going to come

first, because in the end, what do you have if you don't have an education to go

get a job with? So that I think the aspect, the transition from high school to

college for me was where her push, pushing me academically really fell in. Not

necessarily in high school, but once I got to college is where I noticed it.

As a college student, Becca recalled Nancy's words about the necessity of working at school. Until that time, school did not require a concentrated effort; Nancy's influence extended beyond high school and ultimately contributed to Becca's college success. Becca said that her mentor never helped her with schoolwork because she was good at school, but she just helped Becca "keep focused on school." Becca knew Nancy placed a strong value on education. This knowledge influenced Becca to use her education as a means to reach an end and ultimately helped Becca move closer to her career goals.

While Becca was not interested in school, she was interested in her future; and Nancy helped shape the vision of attaining her goals. In response to Research Question 2, Becca perceived her mentoring experience as having a strong impact on her academic success. While she may have been able to maneuver high school without great effort, it was her mentor's influence that kept her focused on academics. Furthermore, her mentor's influence extended beyond high school and into her college experience, which ultimately had a greater impact on Becca's life.

Trianna described herself as a nerd in middle and high school. She said, "I was basically what you'd call a nerd in school. I just loved every . . . especially math. Anything math I absolutely loved." From this description, one could imagine that Trianna was an enthusiastic student. Trianna had an empowering connection with her mentor. This connection was based on knowing Trianna as a person. Trianna stated that her mentor knew everything about her. Having a mentor who made the effort to know her made Trianna receptive to her mentor's guidance. When asked if her mentor impacted her attitude about school and education, Trianna said, "Mrs. McCord, she

definitely pushed me academically, like I said, she was definitely my advocate in the classroom whenever I needed her to be, but she was kind of like my outlet away from the constant pressure."

Trianna continued, "Do not get me wrong. If I needed help with a problem with my homework that my parents couldn't help me with, she was the first person I called. The first person." Trianna knew academics were important, but her mentor provided needed refuge away from academic pressures. Trianna further explained,

She was all about bettering me, not just academically. And that's what I absolutely loved. I don't know if other mentors are like this, but Mrs. McCord, she made it known that yes, academics comes first, and when you handle your work, you'll have all the time in the world to play. And so before we do anything, she'd ask me, "Do you have any tests this week?" or "Do you have any projects that you're going to need to work on this weekend?" So we would plan in advance, and we would work with my academic schedule, and extracurricular schedule as well.

Coming into the program, Trianna hoped to one day attend Wofford College. Both Karen and her husband were Wofford graduates and this, in itself, inspired Trianna to work harder for her goal. Trianna shared,

Just knowing that she graduated from Wofford College. I feel like there's a social sigma [stigma] about Wofford College, and the weight of the degree, what it carries, and just knowing that, not only because I know her husband as well, both graduated and so successful. The American Dream, I wanted to be a Wofford Terrier with Mrs. McCord.

Karen took Trianna to Wofford football and basketball games. She introduced her

to the Wofford campus. For Trianna, being on campus was an inspiring experience. When asked about her mentor, Trianna said she was

> the mentor person that I could look up to, the person I admired, that I wanted to be like, a Wofford Alum. Both of them as well. I had a very, very . . . I don't want to say a rare opportunity, because I would like to say a lot of the mentees were able to receive what I received through my mentorship with my mentor.

As a Wofford graduate, Karen was able to give Trianna a vision of what it would be like to attend the college. Karen was a role model and a helper. She wrote one of Trianna's college recommendations. Trianna said Karen was aware how important Trianna's grades would be in her college application process and the importance of her SAT scores. As a senior, Trianna needed to raise her SAT score and was experiencing test anxiety as a result. Karen was able to step in and help provide the assistance that Trianna needed to overcome the anxiety and raise her score. Trianna stated,

> And I guess this is another time she helped me, that I don't know why I didn't think of, but I have really bad test anxiety, and then I didn't really want to complain to my parents, because at the time, my father took care of my grandfather all of his life, well since I was three, since '97. My papa has always lived with us and he can't speak, he doesn't attend . . . and so I just did not go to my parents and bother them more. My dad stopped working just so he could help out take care of my grandfather, and so I just didn't want to. And I had taken the SAT twice before then. I didn't do horrible . . . of course, I was very hard on myself, having parents, you know. I didn't do great, but I didn't do horrible, and I just noticed I'm very nervous before I take standardized tests, and I was one of those kids who just wanted to get it together and stop being a baby. And then I

realized this is a real problem. My hands would sweat. I would shake. I had to tap or move. And I would take too much time, and then I wouldn't finish. And in total I took the SAT five times—two in my junior year, and then two my senior year, and then one more time the second semester of my senior year. But those two times before I even signed up for the first time, I'd told Mrs. McCord, "I don't know what, but I need some help." I went to all the SAT preps that the program offered and everything, and my scores every time went up gradually, minimally, but gradually. And so she did what she had to do. She talked to Ms. France, but somehow I went to therapy for my test anxiety for three months, all expenses paid . . . my parents did not have to come out of pocket for any of it . . . and I took it that one last time, and got that English score that I needed, and it kind of put me over the top.

In preparation for the test, the therapy taught Trianna to use self-meditating practices at night. Karen would check in with Trianna to make sure she was doing the practice. Trianna said,

I don't like to use the word "weird," but I'd have to do self-meditating practices at night to work my way up until test day, and so she would check on me. "Are you doing your meditation? Are you doing everything correctly?" And I said, "Yes, Ma'am, yes, Ma'am." And at the time, you, as a 17-year-old girl, "Why am I doing this?" But she reassured me that it's for the best, and once again I felt like I had that advocate on my side.

Trianna's mentor Karen provided the tools and support Trianna needed to overcome her testing anxiety. Trianna said, "I wanted to prove her right. I wanted to get that acceptance letter and see her smile on her face." In the end, Trianna achieved the

score she needed and ultimately received a full scholarship to the school of her dreams. Trianna did the work; her mentor was her support and guide.

Trianna perceived her mentor as instrumental in moving her towards academic achievement and in guiding her toward her personal academic goals. Even though Trianna was an excellent student by her own right, she felt Karen provided needed academic support during middle school, high school, and college. Sometimes the support was to provide an escape from the pressure; other times, it was direct involvement in her academics; and other times, it was simply being a college graduate role model. Karen embraced Trianna's college goal and provided the support to guide Trianna toward achieving that goal.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 was, "What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' self-efficacy?" While college attendance is a goal of the Citizen Scholars Program, the 7-year mentoring relationship should also have a positive impact beyond academic achievement. While high self-efficacy impacts academic achievement, it has the potential to positively influence student lives beyond school. Mentoring relationships can influence efficacy by assisting student accomplishments, role modeling, and through verbal persuasion. In this study, perhaps the strongest connection between self-efficacy development and mentoring relationships was through vicarious learning and modeling (Rhodes et al., 2006).

During the interviews, self-efficacy was identified as a theme falling under "identity development." When discussing his mentoring experience, Lamar did not provide any statements confirming self-efficacy development connected to his mentoring relationship. Lamar said his mentor had no long-term impact. He said his mentor did not

know him. Likewise, it did not appear that Lamar related or cared to relate to his mentor.

Lamar stated, "I think it would have better if I had had a male mentor." When

considering Bandura's avenues for enhancing self-efficacy, Lamar did not see his mentor

as a role model, she did not impact his successes, and he never referred to any

conversations with his mentor that were linked to efficacy; thus, Lamar saw no perceived

effect from the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on his self-efficacy.

Adam's comments about his mentoring experience were both positive and

negative. He compared his mentoring relationship to his peers' mentoring relationships,

saying his relationship was not like theirs: "I wasn't as close with him as some of my

friends and their mentors." This comparison indicated a desire on Adam's part for a

stronger connection with his mentor. Adam said his mentor did not really know him, but

he put some of the lack of connection on his shyness. Adam made a reference to a

conversation pertaining to his mentor's belief in him, saying,

> I mean I think he believed in me more than anybody probably. Like this was a
>
> good thing. Like just having somebody that believes in you is a big deal. I think
>
> at least. But yeah, if I thought I couldn't do it, he was like, "Yeah, you can."

During the interview, Adam shared conversations about the future. Adam

recalled, "We would talk about future a lot, it was very goal-oriented. He made me think

about that a lot, which was a good thing." Adam did not say whether his mentor inspired

him or encouraged him but only that he made him think about the future. Adam

conceded that even just discussing the future was a good thing for him. Adam referred to

Melissa and Mindy as other mentors in the program. It was Mindy who really motivated

Adam. He stated, "I think in general Mindy helped more like making me feel like I was

great at everything, like that's what she did pretty much." Adam also attributed his

acceptance into Wofford to Mindy and the program. Adam further stated,

> I always felt like Mindy and Melissa were like, they wanted us to be like the best
> we ever could, which is sort of Bobby's, but it was just a different feeling, like a
> different way about it, like, she would have done like anything to get us
> anywhere. She got me into Wofford.

While not substantial, Adam did perceive a connection between his Citizen
Scholars mentoring experience and his self-efficacy development. The interview did not
indicate a modeling connection but perhaps influence through verbal persuasion. Adam
stated that his mentor believed in him, yet he said his mentor did not really know him.
Feeling that Bobby did not truly know his capabilities and thoughts might mean Bobby
did not really know what Adam was capable of accomplishing. Further, Adam never
mentioned relating to Bobby as a role model. This in turn would lessen the impact of the
mentoring relationship on Adam's self-efficacy. Adam did say Mindy helped him feel
like he could accomplish his goals and that she would have done anything to help him
move toward that goal. He further stated that Mindy and Melissa wanted him to be the
best he could be. From these statements one could infer that Adam perceived his
relationship with Mindy and Melissa as having a positive impact on his self-efficacy.
When considering the combined impact of Adam's three program mentoring
relationships, Adam perceived an increase in his self-efficacy.

Becca had a strong relationship with her mentor. Becca referred to her mentor as
a role model and as a "second mom," indicating a close, enduring relationship. Her
mentor, Nancy, was an administrator in her school district and Becca saw her mentor
interacting with teachers and other district personnel. Becca stated, "Everybody loved
Nancy, just because her personality. She's crazy, but in a good way." Becca gave Nancy

credit for helping her learn to speak to people and to realize that she might be able to connect with a person she does not know. Nancy was a role model for Becca. Becca confirmed,

> It was just her personality and the way she was there to help me see, well, this is how this person is. She's a very good person, so I mean she's almost like a role model. You want to live your life kind of how she lives hers.

> In addition to having her mentor be a positive role model, Becca's conversations with her mentor provided strong affirmations of Becca's abilities. When asked what enduring qualities will stay with her, Becca said,

> The biggest for me is going to be the focus and realizing that whatever you want to do, as long as you set your mind to it, you can accomplish basically whatever goal you want to accomplish. There's nothing you can't do as long as you stay focused and do just that.

> Becca further reflected, "She makes me feel like I can do whatever I want to do." When asked to elaborate, Becca said,

> When I was younger, I knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't really know how or if I could do it. Or, I always had this sense in the back of my head sometimes, "You're not good enough."

Becca continued,

> Oh, like I said, her being able to push me and knowing that I was actually good enough was probably the biggest thing that we talked about with my future. Knowing that I can do something or realizing, "hey, what's your dream here in five years?" Okay, this is your dream. Well, you can do it. These are the steps you need to take to make sure you get there.

Not only did Nancy convey confidence in Becca's ability, she helped Becca map out a plan and visualize how she would achieve her goals. Undoubtedly, Becca perceived her mentoring experience as having a strong, empowering effect on her personal self-efficacy.

During the course of her interview, Trianna made references to her mentor being her role model. She was the Wofford graduate Trianna hoped to be. Trianna admired the way she interacted with other people, and Trianna connected with her faith. As a Wofford graduate, Trianna said, "The American Dream, I wanted to be a Wofford Terrier with Mrs. McCord as well." Another time, Trianna stated, "(Karen was) the mentor person that I could look up to, the person I admired, that I wanted to be like, a Wofford Alum." Hearing her mentor say she was going to Wofford College made Trianna believe it was going to happen. It made her goal seem real and achievable. Trianna said,

> She would tell me I'm going to go to Wofford. She was kind of, you know put it
>
> out there. And just to hear her say it, it coming from her, of course my parents,
>
> too. They definitely encouraged me. But to hear Mrs. McCord say it was another
>
> thing. It definitely was another thing.

Trianna also asserted, "I absolutely love the fact that she was my adult for one. She was my authoritative figure, another one, but she was also a successful one."

In addition to being a Wofford graduate role model, Trianna saw other attributes she admired. Trianna said,

> She didn't push her faith on me, but I will say seeing a God-fearing individual and
>
> a God-fearing woman and the role she played, not only in her family, but in
>
> society, and how well she did mingle with any and everyone that she met.
>
> Definitely I don't know if she knows this, but definitely I saw that. I would just

look up at her and admire how she carried herself.

Trianna continued, "She saw it in me, I didn't see it in myself." Trianna admired the way her mentor carried herself, and Trianna said her mentor saw it in her. This was a powerful verification for Trianna and would indicate a strong impact on Trianna's self-efficacy. Knowing that someone she so admired believed in her abilities was inspiring for Trianna. Trianna said,

> Literally, if I was going through something, she knew about it, not just
> academically, but like I said there were times I didn't want to go to my parents, I
> went to Mrs. McCord. She knew when my games were and she would text me to
> say good luck or "Let me know how you did." She knew what my interests were,
> what I should have been exposed to. . . . She was all about bettering me, not just
> academically.

Having her mentor know her so well and encourage her to pursue her dreams had a powerful impact on Trianna's self-efficacy. When Trianna was accepted to Wofford, she had concerns about fitting in and whether she could do the work. During the interview, Trianna recalled an incident involving negative racial stereotyping. Being African-American in a predominantly White school with many students having greater financial means created challenges for Trianna. Again, Nancy reassured Trianna and strengthened her confidence and resolve. Trianna recalled,

> I just thought Wofford was a school where a bunch of white rich kids went. It is
> on campus, there are many, but there are some kids that aren't that fortunate
> financially, but are just as smart, if not smarter. And so she definitely talked to me
> about it. She definitely, once I got accepted, you know we had it on paper, she
> definitely reassured me it may be culture shock, so I was not used to being around

some of those individuals, and but they're human beings like I'm a human being. That's the attitude I had. But then seeing it, and living it, and being stigmatized, there was an incident that happened at Wofford, but she just reassured me that it doesn't matter, and it doesn't define you. "You're just as good as they are. And you're going to be successful at whatever you decide to do." She let me know before I even set foot on that campus.

There is no question that Trianna perceived her mentoring relationship as having a strong impact on her self-efficacy. Not only did Trianna refer to her mentor as a role model, she gave numerous examples of her mentor confirming her abilities and taking steps to guide Trianna toward her academic and life goals.

Summary

Chapter 4 consisted of the data analysis and findings of four students who participated in the Citizen Scholars Program. Using IPA's suggested guidelines, the researcher identified themes from the coded interview transcripts. Themes were grouped into the superordinate themes which aligned with the theoretical framework proposed by Rhodes et al. (2006). The dissertation's superordinate themes included influence of moderators; quality of the mentor relationship; and social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development.

Of the superordinate themes discussed, the quality of mentoring relationship proved to have the most powerful influence on the overall mentoring experience and on the students' perceived effect on academic achievement and self-efficacy. The quality of the relationship was also the superordinate theme most often linked to participants' discussion of their experience.

Entry into the program required that students meet certain qualifications,

including academic ability. As such, each of the participants had the ability to do well in school. Even though the participants were capable students, their mentors had the opportunity to impact academic achievement. Of the four participants, three perceived their mentor as having a positive influence on their academic achievement. One participant saw no perceived effect on his academic achievement.

Participants' reporting of the effect of their mentoring experience on their self-efficacy was similar to their perceptions of academic achievement. Two of the participants perceived their mentoring experience as having a powerful influence on their self-efficacy. One participant also considered the program administrators as mentors. When taking this into consideration, his mentoring relationships did have a positive influence on his self-efficacy, although the connection was not as clear. One participant did not perceive his mentoring experience as having any influence on his self-efficacy.

Each of the four participants had a uniquely different mentoring experience. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of those experiences, their related themes, and their connection to the literature as well as recommendations and limitations.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how students in a community-based mentoring program perceived their mentoring experience and to further explore the impact of their experience on their self-efficacy and academic achievement. Mentoring can help guide students toward academic achievement, higher levels of education, and ultimately toward positive life outcomes (Rhodes et al., 2000). Research has shown that students from lower SES backgrounds do not reach the same levels of schooling as those from higher SES backgrounds (Hodgkinson, 2003; Ratcliffe & McKernan, 2010; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2006). For those students, a mentoring relationship can have a life-altering impact on their future.

To better understand the impact of the mentoring experience on student outcomes, Bruce and Bridgeland (2014) recommended that an understanding of the mentoring phenomenon from the mentee's perspective be established. The current study explored the perceptions of the students' lived experiences and their interpretations of the mentoring phenomenon. IPA was the research method employed in this study. The research questions that guided this study were

1. What are the themes that emerge from the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience?

2. What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' academic achievement?

3. What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' self-efficacy?

The study's conceptual framework integrated Rhodes's theoretical model entitled

Pathways of Mentor Influence and Bandura's self-efficacy theory. Bandura's work on self-efficacy contends that self-efficacy influences whether a task will be undertaken and the amount of effort applied to accomplish the task (Hackett & Lent, 2008; Piirto, 2007). High self-efficacy can prove to be a powerful motivator for student achievement (Lunenburg, 2011). Rhodes's mentoring model merged research on child, adolescent, and relationship development (Rhodes et al., 2006). Rhodes identified three interrelated domains that impact youth outcomes: (1) social and emotional well-being, (2) development of cognitive skills, and (3) identity development through modeling and the influence of advocates (Rhodes, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). In addition to the developmental domains, Rhodes identified outside mediating influences, the duration of the mentoring relationship, and the quality of the mentoring relationship as factors that influence the developmental domains and student outcomes (Rhodes, 2005).

In this study, the four participants entered the Citizen Scholars Program at the end of their fifth-grade year and graduated from high school 7 years later. All the participants graduated from college 4 years after high school graduation. A total of five students met the above criteria and were contacted for participation. Due to work obligations, one student declined participation. Qualifications for involvement in the mentoring program included academic ability, financial need, a first generation college student designation, and a strong desire to attend college. Students were nominated by their elementary school and were interviewed by a selection committee. The study's participants were the students from their cohort group who had graduated from college and, upon doing so, successfully completed the mentoring program.

Prior to participation in this study, the researcher explained the purpose of the study to the participants. As recommended by Smith et al. (2009), data were collected

through in-depth, semi-structured interviews. All interviews were audiotaped (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Analysis of interview transcripts included multiple readings, coding, and theme identification. Themes were categorized by commonality, then grouped into superordinate themes (Smith et al., 2009). The study's superordinate themes were connected back to Rhodes's mentoring model. A complete analysis of each transcript occurred before moving to the next transcript. After all transcripts were individually analyzed, themes and superordinate themes were compared among the transcripts.

This chapter includes a summary of the major findings of the study. Findings are presented in the order of the research questions. Discussion will link the findings and the researcher's interpretation back to the literature. After the summary of the findings, implications and recommendations for practice are presented, followed by limitations and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Question 1. The first research question addressed in this study explored the themes associated with the students' perceptions of their mentoring experience. Themes were analyzed through the lens of Rhodes's (2005) theoretical model. As such, the study's superordinate themes were the influence of moderators; the quality of the mentoring relationship; and the developmental themes addressing social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development.

Influence of moderators. The influence of moderators consisted of elements and forces outside the mentoring relationship that impacted the quality of the mentoring relationship and the three developmental domains. Themes connected to moderating influences included the three components of the Citizen Scholars Program (activities, administrators, and peer relationships), the mentees' family context, and the individual

student dispositions.

Program activities, administrators, and peer relationships. During the interviews, students made multiple references to the Citizen Scholars Program. Since the program was the facilitator of the mentor/mentee relationship, the program relationships and activities were significant components of their total mentoring experience. Students spoke fondly of the program activities. Lamar said he wished he could go back to participate again. The purpose of the program's activities and classes included team building, peer bonding, academic development, and character development. Activities and classes provided additional experiences and opportunities outside of those shared with their mentor. These experiences helped students develop confidence and broaden their knowledge base (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Miller & Gentry, 2010; Putnam et al., 2012; Rothstein, 2008).

A particularly significant dimension of the Citizen Scholars Program experience was the development of friendships within the program. Belonging to a peer group is an important motivator during adolescence (Packard & Babineau, 2008). Research has found that teens from lower SES backgrounds can be associated with peer groups who do not encourage school connectedness and extracurricular activities (Packard & Babineau, 2008). Programs such as Citizen Scholars can provide a positive peer group affiliation. Over the 7 years students were in the program, close supportive friendships developed. Adam stated that he could share things with his program peers that he could not necessarily share with adults. Lamar said it was his friends in the program who he talked to. Becca said the relationships were the most important aspect of the program. For the participants in this study, Citizen Scholars gave students the opportunity to spend time with peers having similar academic goals and aspirations. The comments made by the

participants about their peer relationships concur with the research stating that positive peer group affiliation contributes to school connectedness, supports academic achievement (Rudasill et al., 2014), and can lead to positive youth outcomes (Newman, Lohman, & Newman, 2007).

In addition to the support of their peers, participants stated that the program administrators provided support. For Adam and Lamar, the administrators provided support that their mentoring relationship was lacking. Adam spoke of his relationships with the program administrators as being particularly important, providing support and encouragement even as a college student. Research has found that program leaders often form meaningful relationships with the youth involved in the program (Keller, 2005). For all the students in this study, the Citizen Scholars Program activities, peer friendships, and administrators acted as positive influences on their mentoring experience.

Family context. A second theme connected to moderating influences was family context. For the participants in this study, family context was a positive moderating factor. The parents were supportive of the program and their child's mentoring relationship. Packard and Babineau (2008) stated that when students' parents encouraged outside endeavors, students felt more confident and secure. All four participants spoke of their parents talking to their mentors periodically. Research confirms the importance of parent involvement in the mentoring relationship, stating that communication between families and mentors helps the development of the mentor/mentee relationship (Hanlon et al., 2009). Further, a parent's interest in a relationship outside the family unit can facilitate a child's engagement in that relationship (Packard & Babineau, 2008). Having parents who supported the mentoring program and relationships helped create a sense of

security for the participants and, as such, family context was a positive moderator.

   Personal disposition of the mentee. Also included as a moderating influence was the personal disposition of the individual mentee, particularly the mentee's willingness to engage. Research stated that a close mentoring relationship required the mentee to engage and take some responsibility for the relationship (Rhodes, 2007). During the interviews, Adam and Lamar referred to themselves as shy and not inclined to share personal information with other people. Being hesitant to openly share with their mentors negatively impacted Lamar and Adam's mentor/mentee relationships. In order to create and maintain a bond, a mentee must share his or her feelings and self-perceptions. There must be honesty in the relationship (Rhodes, 2007). The MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership recommended that in cases where mentees resist openness or display passive tendencies, persistence and empathy on the part of the mentor are necessary. Training and support are needed to help coach mentors when mentees do not engage with them (Rhodes, 2007).

   Both Becca and Trianna had close relationships with their mentors and were willing to engage and let their mentors get to know them. Adam and Lamar did not engage with their mentors. The correlation between the level of relationship satisfaction and the willingness of the mentee to engage was supported by the research that verified the presence of reciprocal dynamics in successful relationships (Rhodes, 2007).

   Quality of the mentoring relationship. The quality of the mentoring relationship was the theme most often mentioned by the participants. In the researcher's opinion, it was the superordinate theme that had the greatest impact on the participants' mentoring experience. Grouped within this superordinate theme were the following subthemes: bonding through shared activities, mentor attunement and care, and the current status of

the relationship. Bonding through shared activities and mentor attunement and care are discussed below, as they were the more dominant subthemes.

Bonding through shared activities. Discussion of how the mentor and mentee spent their time together was a major talking point for the participants. The mentor/mentee bond was created through the time they spent together. Participants who did not enjoy the shared activities with their mentor had relationships that lacked bonding. Participants who enjoyed the mentor/mentee activities had stronger relationships and a more positive mentoring experience. Lamar did not enjoy the activities with his mentor. Adam enjoyed some and was ambivalent about others. Becca and Trianna both spoke positively about the activities they did with their mentors. The significance in how the mentor/mentee spent their time was consistent with the literature. Spencer (2006) observed that enjoyable mentor/mentee experiences contributed to the young person's well-being. In a study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, Langhout, Rhodes, and Osborne (2004) found that successful mentors provided time for enjoyable activities. For the participants in the current study, their assessment of how they spent their time with their mentors mirrored their assessment of their mentor relationships.

Becca noted that it was not so much the big outings that she enjoyed, but it was those activities that allowed time for her and her mentor to get to know each other. For Becca, it was the little things that she most enjoyed. Rhodes et al. (2006) identified this critical piece of relationship development as a series of small wins that occurred over time. Shared experiences created an opportunity for an exchange of information and emotions (Rhodes, 2005). Becca's mentor understood what Becca needed. Becca's mentor was a school administrator and a former teacher. Her professional background

may have helped her understand Becca's needs. This correlated with the research stating that mentors who have either worked or had experience in formal or informal helping roles have a greater sense of efficacy which lends itself to a more successful mentoring relationship (Rhodes, 2007). For mentors not having this prior experience, training and support could help form a positive mentoring experience. Had Lamar's and Adam's mentors had additional training, their mentoring relationships may have been more effective.

Each of the participants stated that giving the mentee some choice in the shared mentor/mentee activities was important. Lamar and Adam were not given activity choices or options, Becca and Trianna were. Rhodes (2007) stated that mentoring relationships should seek a blend of support and guidance. Mentors should find a balance between having fun, working toward goals, and emotional exploration (Rhodes, 2007). The importance of mentee choice and the benefit of mentor/mentee collaboration was documented in a study by Herrera et al. (2000). In the study, the mentee/mentor relationship benefitted when mentees were actively involved in the selection of activities. Mentor/mentee activities are important, as that is the time when bonds are created and relationships are formed. Further, giving the mentees varied choices when selecting activities helps a mentor learn about their mentee, allows a mentor to learn what types of activities their mentee enjoys, and contributes to mentee engagement.

Mentor attunement and care. Rhodes (2007) maintained, "Successful mentors seem to understand and appreciate their mentees, entering their worlds to uncover their unique strengths and capabilities" (p. 3). As mentees becomes more secure with their mentors, they will be more inclined to share thoughts, concerns, and emotions. As mentors learn about their mentees, they become more attuned to their mentees' needs.

Mentoring relationships involve a give and take between both the mentor and mentee (Rhodes, 2007). Becca and Trianna referred to their mentors as being like their "second mom." This comparison echoes the findings of a study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program that found good mentors were similar to parents finding a balance of enjoyable activities, support, and expectations (Langhout et al., 2004). When referring to their mentors as a "second mom," Becca and Trianna were indicating a strong trust and a strong sense of attunement and caring from their mentors.

In a national study of adolescents, Whitney, Hendricker, and Offutt (2011) found that emotional closeness was a key factor influencing the quality of the relationship. For Lamar's mentor to not understand that a middle or high school boy might not find operas appealing indicated a lack of mentor attunement. As stated by Schwartz et al. (2012), mentor attunement and being able to adapt to the mentee needs are indicators of the relationship quality and effectiveness.

Social-emotional development. A successful mentoring relationship provides guidance as a mentee matures. Research has found that mentoring has the potential to positively impact social and emotional outcomes, attitudes, and life satisfaction (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). Personal growth, emotional coaching, and mentor support reinforced the participants' social-emotional development.

Personal growth. Consistent with other themes affiliated with this study, participant perceptions of their personal growth were divided. Adam and Lamar attributed no social emotional growth to their mentoring experience. Becca and Trianna credited their mentoring experience as having impacted their social and emotional growth. Trianna's mentor helped Trianna learn to balance work and play and provided a release from academic pressures. Findings in the literature supported Trianna's

perspective, suggesting that youth's social and emotional well-being can be enhanced through opportunities to retreat from daily stress through the shared activities and the listening ear of an empathetic adult (Rhodes et al., 2006). Becca stated that the relationship impacted her personal growth "in a big way." Becca learned the importance of building relationships and reaching out to meet new people. Becca said she was less shy and standoffish as a result of her mentoring experience. These results coincide with existing literature claiming that a tangible benefit of the mentoring experience included increased social skills (Williams, 2011), enhanced interpersonal relationships, and positive mental health outcomes (Whitney et al., 2011).

Emotional coaching. A second theme falling under social-emotional development was emotional coaching. A mentor can assist mentee social-emotional development through feedback, affirmation, and listening (Smith, 2013). Emotional coaching helps youth manage feelings and negative experiences. A mentor can teach appropriate behaviors through modeling and by teaching strategies (Rhodes, 2005). Again, it was Becca and Trianna who provided examples of emotional coaching. Mentor coaching often occurred when Becca and Trianna shared difficult or challenging experiences in their lives. Since Lamar and Adam did not openly share personal hardships with their mentors, opportunities for emotional coaching did not clearly surface. Trianna's and Becca's mentors taught them to trust that things would work out for the best, to trust in their own instincts, not to dwell on the past, and to look to the future. Their mentors coached them by example and through verbal guidance by providing tools that could be used immediately and in their future.

Mentor support. Mentor support was an important component of social and emotional development. Lamar was the only participant who could not recall any

examples of mentor support. Adam stated that his mentor was supportive and was a good

listener. Trianna's mentor provided support and guidance when a high school teacher

imposed vague and unrealistic expectations and when Trianna experienced a racial

incident as a college student. Becca's mentor offered care and encouragement during

trying family times. Mentoring research concurred that a mentee's self-worth was

positively impacted through the support of an empathetic listening mentor (Rhodes et al.,

2006).

   Cognitive development. Rhodes et al. (2006) identified exposure to new

opportunities, development of knowledge and skills, intellectual challenge and guidance,

and advancement of academic success as ways to increase cognitive development. The

themes associated with cognitive development were broadening the mentee's horizons

and an emphasis on school and academics. Due to the thematic overlapping of school

and academics with Research Question 2, discussion of these elements occur with

Research Question 2.

   As their mentors provided new experiences for their mentees, the participants'

views of their world expanded. For a mentee, learning transpired through the scaffolding

effect that takes place through shared activities and exchanges of ideas (Rhodes et al.,

2006). Adam stated that his mentor took him places he had never been. While Adam did

not enjoy all the activities, he did comment that he learned and benefited from the

experiences. When Adam built the shelving with his mentor, he said it was a good

learning experience. Rhodes et al. (2006) stated that collective work toward a goal

enhances a youth's mental capacities. Trianna and her mentor spent time in activities that

introduced Trianna to the arts. Lamar was also exposed to new arts-centered venues; but

without a positive relationship with his mentor, these experiences were of no personal

value.

Identity development. Identity development was the third superordinate theme related to mentee development. Mentors contribute to identity development when they alter their mentee's perceptions of their current and future selves. When youth observe the adults around them, current and future images are shaped and influenced. Mentoring relationships help mold identity and enhance mentee self-esteem (Rhodes et al., 2006). Self-efficacy, mentor as a role model, and vision of the future self, the themes associated with identity development, are closely correlated with Research Question 3 and, as such, discussion is found under Research Question 3.

Analysis of the three developmental superordinate themes revealed similar results. Although separately labeled, social/emotional, cognitive, and identity development did not operate as independent areas of influence. Influence in one area impacted the development in the other two domains. The overlapping nature of developmental domains was discussed in the literature. For example, improvements in self-esteem and identity development lead to an increased belief in one's academic abilities which in turn improve cognitive development (Schwartz et al., 2012). Further, the overlapping nature of the developmental themes contributed to the similarity in participant perceptions of the impact of the mentoring experience within each domain.

Research Question 2. Research Question 2 was, "What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' academic achievement?" Research confirms that students involved in close mentoring relationships have a significant increase in academic performance and academic efficacy (Bayer et al., 2013). A goal of the Citizen Scholars Program is for the student to attend college and, as such, academic achievement is an important component of the program. The participant

mentors were highly attuned to their mentees' school performance. In order to be considered for the program, students had to be highly capable students. Even though students were capable of academic achievement, this did not mean they were without need of encouragement and accountability or that their schooling years were without academic challenge; thus, guidance from a mentor could prove to be a valuable asset. Additionally, upon entering college, these students would be first generation college students and, as such, help from a mentor could prove to be instrumental (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014).

Lamar was a highly motivated student and was focused on making good grades. Lamar said he did not need academic help from his mentor but said that if he were to identify any area in his life that was discussed with his mentor, it would be his grades. Lamar knew mentor support was available if it was needed.

Adam stated that even though he was a good student, his mentor still provided a support system for him. He stated he had a tendency to "slack off," but his mentor's influence kept school success in the forefront. Adam stated that his relationship was not as close as others in the program, yet he acknowledged his mentor's positive influence on his academics. This influence corresponded with the research stating that even relationships that were considered somewhat close were associated with better academic outcomes (Bayer et al., 2013).

Becca's mentor taught Becca to make her education a priority. She taught her that education was a means to achieving her goals. The influence of Becca's mentor agreed with a Bruce and Bridgeland (2014) report claiming that mentors help mentees gain a better understanding of the power of education. Becca stated that her mentor's words resonated throughout high school and college and helped her remain focused through her

college years.

Trianna's mentor stepped in to provide support for Trianna with a high school teacher. She arranged for Trianna to receive critical guidance in test-taking strategies. In addition to advocating, and possibly just as important for Trianna, her mentor provided time away from the constant pressure of school. Trianna's mentor taught Trianna the importance of maintaining a life balance. Trianna needed this relief in order to preserve her high academic standards.

Adam, Becca, and Trianna all gave examples of mentor academic assistance and said their mentors helped them with academics in various capacities. Lamar did not attribute any of his academic success to his mentoring experience. Although Adam, Becca, and Trianna did not depend on their mentors for school success, they acknowledged their mentors as having contributed to their academic achievement. This result concurred with the study findings reported by Thompson and Kelly-Vance (2001) that positive one-on-one mentoring relationships have the potential to reduce negative academic outcomes and having a supportive mentor bolstered academic achievement. Research has steadily found that students involved in mentoring relationships have better academic outcomes (Bayer et al., 2013; Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014; Nakkula & Pineda, 2005).

All four students involved in this study not only attended college, they graduated from college in 4 years. The influence of a mentoring relationship was reported in a national survey of 1,100 at-risk youth. Bruce and Bridgeland (2014) found that 29% of at-risk college students did not have a mentor. For the students in the current study, attending college was facilitated through their mentor's support. Williams (2011) stated that students involved in mentoring programs were more likely to attend college. Further,

not only did the participants attend college, they graduated from college in 4 years, possibly indicating a more enduring mentor influence on academic achievement.

      Research Question 3. Research Question 3 was, "What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' self-efficacy?" Bandura et al. (1996) proposed that without the belief that personal efforts can produce a desired outcome, one has little incentive or motivation to act. Self-efficacy influences personal effort, learning, and achievement (Bandura, 1997; Bandura et al., 1996). Self-efficacy can be developed through performance accomplishments, vicarious learning and modeling, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal (Bandura, 1997; Hackett & Lent, 2008). Mentoring relationships influence efficacy by assisting student accomplishments, mentors serving as role models, and through verbal persuasion. The strongest connection between self-efficacy development and the mentoring relationships was through vicarious learning and modeling.

      Lamar attributed no growth in his self-esteem to his mentoring experience. Lamar stated that his mentor did not know him as a person and further made no impact on his life. Adam's mentoring experience was more positive than Lamar's. Adam stated that his mentor believed in him, conceding that it was a big deal when someone believes in you. Further, when Adam questioned his abilities, his mentor encouraged and supported him. Adam and his mentor also talked about Adam's future. Adam acknowledged that these conversations were a good thing for him. In addition to his mentor, the program's administrators played a positive role in Adam's self-efficacy development. He stated that the program administrators, Melissa and Mindy, wanted him to be the best he could be. Overall, Adam's perceived self-efficacy improved as a result of his mentoring relationships. Adam received a scholarship to college and credited the

program director for moving him toward that accomplishment. Additionally, Adam graduated from college in 4 years. When his mentor's encouraging words were coupled with the support from the program administrators, there was a positive effect on Adam's self-efficacy development.

Becca perceived a solid impact on her self-efficacy as a result of her mentoring experience. Becca admired the way her mentor interacted with people and stated that Nancy was a positive role model. In addition to being a role model, Nancy verbally affirmed Becca's abilities. She told Becca that with focus, she could accomplish any goal she set her mind to. Not only did Nancy confirm and encourage Becca to pursue her dreams, she helped Becca map out a plan to reach her goals. Nancy impacted Becca's self-efficacy using the pathways of modeling and verbal persuasion. Nancy also helped Becca create a plan to reach those goals. Packard and Babineau (2008) stated that it is not enough to simply have a vision of the future, but a plan on how to get there is necessary. Becca's mentor not only helped Becca create a plan, she helped Becca believe in her future self.

Although Trianna had a home life that supported the development of a strong sense of self, her mentor was also a positive force in her self-efficacy development. Trianna and Karen began their relationship bond through their Wofford College connection. Throughout her interview, Trianna referred to her mentor as a strong role model. Karen made comments to Trianna like, "You're going to be successful at whatever you decide to do." Research has found that positive affirmation from a significant adult such as a mentor can be absorbed into the youth's perception of personal self-worth. Referring to Cooley's "looking glass self," Harter (1992) proposed that student self-perceptions were influenced by the support of significant others. A student's

identity, their vision of self, can be positively impacted by a mentoring relationship. Under the guidance of her mentor, Trianna approached her goals with determination and with the belief that she could be successful. Her mentor helped her overcome obstacles as they arose and helped Trianna keep her goals in the forefront. Trianna's mentor clearly helped Trianna develop a strong sense of self-efficacy.

Summary. The theoretical mentoring model prescribed by Rhodes and integrated with Bandura's work on self-efficacy provided the conceptual framework that guided the interpretation of the study's results. This framework provided the necessary structure to analyze the participants' words and thoughts. The influence of moderators, while not a theme specifically about the mentee/mentor relationship, was a vital ingredient in the participants' mentoring experience. The moderating influences directly impacted the mentoring relationships. The students spoke extensively about the themes found within the moderating influences. All students had good parental relationships. All students spoke of the program's administrators, activities, and peer friendships. Differences in the mentee's moderating influences were found in the individual participant dispositions that heavily impacted the mentoring relationships. Adam's and Lamar's hesitancy to engage hindered the development of their mentoring relationships. Becca's and Trianna's openness deepened their mentoring relationships.

The developmental themes (social-emotional, cognitive, and identity) shared similar results. For the most part, Trianna and Becca expressed positive mentor influence in all areas. Lamar perceived no positive influence as a result of his mentoring experience. Adam's comments vacillated between being upbeat and somewhat apathetic; his responses were sometimes inconsistent. He spoke of positive mentor influences, yet expressed disappointment in the relationship. It is possible that Adam was still

interpreting his mentoring experience. Adam is at an in-between stage in his life; this may have contributed to his uncertainty as to the extent of the influence of his mentoring relationship.

If one were to rank the importance of themes, it could not be based upon the number of positive participant references to the theme. Instead, one must also consider the absence of or negative references to the theme. As such, when considering the mentoring experience, the quality of the relationship was the most relevant theme. This theme impacted the developmental themes which in turn impacted student outcomes. The student perceptions of the quality of the relationship mirrored the perceptions found in social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development as well as the outcomes of Research Question 2 and Research Question 3.

Becca and Trianna placed the quality of their mentoring relationships at the high end of the spectrum. Adam was positive, yet did not perceive his relationship as having the depth of his peers. Lamar placed no value on his mentoring experience.

Recommendations for Practice

The current study presents mentees' candid insights into the mentoring phenomenon, and it explored the impact of their mentoring relationships on their lives and futures. Although the students had very different mentoring experiences, the differences in those experiences provided a valuable comparison of mentoring approaches and relationship effectiveness. The information and understandings acquired from this study can inform the Citizen Scholars mentoring program and the larger mentoring community as a whole. Recommendations are listed below.

1. Perhaps the most critical implication gleaned from this study was the need for relevant mentor training, guidance, and support. Mentors needed a clear

understanding of the importance of relationship development. Mentors should be given strategies on how to develop and strengthen the mentor/mentee relationship. Initial training should prepare mentors for their role and help increase mentor efficacy by equipping mentors with critical tools and skills. Mentor and student expectations should be clearly established.

2. Mentors should be given a list of age-appropriate activities. The list should differentiate between relationship building and goal-focused activities. An understanding of the need to find a balance in relationship building and goal-focused activities should be clearly communicated to the mentor. Mentors should be guided on how to make the activity selection process a collaborative effort while still allowing the mentor to provide the framework of the activity.

3. Mentors should receive continuous support during their mentoring relationship. Administrators and experienced mentors should reach out to mentors to provide support and guidance. When reaching out to mentors, administrators can reinforce the goals of the program and gauge whether or not mentors are fulfilling expectations. During this time, mentor perceptions of relationship development and effectiveness should be evaluated.

4. Administrators should make sure mentors have a clear understanding of the commitment needed by the mentor before embarking on the mentoring relationship. Mentors should be carefully screened prior to beginning the relationship to ensure that requirements can be met and that mentor/mentee matches are appropriate. When matching mentors and mentees, personal interests and preferences such as gender and race should be considered.

5. Mentees should participate in introductory and recurring training so they have

a clear understanding of their role in the mentoring process. Training should

include program requirements, realistic relationship and activity expectations,

and instruction on the role of the mentee and mentor. Training should include

explanations and examples of ways to increase personal engagement,

communications skills, and relationship bonding. Students should know their

responsibilities in the relationship before they begin. Student and mentor

expectations should be clearly established.

6. Administrators should periodically interview mentees to ensure that mentors

   are meeting time requirements and that activities have been worthwhile and

   appropriate and to gauge relationship development and effectiveness.

   Pertinent information should be shared with the mentor in order to increase

   relationship success and effectiveness. By providing support along the way,

   administrators can ensure that mentee and mentor perceptions of the

   relationship are in sync with each other.

7. The program should continue the scheduling of group activities that focus on

   personal development of the mentee and the development and strengthening

   of the peer relationships within the program. Some scheduled group activities

   should include mentors and mentees, thus allowing mentors to establish

   connections and support systems with other mentors in the program.

8. It would also be advantageous for parents to undergo training. Programs

   should ensure that communication lines between the parents, mentors, and

   program administrators remain solid throughout the scholars' participation in

   the program. Engaging parents strengthens the bonds between the mentor and

   their child and can lead to a more productive experience for all the

stakeholders involved. Further, parents can provide valuable insight into their child that could assist with the mentee/mentor relationship.

9.   During the analysis, the program administrators surfaced as a critical component in the success of the mentoring relationship. When a mentor/mentee relationship is floundering or lacking foundation, it is the program director who must support the mentee and give guidance to the mentor. Therefore, it is critical that a strong program director be in place to not only guide the program and program activities but to assist and guide the mentors and mentees.

The above recommendations correspond with recommendations made by MENTOR, The National Mentoring Partnership (Keller, 2007; Rhodes, 2007) and the Mentoring Resource Center (Cannata & Garringer, 2006).

Limitations

In the current study, there are several limitations that should be considered. When using IPA as the research method, study results are limited to the researcher's interpretation. Further, the researcher's interpretation is based on the participant's interpretation of the experience or phenomenon. As such, results could vary when interpreted by other readers.

The number of participants in the current study was limited to four individuals. A total of five participants were contacted, with one potential participant choosing not to participate. This individual may have provided insight that could have given the study a broader base on which to interpret the data. Furthermore, while having four individuals allowed for in-depth exploration of the mentoring phenomenon, their experiences were unique to each participant. Had a different set of individuals participated, their

perceptions would have been different and unique to their mentoring experience.

In Chapter 1, the researcher predicted that a potential limitation was the variance between the mentors. This prediction and later evidence, in fact, has given the research a richer picture of what was experienced by the participants. Similar to the mentees, mentors brought unique perceptions and life experiences to the relationship and, as such, there was diversity found between the individual mentoring experiences.

Another limitation of the study is that perceptions change with time and maturity. This study captures how the participants interpreted their experience at this time in their lives. Additionally, the disposition of the participant at the time of the interview impacted the data that were collected. The researcher attempted to create a calm and positive interview environment in order to ensure the comfort of the participant and to alleviate outside factors that might have influenced the interview; yet other factors, internal and external to the participant, could have altered comfort levels and perceptions. Connected to this limitation was the fact that the researcher is a female. Lamar stated that he would have preferred a male mentor, and it is possible that he could have been more open about his experience had the researcher been a male.

IPA research recognizes the role of researcher bias (Smith et al., 2009). A final limitation of the study is that the researcher serves as a mentor in the program. Additionally, the researcher is an educator with personal beliefs in the potential of a mentoring relationship and the desired outcomes associated with mentoring students.

Suggestions for Further Research

In this study, the mentees shared their perceptions of the mentoring experience. While working with the data, the researcher was aware of a missing voice. The mentors' perceptions of the experience were not being presented. There was a void not knowing

how they perceived the mentoring experience. An additional study could include mentor and mentee interviews with a comparison of their perceptions. Did the mentors and mentees perceive the mentees' experiences and the mentoring phenomenon, in general, in the same way? Further research could investigate how and why mentor and mentee perceptions vary. Additionally, a third perspective that would help inform the mentoring community would be that of the parents. They, too, are observers and stakeholders involved in the mentoring process and, as such, could provide valuable insight for the mentoring community.

Further research could also address student perceptions when they graduate from high school. While the more enduring influences might not surface as clearly, students would be able to more explicitly recall experiences and conversations that impacted their perceptions of their experiences.

Final Reflections

For students who are the first generation in their family to attend college and for students coming from lower SES backgrounds, having an adult who can help navigate the path toward college can be an invaluable asset in realizing college attendance. Not only did the students in this study graduate from high school and attend college, they graduated from college in 4 years. These students' achievements indicate program and student success. Having the credential of a college diploma can lead to an increased opportunity for financial success and positive life outcomes.

Drawing from the experiences of these four college graduates, the current study garnered insight into student perceptions of their mentoring experience and the mentoring phenomenon. In other words, this study examined what worked for them. The information gleaned from their experiences can inform the Citizen Scholars mentoring

program and the larger mentoring community.

While many outside factors influence student outcomes and mentoring relationships, it is the student who can best zero in on their perception of their experience. The mentees' words essentially shaped this study. Ultimately, it is their voices that can best inform mentoring programs as to the effectiveness of the mentoring experience. The participants in this study are powerful examples of the profound impact a genuine mentoring relationship can hold for today's youth.

> Lamar: Know your scholars. Make sure that you know what they like and what they don't like. Get to know their personal life and be a resource for them to be able to talk to you about anything. Make them feel comfortable enough to talk to you about anything . . . ask them questions, get to know them for like who they are, and find out about like their past and maybe what they've been through. Ask them where they want to go in life, like what things they want to do, and how you can be a resource to help them to do that.

> Becca: Mentors . . . be there for whoever you are mentoring, because you don't really know until you form a personal relationship really what they're going through. . . . The student scholars program was for people who didn't really have a lot. So a lot of times when people don't have a lot, there's more issues going on at home that people realize, and I know a couple from different classes personally, so I'd say the biggest thing is to just make sure you're there for them, no matter what they're going through. Try to form a personal relationship, so they feel comfortable talking to you, and making sure that they feel important or they feel someone cares for them. That's probably the biggest thing that you can do.

> Adam: I mean, I think he believed in me more than anybody probably. Like this

was a good thing, like just having somebody that believes in you is a big deal.

Trianna: She has literally left a permanent space in my life that nobody can erase.

Nothing. It's permanent and it's not going anywhere. And I will forever be

thankful and grateful.

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Appendix A

Executive Director Letter of Permission

August 21, 2016

Dr. Gloria Webb Close
Executive Director
Citizen Scholars Program
220 East Kennedy Street
Spartanburg, SC 29302

Dear Dr. Close:

As you know, I am currently working on my dissertation for the Gardner-Webb Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Program. My qualitative study will investigate mentoring relationships and their impact on academic achievement and self-efficacy. I am writing to request permission to conduct this study with students who have successfully completed the Citizen Scholars Program.

The study is titled, *A Phenomenological Study of the Citizen Scholars Mentoring Experience.* Data will be collected through individual, semi-structured interviews. The study participants will be the students who began the program in fall of 2005 and remained in the program through college graduation in 2016. The dissertation will include an overview of the Citizen Scholars purpose, history, scholar selection process, program expectations and learning experiences.

Additionally, I am requesting permission to access and use student files. No student names will appear in the dissertation or in any report resulting from the study. However, with permission, anonymous quotations may be included.

I hope the results of my study will be of benefit to those stakeholders directly involved with the Citizen Scholars Program, other mentoring organizations not directly involved in the study, as well as to the broader research community. As the Executive Director of the Citizen Scholars Program, your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Margaret Lee

Permission is given to Margaret Lee for the academic research as noted above.

_____   _____

Appendix B

Scholar Letter of Consent

Researcher: Margaret Lee

Title of Study: A Phenomenological Study of the Citizen Scholars Mentoring Experience

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this study is to examine how students reflect upon their mentoring relationships, identify themes associated with their experiences, and explore students' perceptions of the influence of the experiences on their academic achievement and self-efficacy.

Methodology/Procedures of Research/Anticipated time to complete: This study will be a qualitative study that follows an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis approach for data collection and data analysis.   Data will be collected through individual, semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Interviews should last between 60-90 minutes.

Possible Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: There are no risks associated with participating in this study and there are no short or long-term benefits to participating in this study. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

Possible Costs: None

Right to withdraw: Participation is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Privacy of data collected from the study: Data collection will be confidential to protect the privacy of participants. Data included in the dissertation will be anonymous. Results will be stored in a locked file cabinet and only known to the researcher. No identifying information will be published in the dissertation.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me in the following ways:
Cell phone: 864-415-8866   Email: mmlee@spart7.org

Signatures: By signing this consent agreement, you agree to take part in the study. You will receive a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix C

Interview Protocol Form and Schedule of Questions

Interview Protocol and Question Schedule

Research Questions:
(RQ1) What are the themes that emerge from the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience?
(RQ2) What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience on the students' academic achievement?
(RQ3) What is the perceived effect of the Citizen Scholars mentoring experience of the students' self-efficacy?

Interview Protocol:
1. The recording device will be checked to secure a clear recording of the interview.
2. Participants in the study will receive a brief description of how the interview will be conducted. Each participant will have prior knowledge and given prior consent for audio recording.
3. The researcher will begin the interview by thanking the scholar for coming. The researcher will ask a couple of general questions to establish a comfortable and relaxed environment for the interview. Opening questions could include:
   How has your day been? Tell me about your day.
   How does it feel to be a college graduate? Do you feel any different?
   How are you filling your time now that you don't have classes and homework?
   These questions will be light "ice breaker" questions to start conversation.
4. To help will memory recall of their experiences, the researcher will ask if the participant would like to make either a mental list or write down things they did with their mentor. The purpose of this exercise will be to get the participant thinking about their mentoring experience. For some participants, this could be a helpful reflection tool.
5. Early in the interview process, I will want to find out if the mentor and mentee still communicate. This information will help guide the interview.
6. General Prompts used during the interview will include: How? Why? Please explain. Can you tell me more? How did that make you feel?
7. There are fewer prompts toward the end of the interview. At this point the interviewee should have a higher comfort level and the researcher would like to see what themes emerge freely.
8. The researcher will end the interview by thanking the participant for sharing their time and experiences and ask if the researcher could contact the participant again if further clarification is needed.

Interview schedule of questions:

General Starter Questions: Questions 1-3 are relationship questions and are similar in nature. It may not be necessary to ask all three questions, as the answers might be supplied during the general discussion of a previous question.

1) Tell me about your mentor (mentors). (RQ1) (This question is very general in nature. I will be trying to set the tone and create a sense of ease and comfort for the interviewee.)
Prompts and follow-up questions: Do you remember where you were? How did you feel? What were your expectations? Did you have more than one mentor? Was there anyone else that you considered a mentor? How would you describe a mentoring relationship?

2) What are some things that stand out in your memory about your mentoring experience? (RQ1)
Prompts and follow-up questions: What types of activities or what did you do when you got together? Conversations? What experiences did you enjoy the most? Did any of those experiences help you grow? Have you done anything with your mentor recently? Can you tell me about it……

3) How would you describe your relationship with your mentor? (RQ1)
Prompts and follow-up questions: Why was it ……….. (adj. scholar used to describe the relationship)? Give me an example of when you felt that way. Did you have any difficult, challenging or frustrating time periods? How have you benefited from having a mentor (RQ2, RQ3)?

4) How has having a mentor influenced your attitude towards your education? (RQ2, RQ 3)
   Prompts and follow-up questions: School, college and success (educational success, life success) How have your views changed from middle school, to high school, and through college? Give me an example of how your views have changed. How has your mentor influenced you? In what ways do you feel like you are more successful as a student as a result of your mentoring relationship?

5) What particular challenges did you have in school? In what ways did your mentor (mentors) influence or advise you during those times? (RQ2, RQ3)
   Prompts: What was the most difficult thing about high school? College? When did you go to your mentor for help? Describe…..

6) Tell me about any times that you went to your mentor for help? How did your mentor respond? (RQ1, RQ2, RQ3)
   Prompts and follow-up questions: Did you ever talk to your mentor about personal problems, challenges or setbacks? Can you tell me about it? Was your mentor able to advise or help you? How were you able to resolve the challenge? Were there times when you wanted to give up, but you kept going? Was your mentor able to help you? Do you ever think about how your mentor would advise you even when you don't reach out to him or her for help? Can you tell me more?

7) How well do you feel like your mentor (mentors) knew you? Or, if currently in touch…How well do you feel like your mentor knows you? (RQ1)
Prompts and follow-up questions: In your view, what are the indicators that your mentoring relationship was successful, or not?

8) In what ways did you and your mentor (mentors) talk about your future? (RQ3)
Prompts: When and how did you discuss your strengths? How has your self-confidence been impacted by this experience?

9) In closing, if you had advice for mentors, what would it be? (RQ1) Is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to talk about?