UNDERSTANDING HOW PEER MENTORS MAKE MEANING OF THEIR ROLE

Andrea Colby Engler

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Robin L. Hughes, Ph.D., Chair

 

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Doctoral Committee          Megan M. Palmer, Ph.D.

March 4, 2015

 

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Michele J. Hansen, Ph.D.

DEDICATION

To my family, friends and the OTEAM:

Thank you for all of your inspiration, support, encouragement, and love.

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UNDERSTANDING HOW PEER MENTORS MAKE MEANING OF THEIR ROLE

In an effort to support undergraduate students and retain them, colleges and universities have created programs that use peer mentors to facilitate their transition to and academic success in college. Involving peer mentors in college student support programs has been shown to be effective in helping students with aspects of their academic success. Research has not focused on the essential experience of being in a peer mentor role. This study aimed to understand how peer mentors make meaning of their role, to capture their voice, and to gain insight into the essential experience of being a peer mentor. This phenomenological study used an inductive approach in describing and interpreting the data collected, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how peer mentors make meaning of their role. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with peer mentors with varying levels of experience from two different programs. The interview data was coded into themes providing insight on each mentor's experience and their understanding of their experience, and were then organized using a holistic developmental framework that included the dimensions of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological development. The findings in this study suggested that peer mentors were able to describe their experiences in ways that reflected how their experiences caused them to pause, have new insights, and think differently in each of the three dimensions.

Robin L. Hughes, Ph.D., Chair

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In an effort to support undergraduate students and retain them, colleges and universities have created programs that use peer mentors as a way to facilitate their transition to and academic success in college. Involving peer mentors in college student support programs has shown to be effective in helping students with aspects of their academic success in areas such as retention, grades, mastering course content, social integration, satisfaction, and overall adjustment to college (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Ender & Newton, 2000; Mangold, Bean, Adams, Schwab, & Lynch, 2003; Pagan & Edwards-Wilson, 2003; Russel & Skinkle, 1990; Sorrentino, 2007). In view of these desired outcomes, institutions have created a variety of programs that incorporate peer mentors, such as academic advising (Diambra & Cole-Zakrzewski, 2002; Rosenthal & Shinebarger, 2010), counseling and career advising (Delworth & Johnson, 1984), tutoring (Saunders, 1992), supplemental instruction and peer-led team learning (Schray, Russo, Egolf, Lademan, & Gelormo, 2009; Tien, Roth, & Kampmeier, 2004; Zaritsky, 2001), first-year seminars (Evenbeck & Williams, 1998; Henscheid, 2001), new student orientation (Ender & Strumpf, 1984), residence life (Everett & Loftus, 2011), and health-related programs (Badura, Millard, Peluso, & Ortman, 2000). The use of peer mentors in these types of programs has shown to be effective for the students that they serve. The impact that it has on undergraduate students has received some attention in the literature; however, research on the impact of mentoring on the mentor is limited. Understanding the experiences of the students who serve as peer mentors and how they make meaning of this experience is important.

The use of undergraduate students as peer mentors has shown to be a successful practice in higher education. Peer mentors are a cost-effective way to extend the arm of the university by providing support and services to a greater number of students. Dolton, Klein, and Weir (1994) and Kapp et al. (2011) completed studies that included peer mentoring as a part of their course redesign and found a cost savings for their programs. Ender (1984) also mentioned that the use of peer mentors increased the availability of student services, freed up professionals' time, and decreased costs.

The following researchers have offered considerations for why utilizing peer mentors has been successful. Ender and Newton (2000), contended that peer mentors have a positive impact on other students because of their position in college. They are "slightly ahead in experience and awareness of what a student seeking help may be going through but not so removed as to seem unable to identify and understand his or her situation" (p. 8). Ender and Newton (2000) and Hamid and Van Hook (2001) also stated that a peer's influence is stronger than many other people in the lives of students. In addition, peer mentoring has shown to be a creative approach, given the various techniques used to help students learn (Diambra & Cole-Zakrzewski, 2002; Mangold et al., 2002; Rosenthal & Shinebarger, 2010; Tien et al., 2004; Schray et al., 2009).

Preparing peer mentors for this role requires a holistic approach to help them understand the diverse aspects of supporting the comprehensive needs of students (Crosling & Webb, 2002). The selection and training of undergraduates to serve in peer mentoring roles can be divided into five themed areas necessary for promoting positive mentoring relationships. The first area involves the mentor understanding the process of behavioral, cognitive, and social learning (i.e., metacognition), as well as motivational

techniques for dealing with roadblocks (Crosling & Webb, 2002). The second area includes understanding student development theory in higher education, group dynamics, leadership, communication skills and the impact of diversity in serving others (Terrell & Hassell, 1994). Counseling skills, including listening, paraphrasing, nonverbal questioning, maintaining confidentiality, modeling ethical behavior, projecting sensitivity, goal-setting, and exploring one's limits and boundaries, as well as the traditional therapeutic counseling process, make up the third area (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2005). The fourth area involves teaching skills, developing learning goals, structuring the learning process, facilitating learning through careful techniques, and assessing learning (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005). Lastly, mentors must have knowledge of self. Mentors need to understand their own lifestyle, personal values, beliefs, stereotypes, and social networks that support others' learning (Ender & Newton, 2000).

While the ultimate goal of peer mentoring programs is to improve student learning, some research on student (mentors) has shown that they also learn and benefit from being role models (Wawrzynski, LoConte, & Straker, 2011) and peer mentors (Harmon, 2006; Henscheid, 2001; Russel & Skinkle, 1990; Schmidt, Marks, and Derrico, 2004). The research looked at learning outcomes in areas such as communication, leadership, time management, and personal competence in mentoring. Research looking specifically at how the peer mentor makes meaning of their role has not been prominent in the literature.

Statement of the Problem

The research on peer mentoring has focused on three areas. The first area has been oriented toward program development and what is needed for strong mentoring programs (Pagan & Edwards-Wilson, 2003; Mangold et al., 2002; Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2007). The second area has focused on the impact of mentoring programs on certain student populations in terms of persistence in school, grade point average, and ease of transition (Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Pope, 2002; Rodger & Tremblay, 2003). The third area has focused on two outcomes associated with being peer mentors: the value gained from being involved in leadership roles on campus (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) and the skills developed from peer mentoring, such as time management, communication, and problem solving (Harmon, 2006; Henscheid, 2001; Jacobi, 1991; Russel & Skinkle, 1990; Schmidt et al., 2004; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1999). The current literature about the impact of mentoring on the peer mentor has largely used quantitative research methods and applied the findings only toward program development. Research has not focused on the essence, the experience of being in a peer mentor role. In order to better understand the impact of mentoring on the peer mentor, additional research is needed to examine the lived experiences of peer mentors.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how peer mentors, who support undergraduates in college courses and college transition, make meaning of their role. More specifically, this study sought to capture the peer mentor's voice and gain insight

into the essential experience of being a peer mentor. The following research questions were proposed for this study:

1. How do peer mentors make meaning of their role?

2. In what ways does being a peer mentor have a developmental impact on the peer mentor?

<div align="center">Significance of the Study</div>

In this study, I desired to contribute to the literature in two specific ways: by focusing on the peer mentor's voices articulating how they make meaning of their experience and by understanding how the work of peer mentoring can serve as a mechanism for holistic development. First, as previously stated, the literature has not offered qualitative research about the impact of mentoring on the mentor as it relates to their personal development (Badura et al., 2000; Harmon, 2006; Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh, & Wilss, 2008). Qualitative research into how mentors make meaning from the mentoring experience could eventually be used to inform the creation of a framework for describing a mentor's holistic development. Secondly, understanding how peer mentors develop an understanding of their experience and what might influence their understanding will help program professionals cultivate the peer mentor's internal voice and determine how to provide the necessary support for their development. I expect the results of this research to help mentors and program directors identify appropriate challenges and reflective prompts to support mentors in engaging in more complex meaning-making exercises, to create experiences for connecting mentors to their internal voice, and to develop intentional mentor trainings that will not only prepare them with the skills necessary to be a mentor but also gain them the most personally.

Definition of Terms

*Peer Mentoring-* "First, [mentoring] is an intentional process of interaction

between at least two individuals. . . . Second, mentoring is a nurturing

process that fosters the growth and development of the protégé. . . . Third,

mentoring is an insightful process in which the wisdom of the mentor is

acquired and applied by the protégé. . . . Fourth, mentoring is a supportive,

often protective process. The mentor can serve as an important guide or

reality checker in introducing the protégé to the environment he or she is

preparing for. Finally... an essential component as a mentor is role

modeling" (Shandley, 1989, p. 60).

*Holistic Development-* This is the internal capacity to define one's beliefs,

identity, and social relations; that is, to meet the challenges of adult life

(Baxter Magolda, 2008). There are three dimensions to the theory of

holistic development:

*Intrapersonal—* in self-authorship, this refers to the question: who am I?

*Interpersonal—* in self-authorship, this refers to the question: what kind of

relationships do I want to have with other people?

*Epistemological—* in self-authorship, this refers to the question: how do I

know*?*

Overview of Dissertation

In Chapter Two of this study I review the literature in three areas: meaning making, the use of peer mentoring; student development theory; and specific inquiry into how holistic development has been used as a framework in understand one's growth development. Chapter Three provides details about the methodology, the researcher, methods to establish trustworthiness, and the data analysis techniques used to answer the research questions presented in this chapter. Chapter Four introduces the subjects of the study, who participated in semi-structured interviews for the research. Chapter Five includes the findings from the interviews and presents them in a structured format with categories and subthemes. Finally, Chapter Six presents the conclusions of this study, the implications for practice limitations, and opportunities for additional research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the experience of undergraduate students who served as peer mentors during their college years. A summary of the literature is presented in the following areas: To begin, the importance of meaning making is discussed. Secondly, the history, definitions, and diverse functions, forms, and areas associated with peer mentoring are presented (Anderson & Shannon, 1988; A. W. Carns, Carns, & Wright, 1993; Murray, 2001; Zunker, 1975). Third, holistic development, the process of meaning making from an external to an internal voice, also known as self-authorship, is discussed. Holistic development is discussed in terms of cognitive development theory (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; King & Kitchener, 1994; Perry, 1970) and identity development theory (Baxter Magolda, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kegan, 1994) in order to provide a framework for showing how the cognitive constructivist perspective integrates these theories (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Lastly, Creamer and Laughlin (2005), Pizzolato (2003), Torres and Hernandez (2007), and Wawrzynski and Pizzolato (2006) are examined as examples of research that have used a holistic framework as a means of assessing students' growth. These studies will be used to inform the methodology section in Chapter Three.

Meaning Making

Higher education professionals have the opportunity to impact student learning well beyond the classroom by helping them create meaning in their lives that will carry them through adulthood. Baxter Magolda stated that a "common educational goal in

American higher education is to improve student learning for the purpose of preparing young adults for the professional, civic, and personal challenges of adult life" (2004, p.2). How colleges and universities approach this goal is complex, involving faculty and student service professionals. College students were described by Baxter Magolda (2008) as needing several skills to function well in today's global society. The first skill is for students to be able to engage in collaborative social relations with others different from themselves. This requires a level of intercultural maturity that is gained through, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological development. Secondly, employers want college students who have teamwork skills and can work well in groups. Thirdly, Baxter Magolda stated that college students were expected to know how to take personal and social responsibility and demonstrate intercultural competence. Lastly, given the pace of knowledge production in today's society, Baxter Magolda asserted that students needed to have forms of learning that could process knowledge, stand apart from external expectations, and connect their new knowledge to their internal voice. For students to develop these skills, they must create meaning from their experiences in advanced education, employment, personal life, and community life. Their experiences should challenge the student with external influences and lead them toward self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004). "Meeting responsible citizenship expectations requires the emergence of a distinctive mode of meaning making" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. xviii) and that mode involves "becoming critically aware of one's own composing of reality" (p. 2).

Along the same lines, Nash and Murray (2010) explored students' perspectives regarding their goals for attending college. They found that students were looking for

more than an education: they were looking to make meaning of their lives and find purpose for their future. Educators have a great responsibility in supporting students in the meaning-making process and when it is done well, it "is a cross-disciplinary, collaborative, and student-centered" effort (Nash & Murray, 2010, p. xiii). "Faculty and administrators need one another as active, knowledgeable, passionate collaborators if we are to be successful in helping our students to discover and to create meaning" (p. xiii). The use of peer undergraduate students as partners in this collaborative student-centered approach is an important part of this effort. If insights could be gained into the mentor's experience and how they make meaning of their experience, practitioners working with the mentors could appropriately challenge and support them in their adult development and make more informed decisions when training mentors and establishing mentor programs.

Mentoring

*The Story of Mentor*

Murray (2001) and Anderson and Shannon (1988) reported that the idea of mentoring can be traced back to the Greek myth of Odysseus in *The Odyssey*. In this myth, Odysseus, a great warrior, fought in the Trojan War and entrusted his son, Telemachus, to his friend and advisor, Mentor. Mentor was charged with advising and serving as guardian to Telemachus and to the entire royal household. As the story unfolded, Mentor accompanied and guided Telemachus on a journey in search of his father and ultimately toward a new and fuller identity of his own. Athene, goddess of wisdom, who presided over all craft and skillfulness, manifested herself to Telemachus in the form of Mentor.

The account of Mentor in *The Odyssey* provides an allegorical framework for discussing the activity that bears his name. First, mentoring is an intentional process. Mentor intentionally carried out his responsibilities for Telemachus by looking after his education, shaping his character, and the wisdom of his decisions. Secondly, mentoring is a nurturing process, which fosters growth and development of the protégé toward full maturity. It was Mentor's responsibility to draw forth the full potential in Telemachus by helping him to make a full transition to become a man. Third, mentoring is an insightful process, in which the wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé. Clawson (1980) asserted that Mentor's task was to help Telemachus grow in wisdom without rebellion, leading to the fourth mentoring process, support and protection of the mentee. Telemachus was to consider the advice of Mentor, and Mentor was to "keep all safe" (Anderson & Shannon, 1988, p. 38). In this Greek myth, the origins of what it means to be a mentor is shared.

Mentoring today is used in many different fields. Since the mid-1970s, career development, business, psychology, nursing, faculty development, and teacher education have incorporated mentoring as a means of socializing individuals into their cultures. For instance, the faculty interested in supporting student teacher education have incorporated mentoring as a way to support new teachers (Clinard & Ariav, 1998; Cullingford, 2006; Gehrke, 1988; Gilles & Wilson, 2004; He, 2009; Heirdsfield et al., 2008). Business and management/organizational research has also investigated the role of peer mentors in employee retention, sharing organizational knowledge, and continuous learning environments (Brashear, Bellenger, Boles, & Barksdale, 2006; Bryant & Terborg, 2008; Eddy, Tannenbaum, Lorenzet, & Smith-Jentsch, 2005). The departments of psychology

in graduate programs are also interested in having their faculty mentor their graduate students and are specifically studying the determinants of effective mentoring relationships (Baranik, Roling, & Eby, 2009; Campbell & Anderson, 2010; Harden, Clark, Johnson, & Larson, 2009). In the field of nursing, mentors are often positioned to be responsible for the placement, supervision, and evaluation of nursing students (Wilkes, 2006). The work of mentoring in career development has been well documented specifically looking at who makes the best mentors, what type of relationships (formal or informal) are the best, and how gender and race play a part in mentoring (Goodyear, 2006; Lentz & Allen, 2009; Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009; Welsh & Wanberg, 2009). Medical schools have also used faculty to mentor other faculty in order to support their work and professional development (Dankoski, Palmer, Laird, Ribera, & Bogdewic, 2012; Sambunjak, Straus, & Marušić, 2006).

*History of Mentoring in Higher Education*

*Tutors*

Peer mentors are not new to higher education. Rudolph (1990) and Lucas (1994) both described the use of undergraduate students as tutors or peer helpers dating back to early colonial times in American colleges and universities. Historical accounts of tutoring describe men who served the college by enforcing rules and order among the students and teaching classes when there was no faculty available. Colonial-era tutors also worked to help students understand the course material. The tutors were considered to be a great cost-saving benefit to the college, as they did not earn faculty wages, yet were used as an extension of the faculty (Lucas, 1994; Rudolph, 1990).

*Paraprofessionals*

Mentoring literature from 1960 to 2000 incorporates the role of peer mentor under the general term *paraprofessional* on college campuses (Carns et al., 1993; Ender, 1984; Materniak, 1984; Wawrzynski et al., 2011). This term is also used to describe other student leadership positions on campus, such as peer counselor, residence hall advisor, orientation leader, and health advocate. Zunker (1975), in an early study, reported on the use of undergraduate students as paraprofessionals in colleges and universities. Carns et al. (1993) conducted a study following up on Zunker's work to provide a historical look at the changes in the uses of undergraduate students as paraprofessionals. Their findings suggested a steady trend in the types of roles these students provided: there had been a shift of services from one-on-one peer relationships to working more with groups; the selection criteria remained fairly consistent; and the training the students received appeared to have increased. Paraprofessionals were reported to provide economic benefits, to preserve professional staff members' time, and to be perceived as being very effective in assisting peer students. However, the activities and functions of these diverse roles were not similar beyond being performed by undergraduates on a college campus; therefore, specific attention to the position of the peer mentor is needed (Carns et al., 1993).

Ender (1984) used the term *paraprofessional* to generally describe students who served as support to their peers, then discussed the activities associated with this role. Ender reported that paraprofessional students provided assistance to their peers to support their adjustment, satisfaction, and persistence toward their educational goals. The focus of adjustment, satisfaction, and persistence were used to narrow the definition of the

paraprofessionals' role. The paraprofessionals' work included the functions of assisting, teaching, and supporting student learning (Ender, 1984). Learning assistance centers became part of the educational environment in the 1970s, dedicated to assisting students toward academic success as a response to the challenges that remedial programs were experiencing. The growth of learning assistance centers came from the increased demand for services and the lack of professionals and money to support other teaching initiatives. Therefore, talented and academically successful undergraduate peer students became a cost-effective means to free up faculty time and provide a much-needed service to students (Enright & Kerstiens, 1980). The increased use of peers in this paraprofessional role led to the development and formalization of peer mentoring programs (Ender, 1984).

Carns et al. (1993), Ender (1984), Materniak (1984), Wawrzynski et al. (2011), and Zunker (1975) have demonstrated the use of undergraduate students in a variety of paraprofessional roles as a widely accepted practice. However, the term paraprofessional was much too broadly defined, with diverse job descriptions, skills, and outcomes making it difficult to generalize about roles and their impact (Jacobi, 1991). Researchers still need to tease apart the roles of peer mentors, the definition of their roles as well as their activities and functions.

*Defining Peer Mentoring*

For the purpose of this study, defining the roles, activities, and functions of peer mentors is important. The word *mentor* is unique; it can refer to a person, an act, or a process. Merriam (1983) contended that "mentoring appeared to mean one thing to developmental psychologists, another thing to business people, and a third thing to those in academic settings" (p. 169). "The literature offers numerous definitions, some of which conflict, so that

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empirical research about mentoring subsumes several distinct kinds of interpersonal relationships" (Jacobi, 1991, p. 505). Because of the diversity of mentoring programs and definitions, the term is often generalized simply as "a sincere desire to help students succeed" (p.505). The variation in definitions is said to be important because "the utility of existing studies centering on evaluating the influence of mentoring on student outcomes is extremely limited due to definitional, methodological and theoretical flaws" (Crisp, 2009, p. 178).

One of the most thorough reviews of literature on mentoring was completed by Jacobi (1991). In this article, Jacobi examined a large number of definitions of mentoring in higher education. There were many operational definitions among the researchers surveyed, with Jacobi concluding that there was not a true consensus as to what mentoring really was. This loose and situational method for defining mentoring made evaluating the concept of peer mentoring very difficult. Therefore, Jacobi emphasized that it was important for research studies to define peer mentoring, what the role of the peer mentor is, and the functions and activities associated with that role to clarify how the concept of mentoring and the view of the peer mentor is being considered.

To assist in organizing the concept of mentoring, Brewster and Fager (1998) suggested that mentoring programs could be broken down into three general types. The first type of mentoring was educational or academic mentoring, to enhance a student's academic achievement by spending time together, communication, and befriending the student. The second type of mentoring related to career mentoring for the purpose of career development and role modeling. The third type of mentoring described personal development mentoring, which served as a supporting relationship to the student during

times of personal or social stress. The mentor in this relationship provided guidance to build the student's self-esteem, self-confidence, and decision-making abilities.

Mentoring has most often been described in terms of the mentoring activity and the functions performed by a mentor for a protégé. Those functions have varied, including support/encouragement, guidance, coaching, role modeling, advocacy, instruction, and exposure (Jacobi, 1991; Kerry & Mayes, 1995; Zachary, 2000). The varied definitions of mentoring functions have made it difficult to create a commonly agreed-upon list of functions, but a list is useful in stimulating thinking "about the broad range of behaviors that characterize mentor-protégé' relations" (Jacobi, 1991, p. 510).

Zey (1984) had offered a different perspective by grouping the functions into four areas, stating that all mentoring can be expressed within any or all of a number of mentoring functions.

(a) teaching/modeling — informing, confirming/disconfirming, prescribing, and questioning,

(b) supporting — protecting, supporting, and promoting,

(c) Intervening/encouraging — includes the behaviors of affirming, inspiring, and challenging and

(d) Sponsoring/befriending — recommending, accepting and relating.

Each of these functions, according to Zey, needed to be present during the mentoring relationship. These functions were critical for the mentor to possess and be able to apply when the need arises (p. 7–8).

Shandley built on Zey's four functional areas by defining mentoring in the following way:

First, it is an intentional process of interaction between at least two individuals. . . . Second, mentoring is a nurturing process that fosters the growth and development. . . . Third, mentoring is an insightful process in which wisdom of the mentor is acquired and applied by the protégé. . . . Fourth, mentoring is a supportive, often protective process. Finally... an essential component as a mentor is role modeling. (p. 60)

In reviewing the program manual and position descriptions for the subjects in this study, Shandley's (1989) definition most closely aligns with what the mentors are trained to exemplify in their peer mentoring positions.

Studies by Brewster and Fager (1998); Brown and DeCoster (1982); Carns et al. (1993); Evenbeck and Williams (1998); Reynolds (2003); and Russel and Skinkle (1990) reported how higher education recognized the importance of developing new curricular structures to enhance undergraduate student learning, helping students explore new career paths, and increasing student retention. Peer mentoring in higher education was found to be one effective strategy to address each of these concerns.

*Mentoring Programs*

The literature on the role and work of peer mentors predominantly focuses on the process of mentoring and not specifically on the peer mentors themselves. Mentoring research focuses on four areas: program development, race, gender, and mentor program effectiveness (Blake-Beard, Murrell, & Thomas, 2007; Holmes, Land, & Hinton-Hudson, 2007; McCormack & West, 2006; McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; Murray, 2001; Patton & Harper, 2003; Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007; Whittaker & Cartwright, 2000; Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2007; Young, Cady, & Foxon, 2006; Zachary, 2000, 2005).

*Program development*

The first area, program development, recommends important elements to consider when developing a mentoring program. Whittaker and Cartwright (2000) wrote *The*

*Mentor Manual* to offer a comprehensive look at mentoring and the considerations to be taken into account when beginning a mentoring program. Specifically, Whittaker and Cartwright reported on the need for a scheme or purpose for the program, consideration of aspects that make mentoring programs successful or unsuccessful, strategies for effective mentoring relationships, and ways to develop one's mentoring techniques through methods such as writing personal reflections. Yendol-Hoppey and Dana (2007) also stressed the importance of being reflective about one's mentoring as a manner of enhancing one's mentoring skills. In addition, the authors stressed that mentoring programs require creating a mentoring context and being well trained to have the disposition to be an effective mentor. This particular resource illustrated mentoring through the use of metaphors to describe the roles of the mentor and mentee and the context of the mentoring relationship. Similar to Yendol-Hoppey and Dana (2007), Zachary (2000) also used a metaphor, one of gardening, to illustrate the necessary skills and techniques mentors needed to apply to the mentoring relationship in order for positive growth to occur in the mentee. For example, Zachary began by expressing the need to lay the ground work, referring to the need to focus on learning; another area discussed involved planting seeds, negotiating, nurturing growth, and enabling; lastly, the idea of reaping the harvest was offered, which meant the closure of the mentoring relationship. Zachary (2000, 2005) offered a tremendous amount by reinforcing the need for necessary aspects of mentoring programs and by emphasizing the importance of creating and connecting mentoring to the culture of the organization and the need for reflection for the development of the program. Murray (2001) provided guidance on how to produce a successful mentoring program, beginning with a definition of mentoring,

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terminologies, models for program structures, coordination of the mentoring process, recommendations for common pitfalls, and how to evaluate the outcomes of the mentoring program. Cohen and Galbraith (1995), Cohen (1995), and Johnson and Sullivan (1995) also provided examples of programs that had shown to be effective mentoring models. There is a strong and consistent message in this literature about the necessary aspects for successful mentoring programs. While these elements are helpful for program development, this research did not mention the importance of considering the peer mentor's role, activities, or functions as essential for successful mentoring.

*Gender and mentoring*

The second area focuses on gender and mentoring. Gender issues and mentoring have not been the focus of many studies; however, it is important to understand the role of gender as it relates to the mentoring relationship and that it is a part of the landscape of mentoring literature. The gender of the mentor and mentee is said to operate on a multitude of levels of the mentoring relationship, such as how the relationships are formed and what expectations are held; what skills are skills; and what resources the mentor might bring to the relationship (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; Young et al., 2006). Gender and mentoring are most often discussed in studies about women in the workplace and not at all in the literature about undergraduate peer mentoring in higher education.

Mentoring for women was considered as a factor in assisting women to break through the glass ceiling, to exceed performance expectations, to adjust styles to be more comfortable for males to work with, and to gain informal networks (Catalyst, 2004). In addition, female mentors helped other females to overcome barriers in the workplace, to understand the stereotypical masculine culture in organizations, to advance in the ranks,

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and to enhance their sense of belonging and safety in these environments. Females were said to rarely mentor males as they "lack[ed] the organizational power and influence to be as effective as men in terms of mentoring others" (Young et al., 2006, p.157). Females were also said to not have successful mentoring relationships with men for biological and psychological reasons. Biologically, it was proposed that the cross-gender mentorships presented a sexual element, often under the surface; however, the feelings were often associated with those in a dating or mating relationship. Psychologically, it was offered that a level of attachment and ideation found in attachment theory in psychology may occur. The theory of attachment suggests that the "ability to develop and maintain relationships begins at a very early age based on our attachment to a parent or primary caretaker" (Young et al., 2006, p.166).

Female mentors were suggested to be most successful in providing psychosocial mentoring functions such as how to manage work relationships (Young et al., 2006). The psychosocial approach was considered to be less formal and researchers found that women preferred a relationship with greater equality, a mutual level of support, and an understanding of work/life balance. This informal structure was identified as collaborative and able to move mentees from positions of isolation to ones that are supportive (McCormack & West, 2006; Young et al., 2006). By contrast, male mentees were said to receive more mentoring and to prefer relationships with male mentors that were at higher levels than them and could provide them with greater status and recognition in the organization. Male mentors were also perceived to be more powerful and able to help their mentees to acquire higher salaries (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; Young et al., 2006).

The research on gender roles in the mentoring relationship has looked at gender as it relates to the mentee; however, more research is said to be needed on the issues, effects, and opportunities that mentoring provides to the mentor. Specifically, research is needed on how gender contributes to the functions the mentor fulfills, the unique needs of women that encourage them to take on a mentoring role, and what they seek from the mentoring experience. Lastly, researchers recommended investigating how gender and other aspects of diversity may interact or affect the mentoring process and/or outcome (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; Young et al., 2006).

*Race and Mentoring*

The third area focuses on race and mentoring. Race and mentoring is often mentioned in terms of a mentoring program offered to a specific racial group. It is not often discussed as a factor in the mentoring relationship. The concept of race in mentoring studies was said to be often omitted from the literature; when it was included, it was referred to as an "unexplained variance" in the data or as a difference in not fitting the standard model (Blake-Beard et al., 2006). It was stated that studies often do not delve into why the differences occurred or, more importantly, do not challenge the existing models in response to experiences of different groups (Blake-Beard et al., 2006). Higher education and organizational literature has contributed some to the topic of race and mentoring by addressing the availability of same-race/cross-race mentor relationships, the outcomes gained in these relationships, and the structure of these mentoring relationships (Blake-Beard et al., 2006; Driscoll, Parkes, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill, & Pitts Bannister, 2009; Patton & Harper, 2003; Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007; Thomas, 2001). Additional research is said to be needed in this area, but the current research supports the

idea that mentees prefer same-gender and same-race relationships. Mentees in cross-racial mentor relationships were said to experience less satisfaction with the relationship, a decreased level of organizational commitment, and lower levels of trust in the relationship (Blake-Beard et al., 2006). Blake-Beard et al. (2006) referred to this gap as "unfinished business" (p. 242) and referred to research on race and mentoring as providing "an extraordinary opportunity to help us answer some of the persistent and vital questions concerning the dynamics of race in organizations" (p. 242). This area of mentoring literature presents a great opportunity for further research to be done in higher education, specifically with undergraduate students.

The intersection of race and gender in mentoring was discussed in Patton and Harper's (2003) study. As in the literature on gender and mentoring, having a same-race mentor was stated as being "vital to the facilitation of successful experiences for African American women and necessary in order for them to break the glass ceiling" (p. 68). However, finding appropriate mentors to meet their needs in graduate and professional schools was said to be very difficult (Patton & Harper, 2003). In support of same-race female mentors, it was shared that "only an African American woman could understand the complex intersection of race and gender in the academy and society" (p. 71). This was supported by the notion that same-race and same-gender mentors were able to establish a deeper and more meaningful connection due to their firsthand life experiences in the academy (Holmes et al., 2007; Patton & Harper, 2003). Although African American women overwhelmingly preferred same-race female mentors, it was noted that this group had the least access to same-race role models and mentors, creating difficulty for African American women (Holmes et al., 2007; Patton & Harper, 2003). This

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outcome is supported by Jacobi's (1991) research, which reported that there were not enough mentors available for women in education.

In an effort to meet the need for mentors with this population, informal (not hierarchical, but rather collegial and collaborative) networks for mentoring have developed. Informal networks form outside of the individual's department, across job levels and professions, often within churches, social groups, and professional organizations. Informal collaborative and collegial relationships have been shown to provide positive outcomes for the members of the relationship, as they often experience a greater sense of satisfaction and increased organizational commitment, as well as nurturing, culturally relevant, and trustworthy relationships. In addition, informal networks have established the need for more mentors in the profession and for members to give back to support others (Blake-Beard et al., 2006; Holmes et al., 2007; Patton & Harper, 2003; Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007; Young et al., 2006).

*Program Effectiveness*

The fourth area of research on peer mentoring focuses on the successfulness and effectiveness of various mentoring programs. The following studies provide strong evidence that peer mentoring programs are successful in helping students in higher education. Russel and Skinkle (1990) examined the effectiveness of peer-advising for first-year students. Skinkle explored the type of peer-helper characteristics used and the effects of their help. The goal of the peer-helper's role was to increase the student's involvement and enhance the student's sense of membership in the academic community. The results gathered suggested that the peer-advising program had a significant impact on the program participants by providing them a greater sense of membership and

involvement on campus. A limitation of Skinkle's study was that the quality of the peer-helper may have affected the program's effectiveness in the study. For example, the character of a peer-helper (their higher self-esteem, tolerance, open-mindedness, and impartiality) may have made them a more highly effective helper, resulting in a more effective program. Russel and Skinkle (1990), recommended further research be considered to focus on the effect of the peer-advising program on the peer-helpers themselves. This adds validation for the need of the current study. This early study recognized that something important may occur to the peer mentor as an outcome of the mentoring relationship.

Other studies that investigated peer-mentoring program effectiveness included research with freshman student retention. Mangold et al. (2002) and Hamid and VanHook (2001) investigated the effects of a freshman mentoring program on student persistence in college. The program provided the students the opportunity of block registration, the registration of nine credits together in the fall and six credits in the spring, as well as mentoring. The determination of whether students benefited was based on the number of student dropouts that occurred during the year; various student characteristics, such as gender, race, ACT score, and grade point average, were recorded (Mangold et al., 2002). This research revealed that the program had a positive impact on graduation and persistence. The study may have been limited by the fact that students self-selected into the sections that offered the peer mentoring program. This is important because we know from student development literature such as Perry (1970), Chickering and Reisser (1993), and Baxter Magolda (2001b), that students must choose to engage in growth and development in order for it to occur.

The research conducted by Reynolds (2003) did look at the use of undergraduate students specifically in the role of peer mentor. The mentors in Reynolds' study worked with faculty in learning-communities that served freshman and sophomore students. The mentors were responsible for student-student interactions, assisting faculty with the curriculum by leading discussions and activities, training on technology, serving as friends, counseling, and being role models in the class. It was found that the peer mentors had a tremendous impact on the students, the faculty, and themselves. However, this research is not specific as to how its results relate to the mentor. The studies presented do provide consensus that peer mentors are an effective practice and the current research looks predominately at program outcomes. The studies also provide support that further research does need to be conducted to investigate the impact on the peer mentors themselves as it relates to their personal growth and development.

*Peer Mentor Growth and Development*

The writing published about peer mentoring presents a gap in the literature as it relates to the impact of the mentoring experience on the peer mentor. Gardner (2001) recognized the significance of peer mentors by stating that the impact of the mentoring relationship "may well be on the peer leaders who serve as co-teachers rather than on the students they serve" (p. vii). Some research on the impact of mentoring on the mentor has been explored in teacher education (Clinard & Ariav, 1998; Gilles & Wilson, 2004) and community service (Astin & Sax, 1998; Schmidt et al., 2004). In these works, the impact on the peer mentor was briefly mentioned in the discussion section of the research as an interesting thought, or as anecdotal remarks about how mentoring helped them become better students, understand children better, understand their work differently, and gain a

greater appreciation for the value of mentoring (Reynolds, 2003; Russel & Skinkle, 1990; Schmidt et al., 2004). The area of peer mentor personal growth and development as a result of serving in a peer mentoring program in higher education has not been specifically investigated. The studies about peer mentoring in higher education will be presented next to understand how they have included the peer mentor's role in their research as well as what research questions and methodologies have been used.

Heirdsfield et al. (2008); Harmon (2006); and Wawrzynski, LoConte, and Straker (2011) have researched the peer mentor's experience as it related to program development and peer mentors' learning gains. Heirdsfield et al. (2008) focused on the mentor's experience in relation to what the mentor thought about the mentoring program they served and how their experience could inform the development of future mentoring programs. The study did not specifically focus on the impact of mentoring on the peer mentor's personal growth and development. Through document analysis of the mentor's written reflections, four themes were presented: the preparation to be a mentor, personal approaches to mentoring, benefits of mentoring, and the frustrations experienced by the mentor. The mentors reported that they felt adequately prepared for their mentoring responsibilities. There was a strong consensus that effective communication and technology were important to their mentoring. The benefits of mentoring for the peer mentor were an increase in positive social gatherings, the feeling that mentoring was rewarding and satisfying, and the fact that "reciprocity occurred for the mentors and mentees. There was a sense that mentoring 'works both ways': mentors grew personally and professionally through the mentorship, friendships developed resulting in positive outcomes" (p. 117). The experience was positive; however, the mentors also described a

number of frustrations about mentoring, including the difficulty in creating and maintaining relationships with their mentees, the fact that the number of students they were asked to mentor seemed large, and that the commitment necessary for the work was more time consuming than they had expected.

These results are useful for preparing peer mentors and the study did describe their experience; however, it did not bridge the gap to the peer mentor by addressing the peer mentor's relationship and the influence it may have had on them in regard to their holistic development. If a study could make this connection and help them to seek the meaning of their experience, it would enable peer mentors' growth and add their voice to the literature.

Wawrzynski et al. (2011) conducted a much larger investigation in a two-part National Peer Educator Study consisting of both qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the outcome of being a peer educator. The subject group for the study was quite broad, including students who served in a wide assortment of peer educator roles, not specifically peer mentors. The study investigated why the students became peer educators, what personal outcomes they had, and what they accomplished. As a result, six learning domains were established: cognitive complexity; practical competence; intrapersonal competence; interpersonal competence; knowledge acquisition, construction, integration, and application; and humanitarianism and civic engagement. In addition, it was found that peer educators took their responsibilities seriously as role models and made better decisions regarding healthy behaviors, such as skipping school and alcohol/drug use. This study was completed to investigate personal outcomes; however, it was very broad in focus, including a variety of peer educator roles, not just

peer mentors. Although it was a very large study, the outcomes of this research did not specifically focus on the peer educator's growth as it related to how they made meaning of their experience or their understanding of themselves.

The participants in the Harmon (2006) study were most similar to the participants in the current study. Harmon performed a qualitative study that investigated what learning outcomes peer mentors gained from serving in first-year learning community courses and how their experiences impacted their personal and professional development, in terms of enhancing life skills and personal interactions. Using semi-structured one-on-one interviews, eight findings emerged. The first finding was that peer mentors "had little to no expectations of the learning outcomes for their experience" (p. 65). The second and third findings were that the mentors learned their mentoring behaviors from the mentors they had in their first-year learning communities and from experiences in their communities. The fourth and fifth findings focused on the influence of reflection. The mentors learned a lot from their interactions with their students, such as how to utilize their personal strengths and overcome weaknesses in the classroom, and "how to better organize and manage their own schedules to become better planners in their own lives" (p. 71). The sixth and seventh findings showed that mentors recognized how to identify the needs of their students and how to interact with them. Through their interactions the mentors were able to learn to "read" their students to determine their needs and how to communicate and interact with them differently. Lastly, the eighth finding related to career skills needed in the future. The mentors recognized that the skills they learned as a mentor "could apply directly to their college major or career field" (p. 75).

The studies by Heirdsfield et al. (2008), Harmon (2006), and Wawrzynski et al. (2011) discussed the impact of peer mentoring on the peer mentor only as it related to their learning gains and how it helped them become better mentors, develop the peer mentoring programs, and have a deeper understanding of their work. However, it is pertinent to also understand how peer mentors make meaning of their experience as it relates to their personal development; their understanding of self and others; and the relationships that they have. Investigators have not looked at mentor growth in terms of how mentors make meaning of their experience and whether it contributed to their holistic development with respect to student learning and student development. Baxter Magolda (2009) discussed how these two bodies of literature were rarely integrated and how bringing the two together created a focus on the context rather than the polarities between these two theoretical approaches. Holistic development and the constructivist perspective are discussed in the next section.

Holistic Development

Holistic development is used to describe the intersection of cognitive and student identity developmental theories. With a holistic development perspective, students are not seen as developing in only one way. Instead, assessment of a student's development takes into consideration both their intellectual and personal growth. To comprehend the framework of holistic development, it is important to analyze cognitive and identity developmental theorists, including Baxter Magolda (1995, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004); Belenky et al. (1986); Kegan (1994); King & Kitchener (1994); and Perry (1970), as well as those who have utilized this framework (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Pizzolato, 2003;

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Torres & Hernandez, 2007; Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006) to fully understand its approach and how it can be used in understanding peer mentor development.

*Cognitive Constructivist Theories*

Cognitive constructivist theories will be presented first to explain the growth of a student's way of knowing, also called epistemological development. The constructivist perspective presented by McGowan, Stone, and Kegan (2007) is that "humans do not simply happen upon reality, but rather are continually engaged in an active process of constructing that reality. The way in which we experience the world is dependent upon how we mentally organize it" (p. 403). The developmental part of this concept was proposed to "evolve through qualitatively different periods of growth based upon alternative periods of stability and change" (p. 403). In this study I sought to understand how peer mentors mentally organize their experience and make meaning of the experience, as it related to their own personal level of development. The theories will be presented chronologically, as they build on each other.

The peer mentors in McGowan et al. (2007) were asked to reflect upon their experience in mentoring. Specifically, they were asked if their work in the role of mentor had influenced the construction of their own beliefs, their understanding of others, and the development of their internal understanding of self. The peer mentors for this study were often called upon to help their mentees' understand complex information, to help them compare and contrast different issues, to check for understanding through the use of clarification and summarization statements, and to foster support for their mentees' struggles. They were asked to reflect about this cognitive process.

A prominent researcher who contributed to the foundation for cognitive

development literature was Perry (1970), whose work described the cognitive

developmental growth in men during their college years. Perry's research on how people

think began with an investigative approach using questionnaires, and after failure, used

an open-ended interview style. Numerous interviews enabled Perry to identify a pattern

of five schemes of thought in nine positions.

Table 1: Perry's Schemes of Thought (Perry, 1970, p. 9–10)

| Position 1 | Dualism | The student sees the world in polar terms of we-right-good vs. other-wrong bad. Right answers for everything exist in the absolute, known to authority, whose role is to mediate (teach) them. |
|---|---|---|
| Position 2, 3 & 4 | Multiplicity | The student perceives diversity of opinion and uncertainty, and accounts for them as unwarranted confusion in poorly qualified authorities. |
| Position 5 | Relativistic | The student perceives all knowledge and values (including authority's) as contextual and relativistic and subordinates dualistic right-wrong functions to the status of a special case, in context. |
| Position 6, 7, 8, &9 | Commitment | The student apprehends the necessity of orienting himself in a relativistic world through some form of personal commitment. The student experiences the affirmation of identity among multiple responsibilities and realizes commitment as an ongoing, unfolding activity through which he expresses his life style |

Perry later introduced the important notion of "retreat," where a person could return to earlier ways of thinking when they rejected the implications for growth in any of the positions. Retreat was not seen as often in the higher positions, but in position 1 or 2 was often met with anger and frustration in the individual. A strong limitation of this research was its transferability: it included only men, was from one location, and suggested that cognitive growth occurred in a fixed progression of stages. Perry laid an early foundation for the study of cognitive development that other theorists have been able to build upon.

Building on the work of Perry (1970), King and Kitchener's (1994) research on the development of epistemology included both men and women and used the Reflective Judgment Model. In this model, "knowing" was said to be a developmental process in which subjects made judgments about controversial issues and "move[d] from accepting knowledge from authority to making judgments based on evidence and reasonable inquiry" (p. 16). The developmental process was said to have seven stages grouped into three levels. The first level of this model, called pre-reflective thinking (stages 1–3), was seen in late adolescence, and often displayed as one not accepting or perceiving that knowledge could be uncertain. This level would be comparable to Perry's dualist position. The second level, called quasi-reflective thinking (stages 4–5), occurred later in college when the student was able to recognize the uncertainty of knowledge, but they still struggled with the ability to see how evidence could be used to make knowledgeable claims. The third stage, called reflective thinking (stages 6–7), occurred after college and was characterized by knowing as being relative, meaning that individuals at this stage used evidence, context, and rules to form their understanding. This theory added to the

understanding of cognitive development through its explanation that "meaning is constructed, the emphasis is on understanding how individuals make meaning of their experiences, and the assumption that development (not just change) occurs as people interact with their environments" (p. 9).

In response to Perry's (1970) work on men's epistemological development, Belenky et al. (1986) wrote *Women's Ways of Knowing* to focus specifically on the development of women. Following an open-ended interview structure, similar to Perry, they interviewed 135 Caucasian college women at an elite institution. The findings from their study may not generalize to all women; however, it is a unique study about women's cognitive development. The early phase of development was called silence, as they were often silent regarding their knowledge and took knowledge specifically from authorities. The next level of development, termed received knowledge, meant knowledge was gained by listening to others, such as friends and authorities. At the time when their knowledge conflicted with what was being said and with their own experiences, the women turned to their own voices. This was called subjective knowing, similar to Perry's level of multiplicity and King and Kitchener's quasi-reflective knowing. When the women were ready to move beyond absolutism and the subjective knowledge of others and had begun to rely on their own reflections, they were in the next level, called procedural knowledge. Belenky et al. (1986) described the procedural level of knowing as having two parts, using Gilligan's (1982) epistemological orientation. The two parts of procedural knowing were called separate and connected knowing. In the separate way of knowing, the women approached their creation of knowledge as doubting and they kept their feelings and beliefs out of their thinking in order to stay completely objective. The

connected knower, oppositely, was said to build her knowledge from her personal experience and was able to access the knowledge of others/authorities to construct her knowledge. The final level of development, called constructed knowledge, similar to King and Kitchener's reflective thinking, was the integration of all the knowledge they had acquired, both personally and from others, taking into consideration the situation and context. This integration of knowledge enabled the emergence of an internal voice to coordinate external influences and manage one's life.

Baxter Magolda (2009) expressed the need to conduct research that explores the tensions and intersections to construct a holistic theoretical approach. This approach would intentionally integrate the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological dimensions. Such research would be important to the peer mentor's process of meaning making, since they are in a constant state of knowledge construction for themselves as well as for those whom they mentor. The forgoing studies will be used for reference when analyzing the data for the current study and determining the growth and levels of development in the peer mentor.

The cognitive theories presented in this section can assist researchers in understanding the development of mentors by enabling them to recognize that there will be differences in how mentors create their knowledge and that gender needs to be considered when listening to the explanations of their experiences. Understanding cognitive development theory is also important because the work of cognitive development theorists has informed the identity development theories of Baxter Magolda (2001b), Kegan (1994), and Chickering and Reisser (1993.

*Identity Development*

Constructing meaning for individual growth and development has been looked at

from the identity development perspective (Baxter Magolda, 1992, 1994, 2001b, 2004;

Kegan, 1994). Constructing meaning from growth and transformation was called "ways

of knowing" by Kegan (1994, p. 199). Kegan, a developmental psychologist, researched

development across the lifespan; the research suggested that individuals had an active

role in the creation of their reality and meaning and that meaning creation generally

occurred when presented with difference or discrepancy; *not* something such as the

difference between being cognitive or emotional, rational or irrational, or simple-minded

or sophisticated, but rather as a matter of style. The term *style* was said to be culturally

related, correlated with gender, and representing how one stood apart from knowledge to

assess opinions versus how one preferred to get inside another's thoughts to assess

opinions. This manner of organizing one's thoughts, feelings, and interactions with others

was called the subject-object relationship. The *object* defined "those elements of our

knowing or organizing that we can reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for. . ." (p.

32). These elements of knowing were said not to be the person but instead something

outside of ourselves that we could do something with. The *subject* referred to the

elements with which we identify: "We *have* object; we *are* subject" (p. 32). Kegan stated

that the "subject-object relationship gave rise to evolution of the organizing principles we

use[d] to make meaning" (p.21). Kegan developed three orders or "stages of mind"

(specifically stages 3, 4, and 5) to describe how adults used increasingly complex ways of

organizing their experience in an attempt to make meaning. In each order the individual

developed the processes to engage in knowledge creation. The third stage, called the

socialized self, was most evident in the college years; meaning making was created through shared realities with others external to one's self and self-authorship was said not to be possible due to still being consumed by external influences. Individuals at this stage were said to be in a process of self-definition. Needs and relationships were something one had (object) and not something that defined oneself (subject). In the fourth stage, one's meaning-making system was internal and mediated the influences of others. Individuals in this stage were able to make self-authoring choices about what they believed and to take responsibility for those selections. The individuals were also said to "come to understand their role as constructors, not receivers, of their lives and subsequently accept responsibilities for internal feelings, decision making and behavior" (McGowan et al., 2007, p. 409). Stage five occurred in a relatively small percentage of the population and, if so, was done at a much later time in life. The self-transforming stage described one's ability to step back, be critical of one's own ideologies, and hold within the self the contradictions and tensions of competing ideologies. Meaning-making structures were said to be heavily influenced by one's expectations and experiences (Kegan, 1994).

Therefore, it is the intent of the current study to understand how peer mentors make meaning of their experience as it relates to their development. The work by Kegan (1994) introduced the idea of self-authorship and Baxter Magolda (1994, 2001b) used this framework to consider the development of participants in the longitudinal study, providing a thorough example of how to understand undergraduate students' meaning making.

Drawing upon Perry (1970), King and Kitchner (1983), Kegan (1994), Belenky et al. (1986), and Baxter Magolda (1992), in 1992 Baxter Magolda researched the possibility of gender-related patterns as a significant factor in the epistemology of individuals in the longitudinal study. Baxter Magolda utilized an inductive research approach in the college phase of the study to attempt to construct a gender-inclusive model of epistemological development. The findings from Baxter Magolda (2001b) suggested that three sets of epistemic assumptions, or ways of knowing, were prevalent in students during their college years. In each way of knowing, two patterns appeared, but not dictated by gender. The patterns revealed that some students approached knowing primarily through a relational/connected way, while others used an impersonal/separate approach. The first way of knowing described was called absolute knowing, where knowledge was viewed as certain, with the following patterns: receiving/relationship and mastery/impersonal. The second way of knowing, called transitional knowing, was revealed as a growing uncertainty in some areas of knowledge. The third way of knowing, described as independent knowing, occurred when "knowledge [was] assumed to be largely uncertain" (2001b, p. 17–18). The last level of development of knowing described, while rarely occurring in the study, was called "contextual knowing (in which knowledge claims [were] made based upon relevant evidence within a context)" (p. 18). It was noted that women in the study used some ways of knowing more than men (and vice versa), however none of the patterns were preferred exclusively by one gender or the other.

The participants in Baxter Magolda's study (1994) were followed beyond the college years. The young adults in their twenties were found to be struggling through the

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questions of knowing themselves, understanding what they knew, and understanding their

relationships with others; they had complex lives that were impacted by society. As

Baxter Magolda (2001b) explained:

> Taking on adult responsibilities, managing one's life effectively, and making informed decisions as a member of a community require something beyond learning particular skills and acquiring particular behaviors. They require, instead, the 'capacity for self-authorship — the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one's own beliefs in order to form judgments' (Baxter Magolda, 1998, p. 143). (p. 14)

Following the same participants from the 1994 study beyond college, Baxter

Magolda (2001b) considered the transitions and described what happened with these

participants: "the journey into adulthood [was] not downhill and good company [was]

hard to find" (p. xv). During this journey, educators expected a long line of growth and

development to take place. For example, it was anticipated that college students would

acquire knowledge and learn to analyze it, learn to process and judge information, as well

as determine an internal sense of identity which related to what they believed, how they

viewed themselves, and what they valued. Developmental theorists call this process of

growth "complex ways of knowing" (p. xvi). The ability to integrate ways of knowing

and being and then integrate them with other people was key to self-authorship and was a

"necessary foundation for mutual, collaborative participation with others in adult life"

(p. xvi).

The journey was considered a continuum in Baxter Magolda (2001b). The

continuum did not progress in a series of one-directional steps, but instead as a process of

evaluation that occurred as the study's participants grew and developed. The continuum

had four phases:

1. Phase one: Reliance on External Formulas. During this phase, participants lacked awareness of their own values and identity, needed outside approval, and were easily influenced.

2. Phase two: The Crossroads. This phase was characterized by the participant's feelings of dissatisfaction with following external formulas, the need for self-direction, and looking to consider their own needs and perspectives.

3. Phase three: Becoming the Author of One's Life. This was a time when the development of the participants's internal perspectives and self-definition occurred; and they decided how they would manage their relationships with others.

4. Phase four: Internal Foundations. Participants by this time in their development had a set of internally defined perspectives to guide their actions and knowledge construction. They now managed their external influences, rather than being controlled by them. (Baxter Magolda, 2001b)

During each of the phases on the self-authorship continuum, Baxter Magolda (2001b) indicated that interviews focused on the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological development of the participant. The questions drew the participants to define who they were. Baxter Magolda stated that a participant's ability to answer these questions may have been more or less difficult depending on the phase they were in and challenges they were confronted with at the time. It was during these periods of dissonance when answers were not clear and they did not feel they had the necessary ways of knowing, that growth towards self-authorship could occur (Baxter Magolda, 2004). A limitation identified in this study includes the minimal amount of racial

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diversity and that it included only one selective Midwestern college. However, Baxter Magolda is the leading author on self-authorship and has published a large number of studies and articles presenting the development of a concept of self-authorship and its application. Baxter Magolda's contributions have served as a point of departure for other studies to expand upon the notion of self-authorship as it relates to some populations and settings (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Hernandez, 2007; Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006).

The next section describes research that has incorporated self-authorship and the findings of additional influences in the self-authorship development process. Influences on the self-authorship process are important to the current study on peer mentoring as a process. The findings are used to create a framework for describing how mentors make meaning of their experience, reach judgments, create internal identities, and balance their relationships with others. This comprehensive presentation of cognitive constructivist and identity development theorists is important to inform decisions about what stages and phases to listen for when interviewing the peer mentors. To better understand how to use the holistic theoretical framework for this study, studies which have used this framework are explored.

*Use of the Holistic Theoretical Perspective in Research*

Several studies have utilized the holistic development and constructivist perspective in their research (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Hernandez, 2007; Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006). These studies are useful in understanding how the self-authoring process has been used to assess student's

epistemological development; and their approach and findings informed the framework of using a holistic approach for this research.

Pizzolato (2003) investigated self-authorship in students who entered college with characteristics that may have contributed to a higher risk of academic failure or early withdrawal. The term *high-risk* was used in the study "rather than at-risk because high risk suggest[ed] risk for withdrawal [was]a gradient scale, rather than a quality the student unequivocally ha[d] or d[id] not have; thus, a student might have been considered high-risk for withdrawal, but still be a high achiever" (p. 798). It was noted that the current research on high-risk students is often in "a deficit model of understanding the high-risk student" (p. 799) and that research on epistemological development in high-risk students had not been conducted. Two research questions were asked: The first question asked to what extent high-risk students possessed self-authoring ways of knowing and the second question asked what types of pre-college experiences were associated with the development of self-authoring ways of knowing.

Pizzolato hypothesized that when a student was presented with the challenges of college a degree of disequilibrium occurred, requiring them to use self-authoring ways of knowing to find formulas for success. The findings suggested that "many of the student participants possessed self-authoring ways of knowing prior to college, but the degree to which these ways of knowing were developed varied" (p. 802). The findings described two themes: The first theme suggested that "self-authorship seemed associated with provocative experiences" which required the student to "deal with experiences that disrupted their equilibrium and compelled them to revise their goals and conceptions of self in one of two distinct ways: by (a) considering making changes, or (b) committing to

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new goals and/or values" (p. 803). The second theme related to the concept of privilege. Students were identified as high or low privilege, which referred to their ability to afford college. Students with low privilege were confronted with more opportunities for developing self-authoring ways of knowing than high-privilege students. Pizzolato's study is useful in presenting what self-authorship looks like and the role that privilege plays in student development.

Creamer and Laughlin (2005) used self-authorship in looking at "how students make meaning of academic and career advice" (p. 13). Through the use of interviews, 40 college women were asked three questions which related to Baxter Magolda's (2001b) three dimensions of self-authorship (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological). The study did not attempt to determine stages or steps used in decision making, but rather the role of self-authorship in their career decision-making process. Creamer and Laughlin determined that context and figures of authority were important elements in the self-authoring process. For the current study, mentoring will provide the context for which the peer mentors will be asked about their experience and process of self-authorship.

Wawrzynski and Pizzolato (2006) investigated whether particular student characteristics and college environments "might influence movement toward self-authorship" (p. 677). Students completed a self-authorship survey twice during the semester in order to identify specific factors that may contribute to self-authorship. The study also took into consideration the student's input characteristics, such as race, gender, age, transfer status, GPA, ACT score, and their Holland Code (Holland, 1997 as cited in Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006). Wawrzynski and Pizzolato determined that student input characteristics were important and stated the need to look more at environmental

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factors such as career choice, faculty-student interactions, and academic choices in order to understand the role of environmental factors in enabling students to develop self-authorship.

Like the other researchers presented, Torres and Hernandez (2007) looked for other factors that could influence a student's way of knowing. They determined that the role of ethnicity had not yet been examined. Therefore, the focus of their research was to investigate "the influence of ethnic identity on the journey towards self-authorship of Latino/a college students" (p. 558). Torres and Hernandez also utilized a holistic developmental framework to analyze the student's cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development and the four phases (external formulas, crossroads, becoming the author of one's life, and internal foundations) of development in the students interviewed. The findings suggested that ethnicity did introduce "unique tasks that Latino/a students must master during their developmental process" (p. 572) towards self-authorship and that it should be recognized that students would need support and assistance along their journey. Torres and Hernandez (2007) is important to the understanding of holistic development because it introduced two notions: (1) some students can regress from crossroads back to external when there is too much challenge; and (2) students did not progress more than one status in any dimension without developing in the other dimensions. It is interesting that mentors were suggested to serve in the role to "assist students in the process of reconstructing negative images into positive images" (p. 572).

The studies presented in this section provided a variety of models on how research on the student's journey towards self-authorship could be approached and more

importantly, they worked from a holistic perspective. In these studies, elements such as student characteristics, ethnicity, context, privilege, and college environment were identified as factors that influenced a student's development. Their work informs the methodology section of this research study.

<div align="center">Summary of Implications for the Current Study</div>

This review of literature has examined the constructs of mentoring, cognitive development, and identity development through a holistic theoretical framework. Two implications of the review support the need for additional research in this area. To begin, the position of peer mentor and the work that they perform has shown to be a longstanding practice in many disciplines, including higher education (Carns et al., 1993; Crisp, 2009; Ender & Newton, 2000). The literature focused predominantly in the area of program development and program effectiveness, with little research on the experience of being a peer mentor and the meaning that they have about the experience (Badura et al., 2000; Harmon, 2006; Heirdsfield et al., 2008). A common element discussed in this literature was the use of reflection to gather the mentor's experience. Reflection was seen as a valuable action in the areas of program development, improved delivery of mentoring services, and the establishment of learning outcomes for the mentor. However, reflection could also be a beneficial means for understanding the essence of the peer mentor's experience, which would assist higher education professionals to support peer mentors in making meaning of their experience. Secondly, research has not been conducted on how being a peer mentor may contribute to one's holistic development. Some studies have used holistic development as a lens for assessing students' epistemological development; however, students who serve as peer mentors or other

campus leaders have not been investigated (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Hernandez, 2007; Wawrzynski & Pizzolato, 2006). Research in this area contributes to the body of literature on holistic development in order to better understand how one's internal voice is formed during the college years and what the meaning-making developmental process looks like in the context of peer mentoring. For these reasons, the current study focuses on describing how peer mentors make meaning of their experience in this role.

The research reviewed in this chapter has informed the purpose of this study, guided the methods selected for this research, and provides a context for understanding the results of this study. Chapter Three describes the methodology that was used to investigate how undergraduate students who serve as peer mentors understand their role.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the design and methods that were used in this study. For this study, I attempted to understand how students who serve as peer mentors make meaning of their experience in this role. The study used a qualitative phenomenological design to make sense of the peer mentors' lived experience and its significance to them. Because of the study's aim to understand, a qualitative approach was appropriate, since Schwandt (2001) defines qualitative research as a process that aims to understand human action. There are quantitative studies that have contributed to peer mentor literature regarding their specific skill development, but more qualitative research focused on the voice of the peer mentor is needed to further understand their experience. Selecting a qualitative methodology allowed for intensive interviews, purposeful sampling of those who are rich with information, and an active role by the researcher to co-construct meaning with the peer mentor. In this chapter, I will address details of using the constructivist perspective, information about the phenomenological method, and the research design, including the research site, descriptions of the participants, the data collection process, and data analysis procedures. Lastly, I discuss my role as the researcher and the procedures used to ensure trustworthiness in the study.

A Constructivist Perspective

This study, much like my own worldview, was framed in a constructivist paradigm. This approach was selected because it recognizes that multiple realities exist and that people construct their own realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Constructivists believe that people play an active role in constructing their knowledge and meaning

based on their experiences (Kegan, 1994). To develop an understanding of peer mentors'

meaning of their experiences in their role as peer mentors, a constructivist

epistemological approach was used to guide the design, process, and analysis in this

study. Torres and Baxter Magolda (2004b) stated that "meaning arises from the

experiences of participants as they are shared during the interaction between the

researcher and participants; therefore the relationship between participants and researcher

is valued, rather than avoided" (p. 335). The constructivist perspective requires a

transformation of the participant/researcher relationship. Epistemologically,

constructivists believe that it is "impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquired

into. It is precisely their interaction that creates the data that will emerge from the

inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 88). This approach requires mutuality, a partnership

between the researcher and the participants in the research process. This is different from

the more traditional role of the researcher as a separate and objective observer in early

qualitative research. By using the constructivist perspective, the peer mentors were

positioned to co-construct meaning with the researcher, as it was their interaction that

created the data during the inquiry (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Through the process

of answering the research questions and using a holistic student development theoretical

framework, it provided direction to the collection of information and its analysis.

<center>Phenomenology</center>

The research process and design for this study followed a phenomenological and

hermeneutic approach. Additional details of the model for this study will be discussed in

the subsequent sections. The method of phenomenology "aims at gaining a deeper

understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (Patton, 2002,

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p.104). The very appearance of something makes it a phenomenon and therefore, any phenomenological experience is said to be a starting point for a phenomenological reflection. Two key aspects of phenomenological research include examining experiences from many aspects until one is able to develop a unified vision of the essence of the experience and seeking meaning from the experience being researched (Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the essence of being a peer mentor was investigated. Following a phenomenological process, it led me to make judgments in efforts to create an understanding of their experience. I was committed to capturing the mentor's words in vivid and accurate terms in efforts to relate their description of their experience back to my research questions.

The phenomenological approach to research was developed by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. He was most concerned with carefully examining the human experience by finding a means through which an individual might come to "accurately know their *own* experience of a given phenomenon, and would do so with a depth and rigor which might allow them to identify the essential qualities of that experience" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2012, p. 12). Husserl desired for subjects to adopt a phenomenological attitude when looking at their experience. This meant the subjects should step out of their experiences and reflexively move their viewpoint away from the straight-out object and be conscious about their perception of the object (Smith et al., 2012).

Another phenomenological philosopher contributing to this area of inquiry was Martin Heidegger. Heidegger was a student of Husserl's, but he had a different perspective on phenomenological research. Heidegger's approach to philosophical

inquiry focused on the interpretation of experiences, such as people's perceptions, awarenesses, and consciousness. People were more than in existence, they instead existed in a worldly perspective. The worldly perspective described people as in-context, as "physically-grounded (what is possible) and intersubjectively-grounded (what is meaningful)" (Smith et al., 2012, p. 17). Intersubjectivity "refers to the shared, overlapping and relational nature of our engagement in the world" (p. 17). It also describes our relatedness to the world and accounts for "our ability to communicate with, and make sense of, each other" (p. 17). In Heidegger's work, an individual's existence in the world is "always 'in-relation-to' something — and consequently . . . the interpretation of people's meaning-making activities is central to phenomenological inquiry" (p. 18). Heidegger's perspective of interpretation and phenomenology is linked with a hermeneutic lens, where hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. Hermeneutics is focused primarily on the meaning of qualitative data and especially textual data. The hermeneutic task consists of understanding what a particular text means by seeking the understanding of the text as a whole and the interpretation if its parts. When hermeneutics is joined with phenomenology, the intention of the researcher is to uncover the meaning of the author. Therefore, it is fitting that a phenomenological and hermeneutic approach was used for this study.

## Method

In this study I used an inductive approach in describing and interpreting the data collected, in order to gain a deeper understanding of how peer mentors make meaning of their role. In this section, details of the study will be discussed, including the description

of the research site, description of the participants, data collection, and the data analysis process.

*Site*

This study took place at a large Midwestern urban research university with a predominantly commuter population. The campus is situated within a major city in the United States. The campus has nationally ranked programs in nursing, public and environmental affairs, law, and health; and it is known for its service learning and civic engagement. There are approximately 22,500 undergraduates at this institution, which has a Carnegie Classification as a research university with high research activity.

*Description of Participants*

The subjects for this study were selected through a purposeful sampling approach in which they were chosen based upon their ability to contribute to understanding and explaining the phenomenon (Creswell, 1994, 1998). Within research studies that use a phenomenological approach, the sample size is said to be based upon the researcher's ability to manage the data, sufficiently and successfully analyze the data, and provide dialogue on the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2012)

The sample in this study included undergraduate students who were serving or had served as peer mentors. They were recruited from two different peer mentoring programs through a letter of invitation (see Appendix A). I interviewed a total of twelve mentors, six from each of two programs, to determine how peer mentors understood their mentoring role. This deliberate variation in sampling was done to get at the common core of a mentor's experience beyond the type of mentoring they performed. The peer mentors needed to have mentored for at least two semesters or to have completed four semesters

of service as a peer mentor to ensure that they could access relevant material during the interviews. An effort was made to have an even sample of male and female mentors, since we know from the literature that gender has been shown to influence one's development (Baxter Magolda, 1995).

Table 2: Sample Selection

| Sample Selection and Size | Academic Mentoring Program | First Year Seminar (FYS) Mentoring Program |
|---|---|---|
| Mentors who completed at least 2 semesters in this role | 3 mentors | 3 mentors |
| Mentors with 4 or more semesters in this role | 3 mentors | 3 mentors |

The mentoring programs in this study have been in existence for over 15 years, during which time they have clearly defined the scope of the student mentor's eligibility requirements, purpose, functions, supervision, training, and evaluation. The mentors in each of the mentoring component types were carefully selected through a highly competitive application process. The peer mentors for these programs were generally recruited by faculty and by the present mentors in the student's course or activity. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) described the importance of enlisting those who currently work in academic programs in the recruiting process. They stated that it is "reasonable to expect that student involvement will be greatest if new students can be immediately linked with people who are already invested in the institution, whether faculty members or other students" (p. 650).

Common requirements for peer mentors to be considered for these positions include being a current undergraduate student; being presently enrolled; having completed at least 12 credit hours at the university; having a cumulative and semester GPA of 2.8 or higher; being in good standing with the university; possessing positive communication and group skills; demonstrating creativity and personal initiative; showing willingness to interact with a diverse group of people; and having a sincere desire to assist with students, faculty, and staff. In addition to training in the specific skills and information needed for each type of mentoring responsibility, peer mentors must enroll in a mentoring course that aids their development of mentor theory and skills, serves as a supplement to the specific training they receive in their specific component, and provides a just-in-time information source for skills and techniques that mentors may need to develop. The mentoring course also aids in the creation of a strong and dynamic community of mentors.

The first type of mentoring program includes undergraduate students who serve as Orientation Leaders in the summer and as First Year Seminar course Mentors during the academic year. The orientation leader is expected to assist new and transfer students along with their guest(s) throughout the orientation day. When in the mentoring role for the First Year Seminar, they are a part of an instructional team for the course. This program offers new students to the university who have 17 or fewer transfer hours the opportunity to be part of a small cohort, taught by an instructional team comprised of a faculty member, an academic advisor, a librarian, and a student mentor. The peer mentor has many roles to fulfill. They are to be approachable and available to assist first-year students in adjusting and transitioning to the university; to serve as an advocate for their

interests; to serve as a knowledgeable resource to students; and to act as a referral agent for students, faculty, staff, and other members of the campus community.

The second type of mentor invited to participate was from the academic mentoring program, which offers students the opportunity to improve their study and learning skills. This is a directed study and practice session model, led by a peer mentor, which combines study and learning skills with content enhancement and collaborative learning to support students enrolled in high risk-for-failure "gateway" courses.

*Data Collection Methods*

*Interview Protocol*

In phenomenology, interviews "play a central role in the data collection" (Creswell, 1998, p. 122). Interviews are "one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 645). The process of data collection for this study was done by in-person semi-structured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000, Patton, 2002; Smith et al., 2012). This type of interview allowed me to "engage the interviewees in exploring assumptions about knowledge, self, and relationships with others" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007, p. 496). Each of the interviews began with an overview of the study and its focus, in an effort to put the mentor at ease and establish rapport. As the interview continued, I followed a predetermined interview protocol (see Appendix B) to create a comfortable interaction that would enable the peer mentor to provide a detailed account of their experience.

The questions focused on exploring how the peer mentor understood their role. I asked them to describe important learning experiences, to describe the impact of those experiences on their thinking, and to inquire as to why they were important. As the peer

mentors answered, follow-up questions were asked regarding what factors influenced the experiences, how they were affected, how they know they were affected, what they learned about themselves, what they learned about others, and what the experience meant to them. Taking sufficient time and providing encouragement to describe and interpret their experiences helped the mentors create meaning of their role and guide the conversation. I also summarized the responses given to insure my thorough understanding of their response. As the data was collected, conscious decisions were made to determine the quality and depth of the response needed to capture the essence of what was being shared. Probing questions were used to encourage participants to make meaning of their experiences during the interview. Descriptive and reflective field notes were also collected during the interview to allow the emerging analysis of the data to direct where else to go in the interview. Each participant was provided a pseudonym to maintain their confidentiality and privacy. All interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the participant and transcribed to provide me with a visual hard copy of the interview conversation to review for analysis. Memos were made between coding and writing up drafts in an effort to keep from getting lost in the data. These memos were used to elaborate on processes used during the interviews, to detail assumptions, and to refine categories and their relationships.

*Data Analysis*

The route to determining the most successful procedure for data analysis was not linear and was extremely challenging. Determining how to manage the large amount of data was at times overwhelming. Smith et al. (2012) was perhaps the clearest resource in

providing a plan for analysis. My data analysis plan can best be described as a six-step

process.

The first step began when the interviews were concluded and transcribed. At that

time, I listened to the interviews and reread the transcripts numerous times while

reviewing my notes and journals. This early process of analysis has been described as an

iterative and inductive cycle (Smith, 2007). The iterative and inductive cycle certainly

describes my analysis experience. The iterative process encouraged me to be reflective

about the peer mentor's account of their experience and it also enabled me to gain a

strong sense of the content of each interview. Being able to enter the peer mentor's world

was an important step to engage with the data. I found that the more I read and listened to

the transcripts, the more I was able to highlight the location of richer and more detailed

sections, contradictions, and awarenesses the mentor made during the interview process.

The second step of the data analysis process was the initial coding phase. This

was the most time-consuming phase, as it was done line by line, making notes along the

way about the experiences and understandings of each part of the interview. My notes

included descriptive comments about key words and phrases the peer mentors said. For

example, I noted the words used to explain what a peer mentor was as "Role of the Peer

Mentor." I also noted the mentor's language, including their nervous laughter, tone,

repetition, and the metaphors they used to describe their experience. For example, when

the peer mentors would describe being able to see themselves in the students that they

mentored, I noted this as a "Mentoring as a Mirror Metaphor." I also made conceptual

notes on the mentor's comments in efforts to focus on the overarching ideas shared. The

notes that I made were helpful in identifying the emergent patterns or themes that were

determined within a single transcript and then subsequently across multiple transcripts. The experience of engaging with the transcripts was very important part of the process.

The third step in the analysis process was focused coding. This step developed the themes by using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through the large amounts of data. This phase required me to make decisions about which initial codes were significant and merited becoming a theme to explain the peer mentors' experience. The themes reflected not only the description of the peer mentor's words and thoughts but also my interpretation. For example, the emergent theme of "Understanding Others" captured the initial coding notes relating to their awareness that not all students were the same and that they had not experienced this level of diversity before. This theme also reflected the peer mentors' development of culturally competent skills in their role.

The fourth step required me to search for connections between and amongst the emergent themes and consider ordering the themes to have a superordinate theme and subordinate themes. The use of NVivo, the qualitative analysis computer software, was extremely helpful in this process of analyzing the transcripts. At the time of the analysis process, the transcripts were loaded into NVivo and the emergent themes, called nodes in the system, were established. The transcripts were then coded again by identifying the sections of the transcript that best exemplified the emergent themes. This process clearly identified the frequency that each themes was supported and established patterning within the data.

The final step involved looking for patterns between the interview transcripts by physically drawing and configuring the themes and examples of the themes on poster paper.

*The Researcher*

"In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 79). It is important to recognize the complexities in the researcher-participant relationship as well as any ethical considerations. For this reason it is important to acknowledge that as the researcher, I am a mentor component director and may have had a relationship with some of the participants in the study. I have been in my professional position for over 15 years. My work requires me to have a strong understanding of the mentoring literature to oversee the first year seminar mentoring program; develop and oversee the curriculum and instruction of five different mentor education courses; and lead the creation of new mentoring initiatives on campus. My interactions with and understanding of peer mentors and their work has grown over the years. My position requires me to be intentional about integrating mentoring and student development literature into my work. This was very beneficial when conducting this study, as I was able to bring this experience forward when coding and interpreting the data. Having this role required me to establish a level rapport with the peer mentors. The researcher/participant relationship has traditionally been referred to as hierarchical with the participant being subordinate to the researcher (Fontana & Frey, 2000). However, to create a co-constructivist relationship, I needed to create an equal and shared role in the research. To accomplish this, I asked myself a series of "consciousness-raising questions . . . to provoke thinking about the power differentials that might exist in the research relationship and to ensure a conscious, ongoing commitment to participant-driven research" (Mills et al., 2006, p. 10). Shared power was also developed by scheduling interview times at a time and location of the participant's choice and by presenting an

open stance, as well as by sharing personal details and answering questions. I consciously worked to put my personality into the research process and build a research relationship (Mills et al., 2006).

When making interpretations in phenomenological research, the researcher is also required to conduct self-analysis (Peshkin, 1988); to suspend presuppositions (Finlay & Gough, 2003); and to consider one's own views toward mentoring to gain a better understanding of my own bias and subjectivity. Preconceptions, described as fore-structures and pre-suppositions, are a danger when interpreting data of interest (Smith et al., 2012). This was very important for me to be aware of when interviewing the peer mentors, so that I did not influence their understanding of the phenomenon, as well as when approaching the data. The process is called bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing does not require me to deny the existence of my own realities, but instead, to put them aside for the sake of the peer mentors in the study. "However, in the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, it is acknowledged that pre-understanding cannot be eliminated or 'bracketed'" (Koch, 1995, p. 830). To maintain awareness and bracketing, I reflected upon my values, interests, perceptions, and thoughts as I conducted the research; I consulted often with other mentor program professionals; and I made notes detailing the intersections of my personal perspective and the data that was collected.

As the researcher, I must continually work on being a constructivist. Torres and Baxter Magolda (2004a) provide great insight from their research experience by discussing the evolving role of the researcher. Their experience indicated that I needed to balance my interpretations with the voices of the mentors, making sure that each of them was able to create their own meaning while helping them to articulate this meaning.

During the process, I tried to focus on the mentor's reasons for thinking, as opposed to the content of their thinking, as indicative of their development. To do this, I tried to build trust and rapport with the peer mentor without becoming too involved. I also tried to step back to see how their stories revealed their understanding.

This researcher-participant relationship was very important to me, as I knew my personal and professional experiences are considered part of my theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to the data, and the ability to separate what is pertinent and what is not. My personal and professional experiences provided me with insight into the meaning of the data collected, providing a basis for themes to be made and a context for how things work in the field (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). With this in mind, I encouraged the peer mentors to share their stories and understand that whatever they shared would be heard without evaluation or criticism.

*Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness refers to the credibility and validity of the qualitative research process (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). It is also refers to the condition when the "research, the topic, and the sense-making process interact" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). To ensure credibility, Creswell and Miller (2000) recommended that a researcher closely align with "the use of systematic procedures, employing rigorous standards and clearly identified procedures" (p. 129). To ensure this study's credibility, the following strategies were employed to establish trustworthiness: verification, peer debriefing, thick description, reflexivity, and field journaling.

Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, and Spears (2002) describe trustworthiness as a process of verification:

> Verification is the process of checking, confirming, making sure, and being certain ... qualitative research is iterative rather than linear, so that a good qualitative researcher moves back and forth between design and implementation to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis. Data are systematically checked, focus is maintained, and the fit of data and the conceptual work of analysis and interpretation are monitored and confirmed constantly. (p. 17)

To begin this process of verification, member checks were implemented. Member checks shift the credibility procedure from the researcher to the participants in the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000) by providing participants the chance to review their transcripts, check for accuracy throughout the analysis process, verify interpretations, and provide additional clarifying remarks that were utilized during the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that member checks are "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). This was a continuous process and took place through conversations with the mentors. These conversations happened regularly and informally in the mentor's mentoring department and in my office. These conversations were especially helpful as I embarked on the iterative and evolving process of data analysis and determining themes and superordinate themes.

Secondly, peer debriefing was used as an aid in challenging my thinking about the data in the research process. Creswell (1998) likens peer debriefing to inter-rater reliability, a process used to establish reliability in quantitative research. A peer debriefer is "an individual who keeps the research honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the research with the opportunity for

catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings" (p. 202). This interaction occurred with two peer mentor program directors and fellow professionals at the research university site over the course of the semester. My peer debriefers had over 15 years of combined experience leading mentoring programs and had taught mentor education classes for over 5 years. Their understanding of the mentoring literature and student development theory, as well as their overall experience in working with peer mentors, made their contributions to this project profound. Both professionals understood my positionality as a researcher and were able to listen for my potential biases, help me to explore alternative interpretations, and challenge me to consider other plausible explanations in efforts to ensure trustworthiness in the data collection and analysis process.

Thirdly, thick description was utilized during the data analysis process to provide the reader with enough information to increase understanding of the data from the peer mentors while offering an in-depth analysis of the findings. Thick description includes information about the "setting, the participants, and themes of the qualitative study in rich detail and supporting facts" (Creswell and Miller, 2000, p. 128). Quality thick description is said to bring the situation alive and transport the reader into the setting or situation being described in the study. This process "enables the reader to make decisions about the applicability of the finding to other settings or similar contexts" (p. 129).

Fourth, I practiced reflexivity (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Reflexivity is described as a procedure "for researchers to self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases" (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127) that may shape the inquiry. It is also recommended for the researcher to disclose their "entering beliefs and biases early in the research process

to allow readers to understand their positions, and then to bracket or suspend those researcher biases as the student proceeds" (p. 127). I was able to do this by keeping notes, reflexively charting thoughts, feelings, and decisions made during the research process. Reflexivity involves me moving in and out of the data, bending backwards, using a critical lens to revisit and revise my own stance through time and my engagement with the mentors. Reflexivity is seen as conscious introspection to serve as a springboard for interpretations (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Reflexivity as mutual collaborators allows participants to be brought in as co-researchers during the dialogue to take into account multiple voices and conflicting positions (Finlay & Gough, 2003). The peer mentor's insights were seen as valuable for data analysis in this research. Schwandt (2000) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) stressed the need for self-reflection and critical analysis during the analysis process.

Lastly, a field journal and memos were used as reflective tools, recording and documenting all decisions made during the study, all observations made, and all ideas experienced during the data collection and analysis process. These journals and memos also served to document rigor and procedures. Strauss and Corbin (1998) advocate the use of a research journal to record the researcher's thinking and how their thinking might influence the analysis of the data. Memo writing was a helpful reflective process to assist me with questions that arose and a way to make meaning about the time that I spent with the peer mentors. In this process, researchers "are able to consciously bring to the surface their own histories and thinking, they will create a point of referral and interrogation for themselves, and subsequently the reader, in relation to their theoretical analysis" (Mills et al., 2006, p. 11).

The processes described in this section to establish trustworthiness in the study allowed me to verify the analysis and interpretation of my data and demonstrate credibility and dependability. Through this process I strove to understand how peer mentors understood their experience.

*Human Subjects Review and Ethical Issues*

Human subject approval was obtained from the Indiana University Office of Research Administration on April 25, 2014 (See Appendix C). To demonstrate ethical standards, the application described the steps that would be taken to insure confidentiality and privacy of all subjects who participated in the interviews during this study. Next, a detailed informed consent letter was provided to each participant to fully inform them about the reason for the research and what information the research was intending to collect. The letter emphasized that participation in the study was completely voluntary and that participants would be referred to by pseudonyms in the writing of all aspects of the research. Interviews were entirely confidential and held in a comfortable place at the university. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed to paper. To ensure security, they were locked within the researcher's office and will be destroyed upon completion of the research. Research methods were closely adhered to and guided by the research committee. Lastly, findings from this study were reported back to mentors and component directors of all mentoring programs that were included in the member checking process at the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTIONS

This chapter provides a review of the participants in the study and their characteristics. Individual descriptions of each peer mentor will be provided and describe their experience as a peer mentor. The descriptions of each peer mentor's experience were developed utilizing the interview transcripts.

The descriptions are individualistic and unique to each participant, since their lived experiences as a peer mentor are their own. For one person, their feelings and expectations toward peers may have been a central aspect of their interview, while another peer mentor may have elaborated on the interactions with their students as a main focus. The rationale for introducing each of the peer mentors is to provide a connection to each participant in my study. In Chapter Five, I put forward the categories and themes that emerged from the study, which form the collective description of the peer mentor experience.

Each peer mentor was invited to participate in the study based upon the type of mentoring they were engaged in and the length of time that they had been a mentor. It was important to me to ensure diversity in the gender and ethnicity of the participants. Participants were identified as young mentors, having two or less semesters of mentoring experience, and experienced mentors, having four or more semesters of mentoring experience. Table 1 provides an overview of the characteristics of the peer mentors who participated in the study. Of the twelve peer mentors, an equal number of mentors from each program were interviewed. There were slightly more females (seven) than males

(five) that responded to the invitation to be interviewed. All mentors were between the ages of 21–23 except for one more mature mentor, who was 55 years old.

Table 3: Student Participant Demographic Information

| Participant | Mentor Program | Semesters of Mentoring Experienced – 3 or more semesters /Young – 2 or less | Gender | Level in school | Age |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| James | Academic | Young | M | Junior | 21 |
| Mary | Academic | Young | F | Junior | 20 |
| Trish | Academic | Young | F | Sophomore | 20 |
| Ellie | FYS | Young | F | Junior | 20 |
| Lori | FYS | Young | F | Senior | 20 |
| José | FYS | Young | M | Senior | 22 |
| Lucy | Academic | Experienced | F | Senior | 55 |
| Simon | Academic | Experienced | M | Graduated | 22 |
| Cole | Academic | Experienced | M | Senior | 22 |
| Abby | FYS | Experienced | F | Senior | 21 |
| Kelly | FYS | Experienced | F | Senior | 22 |
| Rick | FYS | Experienced | M | Graduated | 23 |

To understand how peer mentors made sense of their role, I included participants who were either actively mentoring at the time or had recently completed their mentoring responsibilities. I provide descriptions of each of the participants experience as a peer mentor in the next section of this chapter. The descriptions are informed by the interview and by reviewing the audio transcripts with each of the participants.

Peer Mentor Descriptions

*Participant 1: Kelly*

Kelly (22) was an experienced mentor who had completed four semesters of peer mentoring for the FYS program. She was a radiology major completing her clinical requirement at the time. She sighed, giggled, and tasseled her hair away from her face as if she were winded from running. She began by sharing that she did not push herself much in high school and thought early on that she would just get her degree and get out

of college. However, she was reminded by her mother that she had a lot of potential to reach and was pushed by her mother to do more in college. She remembered saying to herself, "okay girl, you got to figure out your life now." She also shared, "I felt like mentoring was something that I could do that could teach me stuff that's not necessarily, you know, just academic related. . . . It gave me something else while I was still trying to figure out that path."

She knew that she had a lot of growing to do and was thankful that the FYS program was willing to see that in a positive light and give her a chance. When asked about what she thought of her role as mentor, she responded by describing her emotions toward her position. She shared that she was paranoid, stressed, and very concerned about the expectations to do a good job and to know all the answers immediately. Those feelings were additional stress for her, since she was already under tremendous stress as a student trying to make it through college. She shared, "It was intimidating at first, it scared me . . . but I knew I needed to do it." Kelly shared that the position was able to provide her many opportunities for growth, for networking, to learn about herself, to develop communication skills, and to receive feedback. She saw mentoring as an opportunity to be a part of a bigger process.

*Participant 2: Simon*

Simon (23) was an experienced mentor who had completed five semesters of academic peer mentoring. He had recently graduated as a computer science major and was an international student from India. He was a highly motivated mentor who saw being a peer mentor as an opportunity to be a role model and to motivate his students. In addition, he desired professional development, a personal challenge, and an opportunity

to learn something new. He valued service, learning, traveling, and sharing what he knew. He liked to share his experiences of traveling to connect with his students and express his appreciation for diversity in the world.

He shared, "I just wanted to learn something new, uh, the sense of feeling that you have accomplished something." He also shared that he chose to mentor to "get out of his comfort zone, develop my personality, have a great time, and get to know myself better." While he was not sure what to exactly expect, he did expect to share different ideas, try new things, talk more, and be able to offer his advice.

*Participant 3: Lucy*

Lucy (55) was an experienced mentor who had completed four semesters of academic peer mentoring. She was currently completing her clinical requirements for her nursing degree. She had elected to go back to college later in life after being married, having a family, and getting divorced. She shared, "I still had issues with being a grown-up," and "I hadn't really been out in the world very much." She found the college atmosphere fairly daunting at a large university and was not sure about fitting in.

She remembered being encouraged by her peer mentor to apply to be a mentor and then receiving an email the next semester inviting her to apply.

She thought, "I don't think I can make a difference in somebody's life, I don't, you know, I, that's not for me." She said she finally thought, "well, why not give it a try." She smiled brightly and shared, "I fell in love with it instantly. . . . I literally became an adult, in a different way. . . . An adult, as a parent, and you know, someone who raises children, you know do things — It's not the same as being an adult at this level. At least for me it wasn't." She expressed that being a peer mentor "allowed me to actually feel

like an adult — to feel like I can make it, a difference. I can have an impact on someone else without having to be their mom, without having to tell them what to do. . . . I can help them help themselves. . . . Along the way, I learned how to do that for myself too." She described being a mentor as almost like being a mom because "you get to see them grow right before your eyes." She proudly described how rewarding it felt to have her mentees return and express what a difference she had made in their life and that they couldn't have done it without her. Not knowing what to expect, the experience of being a peer mentor exceeded her expectations and she learned so much about herself from the classes, trainings, and the students she mentored.

*Participant 4: Ellie*

Ellie (20) was a young mentor in the FYS program. She was in her junior year of college as a psychology major. She had been living on or off campus during her college years away from home. She shared how she experienced strong mentors most of her life: "My siblings were always very big mentors in my life . . . and I always thought his position was really, really neat." She also experienced having an influential mentor of her own, an FYS mentor when she was a freshman. She shared, "I'm not sure I would be here if it wasn't for her and her leadership and her reaching out to me. " Ellie wanted to have the opportunity to tell her story "to inspire others to find their own path," to share how she had struggled just as she had experienced it. She described a mentor as a role model and she expected to help people in her new role.

She shared that she loved to interact with people, saw herself as an empathetic person, and it had just seemed right to become a mentor. She did not expect to receive so much help developing as an individual and to acquire a whole network of new mentors

from faculty, staff, and advisors. Receiving feedback from her supervisor and having ongoing discussions about her mentoring experience and interactions helped her to realize what her professional career could be.

*Participant 5: Lori*

Lori (22) was a young FYS mentor while starting her senior year as an education major. She had been home schooled on and off throughout her youth and had been quite sheltered from the world. She saw being a peer mentor like being a role model, as an opportunity to "be that person" — she wanted to be that person dedicated to their needs and trained in the knowledge that students needed and wanted. She shared that she had "been there, done that before" and could help them to connect. She elaborated, saying, "not just academically and not just socially, but also I think there's just another sense that I can't really put a word to, but it's just knowing that there's someone there to fight for you, and to, to vouch for you through whatever experience you're, you're embarking on."

Being able to help and support others through whatever struggles they were going through was very important to Lori as she did not necessarily always feel that she had that during her first year of college. She shared, "when I got the email to be a mentor was like a dream come true. . . . I can finally do what I've wanted to do. And then, you think about what it's going to be like and then once you embrace with what it is, it's like a completely new journey and it's something that you might not have ever expected before." In this role, she has been able to experience things she had not experienced before, learn things all over again, and help others to identify what they need to do.

Abby (21) was an experienced mentor in the FYS program. She was a health professions major who was looking for a job. She was new to college and new to the city, and thought she would try to mentor incoming freshman when she decided to apply. She described it as "fun, exciting, and challenging in some ways, eye opening." She saw the opportunity to mentor as a way to help someone else in any way possible, even if it was just the smallest of things. She likened the experience to being a big sister to help her students succeed in anything while they were in college. Her own personal experience inspired her to be a mentor, as she had had a mentor who had walked her through how to do so many things when she began college.

She was a child of a veteran and had received the privilege of having school paid for while in college. She expressed that having that sense of financial security carried over into her confidence in managing school, coping with challenges, and in turn supporting her students. "You live and you learn. Like, you make mistakes. You just got to learn from it. . . . Being in a group of peer mentors who are succeeding inspired me to want to be up there with them. And they also encouraged me and stuff." It exceeded her expectations as she reflected on how connected and attached she was to her students.

*Participant 7: Cole*

Cole (22) was an experienced academic mentor who was in his senior year of the nursing program. Cole recalled that he was a handful in high school, an awkward communicator, not comfortable with himself, and when asked about his thoughts of becoming a mentor he replied, "Honestly, I never thought I was even going to get it." He saw the opportunity to be a mentor as a way to learn something new and hopefully learn

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some skills to help him grow up. "While I'm helping these people grow, I need help growing myself still. And that's why I continue to do it." Cole shared that going to college was a very big change for him and he recalled that all his friends from high school went somewhere else and he wanted to get involved. He shared that he commuted to school and he did not know anybody else and "I was that guy that would actually eat lunch out in his car." Being a peer mentor lined up with his expectations and he was able to get connected and make friends. He saw the opportunity to be a peer mentor as being a role model, someone for others to look to for advice.

*Participant 8: Rick*

Rick (23) had recently graduated with a public safety degree. He began by reminiscing about his mentor interview experience and shared, "I came in with a t-shirt and shorts not knowing that it was like a professional thing that I should have dressed up for." He explained, "I was not sure I was going to be able to do this," and he questioned himself as he observed everyone else at the interview.

He shared that being a Latino, first-generation college student, whose family was very different from the students he was meeting, he realized that the students were also very diverse and had different personalities. It was not just one group of people. He continued by explaining that he "realized that not everyone — or everyone might have had these differences, but we were all working, we were all doing this thing for the students, and we were all, umm, working towards one goal." Being a leader, a peer mentor, provided him the opportunity to be exposed to all kinds of people different from himself. He had generally low expectations about his ability to help others, and he did not expect to actually help others or have them follow in his footsteps.

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*Participant 9: Trish*

Trish (20) was a young academic mentor who shared that she had always seen herself as a mentor, even before she arrived at IUPUI. She recalled that she had seen the application to be a peer mentor and said to herself, "I'm going to that." She saw the position as being a leader, someone to make a difference. Once she started, she really liked it and had not stopped. She accounted for her love of mentoring by referring to her own experience of being mentored. Her father and siblings had always been mentors to her and her own peer mentor that she had in college also encouraged her to mentor others.

She shared that she called her students her little babies and they kept calling her mom. She explained that "I just felt that connection." She continued by saying, "I've always wanted to, like, make a difference." She felt she was really able to connect because she too had challenges and did not let them hold her back from what she wanted to do.

*Participant 10: José*

José (22) was a young FYS mentor who was a senior education major. He shared that he sought out the opportunity to become a mentor "to help a fellow peer through a time of life that I've been in. Where I can give them, umm, advice whether academically, or socially, umm, to help their process and transition be easier." He recalled having had a strong peer mentor during his transition and that was a person he aspired to be: "Someone people could go to for help and advice."

Becoming a peer mentor took time for José. He explained, "it took me a while to really get the big picture of what I'm doing and the role that I'm in. I didn't expect it to

be a real challenging thing, honestly. Turned out it was a lot more challenging than I had anticipated. I expected to come out of training knowing everything and that didn't happen." Instead, he found that being a peer mentor was going to be a real adjustment and it required him to be very intentional to be effective at his role.

*Participant 11: James*

James (21) was a young academic mentor majoring in philosophy. He shared that he grew up in a farming community and was ready to seek out new opportunities in college. He saw himself as a very introverted and internal person. He described his communication prior to mentoring as "mumbling, and very direct." Becoming a peer mentor was not something that he necessarily thought he was going to be good at — he really thought it involved just a lot of standing up and talking, but it turned out to be a lot more. It wasn't just blank faces; they were actual people and the relationship didn't end at the door. He understood his role to be a cross between a friend and a mentor. He described his role as a support system and a guide to help the students out.

He was most surprised about who his students were, the type of work actual mentors do, and the impact he found out he could have on others. "I would never think I would become friends with a 40 year old middle-aged man. . . . I never thought I would be, like, friends with or they would necessarily want to be friends with me or appreciate my personality or something, you know? . . . It's not just surface-level talking when I'm talking with students."

*Participant 12: Mary*

Mary (20) was a young academic mentor majoring in health information. She began by sharing that before becoming a mentor she had not been involved in school; she

had come and then left. She recounted that she barely had any friends her first year in college. She recalled being a little nervous and a little apprehensive at first and not wanting to mess up her students. "This is going to be something where I'm making a huge impact and I better, like, stay on my A game." She also shared that she gave her peer mentor role a lot of time and effort. "When I really love something, I dive into it." She described a peer mentor as a spark, a role model, someone to help others, a real leadership role. She admitted that she had very high expectations for herself and that juggling being a peer mentor and her school responsibilities could be challenging. What she did not expect was to personally get something out of the experience.

Summary

The descriptions of participants present the diversity that the peer mentors brought to their programs. These twelve descriptions set the stage for the analysis and discussion of the themes that emerged from the interviews. This purposeful sample was invited based upon their program type and level of experience in the program. Each peer mentor's background, interest in becoming a peer mentor, and individual story was unique. The themes and detailed accounts of the peer mentors' experiences in their role will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the shared lived experiences of the peer

mentors who participated in this study. Findings from the twelve interviews provide

insight into how peer mentors make meaning of their experiences in this role. As

presented in the previous chapter, the participants in this study varied by program type,

gender, total semesters of mentoring, and ethnicity. Although the participants were

diverse, the aspects of their lived experiences as peer mentors were incredibly consistent

with one another. The findings from this study answer the research questions presented in

Chapter One: How do peer mentors make meaning? In what ways does being a peer

mentor have a developmental impact on the peer mentor?

During the analysis process, I repeatedly reviewed the interview data, as well as

the coding of themes and superordinate themes, to ensure that the peer mentors'

experiences were captured accurately. Numerous examples of actual interview responses

have been included to illustrate the themes discussed. The actual quotes are presented

verbatim from the peer mentors. Pseudonyms were provided to protect the identities of

the study participants.

The peer mentors in this study were undergraduate students representing two

different mentoring programs: academic mentors and first year seminar (FYS) mentors.

The process of interviewing provided the peer mentors an opportunity to make meaning

of their experience by reflecting and sharing how they understood their peer mentoring

role. Three categories were revealed. The first category, intrapersonal development,

reveals the change in how the peer mentor understood themselves and their personal

growth. The second category, interpersonal development, focuses on how the role provided the peer mentor an opportunity to learn about others different from themselves. The peer mentors described how learning about others had helped them develop personally and understand themselves better. The last category describes the epistemological development gained by the peer mentors that describes how they know they have changed.

Table 4: Categories and Themes

| Category 1<br>Intrapersonal<br>Development | Category 2<br>Interpersonal<br>Development | Category 3<br>Epistemological<br>Development |
|---|---|---|
| Personal growth | Awareness in differences of others | Self-concept |
| Self confidence | | |
| A mirror to themselves | | |

Intrapersonal Development

Intrapersonal development is most often referred to as identity or the process of reworking one's sense of oneself. Baxter Magolda (2001b) described how in the early years of college, students' identities are often highly dependent on external forces. The college experience can offer the students opportunities for questioning, exploring, and forming new identities with a stronger internal voice. When the peer mentors were initially asked to pause and reflect about how the experience in this role influenced how they understood themselves as individuals, it was challenging for the peer mentors to answer. I needed to repeat the question a number of times to emphasize that I wanted them to look inward at themselves and not outward towards their actions or specific skills gained. Once they were able to internalize the question, they were all able to speak to the question. All twelve peer mentors expressed that they looked at themselves differently as

a result of being a peer mentor. There were no differences in mentoring type or level of experience in how they responded to their growth. The act of mentoring another individual appeared to be a critical experience in helping the peer mentors understand themselves differently. The interaction provided the peer mentors the opportunity to see parts of themselves in the students that they were mentoring as if they were looking into a mirror. This reflection encouraged the peer mentors to ask themselves, "Who am I?" This struggle of questioning was described as a process of finding, listening to, and constructing the internal self-authored voice (Baxter Magolda, 2001b). The peer mentors specifically described how they were able to develop a deeper and clearer understanding of themselves as a result of being a peer mentor. Repeatedly, the peer mentors shared that being in that role helped them to discover who they were as persons. They described the difference by referring to finding their own voices, being more open-minded, optimistic, self-aware, becoming more accountable, and able to define themselves. Increased self-confidence was specifically mentioned by nine mentors.

*Personal Growth*

The first subtheme of intrapersonal development is personal growth. Four peer mentors (two female academic – one experienced – one young and one FYS – experienced and one male mentor – academic – experienced) described being a peer mentor in terms of their personal growth. They specifically described how being a peer mentor helped them to develop who they are, to know themselves better, and to become more comfortable with themselves and what drives their passion. Simon shared his thoughts about his personal growth, including his increased patience, *and* appreciation to get to know himself better. Simon shared:

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> I believe that every single day we are changing. . . . I definitely think that I discovered myself really well. . . . Patience is one of the very important things. I had it before, but I didn't know how to use that in an effective manner. I really appreciated getting to know myself better and how my personality is changing . . . changing my attitude a lot.

Lucy also expressed how much she had grown as a result of being a peer mentor. Lucy is an older student, a mom, and has experienced many things in her life. She shared how being a peer mentor to others was different than being a mom and how this was a significant contributor to her personal growth and self-awareness as a returning adult student. As she reflected, she shared:

> I literally became an adult, in a different way. As a parent, someone who raises children. . . . It's not the same as being an adult at this level.

This reflection was in reference to her feelings that only part of her "adult self" had been developed before becoming a mentor. By serving as a peer mentor, she credits the experience with helping to develop another part of her adult identity. She continued to describe:

> It allowed me to actually feel like an adult — to feel like I can make it. I can help someone without having to be their mom, without having to tell them what to do. I can actually help them help themselves, which is one of the big things that I learned about mentoring. . . . Prior to the mentoring, I was just like any other student. I definitely think I grew up. I just kept, you know, gaining more and more self-awareness.

Abby, Rick and Lori also discussed how being a peer mentor had helped them to grow and understand themselves in a new light. They likened their growth to that of a metamorphosis, emerging from a shell. Abby began:

> I was like a little caterpillar almost. . . . I kind of stayed to myself. I was very quiet and very shy. And then, getting into this program, it was almost like, "Okay. Got to get out of my shell and evolve a little bit. . . ."

Rick shared about his growth as it related to who he was when he was influenced by his friends, who he was after having been a peer mentor, and how the experience helped him

to find his internal voice and learn to trust himself and who he was becoming. He

reflected:

> I see me as a person now . . . in high school I had weird relationships with
> my friends. . . . I always did everything they told me to do no matter what.
> But when I came to college and I started to make my own choices . . .
> being a mentor, made me realize that I did that for myself. They didn't do
> that for me. . . . I can actually make these decisions myself. That made me
> . . . better as a person for my family and for my friends. I broke out of my
> shell in that way. . . . It's like you're seeing yourself for the first time.

Lori shared how she was always trying to fit in and be accepted and how being a

peer mentor has forced her to grow and gain a better sense of who she is

becoming:

> I think you do start to develop who you are truly and start to understand
> yourself more and identify more of certain things. I would classify myself
> as a kind of a chameleon. I try to see how I can fit into a group. Not just
> like I need to be accepted by others, but this is what this group struggles
> with and what this group needs. I've definitely started to realize, "okay,
> this is who I am. This is what I need in myself." And that constantly is
> changing I think for people because of your experiences. So I think . . . in
> the growing sense, I think I'm growing more in establishing who I am.

She concluded by sharing:

> I think that's what's kept me in this position. It is not because I want to get
> something out of it, it's to see other people grow from it, which then in
> turn helps you grow. Maybe not intentionally, but it does.

José was able to share about his personal growth in terms of his intellectual development.

As described by Perry (1970) in discussing the phases of cognitive development, José

shared how being a peer mentor moved his thinking from a dualistic level of things being

black and white to a multiplistic level of things being grey when thinking about several

aspects of his life. José shared:

> I can remember in high school and before my college experience. . . . I
> really did think I had everything figured out. I did not stress about things
> like I do now . . . things were very, like we say . . . black and white. I can
> remember just feeling that there is a right or wrong. I'm a lot more grey

now, very grey. And that's in my personal life with my political beliefs, religious beliefs, everything. I have learned perspective. It goes along with the grey. When things happen to me now, it is hard for me to come to a definitive opinion about it.

*Self-Confidence*

The second subtheme in intrapersonal development is self-confidence. Nine

mentors described how being a peer mentor improved their self-confidence. Again, there

was no difference in the type of mentor, their gender, or level of experience. Abby spoke

of her increase in confidence and control. Specifically, Abby explained that being a peer

mentor helped to give her:

> Confidence and reassurance that everything is going to be okay. It's not the end of the world, you know. Things happen. Sometimes — it's like out of your control and sometimes you do have control of it. But it's up to you to go ahead and change that so it doesn't happen again.

Through the peer mentor program, Lori was able to share how the responsibility that she

was given and the challenges that she faced were instrumental in helping her gain

confidence and see herself in a new way:

> By doing the peer mentoring it helped me develop confidence in myself to interact with people. I would not classify myself as an introverted person. My freshman year of college, I would be in my room most of the time. I didn't interact with many people just because I was scared of what the world really was and who I would be. "Will people accept me? Will people want to talk to me?" And, "Will I have friends, you know, if I decided to show who I really am?" I think I put myself in this shell more often my freshman year than most people do. So, being able to see that person, it's almost a completely different person, my twin that was shy.

Cole reflected on himself as a goofy kid, though not necessarily the class clown, but that

being a peer mentor really helped him grow in self-confidence:

> As a result of mentoring, I look at myself differently. It has helped me to determine who I really am. I did not used to have confidence or self-esteem. I've come out of my shell and put myself out there. I am more open-minded, and I feel like I can take on more tasks. I've grown up a lot from my rowdy rambunctious self in high school.

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*Mentoring Is Like a Mirror*

Being a peer mentor to others was described by nine of the participants as an important way in which they had learned about others and, in turn, had learned about themselves. The experience of being a mentor was often described as a domino effect where the support was passed down or as a mirror to see themselves. The peer mentors described how their students may have had a larger impact on them than what they had on their students. They described how they could see parts of themselves in their mentees and identify with their mentee's mistakes and struggles, and how this created new awarenesses for them and often changed their thinking and/or behaviors because they realized they needed help growing themselves. Taking time to reflect upon their mentoring relationships has been shown to help the mentor create a deeper understanding of themselves.

Kelly continued in her interview to share about her feelings and growth gained from her students:

> I was always reflecting on how it changed me. At the beginning of my mentoring it really forced me to look on how my stress was reflecting onto my students. I mean, they were telling me like, "girl you need to chill out because you're stressing us out."

This feedback from Kelly's students was a profound awakening for her. She was able to receive clear feedback that how she was feeling and acting was not good for her or her students.

Lucy expressed how she used peer mentoring to reflect upon her growth:

> Every day I still reflect...what I know I should apply to myself because of all the things that I have learned through peer mentoring. . . . I spent a lot of my adult life in depression. So coming back to school was a very difficult thing for me. I was in a very poor marriage and, and struggled to try to keep it. . . . I think that's why I stay so long (in the mentor program) — because it helps me every day to remember that everybody struggles . .

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. and we all need help. Everything that we learn as peer mentors and every person that we help and every experience that we gain is an opportunity to apply it to ourselves.

Ellie described how seeing herself in her mentees reminded her of where she had been and how far she had come:

Being able to share my story and saying, "Yes, I have struggled. Yes, it was a big transition. Yes, many people that I know if not all the people that I know that went through this part of their life had that same, similar struggle." Seeing myself in them at the very first stage and seeing how I came out of it and what that means to them.

Lori was able to describe how she had created new meaning and understanding during her interview. By looking at and describing the challenges of her students, she recognized that the very thoughts and behaviors that got her students into trouble were the same behavior she was exhibiting. She realized that she was putting other things and people before her school work. This was a significant moment of reflection and making meaning for her about her mentoring experience and growth.

She realized:

"My school is suffering in the same way." I think I put myself on the back burner a lot because I just have this constant need that I want to help everyone else and make sure everyone else's needs are completely taken care of before my own. . . . I've realized this past semester you need to have your own time even, even if you're peer mentoring. Even if you're just doing one course, you need to have that alone time, that time where you just make sure you're one hundred percent there.

Cole described how being a peer mentor helped him grow as an individual:

Like while I'm helping these people grow, I need help growing myself still. And that's why I continue to do it.

Rick recalled when he realized that by being a peer mentor he could help himself as well. He began by telling me about the time when he figured this out. He shared:

I was trying to figure out ways to help my students with resources around campus and I was like, "Well I need some of these resources myself."

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> Maybe I can learn from what I'm teaching them and use this to grow
> myself as a person —," Learning that I can take my own advice that I give
> out to others. That was a moment that I, I figured it out.

Trish recalls a special group she was the mentor for and feeling that they had more of an impact on her than she did on them. She shared:

> This just impacted me so much. . . . I see myself in each one of them in
> little ways. I have become a more rational thinker and problem solver. I
> used to play victim maybe my freshman year. I've learned through
> mentoring others how to be, I call it being a creator not a victim. . . . Like
> owning up and really taking accountability. . . . I see them victimizing
> themselves. . . . So, it kind of teaches me that I can't be a victim and I'm a
> victim and they see me victimizing myself. So kind of like practicing what
> I preach. . . . Just learning how to work with and reach out to them in
> different ways has helped me reach myself. I can see parts of myself
> sometimes come out in them.

<p align="center">Interpersonal Development</p>

Interpersonal development as described by Baxter Magolda (2001b) is the evolution of how one perceives and constructs relationships with others. This level of development may occur when the peer mentor weighs "others' perspectives in deciding what to believe and how to view the self" (p. 15). This is very closely tied to intrapersonal development. Peer mentors were asked specifically how being a peer mentor has influenced how they understand others and if it has influenced how they construct relationships with other people. This question was asked to investigate another angle in which peer mentors make meaning of their role. Both academic and FYS peer mentors equally expressed how their position taught them not only about themselves, but about others. The peer mentors were able to describe how they were able to connect with others different from themselves, they developed an understanding of different cultures, and they developed skills needed to mentor others. They also described their appreciation in recognizing the similarities and differences they share with their students. Being in the

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peer mentor role inspired them to get to know others different from themselves. They also described how they learned that their role as a mentor can affect someone else, as this was a surprise to them. Six mentors specifically shared that they learned to be open minded, that others may be different from them, not everyone had the same opportunities, and that they had learned to appreciate others in a new way.

*Awareness of Differences in Others*

Lori was from a small town and graduated with only 60 students all similar to herself. Attending college was a culture shock for her, almost like another world. Being a peer mentor provided an even larger opportunity to meet a very diverse group of students. Meeting others from different cultures inspired her passion to understand people's stories and learn how they may be similar and/or different from herself.

> I think I've developed my sense of culture since our university is so diverse. I'm very interested in and I work better with international students . . . because I've never travelled before. Hearing where they come from, how different it is for them when they enter the doors of the U.S. for the first time.

Hearing about the experiences shared by the students, their language barriers and their struggles, was very educational and intriguing for Lori.

She shared:

> I understand that culture's not just based upon what country you come from, or what state or city, it's, it's also from, like, different school systems and different things. I think I've developed a more cultural understanding of how things work and how people work. I've developed a passion, like I said before, of understanding people.

Abby's experience in mentoring provided her an opportunity for her to see how she was in one way different from her students. Abby is the daughter of a veteran and receives full military tuition benefits to pay for her school. Having this benefit, she did not know

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first-hand about the struggles of paying for college. Abby shared a story about when she

recommended to a student to drop a class and retake it to avoid a bad grade.

She reflected:

I'd never seen a dollar amount of how much a credit hour. I'd never seen
any of that. I had said a comment one day, "Well, I don't pay for my
school. It's okay if I take the class over again." There were students who
were like, "Well, I pay for all of my school. I just don't see how you could
do that and waste money." I had to think about it for a second. I was like,
"Okay, maybe I should have put it in a different way. Some of the students
are working a lot of hours, barely getting sleep, trying to just get by in
school. I guess it was a learning experience; to be grateful and learn not
everyone's the same. Not everyone is getting the same opportunities.

Abby did not feel she was just spending money to spend money. She did not

realize spending money to repeat a course might be a problem for other students.

As Abby reflected, she shared that mentoring others had given her insight into

herself and the realization that not everyone was getting the same opportunities.

Rick reflected on how being a peer mentor encouraged him to develop a new

understanding of others from the perspective of not being in the majority group, sharing

that "people are just people."

Being a peer mentor gives you the opportunity to meet so many different
people. You walk in the room and the scale of diversity here is one
hundred percent. I came from a group of people that weren't diverse, but
they were also not the majority. Because of my Hispanic heritage, I didn't
look at people like that. I've already seen it, I've already experienced that,
but not to the level of peer mentoring where I've seen all different kinds of
nationalities and age groups and everything like that. It was a shock, but I
kind of got over it because I just realized that people were just people . . ..
We all share humanity together.

Cole shared that coming from a small town challenged his beliefs at times and

how being a peer mentor helped him to learn about others as well as learn about himself.

I'm from a small town.... We don't have a lot of diversity. . . . I think for
me it was especially educational when I would mentor . . . diverse
populations . . . because I didn't know how they act or anything. I think

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this mentor experience has helped me to learn a little something about how different populations communicate, act, and all that stuff. Cultural awareness. There's been many times where my beliefs don't match up with other people's beliefs. And I, I struggle with that still 'cause I'm so stone cold on my beliefs. I don't want to change them. But then I realize . . . that just goes along with the diversity thing. That everyone's different.

Mary added her learning experience as it related to verbally interacting with others different from herself as a peer mentor:

It's definitely opened my eyes to the world. Before, I would say things that I didn't necessarily think were maybe offensive. But now I know other people take it different ways just based off of where they're from or how that word is used in their family. It really makes you concentrate on what you're saying and how you're saying it. It's definitely opened my eyes to culture and language.

<div align="center">Epistemological Development</div>

Baxter Magolda (2001b) explained epistemological development as part of a student's ability to understand "how do you know?" as it relates to the meaning given to their experience. The peer mentors were asked to share the experiences and insights they had created in their role and how they knew they had grown. All of the peer mentors, academic and FYS, were able to articulate with certainty that they knew they were different after being in the peer mentor role. They attributed their growth to the interactions they had with their students and the skills necessary to be in the peer mentor role. The peer mentors responded with confidence that they knew they had grown because they saw themselves differently, their self-concept had changed, as result of being a peer mentor.

<div align="center">*Self-concept*</div>

Simon shared that being a peer mentor had equipped him with the skills which made him feel that he was prepared for his future career:

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I have acquired those skills not just to list on a resume or to tell people —
But I feel that I am at that level where I can kind of like an advisor help
people out. So, these skills which I have built on, in a meaningful way,
they are definitely going to help me in my future career. This role has
challenged me.

Lucy was also able to share, that as a result of being a peer mentor, she was a better mom,

a better friend, a better listener, and more thoughtful.

Being a peer mentor completely changed my life. A lot of times I thought
"I don't know that I can do this. I don't know that I'm up for this." I'm
older. I'm, you know, it's harder. I honestly believe that if I wasn't here, I,
I probably would have given up. I would not have had that inner drive to
continue.

Trish described how she used to see herself like a little bud and that after being a

peer mentor, she was more like a flower blossoming to who she was becoming.

She concluded:

I am becoming the woman I'm destined to be.

Lori shared that being a peer mentor help her to grow and establish who she is. She

emphasized that it was the interaction with people that helped her to develop and grow

into her new self.

James, the final interview, shared perhaps the most compelling story of the impact

of his experience being a peer mentor. He shared:

It wasn't until I experienced peer mentoring and all the different aspects of
that when I really saw the most change in myself. It wasn't moving from a
rural farming community to the city that changed me. It wasn't coming out
in high school that changed me. It was peer mentoring and my complete
personality and attitude and values changed. That happened in a year, year
and a half, and that was totally more overwhelming than any other huge
change that ever happened in my life. I never would have signed that
contract and thought, "Oh, my whole life's going to change right now." I
would have never thought that but it has put me in this direction and in
this goal-setting and this personality mode. It has completely changed
everything that I have thought about myself, quite honestly. And it's
changed my expectations for myself and what I think I'm capable of
achieving.... It's been the biggest growing experience of my life.

Summary of Interview Findings

 In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 undergraduate peer mentors who supported other undergraduate students in academic courses and their transition to college. This purposeful sample represented the ethnic/racial and gender diversity of the peer mentoring programs at the university. The sample was split by program type and the mentor's level of experience: Experienced mentors with more than four semesters in their role and young mentors with two or fewer semesters of mentoring experience. Experience was thought to be an important element to the study, believing that experienced mentors would respond differently than young mentors. The type of peer mentoring programs were also thought to be a variable of importance, anticipating that the responses from the peer mentors would be different. Neither factor was supported as an element differentiating the peer mentor's responses to the interview questions.

 The peer mentors were asked a set of interview questions to prompt them to reflect on their experience; their understanding of their role, themselves, and others; and their relationships as a peer mentor. Additional prompts were used to follow up and generate more details about their experiences. For a summary of the individual question responses, see Appendix D. An inductive process was used to code the interview transcripts. After numerous readings, more than 60 codes were assigned and later collapsed into four themes and 10 subthemes in regard to how peer mentors make meaning of their experience and role. Specific segments of the interviews have been presented to capture the essence of the peer mentor's experience.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to investigate how peer mentors understand their role. The primary concern with phenomenological research is to investigate the lived experiences of the participants and the meaning which each participant makes of their lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). To accomplish this purpose, twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with peer mentors who served as academic mentors and first year seminar mentors at a major urban university. The peer mentors were asked about their understanding of their role; about experiences that had been growthful for them; about changes in their understanding of themselves and others; and about the ways in which they constructed relationships with others. Through these questions, I was able to construct an interpretation of how peer mentors make meaning of their role and how they were able to develop from their experience.

The purpose of the final chapter is to discuss and integrate the data collected in this qualitative study with theory. I will discuss the findings from the interviews in efforts to answer each of the research questions. At the end I discuss the implications for practice, limitations of the research, and recommendations for further research.

How Do Peer Mentors Make Meaning of Their Role?

Peer mentors were able to describe how they make meaning of their role in three ways. To begin, they had the essential elements necessary to make meaning as described by Baumeister (1991); Nash and Murray (2010); and Parks (2000). Secondly, they were able to make meaning of their role by engaging in critical reflection as part of their

experience. And lastly, they described their ability to find meaning in their role through the constructive interactions they had with their students.

To begin, Baumeister (1991) described several essential elements needed for meaning-making to occur. This included having an environment, a context, interaction, the process of decoding, and conferring on information. The peer mentor's work in this study can most certainly be described as having these essential elements. The environment was the college campus, in the context of peer-to-peer mentoring, interacting for the purpose of supporting academic success and transition to college. This interaction called upon the peer mentor to engage in a process of decoding the mentor's and mentees' confusion and conferring to reach agreed-upon understandings. The purpose and work of the peer mentor can therefore be described as having a foundation for meaning-making to occur for their students as well as for themselves.

Baumeister (1991) also explained that all of us, without exception, strive to make meaning of our lives in four basic ways: purpose, values, efficacy, and self-worth. It can be found in the peer mentors' responses that they were able to make-meaning of their role in relation to these four basic ways. Peer mentors described how they had a specific purpose even if the interviews revealed that they did not have clear expectations before embarking upon the experience and that they jumped in with a fairly high degree of uncertainty. The peer mentors described their purpose as being leaders, role models, a resource, and part of something bigger than themselves. The peer mentors shared that they were able to clarify the purpose of their role through the training they received and through the experiences in serving others.

Values were described as being the motivation for one's actions and the basis to justify one's behavior and judgments. Efficacy was explained as the feeling that they were in charge of their lives and having control of it to some extent (Baumeister1991). The peer mentors talked about their values and their feelings as it related to their efficacy in the interviews. This came through especially when they described how mentoring others was like a mirror to themselves. The mentors described seeing themselves in their students, causing them to reflect and seek to define themselves, their values, and then align their reasoning and actions with new internal and personal definitions of themselves. Peer mentors provided examples of their shift in behavior, thoughts and feelings as a shift from defining themselves through others' perceptions to defining themselves based on internally constructed values (Baxter Magolda, 2001b). They were able to see the worth in their role and that what they did mattered and had meaning. The peer mentors were able to see their growth as it related to how they saw themselves, their values, and the way they interacted with others. By seeing themselves in the mirror of others, moving forward and back, they were able to see a full picture of themselves.

Secondly, a process of critical reflection was shown to be another way in which peer mentors were able to make meaning of their role. Providing the peer mentors with prompts, opportunities to discuss their experiences and examine their transformations, enabled them to create meaning. Daloz (2012) supported reflection as being important for a peer mentor's transformation. The dynamic of transformation in mentoring gained through reflection was described as creating a series of progressive perspective shifts. The movement allows the individuals to see more and in increasingly complex ways. Each new standpoint "demands that we form new, overarching ways to make sense of the

diversity and conflict we see with increasing clarity around us" (p. 133). The peer

mentors were able to describe in the interviews experiences and interactions with great

detail when they were able to see their perspective shift as it related to themselves, their

understanding of others, and in the way they worked with their students. In some

interviews, the peer mentors discussed the shift in their ways of knowing as challenging,

a period of chaos, and self-doubt. To move through this period, they found that they

needed to let go of their beliefs and current ways of thinking and shift their perspectives

in order to find meaning and new understanding.

Lastly, college students have been described as naturally being in a state of

meaning-making, in a constant search for ways to make connections, to find patterns,

order, and significance (Nash and Murray, 2010). Their efforts to seek meaning were

explained as endless efforts to understand their experience and make sense of the

expected and unexpected (Parks, 2000). Serving as a peer mentor in college is a unique

role and very different from other college experiences. The nature of the peer mentor's

work is, in fact, to support their peers in the co-construction of knowledge and meaning-

making. This role provides the peer mentor with a context and purpose in which to

question and examine the thoughts, feelings, and expectations of the students they mentor

as well as with their own, to dismantle old structures and construct new ones with the

tools that peer mentors are trained to use. The role of the peer mentor encourages the

mentor to make meaning of their assumptions about the nature, limits, and certainty of

knowledge. Baxter Magolda (1991) described how these assumptions tend to move when

the individual shifts from "assuming that knowledge is certain and is possessed by

authorities to assuming that knowledge is constructed in a context" (p.38). The peer

mentors were able to successfully describe moments in their mentoring relationships when they were able to help their students to understand their experiences, create new behaviors to function autonomously, and create healthy and engaged relationships in college. This ability to support other students' construction of knowledge and self was expressed as an effective way in which the peer mentors were able to help others as well as create meaning about their own role and themselves.

<center>In What Ways Does Being a Peer Mentor Have A<br>Developmental Impact on the Peer Mentor?</center>

The experiences, insights, and understandings captured in the interviews were closely examined and organized to understand the ways in which being a peer mentor had a developmental impact on them personally. The holistic developmental dimensions were used to organize the ways in which the mentor described how their experiences were able to contribute to their growth.

The first dimension of holistic development, intrapersonal development, refers to the peer mentor's understanding of self. "Who am I?" "What do I value?" and "Why?" are important questions in this dimension. "This is most often referred to as identity or self-evolution . . . an evolving process in which we continually rework our sense of ourselves and our relationships with other people as we encounter challenges in the environment that call our current conceptualizations into question" (Baxter Magolda, 2001b, p.18). The peer mentors described how, when serving others, they were confronted with moments that challenged their understanding of their own identity, causing them to reflect upon their current standpoint and to make new meaning of themselves and their relationships with others. Baxter Magolda noted that "the formation of identity is closely tied to the relationships one has with external others" (p.18).

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The second dimension, interpersonal development, is used to describe the growth in how peer mentors understood their experience and constructed their understanding of others. In the peer mentor's role, they often shared how they were directly situated in experiences to internally question and coordinate their beliefs, values, and attitudes as they interacted with their students. The peer mentors were able to share how their understanding of others was challenged, they came to new understandings, and their perspectives were different as a result of being a peer mentor. They explained that they were more attuned to the diversity of others, that they appreciated the similarities and differences they shared, and how their new awarenesses and understandings changed their relationships and interactions with others. "Intercultural maturity is necessary both in life on the campus and life beyond the campus" (Baxter Magolda, 2003, p. 234) and this does not come without having an internal sense of self.

Hornak and Ortiz (2004) stated that "students best learn about other cultures when they experience them directly rather than simply reading about them in class" (p. 91). This type of learning experience is also described as an essential key to holistic development. By creating authentic interdependent relationships with others, taking in perspectives different than one's own while not being consumed by them, and negotiating needs, interpersonal development can occur (Baxter Magolda, 2004).

The third dimension of holistic development is epistemological development: "How do I know?" This dimension is said to be the most agreed-upon goal in higher education. Educators want students to think critically and to develop an internal compass in order to achieve complex learning. Critical thinking "requires the ability to define one's own beliefs in the context of existing knowledge" (Baxter Magolda, 2003, p. 233),

the capacity to "construct knowledge claims internally, critically analyzing external perspectives rather than adopting them uncritically" (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 9). However, students often struggle when exploring multiple perspectives, respecting diverse views, and thinking independently.

The peer mentor's were all able to describe experiences, interactions, and moments that affirmed their belief that they were different, had grown, and had new understandings as a result of being in the peer mentor role. They shared stories that specifically focused on the impact that the role had on their self-concept. They described how they saw themselves differently and how they had changed.

Cultivating a capacity to respond to the question, "How do you know?" "requires self-reflection on one's identity and relations with others" (Baxter Magolda, 2003, p.232). Cognitive outcomes such as problem solving, reflective judgment, and mature decision-making are central to achieving cognitive maturity as well as achieving the other dimensions of interpersonal and intrapersonal development.

Overall, my study was able to gather the lived experiences of peer mentors and richly describe those experiences using a holistic developmental framework. The peer mentors' experiences were organized by considering three dimensions of holistic development (intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological) and providing relevant examples of their perspectives about their peer mentor role. Ideally, students should actively engage in making sense of each dimension rather than treating them as separate skills, since the dimensions are interrelated. The experiences described by the peer mentors suggest that this role did in fact provide them with the type of experience that

caused them to pause, have new insights, and think differently in each of the three dimensions.

<div align="center">Implications for Practice</div>

<div align="center">*Critical Reflection*</div>

First, program directors must intentionally plan mentor meetings and mentor classes using transformative learning pedagogy to promote peer mentor development. Growth in the peer mentor is not simply a quantitative increase in skills learned, but also qualitative in the ways they make meaning. This study revealed that peer mentors did in fact experience moments and interactions that caused them to pause, have new insights, and think differently in each of the three dimensions of holistic development (i.e., intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological).

Mezirow (2000) described these experiences that cause one to pause as *disorienting dilemmas*. Periods of disorientation cause the individual to see the world differently than before and the change is described as a phase in transformative learning. Transformative learning "shapes people; they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognize" (Clark, 1993, p. 47). This type of learning is described as having 10 phases by Mezirow (1991) and was condensed by Herbers (1998) into (a) disorienting dilemmas, (b) critical reflection, (c) rational dialogue, and (d) action. The findings from the interviews with the peer mentors can be considered as representing transformational learning experiences.

Belenky and Stanton (2000), Perry (2000), and Kegan (2000) suggested that students are able to critically reflect on their own perspectives in late adolescence and abstractly reason about their own assumptions; these types of learning experiences

support student development as individuals. Higher education and programs like peer mentoring programs could be described as "uniquely positioned to facilitate transformative experiences in learning" (Glisczinski, 2007, p. 320). Wiggins and McTighe (1998) described perspective, empathy, and self-knowledge, gained through critical reflection, as important for learners to be able to analyze information from a variety of perspectives (others' experiences) and incorporate it into their own lives. Therefore, it would be reasonable to suggest that peer mentoring programs design and implement intentional opportunities for critical reflection within their trainings and ongoing support to the mentors within their mentoring communities. This reflection would provide peer mentors the possibility to assign the disorienting dilemmas meaning; engage in dialogue with other peer mentors, faculty, and other professionals; become more complex and dynamic thinkers; and in turn determine new approaches for action with those that they mentor and in their own personal lives.

The opportunity to engage in this level of critical reflection may also impact the peer mentor's own personal transformation as well: "Personal transformation is a dynamic, uniquely individualized process of expanding consciousness whereby individuals become critically aware of old and new self-views and choose to integrate these views into a new self-definition" (Wade, 1998, p. 713). Professionals are said to be able to promote this personal transformation by engaging peer mentors in an inner dialogue and encouraging them to be influenced by this interactive process. Baxter Magolda (2004) and Baxter Magolda and King (2004) described such a process of learning as holistic development. Having assignments and opportunities for critical reflection demands that peer mentors form new, overarching ways to make sense of the

work and challenges the way they see things with increasing clarity around them. This deep transformation occurs not only in what the peer mentor thinks, but also in how the peer mentor thinks about things; it is the shift in their perspective that accounts for their development. For these reasons, it is important that program directors creatively develop and assess transformational learning experiences and opportunities for critical reflections with the peer mentors.

*Learning Partnership Model*

Secondly, peer mentors can be described as learning partners to the students they mentor because of their role in supporting and challenging their students' learning processes. The program directors that oversee the peer mentors must also consider themselves learning partners to the peer mentors. The Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) developed by Baxter Magolda and King (2004) is an approach to learning that supports the development toward self-authorship in college students and mutually constructs knowledge. The LPM is an approach to learning that supports the development of the student in programs by engaging them "in active learning that values their contributions (validation principle) and coaches them toward taking greater degrees of responsibility for learning and knowledge construction (mutual construction principle), all in the context of students' experiences grappling with relevant content (situation principle)" (Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007, p. 197). Peer mentors can be said to serve as learning partners to the students they mentor by supporting and challenging their learning process. The programs that the peer mentors belong to and serve from should also consider themselves learning partners for the peer mentors. Learning partnerships introduce students to a "complex process in which learners bring their own perspectives

to bear on deciding what to believe and simultaneously share responsibility with others to construct knowledge" (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004, p. xviii). This is possible because of the learning partnership's three core assumptions: "knowledge is complex and socially constructed, one's identity plays a central role in crafting knowledge claims, and knowledge is mutually constructed via the sharing of expertise and authority" (p. xix). These assumptions are based on the principles that peer mentors help their students by validating them as learners with a capacity to construct their own knowledge, situating learning in the learners' experience, and by defining learning as a process of mutually constructing meaning (p. xix).

Through learning partnerships, Parks (2000) asserted that from 17 through 30 years of age, a distinctive mode of meaning making occurs: " (1) becoming critically aware of one's own composing of reality, (2) self-consciously participating in an ongoing dialogue toward truth, and (3) cultivating a capacity to respond to act in ways that are satisfying and just" (p. 6). The peer mentoring programs in this study have an opportunity to create spaces for peer mentors to make meaning of their experiences during training, reflections, and opportunities of intergroup dialogues.

In order to intentionally create a LPM of practice in peer mentoring programs, professionals would need to create contexts for the mentors where the formulas for success are not readily available, compelling peer mentors to consider what alternative formulas "might look like and how to engage in that kind of knowing" (Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007, p. 198). The professionals in these programs would support the peer mentor's increased meaning-making capacities by respecting their thoughts and feelings, encouraging and supporting their examination of experiences, encouraging them to listen

to their inner voices, and challenging their current meaning-making capacities in efforts to create new ways (Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007).

Using the LPM by incorporating supports and challenges as a method of constructing peer mentor development helps multiple groups involved in peer mentoring programs. To begin, the peer mentor is able to move forward in constructing new meaning-making capacities, integrating ideas, and understanding. Secondly, the professionals leading the programs would be able to know where the peer mentor is on their developmental journey as well as be able to work towards appropriately challenging the peer mentors in training and ongoing development. This work would also include reflective exercises, an essential component of the LPM, as a means of processing and making meaning of their work. Lastly, the students that are being mentored may benefit as well. They receive support from peer mentors who are accustomed to the tasks associated with constructing knowledge, challenging current ways of knowing, supporting the creation of new ways of knowing, and seeking one's inner voice.

The students in Christiansen and Bell's (2010) study reported that they found emotional support from older students and the fact "that other students were on the same educational journey reinforced senior students as a powerful role model and legitimate source of reassurance" (p. 807). Likewise, the peer mentors described their understanding of peer mentoring as a domino effect and reciprocal in nature: "The reciprocity inherent in peer learning is evident and the initiative is perceived as mutually beneficial" (p. 809).

As shown in this study, peer mentors are eager to discuss their experiences and appreciate the opportunity to reflect and make-meaning of experiences. Therefore, program directors are called to be intentional learning partners. They should begin by

listening to their mentors' stories, asking them to reflect on where they are at with mentoring and their education in their lives, engaging them in the idea of a journey that involves confronting and addressing obstacles, getting stuck, confronting images of themselves, gaining partners, and making discoveries. In addition, program directors should view themselves as guides. Being on the journey with the peer mentor, we can watch for clues in the mentor's growth, encouraging them to find and speak with authenticity in their own voice, providing encouragement, challenging as necessary while affirming, guiding, and caring for them.

*Organizational Structure*

Third, in efforts to support the holistic development of all peer mentors at the organizational level, it is recommended that program directors come together to find a group identity as learning partners, to create a collective frame of reference, and to foster transformative learning experiences. As program directors, it is valuable for us to be aware of the overall directions of change that our mentors experience and to be able to determine appropriately where to meet our mentors on their developmental journey. In addition, we must be able to challenge the peer mentors to listen to their developing internal voices and use those as a guide. The findings of this study suggest that peer mentors can make-meaning from their experience when guided. By collectively working together, effective processes can be created, implemented, and assessed in all mentoring programs as they work towards supporting the mentors in similar ways. These processes could then be used to establish a taxonomy for High Impact Practices (Kuh, 1993), both for what peer mentors do as well as how we, as program directors, ensure intentional high impact practices for peer mentor development.

Limitations of Research

There are some important considerations to keep in mind before the findings of this study are used to inform practice and further research. The limitations include the setting of the study, the particularity of the peer mentor experiences described, potential research bias, and questions asked in the interview.

To begin, this study was conducted on a single campus with a small number of mentors from two different programs. There were six academic peer mentors and six first-year experience mentors at various stages in their mentoring careers.

Secondly, while the sampling technique was purposeful to select those who would be able to contribute to the research, it is possible that the peer mentors who chose to participate in the interviews may have been more reflective of their roles than those who did not choose to participate in the interviews and may not represent other types of peer mentor experiences. In addition, the difference in length of time being a peer mentor (less than two semesters compared to four or more semesters) was not a long enough period of time to see differences in their responses as it related to their development.

Third, peer debriefing, member checks, and reflexivity were used to control for researcher bias in the study. By explicitly exploring personal assumptions with the participants and peer professionals, I was able to challenge and contain my assumptions. Nevertheless, it is impossible to remove all researcher bias, and the researcher's perspective is relevant to the results of a qualitative study.

Lastly, a semi-structured interview approach was used for this phenomenological study in order to gain an understanding of how peer mentors made meaning of their role. The interviews were conducted in a private office to keep confidentiality and this office

was in their workplace setting to promote a trusting environment. The questions asked enabled gathering rich information about their experience and understanding of their role, and could be organized into the three dimensions of holistic development (Baxter Magolda, 2004). The peer mentors said that the experience did in fact cause them to see the world differently after being in this role. However, due to limitations of the interview questions asked in this study, I was not able to say for certain that being a peer mentor did in fact promote development in each of the three dimensions. Future research would need to add further questions to determine each peer mentor's holistic development.

<p style="text-align:center">Recommendations for Further Research</p>

To determine whether the peer mentor role actually contributed to a student's holistic development, additional questions would need to be asked. Recommended questions would ask peer mentors to talk about a time or event that was challenging, how it made them feel, and what sense they were able to make of that time, in order to get at the peer mentor's specific level of development (Baxter Magolda & King, 2012). The length of the interview period would also need to be greater. The study would need to follow the same group of peer mentors in a longitudinal way to capture changes in how the peer mentors understood their role differently over time. In the end, a model showing the gradation of development of a peer mentor could be created. From this gradation a researcher could in fact measure development and determine whether being a peer mentor promoted holistic development.

Other university peer mentor locations would also be useful to determine whether the peer mentor's experience and growth was consistent with peer mentors in other programs at different higher education institutions. The variance in types of peer

mentoring programs at different institutions might offer some additional information as to what aspects of the peer mentor selection criteria, training, and ongoing program supports may need to be in place in order to ensure that peer mentors would in fact grow holistically from the experience.

Other populations may also provide an interesting approach to this research. Specifically, one could look at international students and how they experienced their transition to college and grew holistically during their college years. How can higher education institutions challenge and support the holistic development of international students? This population's experience seems natural to explore, since it is a group with ongoing disorienting dilemmas that encourage the students to see the world differently than they did before, therefore potentially promoting growth.

## Closing Thoughts

The purpose of this study was to understand how peer mentors made meaning of their role. This qualitative phenomenological study was used to understand the lived experiences of peer mentors representing two programs at a major urban university. The broad questions posed for this study asked: How do peer mentors make meaning of their role? In what ways does being a peer mentor have a developmental impact on the peer mentor? The findings were presented in Chapters Four and Five, including a description of the peer mentors, their backgrounds, and thoughts about being a peer mentor. Attention was given to interviewing mentors with different levels of mentoring experience. The interviews provided insight on each mentor's experience and their understanding of their experience, and were then organized using a holistic

developmental framework (Baxter Magolda, 2004) that included the dimensions of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological development.

The findings in this study suggested that peer mentors were able to describe their experiences in ways that reflected how their experiences caused them to pause, have new insights, and think differently in each of the three dimensions. However, additional questions and more interviews over a longer period of time would be necessary to explore whether and how being a peer mentor contributed to their holistic development. Efforts must be made to expand our understanding of the peer mentor's role. It is my hope that these findings inform our understanding of how peer mentors understand their role and lead to a new longitudinal study to capture changes in how peer mentors understand their role differently over time. In the end, a model showing a gradation of development in a peer mentor could be created. From this gradation, development could be measured and researchers could determine whether being a peer mentor promotes holistic development. This could provide insight for professionals to use in creating effective LPMs for peer mentors, including transformation learning experiences such as critical reflection that would enable learners to be able to analyze information from a variety of perspectives, including others' experiences, and incorporate it into their own lives.

**The Development of Peer Mentors**

Dear Mentor,

My name is Andrea Engler. I am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program at Indiana University. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree and I would like to invite you to participate. This study will be monitored and reviewed by my dissertation committee.

I am studying the impact of mentoring on peer mentors development. If you decide to participate you will be asked to meet with me for an interview. Questions will be related to your experience as a peer mentor. The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 1 hour. The interview will be audio taped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The tapes will only be reviewed by members of the research team who will transcribe and analyze them. They will then be destroyed.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at IUPUI – University College. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

Taking part in this study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also quit being in the study at any time or decide not to answer any questions are not comfortable answering. Participation, non-participation or withdrawal will not affect your grades in any way.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at aengler@iupui.edu or 278-1576 if you have student related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Administration at (317) 278-7189 or inforscho@iupui.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the number listed below to discuss participating. I will call you within the next week to see whether you are willing to participate.

With kind regards,

Andrea Engler
(317) 278-1576
aengler@iupui.edu

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

*Introduction:* This interview will focus on your experiences as a peer mentor. You were

invited to participate in this interview because you were identified as a mentor who has

completed at least 2 semesters of mentoring or has completed the 4 semesters of

eligibility for peer mentoring. During this interview, I will ask you some questions that

do not have one correct answer; my goal is to understand your experiences. The interview

should not take any longer than 45 minutes and will be recorded. Your name will be

changed to keep your identity anonymous and you can stop it at anytime. Are you ready

to begin? (recording)

Part 1 (10 min)

1. Tell me about yourself (warm up, rapport builder)
2. What does being a peer mentor mean to you?
3. What expectations did you bring to the mentoring role?
   a. Follow-up: To what extent have your expectations matched what you have experienced thus far?

Part 2 (20 min)

4. Have you had meaningful experiences that you feel have contributed to your growth in college? (probes: experiences that were significant, experiences that were really good/really bad, challenges) Tell me about them. (probes: how so, tell me more).
5. How and to what extent has being a peer mentor influenced how you understand yourself as an individual?
6. How and to what extent has being a peer mentor influenced how you construct relationships with other people?

Part 3 (10 min)

7. What insight do you feel you are able to take away from the experiences you have had in being a peer mentor?
8. Is there anything that you feel you would like to share that I haven't asked you about?

Wrap up.

APPENDIX C: IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL LETTER

**To:**     Robin Hughes
          EDUCATION

          Andrea Engler
          UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

**From:**
          Human Subjects Office
          Office of Research Administration – Indiana University

**Date:** April 25, 2014

**RE: NOTICE OF EXEMPTION — NEW PROTOCOL**

          Protocol Title: How Peer Mentors Make Meaning as it Relates to their Holistic
Development

          Study #: 1404733070

          Funding Agency/Sponsor: None

          Status: Exemption Granted | Exempt


**Study Approval Date:** April 25, 2014

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_____

The Indiana University Institutional Review Board (IRB) EXE000001 | Exempt recently
reviewed the above-referenced protocol. In compliance with 46 C.F.R. § 46.109 (d), this
letter serves as written notification of the IRB's determination.

**The study is accepted under 45 C.F.R. § 46.101 (b), paragraph(s) (2) Category 2:
Surveys/Interviews/Standardized
Educational Tests/Observation of Public Behavior Research involving the use of
educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures,
interview procedures or observation of public behavior if: i) information obtained is
recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified, directly or
through identifiers linked to the subjects; or ii) any disclosure of the human subjects
responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of
criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects financial standing,
employability or reputation.**

Acceptance of this study is based on your agreement to abide by the policies and procedures of the Indiana University Human Research Protection Program and does not replace any other approvals that may be required. Relevant policies and procedures governing Human Subject Research can be found at: http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/hs_policies.html.

The Exempt determination is valid indefinitely unless changes in the project may impact the study design as originally submitted. Please check with the Human Subjects Office to determine if any additional review may be needed.

You should retain a copy of this letter and all associated approved study documents for your records. Please refer to the assigned study number and exact study title in future correspondence with our office. Additional information is available on our website at http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/.

**If your source of funding changes, you must submit an amendment to update your study documents immediately.**

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Human Subjects Office via email at irb@iu.edu or via phone at (317) 274-8289 (Indianapolis) or (812) 856-4242 (Bloomington).
You are invited, as part of ORA's ongoing program of quality improvement, to **participate in a short survey** to assess your experience and satisfaction with the IRB related to this approval. We estimate it will take you approximately **5 minutes to complete the survey.** The survey is housed on a Microsoft SharePoint secure site which requires CAS authentication. This survey is being administered by REEP; please contact us at reep@iu.edu if you have any questions or require additional information. Simply click on the link below, or cut and paste the entire URL into your browser to access the survey:
https://www.sharepoint.iu.edu/sites/iu-ora/survey/Lists/Compliance/IRB_Survey/NewForm.aspx.

/enclosures

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTION SUMMARY

**Question 1:** Can you tell me about yourself? Mentors shared their name, program, and

experience level to establish comfort and rapport for the interview process.

**Question 2:** What does being a peer mentor mean to you?

Role model: All twelve peer mentors were unanimous in describing a peer mentor as a role model. There was no difference between First Year Seminar (FYS) Mentors and Academic Mentors, or based on level of experience or gender. Peer mentors used the following ways to describe being a role model:
- A spark
- A big resource
- A leader
- Someone to look up to
- To carry them where they needed to go
- Someone helping someone else
- To tell them stuff — provide advice
- To motivate students

Something bigger than themselves: Experienced mentors in both programs (2 Academic – 1 Female – 1 male and 2 FYS – 1 Female – 1 male) described the role of being a peer mentor as something bigger than themselves. It was described as:
- Part of a bigger process
- Intimidating
- Exposure and interactions to all kinds of people different from themselves
- To learn how to help someone
- Satisfying and gratifying to know you helped someone else
- To see someone grow right before your eyes
- A really rewarding feeling
- Almost like a mom or big sister
- Between friend and instructor
- A support system
- To share my story to help them
- Someone dedicated to their needs
- Someone with experience
- Trained
- Already connected to show the way
- To make a difference
- To help them feel comfortable

Personal Growth: Four peer mentors (Two female academic – 1 experienced – 1 young and 1 FYS – experienced and one male mentor – academic – experienced) described being a peer mentor in terms of their personal growth. They described their development as:

- Personal growth
- Helped me develop who I am
- To know self better
- Helped me to identify who I am, my drives and passions
- To persevere through things
- Getting out of one's comfort zone
- To push myself
- Helped me grow
- Gained experience
- Became more comfortable with myself
- Increased adaptability
- Gained confidence
- Self-esteem
- Better grades
- How to be part of a group
- Communication skills

Seeing myself in them: The idea of the peer mentor seeing themselves in their students and learning about themselves as they mentored was described at various points during the interviews and was presented first in this question. (2 academic – 1 experienced – 1 young and 1 FYS – young)

- I found myself a bit more — that changed my approach in mentoring, then I really saw growth in the students — then it helped me within myself
- The students had a big impact on me, perhaps more than I had on them
- Not only helped them, I helped myself by learning skills I acquired to be a mentor
- While I am helping people grow — I still need help growing myself

To be like their mentor: This was the beginning of the emerging subtheme regarding their peer mentor having an impact on their decision to become a mentor. Two female young mentors (1 FYS – 1 Academic) shared that the role of being a peer mentor was modeled for them by others, including:

- Siblings
- Their college mentor
- Parents

**Question 3:** What expectations did you bring to the mentoring role?
   a. Follow-up: To what extent have your expectations matched what you have experienced thus far?

All but one peer mentor acknowledged without hesitation when initially asked about their expectations that they did not know what to expect from this experience. In reflecting upon their experience, nine mentors expressed that their experience exceeded their expectations (3 experienced – 2 young FYS) and (2 experience – 2 young academic mentors) and three (2 experienced academic and 1 young FYS) shared that it met what they hoped to acquire from the experience. The peer mentors also shared the emotions that described their expectations, what they expected to gain from the experience, and what they did not expect but did gain from the experience.

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Emotions to describe their expectations:
- To be tense
- Fear of making a mistake
- Paranoia
- To have to know everything
- Very concerned
- I felt I was lacking
- Uncertain that I could do this
- Afraid
- To not be good at it
- Nervous
- Apprehensive

Expectations for the mentoring role:
- To be a role model
- It to be a leadership role
- To make friends
- To have a purpose
- To see more change in my students
- To help people
- To be "that" person for them
- To be a support system
- To grow as a person
- To have rapport with students
- To connect with faculty and staff
- To experience things I had never experienced before
- To do something to impact somebody's life
- For some of my students to do very well
- To ensure my students had the resources and tools they needed
- To need to be flexible and adaptable
- To know everything after training
- To be standing up and talking
- The relationships to end at the door

What they did not expect from their role (but gained/acquired/experienced):
- To do well
- To get the position
- To grow (personal growth)
- That I could make a difference in someone else's life
- For it to open up my mind
- For volunteering as a mentor to exceed my expectations
- To feel more accountable
- To find how much it helped me develop as a person
- To have a whole network of mentors
- To become attached to my students Become more involved
- Become self-aware
- Passion
- More collaborative
- Teamwork
- To have higher expectations for myself
- My voice
- Learn new things I did not know before
- Identify what you need to do
- Gain critical thinking skills
- Fun
- Satisfaction from the experience
- That it was different from what I thought
- Connected
- For my mentees to follow in my footsteps and become mentors
- That it would have been so challenging
- To be happy

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- Gain self-confidence
- Gain self-esteem
- Gain friends
- Be able to give advice

- Share different ideas
- To talk more
- How much goes into this

Skills:
- To identify what one needs to do
- Critical thinking skills
- To learning something I didn't know before
- To talk more

- To be able to give advice
- Able to share different ideas
- To get more involved
- Learn new things

**Question 4:** Have you had meaningful experiences that you feel have contributed to your growth in college? (probes: experiences that were significant, experiences that were really good/really bad, challenges) Tell me about them. (probes: how so, tell me more).

All twelve of the peer mentors were able to identify growth in themselves as a result of being in a peer mentor role. Their growth was broken into the following areas. There were no differences in mentoring type or level of experience in how they responded to their growth. Confidence was specifically mentioned by 4 mentors.

Understanding of others:
- Able to connect with others different from myself
- Service experience
- I did not know how to act around diverse cultures/populations
- Cultural competency
- Opportunity to search for who others really are

- That not all students are similar to me
- My eyes were opened and changed my perspective on people
- Other people struggle too

Seeing themselves in their mentees:
- Learn to take my own advice
- I saw my students play victim and realized I do that too
- Giving them support in turn helped me find support

Personal growth:
- More optimistic
- More connected to the university community
- Opened my eyes to the world
- That I cannot play victim
- To put myself out there
- Own up and be accountable

- Confidence
- Reaching out and understanding others/help understand myself better
- Praise from students
- Reflection time
- Service experience

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- When my personal beliefs did not line up
- Develops you into the person you truly are
- Realizing I'm the one responsible
- Able to coach myself and others through things
- Support I didn't know existed
- You provide support and receive it all at the same time
- I "see" myself as a person

- Made me realize that I am doing this for myself
- I make decisions for myself
- To understand who I am in this world
- I'm still me and going to be me no matter what
- That I do have control
- The experience provided great insight into myself

Outcomes gained:
- Mentoring techniques improved
- Able to talk to anyone
- Communication style
- Cultural understanding and competence

- More rational thinking/problem solving skills
- Confidence to walk in a room, smile and interact with anyone
- Individual skills

**Question 5:** How has being a peer mentor influenced how you understand yourself as an individual?

This question was a bit more challenging for the peer mentors to reflect upon. They had to look inward at themselves and not outward towards their actions as a mentor. They were all equally able to speak to the question and personal awareness about themselves was mentioned more.

There were no differences based on mentoring program, level of experience, or gender.

Understanding of self:
- I know who I am and others cannot shape me anymore
- Accountability
- To be more independent
- Broke out of shell and put myself out there
- Do not let others define me
- More well-rounded
- Better problem solver
- I'm responsible
- I'm a doer
- Confidence
- Able to admit my faults

- Willing to listen more
- Willing to seek advice
- See myself in a circular manner — not one-directional
- I have been able to discover myself
- I look at myself differently to help me to find who I really am
- I can take on more responsibility
- To present myself in a different way
- To take care of myself
- To know what helps me and what to let go of

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- More loving, accepting, appreciative, questioning, comfortable with who I am
- Open to new ideas/things
- Mentoring requires me to check with myself what I know – where I should be
- That everyone struggles
- It changed my attitude about everything
- Open-mindedness
- More connected to community
- More patient
- More willing to listen
- Willing to listen to different perspectives
- Better communicator
- Mature
- To understand multiple perspectives
- More open
- See myself as a person
- Able to make my own choices and decisions

**Question 6:** How has being a peer mentor influenced how you construct relationships with others?

This questions was a bit easier to ask after asking the previous question. The mentors were more in the mindset of reflecting upon themselves in relation to their mentoring experience. Seven of the mentors (3 young academic, 2 experienced academic, 1 experienced FYS, and 1 young FYS) spoke specifically about how their ability to understand themselves better helped them to construct relationships with others.

Understanding of self:

- To be open minded
- Confidence
- Feel like I have more to contribute to the relationship
- I know how to integrate myself more
- Mentoring has changed all of my relationships including my friends and kids
- I'm calmer
- More critically thinking
- Better listener
- More intentional
- More focused
- I am not quick to judge others
- I'm happier
- I have figured out myself and the type of people I want to be around
- To know what positive energy is for me
- I'm more compassionate, empathetic, not judging
- More open-minded
- More of a grown-up

Understanding of others:
- Mentoring encouraged me to connect with people I otherwise would have never connected with
- Gained the ability to see similarities in others

- To be open-minded
- Recognize that everyone has something different to bring
- I desire to get to know others
- Not to be afraid

Outcomes gained:
- Taken the skills I have gained to all other aspects of my life
- I am always instructing others

- How to create relationships
- How to be detached and balance the relationship
- How to read people

- I really care about the connections with others
- Trusting others

- How to pull something out of what they are saying
- To make others feel comfortable
- Make a good first impression

**Question 7:** What insights do you feel you are able to take away from this experience of being a peer mentor?

The peer mentors were very good at being able to sum up what they thought or felt that they have been able to take away from this experience. Their answers were longer, more thought-out and descriptive. Again, there did not seem to be a difference between academic or FYS; they both provided more descriptive answers.

Understanding of self:
- To be able to find my own voice and being able to communicate it effectively.
- Figure out who you are and being able to tell people who that is.
- Confidence
- Being able to define myself
- Being able to present yourself in the way you want to be perceived
- To identify who you are as a person and your goals, passions, and why you do the things you do

- To find my strengths
- To establish your own credibility
- I am so happy and a positive person
- To develop who you are truly
- Start to understand yourself more and identify more with certain things
- To know "who am I?"
- To be open minded
- Through my interactions with others, I learn more about who I am

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Understanding of others:

- You never know how your actions can affect someone else
- Everything you do can affect someone else

- I am able to see the good in everyone
- Seeing others grow is my greatest takeaway

Outcomes gained:

- How to come alongside or behind somebody and not think you are superior to that person
- To be flexible and adaptable — not everything's going to go perfectly
- What things necessarily matter
- While you have the opportunity to help every student, every student does not want to be

- I have acquired skills not just to put on a resume or tell. I can really help people.
- I have skills to interact with people
- How to carry myself

helped and sometimes you have to accept that.

Finally, the last question was able to sum it all up about the peer mentors' experience and their understanding of the role.

**Question 8:** What final insights would you like to share?

The peer mentors were able to sum up their thoughts and feelings about their experience as a peer mentor with positivity and appreciation. Repeatedly, each peer mentor described their experience as personally growthful and that they have been able to learn so much about themselves.

- My complete personality and attitude has changed
- It's changed my expectations for myself
- It's been the biggest growing experience of my life
- I have learned "I can do it"
- I'm lucky to be a part
- I found out I am more serious than I thought
- I am more mindful

- Mentoring never stops
- I am more aware
- I am more cognizant of my presence and people
- Don't underestimate yourself
- It has pulled this introvert out of her shell
- I am grateful for the experience
- If I didn't do this experience, I would not be who I am today.

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    universities. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 16*(4), 282–286.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Andrea Colby Engler

**Education**

Ed.D., in Higher Education, minor Communication Studies and Counseling
Indiana University

Masters of Arts, Professional Counseling
Central Michigan University

Bachelor of Science, Majors in Psychology and Interpersonal and Public Communication
Central Michigan University

**Awards and Professional Association Leadership**

HERS, Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education—2004

Bynum Mentor Chancellor's Award—2000

National Orientation Directors Association (1989 – 2006, 2009)
 Region VII Board Representative—2000 – 2003
 Finance Committee, Chair—2002 – 2003
 Region VII Conference Committee—1999, 2000, 2001
 National Conference Committee member—2001
 Indiana State Coordinator—1999 – 2000
 Region VII Showcase presenter—1996

**Research Experience and Interests**

From 2002 – 2004, assisted the Director of Assessment in a program
review for the Office of New Student Orientation. The participatory
action-research design focused on evaluating the goals and services of the
program in efforts to implement data-driven changes for quality
improvement of the program.

Completed the New Student Orientation Service Unit Self-Study and
represented the department during the external review process in April,
2004.

Created a locally developed instrument to measure student satisfaction of
the orientation program.

Research interests include:
- Classroom Assessment
- Mentoring
- Impact of Mentoring on Mentors
- Student Motivation
- Self-Authorship
- Appreciative Inquiry

## Professional Experience

### Organizational Leadership

Provided leadership and oversight for the New Student Orientation and First Year Seminar Mentor Program, creating and implementing a strategic plan, program goals, and learning outcomes.

Identified best practices to implement student transition programs and served as a resource for the campus in such matters.

Represented IUPUI in campus, state, and national conversations on students in transition.

### Management and Supervision

Supervised the Director and Assistant Director for Orientation.

Oversaw the recruitment, training, and supervision of more than 80 students to serve as orientation leaders, office assistants, and student mentors for more than 100 courses of first-year seminars.

Oversaw the Office of Student Transitions and Mentor Initiatives.

Managed two orientation budget accounts totaling over one million dollars.

### Teaching Experience

Served as Course Coordinator, curriculum designer, instructor, and coordinator for assessment in five mentor education courses. Approximately 300 peer mentors each semester were required to enroll in one of the sequential mentor education courses.

Instructed the U212 Leadership in Education course in fall 2003. Focused on introducing leadership theories, creating awareness of personal leadership style, and using application to explore how leadership impacted the educational setting.

Co-Instructed the C750 Learning and Teaching in the College Classroom in summer 2003. Focused on the study of best practices in teaching, such as collaborative and active learning, student motivation, classroom management, and classroom assessment.

Designed and implemented a three-week training program for staff development of new student orientation leaders and learning community mentors. This program was designed to develop understanding of the learning objectives of the program as they related to student learning. This was accomplished by building teamwork and leadership skills, and developing small group facilitation skills, active learning exercises, campus technology, campus information, and techniques for reducing new student anxieties and fears about beginning college.

Founded the Mentor Symposium, now in its 14th year, focusing on professional development and techniques for undergraduate peer mentors.

**Counseling and Development**

Provided academic, personal, and career counseling to enrolled students assisting with curriculum choices, graduation requirements, transfer information, and semester scheduling.

Planned and led student support groups, seminars, and small group classes on financial planning for college, career development, and self-exploration for non-traditional students at an off-campus branch location.

**University Committees**

Council for Retention and Graduation
University College Dean's Cabinet
University College Curriculum Committee
Orientation Advisory Council
Placement Test Advisory Committee
Enrollment Management Council

**Professional History**

| July 2009 – Present | Executive Director of Student Transitions and Mentor Initiatives, IUPUI |
| February 1997 – July 2009 | Director of Orientation Services, IUPUI |
| February 1996 – February 1997 | Assistant Director of Orientation Services and Coordinator of Campus Visit Programs, IUPUI |

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|---|---|
| August 1995 – February 1996 | Assistant to the Director for IUPUI and Ivy Tech Office of Coordinated Programs, IUPUI |
| September 1995 – February 1996 | Academic Counselor, Undergraduate Education Center, IUPUI |
| January 1995 – May 1995 | Academic Counselor/Orientation Graduate Advisor Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI |
| January 1995 – May 1995 | Bridge Program Coordinator Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI |