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# Supporting Minority Students Through Mentoring: Best Practices for Formal Mentoring Programs

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

SUPPORTING MINORITY STUDENTS THROUGH MENTORING:  
BEST PRACTICES FOR FORMAL MENTORING PROGRAMS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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Wishing to be friends is quick work, but friendship is a slow ripening fruit.

Aristotle

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
CHAPTER ONE: MINORITY STUDENTS AND MENTORING	1
Statement of Problem	3
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Philosophical Dimensions of Mentoring	6
Student-Teacher Relationships	8
Critical Race Theory	10
Current Trends in Mentoring	13
Long-term Relationships	13
Natural Mentoring	14
Connections	15
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	16
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	19
Limitations	21
Categories and Trends	22
Role Modeling	22
Time-Commitment	23
Analysis	23
Caring and Friendship	24
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK	27
Findings	27
Future Considerations	28
Design	28
Evaluation	30
APPENDIX A: MENTORING ARTICLES	31
BIBLIOGRAPHY	35
VITA	41

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Qualities of Mentoring Relationships

26

## ABSTRACT

Approaches such as universal education, state and national standards, and reform acts like No Child Left Behind have sought to ensure that all students in America receive the same level of education. However, for all of the varied approaches, education systems are limited by institutionalized racism. An analysis of the education system through the lens of Critical Race Theory highlights the need to look outside of the traditional school setting, while Culturally Relevant Pedagogy gives insights for understanding the best practices in meeting the needs of minority students. This research considers how mentoring provides support and success for minority students by working with students outside of the school structure. Using the philosophies of friendship and caring, combined with the noted success of informal mentoring, formal mentoring relationships can support minority students through natural caring friendships. Research for this work considers qualitative studies that reflect on mentoring success stories in efforts to compile the attributes that align with the philosophies of caring and friendship. Future implementations for formalized mentoring programs are offered that might replicate the successful aspects of natural mentoring and increase the effectiveness of the programs.



## CHAPTER ONE

### MINORITY STUDENTS AND MENTORING

Over the past century, Americans have seen a number of institutionalized educational reforms designed to promote academic equality for all students. However, minority students today continue to struggle to “make the grade.” While achievement gains have been made in the past three decades for African-American and Hispanic students, minority students still score lower than their White peers on national achievement tests (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). Minority students include students whose culture historically falls outside of the dominant, White American culture. Minority groups typically include students of color, students whose families live in poverty, and new immigrants whose parents have relatively low levels of schooling (Sleeter, 2011). Minority students can at times be referred to as “at-risk” students, identifying them as students who are at a greater risk for lower levels of success in school, have higher dropout rates, and deal with issues that can undermine overall childhood development (Moore, 2006). It is imperative that within public education measures are taken to erase these inequalities in student achievement so that every member of society has the opportunity to achieve success.

While there have been advances made in the American education system to support minority students, the scope of influence is limited by an underlying system of institutionalized racism which imposes on students’ educational experiences. Reform

policies such as No Child Left Behind promote efforts to improve academic success for students by placing an emphasis on standardized tests, the results of which indicate a discrepancy in education levels between minority groups and their White peers. This perception of the dominant culture impedes minority students' abilities to have authentic academic experience. Even with changes such as culturally conscious curriculum and structural adjustments within schools, minority students can encounter color-blind educators, which can create alienating experiences. Although the concept of mentoring students is not revolutionary, creating and implementing mentoring programs that specifically consider the needs of minority students could improve student academic success rates.

In this study I examine naturally occurring engagements within meaningful mentoring relationships that can successfully help minority students form an identity that promotes long-term academic engagement. I consider how at-risk, minority students benefit academically from mentoring relationships, while also identifying the qualities of the relationship that are found to be the most supportive. Nel Noddings' philosophy of Care and Aristotle's view on friendship provide the framework of qualities that support the mentees' construction of a productive relationship. This work considers the application of a mentoring structure from the perspective of student-teacher relationships, as well as the implications of mentoring through the lens of Critical Race Theory, to establish a foundation that supports the success of minority students who participate in mentoring relationships.

### Statement of Problem

The American education system is committed to teaching all students and providing equal support for the individual growth of every child. Historically speaking, however, the attempt to meet the needs of all students has been carried out through the lens of the dominant culture. In the pivotal 1954 Supreme Court case, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the courts declared separate was not equal and mandated the desegregation of all public schools. This ruling came during a time in America when racism was overt and carried out through such actions as the Jim Crow laws. The Court's decision to integrate public schools reflected an implicit belief that segregation was detrimental to minority students, but not to White students (Prendergast, 2002). The groundwork for the structures to guarantee equality in the American education system stems from this case and reflects the country's dominant culture. Even with the Court's intention to neutralize overt racism, our schools operate within a system that perpetuates the assumed dominance of White culture.

In addition to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, it is important to consider other Supreme Court cases that affected the racial landscape of America. In the decades following Brown, the Civil Rights movement took a stronger role in the fight against racial discrimination. *Washington vs. Davis* and *Regent vs. Bakke* - Supreme Court cases looking at racial bias in police entrance exams and the need for affirmative action, respectively - legally addressed the racial underpinnings that members of the minority faced within the American culture (Prendergast, 2002). The effect of these cases led to educational practices that attempted to maintain existing standards without seeking to

integrate the underlying values of non-dominant cultures. As a result, teachers today are encouraged to teach from a color-blind point of view in order to ensure equitable practices. While this may help the teacher feel that he/she is reaching all of his/her students equally, this approach denies value to the rich cultural experiences that the students bring to class.

Understanding the systematic approach to deny race within schools, combined with the historical trajectory of racism, provides insight into its impact on minority students' education. Pollock (2004) states that present racism is vastly different than the Jim Crow era of racism when discrimination was outright and overtly witnessed in society and schools. Minority students today are more likely to encounter color-blindness, or denial of race, from teachers and administrators who are members of the dominant culture. Color-blindness, combined with the statistic that 84% of teachers in America are white, compounds the potential for a minority student to miss out on an authentic school experience, one that fully recognizes and honors his/her cultural background (Frankenberg, 2009). Furthermore, color-blind actions may mask underlying racist tones and perpetuate inequities in schools. Race inherently impacts student experiences because racial identities are contextually assigned in every new scenario through the act of "race making." Race making means that students are continuously learning to navigate racial boundaries in schools while simultaneously being included and excluded from individual and racial categories (Lewis, 2003). The presence of race makes it necessary to create a support system for minority students that bridges the divide

of racial boundaries and creates authentic experiences that are equal to those of the dominant culture.

Mentoring relationships support minority students by modeling and guiding them through potential roadblocks during their education. Mentoring has appeared in many forms and structures over the past three decades, from highly formal approaches with specific guidelines and goals, to those that occur naturally and are informal. Furthermore, some formal mentoring programs focus solely on academics, while others consider all aspects of the student and support their social and emotional needs. In this work I answer the research question “What essential qualities need to be considered when creating a formal mentoring program that effectively supports minority students’ success?” Additionally, I seek to determine whether, and to what extent, minority students can benefit academically from same race mentoring relationships. Analysis of such criteria can help mentoring organizations advocate for the most successful relationships to support minority students.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review reflects on Aristotle's philosophy of friendship and how such a relationship can serve as a model for a successful mentoring program. It also considers Nel Noddings' philosophy of care in education and the qualities that transfer into a mentoring relationship. The review also looks at current trends in mentoring programs and how they are trying to support minority students' successes within the current system. Additionally, literature on Critical Race Theory is used to consider the gap that still exists for minority students' successes in traditional classrooms. It concludes by reviewing what educators have learned about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and the aspects that could transfer to mentoring programs.

#### **Philosophical Dimensions of Mentoring**

Mentoring can be traced back through centuries of valuable relationships such as Aristotle's writings on friendship. Aristotle's definition of friendship from book VII of the "*Nicomachean Ethics*" helps make the connection to the most meaningful form of mentorship. Aristotle shares that there are three levels of friendship based on utility, pleasure, and goodness, with the greatest level of friendship being goodness. Aristotle explains that all people benefit from friendship, young or old, rich or poor, and that no one can live without friendship. Friendship, in its truest form, is virtuous because it is built on the virtues of nobility and justice (*The Nichomachean Ethics*, 1893).

When considering friendship and mentoring, a mentoring relationship that is short lived may be likened to a friendship that rests in utility: one that exists between two people in shared situations but beyond those specific situations, the friendship (relationship) fades. Mentoring relationships that are based on surface qualities such as the other's wit are friendships based on pleasure and also fade as those qualities diminish. The final and most valued friendship is based on goodness and is rooted in each other's admiration of a life focused on goodness. It is here that the purest definition of mentor is drawn as two individuals are connected, initially through a shared situation, to form a relationship based on the desire of justice and goodness.

Friendship founded in goodness is most often found, according to Aristotle, between two equals, as they possess similar backgrounds and the appreciation for goodness is relative to shared experiences (*The Nichomachean Ethics*, 1893). However, it is possible that the same type of friendship can be found in "unequal" relationships such as a father and son or commanding officer and soldier, as the value of these friendships is increased through conversation and reflection. Friendship based on goodness mirrors insight and guidance is authentically formed based on shared truths. In this sense, a mentor acts from a guiding role, as a father to a son, which allows the mentee to gain understanding through critical reflection. Often, a challenge that exists in mentoring relationships is when the mentor struggles to connect to the mentee's background and life experiences (Liang & West, 2007). In order for the connection between mentor and mentee to feel the most authentic, it would mirror the most virtuous of friendships, creating a lasting and mutually beneficial relationship.

### **Student-Teacher Relationships**

Nel Noddings' philosophy of care in education draws on the feminine qualities of education. Noddings describes caring as educators' beliefs that they will meet their students' needs and help each student be successful during their time together as teacher and student (Noddings, 2007). She believes that the teacher replaces her own needs and desires with the needs and desires of another. Caring recognizes that the teacher has already invested into the student prior to the relationship and will give of him or herself in order to help the student reach his/her goals. "When I care, I really hear, see, or feel what the other tries to convey. I want to respond in a way that furthers the other's purpose of project ... I am seized by the needs of another..." (Noddings, 1992). The teacher begins the relationship from a place of ethical care, where a sense of obligation to the students' needs and success merges with the willingness to do what it takes to help a student be successful (Nodding, 1984).

The initial teacher-student relationship is built on ethical care but can grow into a more natural relationship as the year progresses. In the classroom, care becomes evident through differentiated curriculum, unique learning experiences matched to specific students' learning styles, and teachers seeking to understand students' interests as a motivator. Care can be witnessed when educators activate personal intuition as well as trust in their students' abilities to be a part of the learning process (Noddings, 2007.) The connectedness and bond can blossom into a natural caring relationship and in moments of disillusionment, the teacher simply refers back to the ethical sense of caring with which he/she began.



The role the teacher plays in a student's life has the potential to be highly influential, whether positive or negative. Without intentional reflection, teachers from dominant groups could create an inauthentic experience for minority students. Noddings addresses this tendency when she discusses the humanist approach sometimes taken in multicultural education. It is possible that when emphasizing qualities held in high regard in the care model - modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation - educators can reach for a "higher" set of values, a set that transcends ethnicities. This practice is well intended, however it can fail to honor how a culture may also recognize or define values such as civility, kindness, and honesty differently from the dominant culture. The consequences of such denial or misrecognition in school can lead to a student's inauthentic experience when the contributions from his/her group are not represented (Noddings, 2012).

While Aristotle and Noddings' philosophies support one another in many ways, such as using meaningful relationships to support student success, a very basic difference exists and is important to note. Whereas Noddings does not feel caring between teacher-student can truly be reciprocal, Aristotle feels that reciprocity is actually an intended outcome for friendship. More current work in educational philosophy acknowledges that the teacher-student relationship is unable to transition into a level of friendship that Aristotle calls for. The structure of the formal classroom is such that the hierarchy of the teacher-student relationship and the requirements for the teacher to be impartial "conflicts with the demands of friendship" (Shuffelton, 2011). Although teacher-student relationships cannot obtain the reciprocal friendship model that Aristotle promotes, a

need exists for relationships that support the student outside of the limitation of education.

Using both philosophies to inform the success of a formal mentoring relationship, it is evident that aspects such as belief in student success prior to any relationship, as well as friendship, are highly important to both student and teacher. In the formal sense, a mentor can be seen as the teacher and reflects the same beliefs as Noddings has shared. However, if one considers the value in the friendship role that Aristotle promotes, it would be of importance to have the “teacher” step outside of the formal role and into one that can become reciprocal, implying the true understanding that the relationship can support a friendship.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Within the public education system, educators are a part of a system larger than their own belief and value systems, and face the history of racial policies and curricula. While educational philosophies such as Noddings’ belief in care inform teachers’ approach to supporting individual student needs and success, the education system is still a part of a larger, racially complex history. Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a lens to review policies and laws for unequal race relations. Critical Race theorists seek to expose these systematic customs maintained in society. It is these customs and practices that can threaten the progress of minority students in the American education system (Sleeter, 2011). CRT identifies the customary racism occurring in the United States as stemming from historical actions and policies such as *Brown vs. Board of Education* and school integration. CRT proponents maintain that racism cannot end within the current system

because the system itself provides an excuse for racism (Pollock, 2004; Bonvilla-Silva 2006).

While CRT looks at racial inequalities, it is important to highlight the scholarship of Critical Social Theory's (CST), as it is related to education and the intentional teaching of critical engagement and questioning techniques. CST is rooted in critical theory and explores the valuable need for critical examination in the formation of knowledge (Leonardo, 2009). This practice teaches students how to be critical of the pedagogical doctrine encountered in school and how to reconstruct knowledge in their own interests. Critical Social Theory's argument fluctuates with society's actions, and encompasses the process of emancipation through critical engagement. The awareness and application of CST allows students to free themselves from a racist system by teaching students how to question their interactions and experiences within society (Leonardo, 2009). CST can illuminate racial inequalities in education through the use of three approaches: the deficiency-oriented approach, the structural approach, and the emancipatory approach (Sleeter, 2011).

The deficiency-oriented approach to remedy institutionalized racism is found in "compensatory education," which is the belief that education is able "catch up" lower performing students to higher achieving students. Compensatory education is often viewed through the lens of the "achievement gap." The structural approach involves changes made within "structural education" and considers the structure in which students are educated and the historical inequalities present in traditional education policy and practices. Attempts to change structures include instituting small learning communities,

academies within large schools, de-tracking policies, and magnet and charter schools (Sleeter, 2011). Even though these approaches promote success for some students as they address structural inequalities, they do not address the disparities that remain in education or provide a solution for students who are unsuccessful within these models.

The third approach, emancipatory education, models how structural inequalities found within schools and societal measures of success by the dominant culture directly affect minority students and their learning. This approach encourages students to value their identities while navigating within the structure of a system that continuously fails them (Sleeter, 2011). The emancipatory approach is used in education to explore and analyze the existence of unequal power relationships in school and society. The perspective of emancipatory education provides a lens to view how the institutionalization of schools promotes segregation based on race and class while recognizing that most curricula and assessments are created by, and based in, the dominant culture's knowledge and perspective. This approach confronts structural disparities by using the premise that those who experience the disparities fully understand the problems facing the marginalized group. They are then qualified to inform practices based on that awareness. This awareness can create an informed shift away from the dominant society's structures through a critical investigation of the system. That said, in order to change the inequalities in educational outcomes, a different approach to measure student success must be considered (Sleeter, 2011).

It is here that mentoring matches the needs of emancipatory education as the relationship falls outside of the education system and allows the student to practice

necessary skills needed to be academically successful. When mentoring reaches the level that it holds the qualities of friendship based on goodness and natural caring, the mentor can model behaviors and responses to difficult situations the mentee encounters. These behaviors support students critically engaging with their education and promote academic success.

### **Current Trends in Mentoring**

It is important to look at research in the field of mentoring to determine what aspects and conditions of mentoring relationships have proven to be most successful. The following aspects of a mentoring relationship are valuable to consider when creating a meaningful and enduring mentoring relationship: long-term relationships, youth centered and natural mentoring, and community centered relationships.

#### **Long-term Relationships**

A successful mentoring relationship serves as a sounding board for the mentee, as well as providing a model of effective communication skills that assist the youth to understand, express, and regulate emotions. According to Jean Rhodes, et al. a mentoring relationship can offer youth genuine care and support, which can challenge negative views the students may hold of themselves. Over time, mentors can demonstrate how to construct and maintain positive relationships with others (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). Certain criteria, such as the duration of time, the sense of strong emotional investment, and higher authenticity marked by engagement and gained sense of empowerment, support successful relationships in mentoring (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Spencer, 2006). D.L. Dubois' qualitative research study on mentoring indicates

that possible benefits of the relationship included significantly higher performance in education and work, mental health, problem behavior and health (DuBois, 2008). DuBois also found that in order for a mentoring relationship to be the most successful it would ideally last for over a year and should engage in a youth-centered style that includes flexibility and focus on the youth's interest. Given that students enter school from a variety of backgrounds, and are influenced by social experiences that impact their educational development and achievement levels, they respond to life events in varied ways depending on the skills they have had a chance to practice (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Therefore, the duration of a mentoring relationship is two-fold: it allows the partnership to experience shared bonding experiences, as well as model and practice responses to various situations the mentee encounters.

#### Natural Mentoring

According to Struchen and Porta (1997), if the mentor is too far removed from the mentee's life experience, the challenge of creating an impactful relationship is greater than if the mentor occurred naturally in the mentee's life. Their work indicates that the social distance plays a large role in the mentee's mindset especially when it comes to the longevity of the relationship. If the mentor is from a shared background and develops more of an informal, natural relationship, it is more likely they will stay in the mentee's life for a longer period of time (Struchen & Porta, 1997). These findings align with the research which echoes that students with natural mentors in their life are more likely to have stronger beliefs in the importance of school for future success (Hurd, Sánchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012).

While researching the most current trends in mentoring minority students, a noticeable occurrence in the approach of successful mentoring continued to appear. Qualitatively speaking, many at-risk African-American and Hispanic students who beat the statistical student achievement odds and who were interviewed in college seem to share similar stories (Warde, 2008, Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, & Dana, 2009). The journey of how they arrived in college and who supported their successes is largely based on a familial, sometimes stated as kinship, relationship formed during their junior high and high school years. These bonds commonly occurred with adults who shared the students' backgrounds, were typically from the same neighborhoods, and knew the conditions the students were facing from first-hand experience (Schilling, 2008; Robinson-English, 2006). Relationships with natural mentors promote a more positive, long-term educational attainment among participants through an increased private rearguard (the outlook on their racial identity), as well as increased awareness of the importance of doing well in school (Hurd, Sánchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012). While these experiences are difficult to research during the actual experience (it usually takes the student finishing high school and progressing to college to qualify for such studies), the qualities and attributes of the "natural mentor" can provide formalized mentoring program guidance in creating experiences that replicate the same success rate.

### Connections

Research on teacher-student relationships can inform mentors on how teachers can be the most successful in their practice given the diversity and multiculturalism present in education. A study of 18 culturally diverse, high-achieving students in an

urban high school revealed a number of factors that improved the students' abilities to be resilient amid poverty, family crises, and adverse environments (Herbert, 1999). Among these factors were supportive adults at home, school, and in the community; extracurricular after-school, Saturday and summer enrichment programs; challenging educational experiences; a network of achieving peers; and a strong belief in and sense of self (Bryan, 2005). There is a strong need for teachers to create environments that are based on meaningful learning experiences to help their students stay enthusiastically engaged with their work (Nieto, 2009). Nieto advocates that schools could benefit from working with outside partnerships and it is realistic to see that a community-based mentoring program as an investment in their students. Such a partnership would foster communication and support for students through a comprehensive approach that involves their community and natural networks.

### **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) scholarship addresses cross-cultural misunderstandings that can impact student learning, considers the necessary steps needed to recognize individual student backgrounds, and identifies ways to be the most successful in the classroom experience. This approach has the potential to provide individualized experiences for students, as they feel validated and recognized within the school even though no amount of pedagogical shifts can transcend the institution and its history. Schools, and in particular teachers, are stuck in the framework of the racism that exists within the institution and are limited in the authentic experiences they can provide students from non-dominant groups. CRP seeks to create a supportive curriculum that



honors and recognizes all students, but can be limited by the institution itself. Many factors directly affect the role teachers can play in a student's life, as the teachers are still a part of the larger system that has the residue of policy and reform (Cuban, 2011).

Additional factors that directly affect students' lives include unfair bureaucratic policies and practices, lack of resources, as well as poverty and racism. Issues such as inequitable funding and resources often make it very difficult to focus on individuality and authentic experiences when value added to test scores and student growth drive teacher focus.

Furthermore, the success of CRP in classrooms depends on the teachers' awareness and true understanding of the level of color-blindness they bring into their teaching. Teachers from the dominant culture may not recognize the difference between sympathy and empathy in their teaching practices. Bonilla-Silva confronts this level of "nonracist" beliefs directly when he addresses that color-blind racism exists as the dominant racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). He identifies that color-blind racism ignores elements of cultures that are not already embedded in the dominant culture. Without critically engaging with these aspects of racism that exist within education, a teacher from the dominant culture continues the cycle of racism through color-blind behaviors.

Historically and at present, it is the silence on race that compounds color-blind practices within schools (Rury, 1999). Research in the area of color-blindness, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), and caring within student-teacher relationships demonstrates the consequences of inauthentic experiences on a student's education and indicates the need for students to recognize their heritage and identities as they progress through

school (Gonzalez & De Jesus, 2007). Authentic experiences for minority students translate beyond what Gonzalez & De Jesus describe as soft caring, typically seen in white feminists who take pity on students given difficult circumstances, and opportunities are created for minority students to reflect on their own communities.

The foundation to a successful educational experience that a mentor can provide in a student's life brings together the previously noted research on student-teacher relationships and CRP. The literature I have reviewed here strongly suggests that in order for a student from a non-dominant group to feel authentically recognized as an individual, the student must learn critical skills outside of the system that they are educated. Practices such as care and CRP can inform the process of creating of a positive mentoring experience, yet a student from a non-dominant group cannot fully develop as a contributing member of society simply from their schooling experience. A successful mentoring partnership should teach students how to critically reflect on their experiences and fully engage successfully in their education. Using the practices identified in research on teacher caring and CRP, along with the concept of authentic experience, my research will identify ways in which a mentoring relationship with students from non-dominant groups can be the most successful.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

For this work, the research focused on programs that targeted minority students, specifically looking at work with African-Americans and Hispanic students. At-risk students in both demographics tend to historically underperform on achievement tests, have higher high school dropout rates, and struggle with higher education and career aspirations. Working with a mentoring project can provide students with a caring adult that is invested in their success and future aspirations. Additionally, it was important to find studies that included interviews and the perspectives of both mentor and mentee, and therefore qualitative work was valuable. Furthermore, this work sought to find articles on same-race mentoring to identify trends within the larger work of mentoring minority students.

This study took into account research on mentoring since 1980, which is considered to be the onset of large, national mentoring organizations such as Big Brother, Big Sister (BBBS). This boundary of time reflects a period in United States history when the popularity of mentoring infused into mainstream after-school and educational programs. According to the Big Brother, Big Sister agency, mentoring is believed to focus less on specific problems after they occur, and more on meeting youths' most basic developmental needs (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995). To find pertinent and appropriate articles, the following databases were used:

Child Development and Adolescence Studies, Education Research Complete, ERIC (Education Research Information Center), Professional Development Collection, PsychInfo and JSTOR. All databases have access to articles archived from 1980 to the present. Given the potential support a mentor provides for a minority student, target keywords in research included the following variations:

1. Mentoring and “African-American students”
2. Mentoring and “African-American youth”
3. Mentoring and “African-American” and “young adults”
4. “Same race” and mentoring and “high school”
5. “Same race” and mentoring and youth
6. “Same race” and mentoring and “young adults”
7. “Same race” and mentoring and students
8. “Same race” and mentoring and transitions

As anticipated, research and work with such specific aspects and keywords of mentoring were limited and adjustments were necessary to locate articles. An important find during initial research indicated that natural mentoring and informal mentoring articles also aligned to the research. When seeking articles on same-race mentoring, it was evident that such relationships were more common among shared backgrounds and were recognized as naturally occurring. These terms were therefore added to the key words and the following key terms created an exhaustive base of literature: mentoring, minority, natural mentoring, informal mentoring, African-American, Hispanic and role model.

Furthermore, the search for articles on mentoring minorities among high school students had to be removed and articles on mentoring in colleges were included.

Although this allows for a larger span in ages, the aspects and qualities of the mentoring relationships could be considered. The following information was used to categorize and analyze trends from the articles:

1. Record the duration of mentoring program
2. Record impact statements- mentor or mentee- to determine if they reflect Aristotelian, Noddings or CST beliefs
3. Describe the pairing of the mentor and mentee
4. Record evidence of reciprocal relationship
5. Record any reflection on race, racism or inequalities
6. Record evidence of critical awareness, reflection, and changes on issues in mentee's life

### **Limitations**

Even with the key terms and specific databases used, not all articles aligned to the research needed. Articles that did not support this research included quantitative studies that did not provide the mentor or mentee perspective. Also, studies that researched multiple mentoring projects to analyze specific research questions and did not consider one program at a time were unable to provide the necessary mentor/mentee examples and reflection needed to determine caring and friendship qualities. Furthermore, a majority of the articles did not identify if the partnerships were the same race or ethnicities. A final issue that I ran into with the selection articles was the literature review or “how to”

manual on creating a successful mentoring program. While these provided grounded theories and suggestions, the program component was missing from the work. These factors limited the work available to dig into and determine if programs encompass the aspects and qualities of a mentoring project that supports minority students. The final result yielded eleven articles that displayed characteristics of Aristotelian, Noddings, or both in the qualitative reflections of the mentoring programs.

### **Categories and Trends**

The research of articles provided many qualitative studies that, upon review, shared a couple of specific trends and qualities. Multiple studies considered the aspect of role models acting as mentors, as well as the importance of the time commitment. These two categories support the understanding of Noddings' work, as well Aristotle's views of friendship. However, it is valuable to question these categories within the context of mentoring relationships.

### **Role Modeling**

The theme of role modeling within mentoring relationships appeared often throughout the literature and it became apparent that the distinction, if any, needed to be addressed between a role model and mentor. If the mentor is in place to serve as a "role model" then does that align to Noddings' belief of care? In this relationship, does one need to provide examples of how to interact within schools and society? Is this devaluing if the student and mentor are not from the same background? It feels presumptuous that the mentor could know what is best for the student, especially if the mentor is from the dominant culture. Also, going back to the definition of mentoring, support does not mean

just modeling. The question of how the term mentor is used becomes an issue when examining such programs.

Wendy Struchen and Mary Porta's work on how role modeling compared to mentoring illustrates that a continuum exists when building a relationship with youth (Struchen, W. & Porta, M. 1997). Often formal programs set up a one-to-one match between an adult and youth but this does not ensure that a mentoring relationship will occur. The adult serves as a role model first and after time together the bond may grow, as the student trusts the adult's investment into their well being. This follows the philosophy of care, starting as ethical and growing into a more natural relationship.

#### **Time-Commitment**

While research states that time-commitment is important to mentoring relationships, when the aspects of care and friendship are applied, the impact of time is illuminated. In the case of formal mentoring relationships especially, the presence of the mentor in the mentee's life over an extended amount of time in many cases allowed the relationship to feel more natural and like a friendship (Gaytan, 2004). Lengthening the amount of time takes the relationship out of the initial intentions (academic success, higher self-efficacy) and allows a bond to form that is grounded in shared experiences, fostering long-term friendship.

#### **Analysis**

While the research conducted found articles highlighting many aspects of mentoring relationships that worked for specific programs, a very critical trait appeared that aligned to the work of creating impactful relationships for minority students: natural

mentors. The aspect of natural mentors aligns to Aristotle's belief of reciprocal friendship. The investment of time into the mentee's life occurs naturally and resembles the initial stages of parent and child, unequal social ground but rooted in goodness. The relationship is trusted by the mentee given the shared background and is fostered by time and commitment – both highly regarded aspects of successful mentoring. The mentor serves as a role model in the beginning, but as the relationship continues, both qualities indicate the mentee's return investment into the relationship.

Furthermore, natural mentoring relationships are more likely to recognize and understand the challenges and obstacles the mentee faces in their everyday experience. Zimmerman, et al. found that 54% of the mentees had natural mentors related to them. This indicates a possible connection between comfort level and responsiveness to the support (Hurd, Sánchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012).

### **Caring and Friendship**

The body of research used in this study indicates the importance of ethical caring to transition a formalized mentoring relationship into a place of natural caring. The importance is noted in review of such studies as Diane Yendol-Hoppey, Jennifer Jacobs and Nancy Fitchman Dana's work with urban mentoring relationships (Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs & Dana, 2009). The university understood the importance of providing students with mentors and established a mentoring program for all minority students. While the mentor at the beginning of the relationship acted from an ethical point of view, the success of the program came once the student started to participate in the relationship. Over time, ethical caring relationships transitioned into natural caring relationships, as



seen in stories such as the student recognizing the mentor's investment into his/her success (Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs & Dana, 2009). One mentee expressed this understanding when sharing the story of being invited over to her mentor's house. She began to see her mentor as someone from the same background and as a successful professional. The mentor entered the relationship initially as a role model and, over the course of time; the natural, caring relationship became a friendship.

This concept of natural caring transitioning into the highest form of friendship is evident in the reciprocal nature of the relationship. The mentors' ability to connect and display a natural sense of caring, acting from a place of investment and commitment, allows the mentee to develop a sense of goodness from within the relationship. In the article "An examination of resilience processes in context: The case of Tasha," the author collects a woman's perception of her mentor and the impact it made in her life (Schilling, 2008). Tasha's relationship with Jerry, the university coordinator, started when she was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and he remained in her life for the next 7 years. Friendship is demonstrated when the project director states that Tasha stayed committed to the project based on her relationship to Jerry- "[Tasha stays in the program because] she has a strong connection with Jerry. I don't think she feels the need for it, but she likes that part for sure..." Jerry started with the project to provide mentors to students in need and after 7 years was still involved in Tasha's life. The bonds of friendship based in reciprocal goodness supported this relationship.

While the research on specific qualities of mentoring minority students was limited given the parameters of the project, the results provide useful insight on how to

support minority students' success through mentoring. Minority students who overcame obstacles in school, graduated from high school, or attended college often attributed this success to a person who was invested in their life and future. When many of the students reflected on moments when they overcame hurdles, the people who supported them often occurred organically in their lives and were from the same background as the student. It was also common for these adults, or mentors, to be of familial relationship to the student and invested in the student's success from a naturally caring intention.

Table 1. Qualities of Mentoring Relationships

	<b>Initial Formal Mentoring Relationship</b>	<b>Informal Mentoring Relationship</b>	<b>Optimal Mentoring Relationship</b>
<b>Origination</b>	Intentional	Organic	Intentional
<b>Motivators</b>	Extrinsic	Intrinsic	Intrinsic
<b>Friendship</b>	Based on Pleasure	Based on Goodness	Based on Goodness
<b>Caring</b>	Ethical Caring	Natural Caring	Natural Caring

Table 1 illustrates the trends and themes that surfaced after applying the considerations of caring and friendship and length of time to the qualitative articles used in this study. The optimal mentoring relationship is based on natural caring relationships and friendship founded in goodness. These qualities are present in various capacities throughout formal and informal mentoring relationships and can be fully actualized in future formal mentoring programs with intentional consideration.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Findings

Formal mentoring projects are intentional in design and are created to meet specific goals aligned to program goals. A person who signs up to be a mentor in a formal program acts from a place of ethical care and can be motivated by various reasons. Most likely, the mentor will not know the mentee until they are matched and it is this unfamiliarity that makes the relationship reflect a friendship based in utility. Friendships based in utility inhibit quality mentoring.

Informal mentoring relationships occur organically between a mentor and mentee and are often rooted in a familial or kin-like relationship. Given the established relationship of the two participants, informal mentoring most likely possesses qualities of Noddings' natural caring. Additionally, the familial or kin-like relationships are most likely reciprocal in nature and therefore reflect the highest form of friendship: one based in goodness. This relationship is the most successful form of mentoring for minority students and creates a model for the optimal form of formal mentoring.

Unfortunately, Noddings believes that natural caring cannot be intentionally created. By definition, this causes formal mentoring programs to lack that quality which is most successful in informal programs. Programs that focus strictly on Noddings' work cannot replicate informal mentoring successes. However, Aristotle's philosophy on friendships provides that relationships can transition with time and commitment.

Therefore, formal mentoring programs that start with friendships based on utility and ethical caring can be intentionally modified to include factors that will be likely to result in reciprocal relationships based on goodness, such as time, commitment, and shared experiences.

Optimal formal mentoring programs must be intentionally planned to increase the likelihood of developing reciprocal relationships and therefore the likelihood of minority student success. Qualities such as shared cultures, similar backgrounds and being of the same race should be considered when match mentors with a mentee. Intentional work in the planning stage should also consider if a mentor is ready to commit to consistent meeting times, over an extended period of time, while engaging in shared activities and experiences. This pre-loading will support the program's success by "stacking the deck" in the beginning to ensure the goals of the program are met. Additionally, trainings should occur at the beginning of new programs or when new partnerships are created that provide examples and research with mentors that explain what each quality looks like and how they can establish those aspects in their relationship.

### **Future Considerations**

Future projects are needed to capture the success of the intentional approach within formal mentoring relationships.

### **Design**

This work provided a deeper look at how mentoring can support minority students but future work is still needed to answer the following questions, 'How do formal mentoring programs that mirror the meaningful impacts of natural, informal mentoring

relationships support minority student success?’ and ‘What aspects of an informal, naturally occurring mentoring relationship successfully transfer into a formal relationship?’ While this study indicated the most successful mentoring relationship is one that occurs organically and naturally, future work could consider “informal mentoring” compared to most mentoring projects that are intentionally created and formally designed. Given that the structure inherently differs by design, the work then becomes how to create the informal structure for a formal program. Formal mentoring projects can harness this work to intentionally guide the creation of future mentoring relationships.

Important to consider is the challenge with designing a mentoring program that utilizes the best practices of naturally occurring mentoring relationships is the constraints of the program. Formal mentoring programs often have specified goals that are dictated by external factors, such as a need in the community, or the mission of a funder. Additional external constraints may also include the location of the program, structured or unstructured time limitations, the mentor’s experience and expectations and/or if the mentors were self-selecting or not. These are common underlying factors that the program needs to consider at the onset of the project as each of these issues could impede the ideal design of the mentoring program.

While this approach incorporates intentional design, the informal collection of data creates a need for further work. Formal mentoring projects that aim to meet the needs of minority students should reference this work to include aspects of informal, naturally occurring mentoring relationships, as well as seek to create reciprocal

friendships. Understanding that the American education system cannot meet the needs of minority students within the context it has historically operated, formal mentoring programs can start to bridge the achievement gap in minority student success. Furthermore, intentionally pairing mentors with students that have shared backgrounds can begin to foster a deeper mentoring relationship.

### Evaluation

Intentional evaluation can help determine the success in incorporating aspects of informal, natural mentoring to formal mentoring programs. Qualitative survey questions administered on a regular basis throughout the program could help determine the success of intentionally designed formal mentoring programs as well as help the program respond to the needs of each participant. It is important that the evaluation captures beliefs and feelings toward the mentoring partnership from both members of the relationship to determine the reciprocal nature and if true friendship exists. Furthermore intentional programs should monitor student grades, attendance, graduation rates, and post high school plans. It is here that quantitative data can be obtained for the specific program to notice trends over time.

This future work will determine the best approaches to transferring informal mentoring successes into formal mentoring programs.

APPENDIX A  
MENTORING ARTICLES

Author	Philosophies demonstrated within articles	Indicators of philosophies
(Brown, E. 2010).	Aristotelian	GO-GIRL had an impact on the mentors: Mentors noted the following outcomes a) Their own growth, competence, and developing confidence as mentors, b) emergent decisions about their own career choices and their interest in and relative comfort with the fields of science and math, c) their contributions as mentors to the lives of the middle-school girls, d) the enhanced awareness and understanding of sociocultural, economic and other contextual factors that shape the lives of their mentees, and e) their increased understanding of themselves as young woman
(Schilling, T. A. 2008).	Aristotelian	Tasha stayed committed to the project based on her relationship to Jerry- "(Tasha stays in the program because) she has a strong connection with Jerry. I don't think she feels the need for it, but she likes that part for sure..." (Program leader- Devin)
(Waller, K. S., Houchins, D. E., & Nomvete, P. T. 2010).	Noddings	Very formal suggestions within the article indicated the care model to support the students. Identified students in need of a role model and over time the adult transitioned in to a mentor by providing support and care for the student.
(Warde, B. 2008).	Noddings	One student recalled a high school music teacher, whom he is still in touch with, that helped him prepare for his audition which led him to a full scholarship, the student states "He helped me prepare, he paid for all of these music theory and analysis books and made me study... Because of his help I was able to do well on my audition." The adult acted from a place of caring.
(Robinson-English, T. 2006).	Noddings	"To give these boys a chance we have to catch them earlier and earlier if we don't want to lose them forever." This represents Ethical care and obligation.



Author	Philosophies demonstrated within articles	Indicators of philosophies
(De La Cruz, Y. 2008).	Noddings	Family members were the first and most influential mentors in the participants' lives. These were most commonly their parents and although the family members were not able to provide academic support, the emotional support was effective enough to become a driving force help participants get to the next level of education. This anecdote recognizes a natural, informal mentor combined with ethical and natural caring from the family member.
(Sánchez, B., Esparza, P., & Colón, Y. 2008).	Noddings	Most natural mentors were familial and indicates ethical and natural caring
(Hurd, N. M., Sánchez, B., Zimmerman, M. A., & Caldwell, C. H. 2012).	Aristotelian  Noddings	The familial relationship allows the dynamic of the relationship to be reciprocal given the pre-established relationship. The older adult involved held the role as a role model from a shared background but the investment of time and effort with the mentee was returned by the familial relationship.  Over half of the students (54%) identified the natural mentor as family member (aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins or older siblings), and therefore establishes that the sense of natural caring is more likely because they are involved in an informal way.
(Yendol-Hoppey, D., Jacobs, J., & Dana, N. F. 2009).	Aristotelian  Noddings	After a year with the advisor, the student acknowledged the professional relationship turned into a friendship.  The beginning of the relationship started by ethical care and as the year progressed, it is evident by the mentors' investment of time that it transitioned into natural care.



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