BURRIS, DEBORAH BRILEY, Ph.D. Mentorship in a Small Private University. (2017) Directed by Dr. Leila Villaverde. 280 pp.

Using qualitative exploratory research methodology, I sought to explore the first stage implementation of a university-based initiative aimed at creating an undergraduate culture of mentorship at a small liberal arts institution. Initially formulated in 2014, the initiative was officially underway by the fall of 2016, at which point I commenced this study. I used face-to-face interviews to collect primary data from participating mentors and mentees, supplementing that data with information obtained from document analysis methods and researcher field notes. The following research questions underscored the study:

1. How do faculty and students currently understand the mentor/mentee relationship and its purpose?

2. How does the culture of mentorship initiative impact the lives of traditional undergraduate students at Private University?

3. How are mentors affected by the mentor/mentee relationship as implemented in the university's mentorship initiative?

4. Does the mentorship initiative demonstrate the theoretical frameworks of subjectification, self-authorship, and transformational learning? If so, how?

Findings suggest that the mentor/mentee experience had proven meaningful for both parties; that participants invested seriously in the relationship. A chief concern that emerged from the study involved the ways in which students were initiated into a community of this nature; as such, suggesting that a more effective means for

communicating expectations of student mentees—as prospective, first year, or transfer students—should be a high priority in planning next steps. Relative to emergent mentor concerns, findings suggest that more effort should be made to balance faculty roles/obligations with the demands of the mentor role. Ultimately, the value of this study lies in (a) its openness to the experiences of mentors and mentees as they occur in the field for the first time; (b) its concurrent timing with the formal implementation of the initiative so as to capture the initial, dynamic nature of this process; and (c) its potential to support ongoing/future studies of the mentorship initiative. Finally, I suggest that longitudinal studies dedicated to the culture of mentorship initiative would be useful in exploring its developmental aspects (for mentee and mentor) specific to this study's theoretical grounding in the concepts of subjectification, self-authorship, and transformational learning.

MENTORSHIP IN A SMALL PRIVATE UNIVERSITY

by

Deborah Briley Burris

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Approved by

Leila Villaverde
Committee Chair

I dedicate this work to both my mother, Mary Ann Briley-Emmons and my life partner, Timothy Arthur Burris. Mother, you have been a chief source of inspiration for me my entire life—always exploring the edges of human potential and culture—consistently seeking to appreciate the wholeness of life. Timothy, you are the perfect partner for me. I continue to marvel at the ease with which we have learned from each other and the joy I feel when I am with you. My deepest love and gratitude to you both.

APPROVAL PAGE


This dissertation, written by Deborah Briley Burris, has been approved by the

following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North

Carolina at Greensboro.



Committee Chair    Leila Villaverde               

Committee Members    Silvia Bettez                  

Kathy Hytten                  

Chris Poulos                  


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iii

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Finally, I want to express my love and gratitude to my family—my children, Christine, Briley, Mary, T. J., & Andrew, and grandchildren, Zofia, Luna, & Aurora. You are the center of my universe and I treasure all of the ways in which we have grown and learned to appreciate life together.

# PREFACE

## Overview

In order to provide clear parameters and to effectively contextualize this university-based dissertation research project, I offer a Preface in which I present a brief description of the site for this study, including its history and geographical location; current demographic information; significant leadership dynamics, recent past and present; and a discussion of the rationale that has led to the shaping and establishment of a new initiative that we, in the university, are referring to as a "culture of mentorship." Essentially, my intention for undertaking this study is to explore the relationship between faculty mentors and undergraduate mentees, with particular emphasis aimed at the transformative potential of this relationship for both parties. In my experience in multiple roles as researcher, faculty member, and mentorship initiative leader, I have developed intersecting interests and responsibilities that coalesce around my ideal conception of mentorship as an organically humanizing process. In other words, my experiences across these multiple roles have inspired my notion of mentorship as a practice that could conceivably be dedicated to personal development in the same way that it has been conventionally linked to academic and career development in education. On this basis, I—along with key academic leadership, including the Provost, deans of all academic divisions, and department chairs—have agreed to emphasize the significance of individual, human (and academic) development as fundamental to a meaningful and worthwhile mentor/mentee relationship. In turn, as dissertation researcher, I explore

possibilities of discovering examples/testimonies of developmentally transformative

living and learning impacts as experienced by participating mentors and mentees. The

following research questions ground this study:

1.  How do faculty and students currently understand the mentor/mentee

    relationship and its purpose?

2.  How does the culture of mentorship initiative impact the lives of traditional

    undergraduate students at Private University?

3.  How are mentors affected by the mentor/mentee relationship as implemented

    in the university's mentorship initiative?

4.  Does the mentorship initiative demonstrate the theoretical frameworks of

    subjectification, self-authorship, and transformational learning? If so, how?

Finally, based on proper research protocols, I refer to this university as "Private"

throughout the study for purposes of discretion, ensuring anonymity for the institution

and the study participants.

## A Brief History of Private University

The current Private University emerged from the work of an individual who

sought to provide education and social service needs to slaves who had been newly freed

during the mid-1800s in the American south. It was supported by the Board of Home

Missions of the New School Presbyterian Church. Among the several schools created,

one of those schools was sponsored by the Women's Home rural southern region; the

school grew and operated as a high school, issuing its first diplomas in 1913. The high

school evolved into a junior college in 1934, to eventually be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges in 1942. Some years later, and as the result of a sizable bequest, the junior college became a full, 4-year college institution in 1954. Another significant development occurred in 1961, when the United Methodist Church voted to sponsor the college. Sponsorship was financially based, including program assistance or scholarships at that time and did not involve influencing policies, procedures or shaping curriculum (Hutchinson, 2002).

In 1977, the college added an urban campus, located in a large city, to its original design, offering undergraduate classes in Criminal Justice at the new site. Over time, other academic departments, disciplines, and degree programs were added to the college's curricular base, with new course offerings encompassing multiple campus locations. In 1985, the institution incorporated a Master's of Business Administration (MBA) degree program; in 1989, established a Master's in Christian Education degree program; and then in 1993, added a Master's of Health Administration (MHA) degree program. Ultimately, in order to better support and expand the college's graduate programs, the Board of Trustees voted to reorganize in order to establish the institution as a full university in 1996. Private University is now a globally engaged, private, nonprofit, liberal arts university comprised of an undergraduate college, an adult degree completion program, and various professional and graduate programs. The campus that serves as the site of this study only serves the undergraduate population.

**Geographical Setting and Current Student Demographics**

In keeping with the anonymity required by IRB regulations, it is important to state that the demographic figures discussed in this section were derived from a "Fact Book" manual published annually by Private University. Consequently, citation information for these figures must also remain anonymous in order to protect the identity of the institution. Similarly, the geographical setting is described in generic terms so as not to compromise the university's anonymity in the context of this study. From the perspective of an initial overview, Private University has a total enrollment of 1,780 students, engaged in 29 undergraduate majors and seven graduate programs on three campuses. The main campus is located in a relatively rural area, equal-distance from some of North Carolina's largest metropolitan areas. As such, it requires a drive of 30-45 miles in each direction to reach communities with populations ranging from 16,000 to 700,000 people.

As of the 2015-2016 academic year, specific demographic data pertaining to the makeup of the university's student population reveal that a majority of students come from North Carolina (78%). Approximately 14% of students come from other states, and 8% are international students (China, Russia, Greenland, Sweden, Spain, France, England, Chile, Argentina, & Columbia). Sixty-five percent of the student body identify as female and 33% as male. Sixty-nine percent of the student population identified as Caucasian, 26% are African American, and the remaining 5% included Asian/Pacific, Hispanic, American Indian, and bi-racial students (Private University Fact Book, 2015-2016).

While Private University is a small institution, these demographics reflect the broad diversity *in terms of national origins* that exist. In that sense, it provides another window on the experience of mentorship not confined to a broader group. From my experience working with international students, I have observed that these individuals studying outside their native countries seem to demonstrate a greater sense of self awareness and confidence.

**University Leadership in the 21st Century: Laying the Groundwork for a Culture of Mentorship**

**2010: New Leadership and Strategic Planning**

As a campus community, we welcomed our ninth president to Private University in December, 2010. This individual dedicated the first year of his tenure to developing a solid understanding of the university's unique culture and, concurrently, an understanding of the realm of higher education in general. This point is especially significant because prior to his appointment as university president, this individual's career was situated in the business sector, having presided over a regional bank and demonstrating a business acumen reinforced by his background in law. Thus, the choice of this individual as university president spoke to his financial expertise, among other qualities, as it was deemed particularly valuable to the university in terms of reorganizing debt and financing much needed physical plant repairs and renovations. During the late spring of his first year in office (2010-2011), Private University's president organized his cabinet to undertake a strategic planning process in which he sought to enlist the help of consultants

outside the university. This planning process took over a year and a half to conceptualize and construct as a viable mission or initiative worthy of implementation. As a member of the strategic planning committee I was privy to these discussions and planning processes. Ultimately, these efforts resulted in ten organizing goals that encompassed this administration's focus on strategizing a new or renewed institutional identity. One of the ten organizing goals was "delivering a distinctive undergraduate curriculum." As a result, the Provost and academic administrators ultimately identified the culture of mentorship as a key goal and core component of such a distinctive undergraduate curriculum. By instituting this focus, Private University could distinguish a significant aspect of identity as an institution that values whole student development based on a university-wide system of relationships. The remaining nine goals have more to do with the operational challenges of the University at this particular point in time.

**Cannon Trust Grant for Emotional Intelligence Assessments, Student Advising and Coaching**

Prior to the new president's arrival in 2010, the (then) current leadership had already started to implement steps with which to identify characteristics—speaking to future programs or initiatives—that would distinguish or brand this university. For instance, and pre-dating formal plans for implementing a university-wide mentorship initiative, plans were being developed to secure funds from the Cannon Trust. The Cannon Trust is part of the foundation established by Charles A. Cannon, former President and Chairman of the Cannon Mills Textile Corporation. As a philanthropic

foundation, Cannon supports research and initiative in health care, higher education, human services and community. In regard to support for higher education, Cannon is primarily focused on the support of initiatives by private Colleges and Universities throughout the state of North Carolina.

The purpose of this particular proposal was to provide training for first year advisors to develop coaching skills as well as to more effectively utilize a tool for assessing emotional intelligence (EQ). Seeking this grant was an effort to ensure that first year students would be better able to understand and apply the personal behaviors and academic skills associated with completing a college degree. Private University leadership embraced the idea of correlating students' emotional intelligence to academic achievement and a successful undergraduate experience. Several of the chief administrators had research interest in emotional intelligence as did the consultants with whom the proposal was crafted. The assessment was intended to be a tool that serves as a conversational starting point in an effort to build a deeper relationship between the student and the advisor. It was thought that an assessment of emotional intelligence might also provide insight as to non-cognitive challenges that might interrupt a student's persistence. On this point, research supports the notion that a better understanding of the collection of non-cognitive social and emotional impulses natural to a developing adult can positively impact academic and life achievements (Grier, 2004). In other words, by affirming the emotional development of the student as a necessary and valuable component of the undergraduate experience, faculty and staff would be more prepared to

support student success. Ultimately, the Cannon Trust grant proposal outlined the intended use of EQ assessments for students, aiming training at first year advisors in the use of this tool and in the communicative strategy of "academic success coaching."

Private University's plan to incorporate EQ assessments for students links up to a "coaching" orientation in higher education advising, hinting of a mentorship model in which students' emotional development is deemed pivotal to navigating the college experience. In fact, in order to integrate what is known about emotional intelligence into current systems of academic advising, a number of colleges and universities have turned to coaching programs (Bettinger & Baker, 2011). Companies such as InsideTrack and iGoalzCoaching offer coaching services based on the supposition that coaching can positively affect student engagement, learning, persistence and degree completion. A relatively recent independent study conducted by Stanford University professor Eric P. Bettinger and Stanford doctoral student Rachel Baker focused specifically on the success of InsideTrack programming, which has been utilized for more than 250,000 students nationwide at partner schools including the University of Dayton, Chapman University, and Florida State University. The Bettinger study found that for randomly selected student groups—half of which received student coaching—retention and completion rates were greater for those students who were coached for any length of time following enrollment. These results did not change when controlled for age, gender, ACT scores, high school GPA, SAT scores, on or off campus residency, receipt of a merit scholarship, Pell Grant awards, or math and English remediation (Bettinger & Baker, 2011). Given

this and other compelling evidence (Robinson & Gahagan, 2010; Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2007; Tuttle, 2000) demonstrating positive results in using a coaching strategy in student advising, the Cannon Trust grant to fully train and implement a program of this nature was sought and awarded to Private University in the fall of 2011.

Implementation of the grant began in 2011 with a two-day retreat designed to develop first year advisors' coaching skills. The following year these same advisors were given training in the utilization of EQi, an online assessment of emotional intelligence with a rather extensive student report and coach report with suggestions for development. The utilization of this assessment for emotional intelligence was begun in the fall of 2012 with the freshman class. From 2011-2014, the same consultant and training group worked with this cadre of first-year advisors by providing ongoing training as the assessment tool was becoming more familiar as it was being utilized in coaching sessions. The first-year advisors, who also served as instructors in the first-year seminar and advised the students in their class section, as a group, established that they would meet three times with each student outside of the two times in class meetings during each semester.

The experience that these advisors shared in monthly meetings to discuss this coaching initiative was almost universally positive. Student feedback survey suggested the same positive experience on the part of students. It was generally felt that advisors came to know their students better by the middle of the first semester meeting in coaching sessions which began with discussions of emotional and social challenges and

goals than in previous advisor student scenarios focused on the informational aspect of advising alone.

Workshops for all other faculty advisors were offered in the third year of the initiative and conversations began to center around the importance of this approach to relationship building out of class with students. This grant funded initiative utilizing coaching and EQi introduced a new experience for faculty and professional staff on this campus and laid the foundation for the institutional identity formation that followed.

Another equally influential change that has contributed to situating our emphasis on mentorship was a complete process mapping and reconstruction of the system of advising at this institution. A task force was formed during the spring of 2014 to sort out issues related to advising, primarily involving strategies to coordinate more efficient and consistent advising practices across the universities' campuses. Being a small school, but operating three distinctively different programs (undergraduate, adult degree completion and graduate programs), we (as a collective of administrators, faculty, and staff) have been using a mixed methods approach to advising. For example, on the undergraduate level, advising is done by faculty and professional staff. On this campus, the professional staff currently include two of our librarians, the administrative assistant to the Provost, the Director of the Travel Abroad Program, and two individuals from the learning center. This group only works with freshmen. There is a dedicated group of faculty members who enjoy and seek to work with freshmen in particular, but all faculty are expected to

advise students in their major. For the degree completion program, professional advisors work with the adult students and, in the graduate programs, the faculty advise.

This institution has undergone numerous changes in technology which has had a direct impact on advising. Accessing student records, maintaining records regarding meetings with students and interfacing schedules for preregistration and registration are processes that have been impacted by new software programs and has precipitated the need for some training on the new technology. Unfortunately, we have not had the time or personnel to provide adequate training. In fact, until we obtained the grant for coaching, there was no training or organizing around a common philosophy or process for advising.

During the summer of 2014, several members of this advising task force were sent to the National Academic Advising Association's Summer Institute held in St. Petersburg, Florida.  The goal was to expand their knowledge base around trends and best practices in advising. As a result of this experience, Private University implemented a mission statement adopted by the faculty in January of 2015 that reflected a model for advising that incorporates the informational, conceptual, and relational aspects of the process. For at least a decade, there has been a token acknowledgement of the importance of developing a closer relationship between advisors and first-year student. One might expect an advisor, whose primary concern is ensuring an appropriate class schedule, to only focus on this single responsibility. At Private University, we refer to these advisors as "mentors" and their respective advisees as "mentees." Prior to January 2015, when the

mission statement was drafted, there was nothing provided institutionally regarding what the relationship should be beyond the "mentor" title.

**Claiming Mentorship**

Despite the months of work and the university-wide involvement of staff and faculty to develop a strategic plan that would distinguish this Private University in its own right, the result seemed to speak to an operational plan rather than a strategic effort that would lead the institution forward. At this juncture, the then President left Private University and, with the direction of a second group of consultants led by the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Vice President for Advancement, and the Provost—efforts were made to create a brand for this institution; that is, a unique identity associated with its purpose and principles. In the fall of 2014, those involved in this planning effort identified two "pillars" to represent both who Private University is, as an institution, and what we—as administrators, faculty, and staff— have the capacity to develop relative to our professional principles and the best interests of our students: engaged learning and mentorship. The engaged learning focus of this two-prong sense of purpose evolved as a result of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) conceived in 2010 with the implementation begun in 2011 leading up to the SACSCOC reaccreditation of 2012. The executive summary of the QEP, defines engaged learning for this institution as

> (Involving) student engagement in the learning process, with their object of study, with other disciplines and in the world around them. Likewise, critical thinking involves an intellectually disciplined process of active and skillful application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of information gathered through observation, experiences, reflection, reasoning, or communication (all of which are activities

of engaged learning). The QEP is designed such that each dimension of engaged learning can serve an additional goal, that of enhancing the critical thinking skills of students. Therefore, the overall goal of the QEP is to enhance student learning in the area of critical thinking through increased engagement across the curriculum. (p. 1)

As stated, the QEP was officially intended to impact "student learning in the area of critical thinking through engagement across the curriculum." The development of critical thinking became one of the chief competencies and student learning outcomes for a major revision of the general education curriculum put into place in the fall of 2013. And, again, the engagement aspect of the QEP became one of the overarching intentions for the university along with mentorship.

**Fostering a culture of mentorship.** To focus on "relationship" as a distinguishing feature of Private University's character and purpose made good sense given the institution's small size and friendly, personable atmosphere. In a recent report conducted for the Council of Independent Colleges in which faculty composition and individual faculty roles were explored, the authors noted that most independent colleges put great stock in the interactions that take place between students and faculty whereby such interactions contribute to the development of the whole student; that is, to the personal and academic development of the student (Morphew, Ward, & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). So, while the characteristic or principle of "relationship" is not unique to Private University alone, the implication is that it is more commonly adopted among private universities, in contrast to larger, public institutions. As such, its institutional focus on relationship has become a priority in terms of fostering positive and productive

connections among faculty, staff, and students at Private University. On this basis, relationships initially established at this institution often remain intact and strong after students graduate; an unintentional, yet welcome, outcome of a small university campus culture.

In effect, Private University's leaders (including myself) have come to view the showcasing of a naturally occurring experience—the development of holistic relationships in the small, private university environment—as a distinguishing characteristic that reflects authentic communication among university constituents. The challenge from here has been, and will be, to take relational development from an informal, organic experience for many to a formally institutionalized program that defines the mentor-mentee relationship in this context of holistic development, certainly for student mentees and including mentor development, as well. While we began with a rather utopian view of what could be our brand, we have been able to conceptualize this view as a doable initiative based on our ongoing discussions and planning sessions since that time. Finally, because the initiative flowed out of the areas for which I had become responsible—including the first-year program and co-curricular initiatives-I was involved in constructing and organizing the phases considered significant to full implementation. In fact, I became the implementation leader of the "culture of mentorship" initiative at Private University, slated to officially begin with the fall 2016 semester.

**Developing a Culture of Mentorship Initiative: Three Phases**

From early conceptualizations of Private University's unique brand/identity to the actual implementation of a formal initiative, three phases of planning have informed (and will continue to inform) the institutionalization of a culture of mentorship at the university. It is important to note that these phases (especially Phases II and III) should be viewed as continuous in nature, meaning that initial actions already put in motion will continue to evolve as the program, itself, develops and re-develops through this first year of formal implementation (the 2016-2017 academic year). In addition, and to reiterate a point previously made regarding the timing of program implementation and the conduct of this research study, the newness of this mentorship initiative will naturally impact the course of this study. Again, the initiative and the study can be viewed as two new works in progress simultaneously, with implementation and refinement of the mentorship initiative informing the study's design, dynamics, and eventual findings.

Phase I, or the preliminary phase, represents the point at which the Provost brought leadership together, including deans and department chairs to begin to define what we mean by mentorship, basing the term on our collective notion of human relationship as the foundation of the mentor-mentee dynamic. Phase II represents the point at which the entire university staff has been trained in skills and language that correspond to the mentorship culture we are attempting to create; at the same time, fostering a better understanding of the role of mentor, and how to develop the kinds of communication skills necessary to the relational qualities of mentorship. Phase III

represents the stage at which faculty and staff roles, in line with official governance, have

been developed in relation to the initiative so as to further reinforce and validate this

project as an integral part of the university experience for both students and staff; further,

to reinforce and validate mentorship as one of the key identifying pillars adopted by the

university. Next, I follow with a brief outline of what each of these phases has involved

(and will likely continue to involve, going forward) in order to bring the reader to the

point at which this initiative is officially underway, also signifying the starting point for

this dissertation study.

**Preliminary Phase I**

Although the concept of a "culture of mentorship" was solidified in the fall of

2014 and proclaimed to be our brand, the concept had to be broadened within a shared

vision that we, as university leaders, had to clearly define and articulate. In addition, we

had to establish a budget that would adequately provide the internal provisions needed to

support and sustain the initiative going forward. These activities took a full year to

coordinate. By the latter part of fall 2014, we began the work of enlisting the

commitment of deans and department chairs on both the academic and staff sides of the

university community. Through a series of meetings, those of us involved in planning the

initiative—the Provost, Dean of Education and I-held discussions with these individuals

to better inform them and to also seek their input. For the most part, all parties were

committed to supporting the initiative, although there was considerable disagreement

regarding how to best define mentorship and what expectations we had regarding who

would be assuming the role of mentor. These discussions continued into the new year

prior to the annual faculty-wide assembly that took place at the beginning of the spring

semester, 2015.

Early in that same semester, spring of 2015, the planning team which by now was

expanded to include all of the deans and a number of department chairs created a draft

mission statement through which to develop and operationalize the institution's intended

culture of mentorship. The statement reads as follows:

> [Private University] calls all members of its community into a mentoring culture. We foster self-awareness, empowerment, and resourcefulness through guiding relationships that equip servant leaders to add value to the world. (Private University, Draft Mission Statement, A Culture of Mentorship, 2015)

**Phase II**

In the spring of 2015, we contracted an outside agent to provide preliminary

training that would reach the entire community of faculty and staff at Private University.

There were a few workshops in the spring offered primarily to faculty. The summer

sessions were primarily for the staff, but some faculty members attended these sessions as

well. In the fall of 2015, training sessions were provided to the rest of the faculty on each

of the three campuses, although this study of the culture of mentorship initiative was

purposely aimed at the main campus. The sessions were 4 hours each, included up to 15

people, and were offered in the morning or afternoon to accommodate a variety of

schedules. The intent was to provide a space within which we could discuss and seek

common ground to our approach for establishing a mentorship culture. Training strategies

included (a) self-assessment of faculty's perspectives of the teacher/student relationship, (b) a critical discussion of how conceptions of coaching, advising, and mentoring could be aligned to address the well-being of students, and (c) an introduction to basic communication principles and practices focused primarily on deep listening and skillful inquiry that invites dialogue. As one of several outcomes of these sessions, we determined that our institutional view of advising incorporates informational, relational, and conceptual aspects. Generally, provision of information includes the how-to's of navigating curriculum, activities, and adjustment to college life. The relational aspect is where we aim to foster a culture of mentorship that regards and respects the student as a complete—whole—human being who brings his/her particular academic skills, personal resources, and goals to the higher education experience. Conceptual aspects of advising are more theoretical in nature and drive our efforts in crafting our mission and communicating our goals. Finally, we agreed that coaching is actually a set of skills that both a coach (academic, sports, life, etc.) and mentor could employ in working with students. Some of the sessions—particularly those that involved employees who did not consider themselves in the position to mentor students—involved examining roles and ways in which each staff member actually does impact students. My observations of some of these discussions were that this was the first time this university had recognized some of the jobs and individuals who performed these support functions in regard to their important to the mission of the university. I also sensed a better understanding between

individuals of their respective contributions. By the end of the fall of 2015 close to 60% of the staff and 94% of the faculty had experienced the same training.

**Phase III**

During a faculty workshop held in January 2016, a portion of the agenda was dedicated to engaging each faculty member in exercises intended to stimulate ideas and work through their interests, needs, and concerns regarding the institutionalization of mentorship as a dominant feature of university life. Most of the faculty were in attendance at this pivotal workshop and represented graduate programs as well as all the divisions of the undergraduate school. Each of the divisions worked in a session within their undergraduate disciplines and the graduate school worked with their colleagues. Because each division and the graduate school have different kinds of opportunities to work with students, it was felt that each could speak to both opportunities and challenges that they experienced. For example, a significant percentage of classes in the MBA program are offered online. Online relationships offer their own set of challenges and benefits for working individuals. The undergraduate Division of Applied Sciences, which includes the nursing program, works with a very small cadre of students in carefully monitored training which lends itself to another unique situation that impacts the relational potential in a mentor/mentee relationship.

## Closing Commentary: Framing a Study of a Culture of Mentorship

Bringing this Preface to a close, I want to address the humanistic concerns and approaches that I—as faculty member and mentorship initiative leader—view as essential

to establishing a culture of mentorship as conceived and described in Private University's working mission statement. Similarly, in my role as researcher, I have applied such concerns and approaches to my framing of this qualitative study, openly professing my humanistic orientations as an individual and as an academic professional. Thus, in the following sections, I conclude with brief discussions of (a) self-authorship as it pertains to the student, (b) the subjective nature of education, and (c) competing understandings of the terms "mentorship" and "mentor" as they inform my vision of a humanistic culture of mentorship at my university.

**A Culture of Mentorship: Providing a Pathway to Self-Authorship**

There is a portion of the initiative's working mission statement (see statement in "Preliminary Phase I" section) that especially resonates with me regarding what a culture of mentorship signifies. It declares that a mentoring culture is about "fostering self-awareness, empowerment and resourcefulness [within the student]." To my way of thinking, this view of individual awareness and empowerment speaks to the student's growing capacity to achieve self-authorship. While my institution has not used the term "self-authorship" as a specific objective for our student outcomes, I am suggesting that the term fits what we are hoping to see happen as a result of our mentorship initiative. To briefly clarify, self-authorship is a term that signifies a stage of development in which independent thinking and the activation of personal agency become part of the individual's intentional way of being in the world (Baxter Magolda, 1999). I am suggesting that the concept of self-authorship is relevant to this study of the mentor-

mentee relationship—bound to the humanistic ideals included in the mission statement—

due to the potential for transformational experiences that might emerge, especially with

regard to the student mentee. I will address the meaning and implications of self-

authorship in more depth, and as applied to the study, in my review of the literature

through focusing on the work of Kegan (1994) and Baxter Magolda (1999, 2002, 2004a),

among others.

**A Culture of Mentorship: Emphasizing the Subjective Nature of Education**

My personal commitment to human connection informs my professional

capacities within the work I do at this university, signifying an abiding interest in human

relationships. Specifically, I hold multiple roles as a faculty member in Communication

Studies, director of a four-year program that incorporates the First Year Experience for

freshmen, and chairperson of the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. My

interest in furthering relationships in the university setting, especially within the

mentor/mentee dynamic, is further informed and influenced by the processes and systems

of communication that predominate within the context of higher education. Therefore,

because I am leading Private University's mentorship initiative, the themes of human

relationship and communication play a large role in how I contribute to the discussions

surrounding its planning and implementation. Furthermore, by framing this study around

the perceptions of selected mentors and mentees—emphasizing the relational aspect and

influences of the mentoring process as it unfolds—I might contribute to a better

understanding of what I consider one of the most significant purposes of education:

subjectification; that is, the development of the individual (the student) as a freely thinking, choosing, acting, and responsible individual in the world (Biesta, 2010).

At the same time, I am troubled by what I view as the objectification of both students and faculty based on the 21st century neoliberal educational model that has expanded from the K-12 sector on up into higher education. This model is predicated on standardizing (objectifying) policies and practices; technicism, including a marked emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math curricula (STEM); a downgrading of the arts and humanities in education; and a global worldview aimed at production, consumerism, and the grooming of an efficient workforce (Giroux, 2002). Note that Chapter II's Literature Review includes a more detailed discussion of neoliberalism in education; as such, how this topic is relevant to Private University's mentorship initiative, and how this study has been conceived and carried out to investigate the initiative as it is being implemented.

Based on my belief in a subjective, humanistic model of education in contrast to neoliberal education's objectivist model, I am even more invested in creating a culture of mentorship at Private University where the student's subjectivity, as opposed to his/her objectification, will be the priority. With my long tenure as an educator who has interacted with numerous other educators and students, I know that many share my concern regarding the inhumanity of a one-size-fits-all, standards-based model of education that does not prioritize the development of a subjective sense of self as part of the educational experience. Ultimately, believing that the process of objectification

stymies the human potential for personal growth and self-authorship, I am professionally and personally committed to establishing and sustaining a culture of mentorship embedded in humanistic values. Furthermore, as a qualitative researcher who recognizes both her own subjective stance and her responsibility to her institution, I will conduct this study with purposeful transparency and integrity.

**A Culture of Mentorship: Discerning the Meaning of Mentorship and the Role of Mentor**

As educators at my institution have become invested in developing mentorship on this campus, I have become interested in the many ways in which we have been using the term *mentor*. For some, mentoring suggests having all the answers; for others, the role of mentor suggests career development. Since the inception of this initiative in the fall of 2014, I have been witness to some considerable disagreement among faculty and staff concerning how this university should understand and demonstrate mentorship. While the term *mentor* has been used in a variety of ways in higher education, there appears to be a lack of shared understanding of what this role or the mentor/mentee relationship can mean. While, as leader of the mentorship initiative, I am not seeking nor do I expect a consensus of opinion regarding one conception of mentorship among this faculty and staff, I am seeking to advance a decidedly humanistic view of the mentor-mentee relationship. With this view in mind, I am seeking to explore the developmental possibilities that might ensue for both parties. Certainly, my view of mentorship can be situated on a continuum encompassing its various conceptions and applications—from

more utilitarian perspectives associated with mentoring in the business world to alternative perspectives associated with various aspects of human existence. Based on Private University's relatively novel approach to mentorship as part of the undergraduate experience, I hold open a window of new possibilities that might emerge from the study outcomes; possibilities that might reinforce a notion of undergraduate mentorship as a transformative undertaking. Similar to my brief introductions of the concepts of self-authorship and subjectification in this Preface, I will discuss mentors and the mentorship process—from historical and theoretical perspectives—in my review of the literature in Chapter II.

Most often, within institutional frameworks, a "mentor" is engaged to provide career-related advice or with a focus on helping a student overcome a disability or an at-risk status. On this view, and considering the traditional role of advisor as mentor, more prescriptive models of mentorship presume that the advisor is in a position of authority. For some student issues that are addressed by the mentor according to conventional standards, this role of authority figure may be an appropriate assumption. As such, an authoritarian approach would not likely facilitate mentorship as a mutually invested, developmental partnership because an implied inequality would exist between the two parties. In contrast, proactively cooperative mentoring practices could potentially foster relationships based on mutual regard and trust between student and mentor, conceivably benefitting both. At this juncture, it is important to qualify that while this study may reveal certain themes that speak to power relationships, my intent and process – at the

outset—has been to focus on the potential emergence of the uniquely human dynamics that could be fostered between participating mentors and mentees specific to the university's initiative.

**This Study's Value to a Developing Culture of Mentorship**

Studying mentorship in the higher education setting, through the perspectives of both mentors and mentees, could offer a rich opportunity for achieving a deeper understanding of the value of this particular kind of relationship for both parties. In other words, studying anything in education from either an isolated "teacher centered" or "student centered" perspective seems to be limiting an important part of the equation from whichever direction you view it. I posit that something synergetic can happen as a result of the relationship-building process between mentor and mentee. Stated another way, communicating in an authentic, intentional manner on a regular basis—where both parties are treating the other as significant and the interaction is unscripted— has the potential to spark a consciousness of mutual care and cooperation that can only emerge through time and commitment to the relationship-building process. Clearly then, my interest is in what takes place in the relationship-building process between a mentor and a mentee of which academic guidance and support is only one part. Numerous questions arise regarding both the implementation of the initiative and the concurrent implementation of this research study. For example, how do faculty and students understand the mentor/mentee relationship and its purpose from the outset; that is, prior to experiencing this new, university-based model of mentorship? Will they achieve a

deeper understanding of the potential rewards of this relationship as participants in the initiative? What opportunities for development and transformation are possible in that relational space? Might a transformative impact provide an integrative experience, and will that experience move the student toward self-authorship and a subjective understanding of education as a dual process of academic and personal growth? Ultimately, and spanning my multiple roles within this university community along with my role of doctoral student/researcher, I am in search of understanding the intersections between the relational and communicative value of the mentorship process and the transformational possibilities that it can signal for a traditional undergraduate student (not excluding transformational possibilities for mentors, as well). The value of this study, then, lies in (a) its openness to the experiences of mentors and mentees as they occur in the field for the first time; (b) its concurrent timing with the formal implementation of the initiative so as to capture the initial, dynamic nature of this process; and (c) its potential to support ongoing/future studies of the mentorship initiative, thus serving as a base and a continuing resource for generating knowledge and informing practice.

Finally, I think it is imperative to reiterate the fact that the institution I serve has very purposefully taken a solid stance on the importance of student advisement framed within the concept of meaningful mentor/mentee relationships. As a relatively cohesive community of administrators, educators, and staff members, we have been in the process of operationalizing a mentored learning model that we hope will be realized both in and outside the classroom. We see mentorship as being an essential way to support an

integrated and transformational college experience for our students. We have proclaimed

our intention to create a "culture of mentorship," and we are in the process of fully

conceptualizing what this can mean through ongoing discussions and evaluations of our

plans and designs to address mentoring as both a concept and as a course of action. In this

moment of its initial implementation and evolution, I intend to explore what a culture of

mentorship means for mentors and mentees through this dissertation research project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF TABLES

**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

The value of the contemporary undergraduate experience, relative to both small colleges and larger universities, is being newly scrutinized in regard to its purpose and its effectiveness. In recent years, higher education has made it a priority to focus on what institutions can do to positively impact enrollment as it relates to student engagement and retention. In this culture, we continue to struggle to come to terms regarding the purpose of education among educators, policy makers, and opinion leaders who hold a wide range of political agendas. The view that a bachelor's degree is the in-road to an entry-level career opportunity, ensuring economic security and personal happiness, seems to prevail. Yet, a conflicting belief has emerged and escalated in recent years that casts doubt on the necessity of such a costly investment, especially in light of the "job ready" label that is commonly applied to high school students in an effort to fast track them into a job. This urgency to join the 21st century workforce contributes to the dismissive attitude that can invalidate a liberal arts college experience. These competing perspectives and resulting policies are now impacting enrollment and retention in colleges and universities across the country. A recent report, "Ten Trends for 2013: How Marketplace Conditions Will Influence Private Higher Education Enrollment—And How Colleges Can Respond," addressed the economic environment in relation to higher education, reporting that trends "have created a marketplace situation where higher education administrators must think

differently and evolve in a manner that responds to the needs of individuals, families and our society" (as cited in Abdul-Alim, 2013, para. 2).

While we, as educators, are responding with a sense of urgency to immediate problems such as retention and the imposition of requirements from policy makers intended to control educational outcomes, those of us who are passionate about the purpose of education as being more than training workers are seeking to find a way to communicate a more holistic view of education to the culture at large. Educators oriented toward this perspective are looking for ways to transform both thinking and feeling in order to influence the capacity to be intellectual, compassionate, and intentional about the importance of education to students' personal development, professional competence, and social/civic awareness. The fostering of this perspective, along with its translation as a real approach to undergraduate education, requires a purposeful concentration of time, effort, and commitment to a more holistic view of teaching and learning. Too often, however, we are witnessing the expediency with which students are rushed through their educational experiences. This accelerated rate perpetuates mindless competition and self-serving individualism. Instead, we are seeking new structures and processes with which to provide undergraduate students an educational experience that both qualifies them to begin a professional endeavor and emphasizes developmental opportunities for personal and social well-being.

Biesta (2010) contended that a "good" education should be aimed at three primary purposes: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Qualification has to do with developing skills and abilities that ensure a person is productive in his or her adult life.

Socialization is about becoming incorporated into one's culture in order to be able to understand the norms and values related to co-existing in the world. Subjectification is about the process of realizing one's unique expression of life (Biesta, 2010, pp. 19–21). I would suggest that systems of education, and particularly those in the U.S., have focused on qualification and socialization at the expense of subjectification. Biesta (2010) has said as much. In my opinion, the current system exemplifies a 21st century neoliberal view of education that is obsessed with measurement and positivistic ways of knowing (Morley, Marginson, & Blackmore, 2014). On this view, I am suggesting that when measurement becomes the only indicator of effectiveness, we run the risk of over-reliance on the tools we use and loss of a larger perspective.

Over the past several decades, holistically oriented educators have become increasingly interested in testing the possibilities of restructuring the college experience in order to integrate the curricular and co-curricular dimensions. The rationale is that by focusing on the integration of these areas, we can more effectively address the overarching objectives of higher education by fulfilling one of the cornerstone purposes of education that Biesta (2010) distinguished as subjectification. In other words, by integrating academic or curricular experiences with co-curricular experiences that provide additional outlets for the expression of a student's interests and creativity, there is a greater likelihood for that student to develop a stronger, more integrated sense of self. Said another way, the student's sense of personal agency is affirmed when he/she is empowered to make choices and take actions that reflect a congruence of personal interests with academic requirements and responsibilities. University educators who

advocate for this more holistic approach have identified several promising practices that have the potential to effectively assimilate what is learned in the classroom with co-curricular, developmental experiences also designed to be intellectually educational (Kuh, 2005). Such experiences are called "high-impact practices," and they include first-year seminars and experiences, learning communities, writing intensive courses, and undergraduate research to name a few. However, these practices are not always effectively connected to the student's overall experiences of college life as currently designed. College life is most often organized into separate systems such as the academic experience or student development (Wawrzynski & Baldwin, 2014). The term "silo" is frequently used to depict this lack of integration across many college and university divisions/departments and the functions they generate (Kolowich, 2010).

Based on the preceding discussion, along with my first-hand experience as a seasoned faculty member and leader at Private University, I posit that institutions of higher education are missing opportunities to connect the various facets of a college/university experience and, therefore, are not providing the integration necessary to promote a transformative learning experience for students. In this sense, I suggest that a transformative learning experience constitutes the student's expanded capacity and desire to reflect and to question prior assumptions about self, life and learning. In other words, the student might experience an internalized sense of growth; not changing who she/he is, but, rather further developing the person as an individual through this particular stage of education. I suggest that an ideal of transformative learning is directly related to Biesta's (2010) concept of subjectification because, based on adult transformative

learning theory (Mezirow, 2000), the student is exposed to learning experiences that encourage confrontations with multiple (sometimes controversial) points of view, personal reflection practices that question old assumptions, and the reconstitution of his/her sense of self and worldview. In Chapter II's review of the literature, I discuss Mezirow's transformative learning theory in detail. Essentially, I present the theory upon which transformative learning is based as a pedagogical concept and from which I borrow to adapt to this university's mission to develop a culture of mentorship. My vision of this initiative would move away from an authoritarian rendering of mentorship to a holistic vision in which the student is regarded as a unique individual-capable, resourceful, creative, and potentially riper to the experience of learning as a transformative process.

## Problem Statement

With the bulk of my work in higher education limited to the small, private liberal arts setting, I have witnessed my institution—and others like it—struggle to survive amidst the increasingly corporatized influence of the neoliberal educational model currently infiltrating higher education. Due to this encroaching influence, I see the foundational philosophy and the humanistic purpose of the liberal arts institution threatened by a marketplace approach to teaching and learning that emphasizes a standards-based, one-dimensional, and instrumental view of educational purpose. This view is further underscored by neoliberal education's political and economic concerns corresponding to a focus on global competition, production, and consumerism; thus, having little to do with advancing the individual student's overall development as a

person, as a learner, and as a citizen, the kind of development with which a liberal arts institution is ultimately concerned. Therefore, in my view, the very purpose and practice of education is in question today: Do we educate the whole student based on a holistic perspective of teaching and learning, or do we educate students as products themselves? In order to address this problem, I am proposing a return to the holistic perspective that is the hallmark of liberal arts education through advancing a different focus on the purpose of mentorship; one that emphasizes and translates achievement and success in the contexts of human awareness, relationship-building, and social consciousness.

Along with threatening the philosophy of education that has characterized the small liberal arts college, neoliberal educational approaches aimed primarily at job preparation bring significant financial pressure to the small college or university. Like most institutions of higher education now, the smaller institution's viability is closely connected to retention numbers as they relate to tuition, funding, and institutional marketability. In a March 2, 2015 edition of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* featuring the headline article, "Survival at Stake: In the Aftermath of the Recession, Small Colleges Adapt to a New Market," author Biemiller (2015) described the current struggles of small, private liberal arts colleges and universities that once offered a comfortable fit to many students, serving either as the college of first choice or as an opportunity to earn a degree with the personal support that small schools can offer. The decline in enrollment at so many of these small schools escalated during the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis. However, along with that episodic moment, the decline of the middle class has had a growing, insidious impact on the vitality of private colleges and

universities over the past many years. Furthermore, and to reiterate the negative impact of neoliberal education on these institutions, the increasing emphasis on marketplace values has taken its toll on higher education curriculum, evidenced by the ways in which neoliberal culture has deemphasized liberal arts while emphasizing STEM disciplines (Giroux, 2011).

Survival strategies of small, liberal arts institutions cover a range of creative options, some of which challenge old traditions. For example, some institutions have included foregoing the traditional "female students only" policy and opening admission to men, as in the case of the all-female Wilson College in Pennsylvania. In 2013, this same school won its board members' approval to take drastic financial measures such as buying back as much as ten thousand dollars of a student's loans once the student has graduated, in the hope of attracting more students by appealing to their concerns about college loan debt. Centenary College of Louisiana has adopted an immersion program to take the entire freshman class on a ten-day trip to Paris as an incentive to new students to commit to enrolling at the school.

Funding of higher education institutions is also threatened by another worldview that questions its usefulness to many students. In their book, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, Arum and Roksa (2011) created a significant wave of distrust and national debate regarding the value of a college education. These authors looked at data collected from 24 institutions, starting at the beginning of the freshman year and concluding at the end of the sophomore year, focusing on skills such as critical thinking, complex reasoning, and communication. The study concluded that almost half

of these students had not achieved any growth in these areas during the first two years of college work. As a result of this study, Arum and Roksa (2011) made the claim that a four-year college education is not necessarily an asset for many students. Since their book was published, other studies and critiques have emerged that have challenged the nature of this study's questioning framework (content and focus) and statistical methods (Igo, 2011). For example, Lederman (2013) stated, "Attempts to standardize assessment of student learning (through a national exam, say) are seriously flawed because they are too distant from what happens in the classroom and define learning too narrowly, among other problems" (p.1). Regardless, Arum and Roksa's (2011) original claims have contributed to discrediting the aim higher education and, in so doing, have fed the neoliberal mentality that education should be solely about the task of preparing workers. The neoliberal worldview, then, lends credence to their argument that higher education, especially a liberal arts education, is not a significant benefit for many students.

While I am concerned about the potential demise of small liberal arts institutions in general, for this study, I confine my focus to my institution and to what is or is not happening there. In the end, my findings, as specifically related to this institution, might have resonance for other educators who teach in small, private colleges and universities.

Private University is approaching the 21$^{st}$ century undergraduate experience as one in which job preparation is important, but not at the cost of minimizing the unique set of experiences, challenges, and expectations that each individual student brings to the university.  No single program or system of education will understand those distinctive qualities. The opportunity to be in relationship with a mentor who can, in deep

conversation, help make the mentee's thinking visible, limitations surmountable, and opportunities possible is a promising approach to navigating the challenges of higher education: (a) prepared to contribute to the workforce, (b) develop as a thoughtful and engaged citizen of the world,  and (c) mature as an individual able to think beyond the hegemonic forces of outside authority and discover a personal motive to act in the world. All of these potential outcomes—qualified for work, prepared to contribute to society, and fully aware and responsible for one's own unique expression of life—are not intended to be left to chance at Private University. By honoring the value of the relational connection, the mentorship initiative represents a strategy that may have more impact on these essential outcomes. The process of mentoring can offer a window through which to explore and better understand what a traditional college age student experiences as a result of his or her conditioning up to this point in life. I believe that a study aimed to discover how the lived experiences of both mentor and mentee impact their educational processes and personal and academic lives can offer broader insights and guidance for the future.

## Statement of Purpose

**Exploring the Possibilities of Mentorship as a Transformative Experience**

Relative to the issues brought forth in the previous section, issues that not only underscore the challenges of contemporary higher education, but that seek our collective reconsideration of what constitutes a good education, I aimed to study the possibilities of mentorship as a transformative learning experience. I continue to use the term *transformative* to signify the expanding of the student to self-direct his/her learning

experiences. To be clear and consistent, I am proposing that a transformative learning experience for undergraduate students might serve a more existential notion of learning that encompasses the academic, intellectual, social, and personal development of students during the college years. As previously stated, I posit that transformative learning experiences are more likely to emerge from an integrative approach to education that regards students as whole and complex individuals whose learning processes should not be compartmentalized as separate entities.

In Chapter II's review of the literature, I discuss the origins of transformative learning as a theory initially conceived within the contexts of adult education, and how I am adapting this theory to my research in the undergraduate college setting. As such, I unpack understandings of transformative learning from theoretical perspectives, as well as illustrate its real-world possibilities as a product of mentoring processes grounded in human relationship and integrated approaches to teaching and learning.

**Exploring the Mentorship Initiative as an Ongoing Work in Progress**

As a result of an institutional self-study that was part of a strategic planning process completed in 2014, we (those of us directly involved in this process) determined that we would distinguish Private University as an institution that values mentorship. As contextualized in the Preface, we are attempting to cultivate a "culture of mentorship" that will, over time, potentially contribute to the development of a more critical and interconnected university community. Consequently, during the 2015-2016 academic year, our collective effort to grow a culture of mentorship has involved a small team of leaders planning and implementing strategies that would support and sustain this

characterization. Such efforts have included producing a guiding mission statement; strategizing staff and faculty training sessions intended to develop our understandings of mentorship, specifically within the context of this university's initiative; articulating what we want this initiative to mean for our students; and identifying which systems, policies, and procedures must be instituted to ensure our effectiveness as an academic community. Admittedly, claiming this identify was not based on having done a great deal of research. However, as we have begun the first steps toward implementation, I have discovered what appears to be an important possibility for Private University; that is, the possibility that mentorship, practiced within an institution of higher education, can be established as a cultural norm, one that emphasizes the value and desirability of human relationship as fundamental to the college experience (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996). Ultimately, if established and done effectively, the practice of mentorship should be a shared intent by all members of our educational community.

Clearly, this initiative will be several years in the making. It will provide many opportunities to learn about mentorship and the relational impact of the mentor/mentee connection as experienced by faculty, staff, and students. Over time, the initiative will also reveal the impact of collegial mentorship experiences among our faculty and staff members. In my position as leader of this initiative, I have embarked on a process in which I am preparing faculty and staff to conceptualize their roles, actions, and responsibilities as mentors. Moreover, as a non-traditional mentorship initiative encompassing campus-wide participation and cultural evolution, all stakeholders will be trained to engage this changing culture in formal and informal ways. The academic year,

2016-2017, represents the first year of a work in progress. Recognizing the long-range and shifting dynamics involved in this initiative, we have decided to approach this mission as a longitudinal project that involves reshaping and reforming over time.

**Research Questions**

In light of my personal and professional commitment to this initiative, I have chosen to make it the subject of my dissertation project as a first stage study during the 2016-2017 academic year; thus, marking the starting point for this research. Using the exploratory interview as my method of inquiry, I propose to conduct a qualitative research project in which I will utilize face-to-face interviews as my chief data collection instrument to address the following research questions that underscore the study:

1. How do faculty and students currently understand the mentor/mentee relationship and its purpose?

2. How does the culture of mentorship initiative impact the lives of traditional undergraduate students at Private University?

3. How are mentors affected by the mentor/mentee relationship as implemented in the university's mentorship initiative?

4. Does the mentorship initiative demonstrate the theoretical frameworks of subjectification, self-authorship, and transformational learning? If so, how?

I formulated these four research questions to align with my study purpose: (a) to explore the possibilities of expanding human connections across the mentor/mentee relationship, (b) to determine the potential impact of mentoring on transformative learning experiences and personal development for undergraduate students, and (c) to

explore the initiative, itself, as an ongoing work in progress. As a lens through which to view this formally constructed, college-based effort, I intended for this research to serve as an exploratory first step in addressing a more humanistic construction of the mentoring relationship. As such, in Chapter II's Literature Review, I directly address the research on mentorship from historical and contemporary perspectives as it informs and/or challenges my study purpose and design. In turn, I address theories of transformative education more closely, particularly referencing their origins in adult education, and further illustrate how I apply these theories to conceptions of transformative mentorship processes and experiences.

## Overview of Methodology

For this study of the mentor/mentee relationship involving undergraduate students, I determined the qualitative exploratory interview approach to be the most appropriate methodology (Bruggen, 2001; Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2002; Lichtman, 2013; Yin, 2011). This study involved examination of a particular social phenomenon or system and allowed for intensive description and analysis within the designated parameters of the study. I selected a specific undergraduate institution as the study setting where I continue to serve as faculty and project director of the university's mentorship initiative. I collected data through face-to-face interviews with selected faculty and students who comprised the study sample. Specifically, I conducted two rounds of interviews: (a) Round 1—interviews of individual mentors and mentees, and (b) Round 2—interviews of paired mentors/mentees. In addition to the interviews, I gathered supplementary data through a process of document analysis, focusing on

documents and materials pertinent to the initiative in terms of planning, policy-making, implementation, etc. I also generated data in the form of researcher field notes. Finally, I examined the interview data through coding processes and identified emerging themes and patterns from which I developed findings that directly addressed my research questions. In Chapter III, I detail the use of these data collection instruments and procedures. Furthermore, I address coding procedures and findings in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, I present an analysis of those findings after which I draw conclusions presented in Chapter VI

**Researcher Subjectivity and Assumptions**

As a long-time university employee and project director of this university's mentorship initiative, I am both personally and professionally invested in the planning, implementation, and future outcomes of the program. In these capacities, I feel a great sense of responsibility for how students and faculty are affected by the program's emphasis on human connection and personal commitment. In this sense, I feel responsible and, yet, empowered in terms of encouraging students and staff to be vulnerable to their deeply human capacities. Clearly, as researcher and program director, my biases are inherent to the ways in which I have constructed the mentorship program and the design of this study. These biases reflect certain fundamental beliefs that I hold about the human condition; specifically, our essential need for relationships, personal communication, and ongoing possibilities for individual and social development.

Ultimately, I am completely invested in the potential success of this program. As such, my assumptions about this research are grounded in its general viability as opposed

to having any concerns or assumptions about potential obstacles. In other words, while I have sought to separate my roles—researcher, project leader, and faculty member—I have been steeped in the undeniable hope and expectation that my humanistic perspective of mentorship would be validated by the participants in this study. I now recognize that I had confidence that the study's overall findings would bear out my views. Clearly, I knew at the start of this process that researcher subjectivity is a key component of qualitative methodology and I own my subjectivity out rightly. In fact, my enthusiasm for conducting this study was fueled by my commitment to Private University's mentorship initiative.

## Rationale and Significance of the Study

I consider this study significant because I believe the mentorship initiative is a doable and meaningful response to the instrumental, non-relational focus of 21$^{st}$ century educational policies and practices that dominate the higher education scene today. Relative to the individual, I hold that the study is not only significant to the undergraduate student in terms of promoting transformational learning experiences on both academic and personal levels, but that it also lends a great deal of significance to the role of the educator as a subject who also needs connection and validation as a professional educator and as a human being.

## Definitions of Key Terminology

1. Mentorship: Mentorship is a relationship in which an experienced or more knowledgeable individual guides a less experienced or knowledgeable individual. It may be considered a form of developmental relationship that

encompasses the following functions: advising, guiding, encouraging, coaching, and advocating (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Jacobi, 1991).

2. Transformative Learning: Transformative Learning theory, attributed to Jack Mezirow (1991), involves a process based on a constructivist perspective that includes stages of self-examination, questioning, and revision of the way a person perceives life and the world. Relative to the undergraduate student, a transformative learning experience would open the student to questioning old assumptions and/or the opinions of others in order to formulate his/her own opinions and worldview.

3. Self-Authorship: A term coined by Kegan (1994), self-authorship is a stage of human development that tends to coincide with the traditional, undergraduate college years. This stage is reflective of transformative learning experiences because it signifies the individual's choice to think more independently and exercise personal agency.

4. Subjectification: In the context of education, subjectification, (Biesta, 2010) represents a process of individuation in which the individual student moves from a state of intellectual, emotional, and philosophical dependency to a more independent state of thinking and acting.

## Chapter Outline

This dissertation, titled *Mentorship in a Small Private University*, is comprised of a Preface and six chapters. Following is a summary of each.

The Preface serves to provide the context for this study. By identifying the significant leadership dynamics that led to the shaping and establishment of an initiative to develop a culture of mentorship, the reader can better understand some of the thinking that led to this plan of action. The Preface includes a sketch of the institution's history, its location, and demographic characteristics. This collection of information is intended to clearly distinguish the unique nature of this particular small liberal arts institution.

In Chapter I, Introduction, I provide an overview of this research project, addressing the study problem, my purpose and rationale for undertaking the study, the research questions that inform it, and its potential significance to undergraduate students and institutions of higher learning. In addition, I provide an overview of the methodology used to conduct the study, including details about study instruments and the sample. In this chapter, I present the study problem as an instrumentalist conception of education and, with that, the practice of mentorship in higher education as grounded in the neoliberal emphasis on job preparation, technicism, and marketplace values. In contrast to this view, I have framed a broader, more humanistic conception of mentorship that I suggest can be transformative for today's undergraduate student. To this end, the study was conducted during the first year of my university's newly implemented initiative, "Culture of Mentorship," of which I am the director.

In Chapter II, "Review of the Literature," I present the research on mentorship as it has been historically conceived and practiced, leading up to current mentorship practices in higher education. Among the research covered, I include the work of Baxter Magolda (1999, 2002, 2004b), Baxter Magolda and King (2012), Crisp and Cruz (2009),

Gershenfeld (2014), and Mullen and Lick (1999). In addition, I address Jack Mezirow's (1991) theories of transformative learning in the interest of applying transformative learning theory to my humanistic conception of mentorship in the university. Further, I discuss Biesta's (2010) theory of subjectification and Kegan's (1994) and Baxter Magolda and King's (2012) work on self-authorship as these concepts and theories inform this study. To complete this chapter, I include my Conceptual Framework, using the relevant theories that have emerged from my research to serve as the foundation from which I have created and structured this study of mentorship in the university.

In Chapter III, "Methodology," I justify the use of a qualitative research approach to investigate mentorship as a distinctive practice of human relationship through which it might be possible to provide transformative learning experiences for undergraduate students. Further, I argue for the utility of the exploratory interview approach as the most appropriate methodology for investigating the dynamics of the mentoring relationship among selected students, professors, and staff members at my university. I also describe the research setting, the study sample, my interview/data collection processes (interviews, document analysis, and researcher field notes), and my data analysis processes based on coding and identifying patterns and themes across interviews. Finally, I address my assumptions, biases, and trustworthiness as researcher, along with the limitations and delimitations of the study.

In Chapter IV, "Findings," I report the outcomes of my investigation; that is, the themes and patterns that emerged from the interview data, along with the findings generated from my analyses of study-related documents and researcher field notes. With

my primary research focus placed on these face-to-face interviews, I report my findings by including relevant and meaningful excerpts from the interviews, supported by thick descriptions of subjects' responses. To this end, the findings chapter incorporates information gleaned from a total number of 23 interviews based on individual and paired sessions with study subjects. Secondary data collection methods supplemented the primary interview findings.

In Chapter V, "Analysis of Findings," I discuss my interpretations of the study findings as they relate to my research questions and the conceptual framework. Through processes of analysis and synthesis, I may translate emergent patterns and themes from the interviews in order to make meaning of the findings in light of my proposal to frame mentorship as a relational and humanistic proposition. In addition, I address possible, unanticipated findings that arose during the course of this study, and I reinforce my awareness of my own positionality as researcher, faculty member, and director of my university's mentorship initiative. Lastly, I restate the limitations and delimitations of the study as they might impact my analysis of the findings.

In Chapter VI, "Conclusion," I integrate all the components of the study process, with full attention paid to the study results and subsequent analysis, in order to draw greater meaning and make more informed recommendations for my university mentorship program. As such, the potential implementation of recommendations that result from this first-year study can provide insights for ongoing studies and, hopefully, for continued improvement of the mentorship program in years to come for Private University. I discuss possibilities regarding the transferability of this study's results to

similar institutions in terms of size, student population, faculty investment, academic focus, and openness to integrating academic and co-curricular student experiences. Finally, I address these concepts in terms of what could be at stake if we continue down the neoliberal path of education and neglect the transformative possibilities of mentoring relationships in the realm of undergraduate education.

**CHAPTER II**

**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

**Introduction**

In order to provide a substantive foundation from which to consider both theoretical and practical perspectives of mentorship in relation to the undergraduate experience, I address concepts and practices associated with mentorship across several contexts throughout this chapter. First, I examine the concept of mentorship within its historical frameworks. I then investigate mentorship specific to higher education, summarizing its most recent history in that setting based on the available research. In so doing, I address *if and how* (my emphasis) mentorship has been utilized as a tool for integrating the college experience thus far. Specific to a broader and more holistic view of mentorship, I present Biesta's (2010) concept of subjectification as one of the chief purposes of education, with subjectification signifying a state of being that informs the development of student "self-authorship" as theorized by Kegan (1994). I then isolate the concept of self-authorship (Kegan, 1994) as one of the goals of the transformative learning process based on both its theoretical principles and practical applications. With subjectification and self-authorship serving as theoretical foundations, I introduce and investigate the concept of transformative learning—initially associated with Jack Mezirow's (1991) theory of adult education—as it might be applied to mentoring relationships in colleges and universities. I ultimately suggest that the concept of

mentorship, as a decidedly human and relational undertaking, can be a catalyst for fostering transformative learning processes that would more likely develop and enhance the student's personal awareness of her/his subjective stance as an individual, leading to a more empowered state of self-authorship; that is, the student's ability to think, choose, and act for her/himself.

Before proceeding to the stated order of this literature review, it is worthwhile to acknowledge a peripheral, yet significant, aspect of my research process as it informed this study. As both a qualitative researcher and invested leader of my university's mentorship initiative, I sought to explore mentorship as a relationship-building process that could offer positive and profound influences on the undergraduate student's overall development. However, I encountered a glaring gap in the research, pointing to a lack of attention paid to the deeper, transformational possibilities (personal, professional, academic growth) of the mentor/mentee relationship—not only for the student, but also for the faculty member whose role is often neglected or taken for granted. On this point, the literature reviewed primarily focuses on the effects of mentorship in terms of how the mentee is impacted in specific, often time-limited situations. There is very little research regarding mutual mentor/mentee experiences that contribute to personal, social, and intellectual development within the academic community. In other words, the available research does not spotlight the formal utilization of mentorship as a means through which to integrate experiences that would contribute to the broader development of the whole person. With regard to the experiences of faculty as mentors, while the literature reveals some speculation and, certainly, prescription (or provocation) about how faculty can

impact student development, little is thought through in terms of their perceptions,

frustrations, mindsets, or dispositions in this role. As Baxter Magolda (2002) pointed out,

> learning partnerships require abandoning traditional notions of classroom authority . . . adaptive challenges call for changes of heart and mind . . . to genuinely share authority with learners, I had to change my way of thinking about learning, my role as authority, and the learners' role. (p. 35)

Therefore, while this literature review projects a necessarily student-centered focus (as it

relates to the bulk of the research), the actual study not only considered the role of the

faculty member as essential to the mentor-mentee relationship, but intentionally

incorporated an exploration of the impact of mentorship on the mentor him/herself.

Finally, this study does not address mentorship among faculty mentors as peers as it is

not relevant to the constructs of this project.

**"Mentor" as a Concept**

As a concept—perhaps even as a label— the word, "mentor," conjures abstract or

vague images due to the multiple meanings, interpretations, and expectations associated

with it. Nonetheless, "mentor" represents a concept that has been and continues to be

utilized in education, business, and military sectors (Cole, 2012; Jacobi, 1991).

Therefore, I submit that it is necessary to lay the groundwork for a review of the literature

on mentorship by first exploring how the concept of mentor has been understood in both

historical and current contexts.

Homer's first mention of the "Mentor" in the ancient Greek poem, *The Odyssey*

(translation: Fitzgerald, 1998), is most often credited for providing a fascination with the

nature of such a person who would share his/her wisdom, provide sound counsel, and

commit to establishing meaningful relationships with those whom he or she guides and sponsors. *The Odyssey* tells the story of King Odysseus who leaves home to fight in the Trojan War, authorizing Mentor oversight of his kingdom and his son. Mentor is portrayed as being instrumental in guiding the son into adulthood. However, stemming from his exploration of the expanded uses of the term "mentor" across time and cultures, Roberts (1999) suggested—upon close examination of the original text in *The Odyssey*—that Homer did not assign the positive qualities commonly associated with contemporary conceptions of mentor to his character, Mentor. Specifically, Roberts (1999) suggested that Homer's Mentor fundamentally functions as a friend of King Odysseus, as opposed to representing an individual who has established himself as a personal guide or tutor. Homer's original telling illustrates that although he was entrusted with the household while the King was away, Mentor actually did a poor job of oversight.

It was the French priest, writer, and educator de Fenelon (1699), as expressed in his novel *Les Adventur de Telemaque*, who is given credit for our current view of mentor as a helpful guide and role model. In fact, de Fenelon—who lived during the age of Enlightenment and who tutored the grandson of King Louis IV of France—rewrote the original story depicted in *The Odyssey* as a political commentary against autocratic rule. In his version, de Fenelon (1699) positioned the character Mentor as a thoughtful hero who espoused the values of brotherhood and peace, thereby highlighting the characteristics that are most commonly attributed to mentorship in current contexts and usage. Consequently, based on his reading of Fenelon's version, Roberts (1999) argued that a close examination of the actions and attitudes of Homer's Mentor would reveal a

character who possesses none of the positive qualities associated with contemporary understandings of a mentor as a constructive role model driven by ethical and humanistic values. To reiterate, according to Roberts (1999), Homer's depiction of Mentor reveals a person who fails to keep King Ulysses' household protected. Roberts (1999) argued,

> It is Fenelon, not Homer, who endows his Mentor with the qualities, abilities and attributes that have come to be incorporated into the action of modern day mentoring. With only thought and consideration, Fenelon's work may well regain its rightful place within the future writings on the concepts of mentor and mentoring. (p. 7)

Regardless of the origins of meaning and characteristics, the attributes of a mentor that have prevailed over time include commonly held views of someone who possesses knowledge and who can be trusted; in other words, someone who can advise and encourage a protégé.

From such early literary works as *The Odyssey* and others that followed it, the mentoring relationship would seem as if it should be part of the educational experience and, most appropriately, within university culture. Accepting the traditional view of the role of mentor as helper or guide, this dynamic certainly can be seen in aspects of the academic world whereby one individual serves as a guide to a novice; on this view, implying a foundation of accomplishment on the part of the mentor in some aspect of life from which he/she imparts knowledge, skills, or a sense of expertise to the other. Thus, a seasoned professor can be viewed as a mentor to a new, junior professor; or an experienced administrator can mentor a novice in his/her department. Similarly, this

traditional construct of mentor as helper or guide seems to have prevailed within the

typical faculty to student relationship over the course of time.

In more recent decades, however, the mentorship concept—and with that, the role

of the mentor— has experienced a variety of nuanced understandings and modes of

expression. In fact, because of the variety of ways in which the term "mentor" has been

and continues to be used in academia and elsewhere, implicating a kaleidoscope of

potential approaches to the role, research suggests that we should be very clear about

defining the purpose and expectations associated with it. Hansman (2002) stated that the

options or perspectives associated with the role of mentor cover a broad spectrum,

ranging from that of a person endowed with mystical powers aimed at influencing others;

to a professional consultant who helps the newcomer navigate and adapt to a business

culture/organization; to individuals, regardless of their fields or disciplines, who serve as

guides/role models for the newly initiated, at times involving very personal constructs on

the one hand or very professional constructs on the other. According to Hansman (2002),

this range of perspectives and interpretations of the mentor role has allowed for a

categorical approach with which to organize what she defined as informal and formal

relationships. Hansman (2002) suggested,

> Informal mentoring relationships are psychosocial mentoring relationships,
> enhancing protégés' esteem and building confidence through interpersonal
> dynamics, emotional bonds, mutual discovery of common interests, and
> relationship building (Kram & Isabella, 1985). Formal mentoring relationships, in
> contrast, are generally organized and sponsored by workplaces or professional
> organizations; a formal process matches mentors and protégés for the purpose of
> building careers. (p. 1)

I submit that Hansman's (2002) two categories of informal and formal relationships can be applied to Private University's culture of mentorship initiative because, from its initial planning stages to its formal implementation (fall 2016), the underlying proposition has been to emphasize and encourage both the personal and academic dynamics of the mentor-mentee relationship equally; in this way, encouraging a unified culture of mentorship that advances its commitment to a more inclusive, humanistic praxis of mentoring in the academic setting. Therefore, in principle and as initially conceived, Private University's mentorship initiative can be understood to give equal weight to mentoring processes that promote individual (personal) development and academic/professional development.

Moving the discussion forward toward more contemporary contexts, it is significant to note that the term "mentor" continues to be used and exchanged with descriptors such as "guide," "sponsor," "counselor," "advisor," and "coach" (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). In using any of these descriptors, the intention typically signifies the role of mentor as being one of looking after the mentee's best interests (Smink, 1999). Given this common application as it contributes to a conventional conception of mentor as helper or guide, there appears to be a lack of research regarding the actual practice of mentoring. As such, much of the research has been directed toward understanding the benefits of being mentored rather than *how* mentorship is or should be exercised (Chao, 1997; Fagenson-Eland, 1989; Scandura, 1992). While Hansman (2002) reported that scholarly interest in the concept of mentorship increased during the second half of the 20th century, empirical investigations into mentoring practices had been uncharacteristic

until the 1990's. Consequently, although there has been progress in acknowledging and promoting the importance of mentorship from the 1990s to the present time, the functions and responsibilities of a mentor have not been made sufficiently clear (either in the field or in the literature), thus leaving those in the role of mentor potentially uneducated and subject to the possibility of promoting negative consequences for the mentee (Hudson, 2005). Furthermore, the general assumption from the literature regarding mentorship as a universally positive experience has not sufficiently accounted for the many socioeconomic and cultural characteristics that distinguish one individual from another, particularly as these characteristics relate to the mentee (Hansman, 2002). I submit that these individual characteristics do have an impact on how one might engage in a mentoring relationship, both in the educational setting and in the realm of work.

**Overview of the Research: Mentorship and the Undergraduate Student**

As I reviewed the literature, I questioned why there has been such a growth in programs utilizing a mentoring approach to working with undergraduates? Retaining students seemed to be an insinuated and often stated purpose for mentoring. While the research ostensibly connects mentorship to academic achievement and career preparation, I suggest that admissions and retention concerns tend to underpin those two areas. For example, as colleges and universities have adopted a business model to stay afloat, "selling" the college experience has increased enrollment in the freshman year. However, research indicates that there has been a significant drop-out rate between the freshman and sophomore years nationwide (New, 2014). Some theorists have sought to determine if there is a relationship between mentorship and retention, and based on the available

literature, there appears to be (Hoffer, 2010; Shultz, Colton, & Colton, 2001). Although Private University has not openly discussed its mentorship initiative in the context of retention, administrators have associated mentorship and retention in ongoing conversations. On the other hand, the literature that incorporates a humanistic approach specific to undergraduate mentorship, apart from admission and retention issues, is limited in emphasis and scope.

In contrast to the undergraduate focus, results from my review of the literature revealed much about mentorship involving faculty and graduate students. In contrast, there was much less available research on higher education mentoring practices pertaining to undergraduate students as a whole. In other words, the majority of research on undergraduate mentorship seems to be isolated to specific disciplines, especially the professions. Therefore, based on this study's focus aimed at the experiences of undergraduate students across departments and disciplines and at their mentors at Private University, this section is primarily based on a review of the existing mentorship literature pertaining to the undergraduate student. To this end, and using the key words "undergraduate" AND "mentoring" in combination, a preliminary search of the ProQuest Central database revealed almost 11,000 records on file since 1983. These records represent scholarly articles, books, and dissertations that provide insight into some aspect of higher education and its connection to mentorship. As previously stated, records further indicated that there was a steady growth of research interest in the areas of higher education and mentorship during the 1990s. Moreover, the number of these records escalated toward the second half of the last decade of the twentieth century, with a

breakdown of the time line showing that 9,829 of the original 10,880 records accrued

after 2000, steadily increasing each year since.

Across the glut of research revealed within the broad Internet search of

"mentoring" and "undergraduate," a sampling of programs, models, and initiatives

appearing to represent both formal and informal mentoring relationships emerged. For

example, a formal mentoring relationship in a particular academic setting involved the

assignment of a mentor to a student for purposes of guiding or assisting the student with

research projects (Jacobi, 1991). Informal relationships involved connections that

evolved as a result of common interests between the mentor and mentee or the

establishment of a professional friendship, albeit a friendship without a recognized sense

of commitment (Hansman, 1998; Kram, 1985). In both cases, the research indicated that

mentored individuals generally benefitted from the attention given to them by mentors,

particularly in terms of being guided to make better life choices (Smink, 1999).

Furthermore, research revealed some evidence that the undergraduate student's academic

performance often improves as a result of being mentored (Anderson, Dey, Gray, &

Thomas, 1995). Research also presented strong evidence that mentored individuals

perform better once they enter the workplace (Chao, 1997; Scandura, 1992). Intended to

infer, as well as affirm, the positive aspects of mentorship, I include the following

passage from Chao (1997) who noted,

> Data from 82 current protégés and 69 former protégés were compared with those
> from 93 individuals who reported never having a mentor. The three groups were
> compared on career outcomes, job satisfaction, organizational socialization, and
> income measures across a 5-year period. Results showed consistent differences
> between mentored and non-mentored individuals. (p. 1)

Other recent research efforts isolated specific aspects or applications of mentorship in the college or university setting. For example, Propp and Rhodes (2006) are among those researchers who have studied the constructs of student expectations within the mentor/mentee relationship. Their research suggests that students expect advisors to perform both as academic and personal, developmental guides. Propp and Rhodes (2006) also noted that specific to the developmental function, upper class undergraduates demonstrate a preference for more individualized approaches in the areas of guidance and advisement; in contrast, demonstrating a lower level of expectation regarding the academic dimension of mentoring. In turn, Gordon, Habley, and Grites (2008) represent a segment of researchers who have studied both formal and informal mentoring experiences, offering a variety of advising scenarios that reflect the range of students' individual needs and preferences. Within their collection of research, Gordon et al. (2008) also addressed the many ways in which scholars have studied how students identify, select, or are paired with a mentor. Generally speaking, the current literature on mentoring and the undergraduate experience is still limited, most often dealing with those students involved in the sciences, health care, and other specialized areas of study typically associated with the professions (McCarthy & Mangione, 2000). To reiterate a point made earlier, a greater percentage of the current research on mentoring in higher education appears to be directed at the experiences of graduate students and faculty.

Overall, the research indicates that most documented mentorship initiatives in higher education are implemented and experienced through formal programs. Such efforts tend to represent institutional priorities aimed at supporting academic persistence

for those students who may be underprepared for the level of academic rigor expected at the university level, or who are considered high risk for other reasons (Astin, 1977; Erkut & Mokros, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). At the same time, the potential success of these programs seems to be impacted by students' unique characteristics and experiences related to gender, race, sexuality, and other diverse identifications (Calabrese, 1996; Jacobi, 1991; L. M. Johnson, 2006). On this last point, I noted previously that research on participant characteristics is limited, and I see this as an area of mentorship research that needs to be expanded.

Finally, some of the increasing interest in mentorship and its relation to education is reflected in the rise and nature of the research that began in 1990, and which continues to grow to this day. Thus, tracing back to the 1990s, this expansion of interest appears to have been driven by the belief that American education has not adequately provided for the development of skills necessary to compete in a global economy (National Center of Education and the Economy Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce (1990). On the premise that this is still the case, I suggest that it is even more imperative for educational institutions to redesign and implement mentorship initiatives that address—equally—students' academic skills and their capacities for personal development within the contexts of an even more complex and inter-connected contemporary world. In this way, students might be better prepared to effectively and healthfully negotiate the realities of living, learning, and working in the advancing years of the 21st century.

**Selected Primary Studies of Undergraduate Mentoring Programs**

Though a concept with a very long history, the actual study of mentorship in the context of higher education was originally undertaken by faculty at the University of Michigan in 1911 (C. S. Johnson, 1989). It was much later in the 20th century before attempts were made to define the role of mentor, as a concept, and to elucidate the functions associated with mentorship as a practice within the educational realm. This section of the review is intended to provide a brief overview of the research concerns that inform this particular study of mentorship in the undergraduate setting, starting with a focus on primary sources. Here, I highlight the work of researchers who have attempted to uncover common operational definitions of mentorship, along with studies that demonstrate the link between mentorship and academic success within the undergraduate experience. At the same time, it is important to note that relative to my research efforts, I found that primary studies aimed at mentors and mentorship in the realm of undergraduate education were limited.

**Operational definitions of mentorship.** Because the terms "mentor" and "mentorship" have not—historically—been clearly and/or consistently conceptualized, I found it challenging to navigate the available research aimed at clarifying these terms and their contemporary significance to higher education. In an overall sense, mentors have been recognized as existing and functioning across a number of contexts, including (a) the academic arena; (b) the world of business; (c) the realm of developmental psychology; and (d) the professional fields of sports, medicine, and law. Yet, these areas, themselves, illustrate the difficulty of maintaining a common view or definition of

mentor and mentorship based on their distinctive cultures and purposes within

community and social structures. While there may be some similarities across these broad

areas, the focus of each can be very different. For example, mentoring at-risk youth, new

employees in a business setting, or undergraduates on a college campus all qualify under

the mantle of mentorship, but their particular functions likely require distinct definitions

and approaches (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Eby, 1997; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois,

2008; W. B. Johnson, 2007a).

Specific to the realm of higher education, a number of scholars have underscored

the importance of developing relationships between students and faculty (Pascarella,

Terenzini, & Hibel, 1978; Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood, & Bavry, 1975). While a

deliberate focus on teacher/student relationships infers some degree of common ground,

definitions related to multiple/varied conceptions of such relationships have provided fine

distinctions within the field of higher education. For example, there is a conception of

teacher/student relationships that highlights a hierarchical dynamic, emphasizing the

significance of rank within its definitional description (Blackwell, 1989). Other

conceptions prioritize the functions of support, nurture, and guidance, thereby implicating

differently nuanced definitions applied to the role of mentor (Moses, 1989; Shandley,

1989). Still other conceptions of mentoring relationships highlight activities

recommended for practice between mentor and mentee (Schmidt & Wolfe, 1980). Such

distinctions have value, but they also present a challenge to educators and administrators

in terms of generating consistent and effective understandings from which to design and

implement effective mentorship programs. For example, as a long-time faculty member

and mentorship advocate at Private University, I can attest to the reality that we continue

to experience a range of operational definitions in our attempts to understand mentorship

and the best practices of mentors. As such, the issue of definitional disparities impacts

our ability to assess and compare mentorship roles and practices. In fact, in a recent study

of peer mentorship, the researchers continued to reiterate the need for and value of

establishing shared definitions of what it means to provide mentorship support to

undergraduate students (Egege & Kutieleh, 2015). Although mentorship is considered a

best practice in higher education, without clear parameters it becomes difficult to

compare and evaluate.

**The relational aspects of mentoring.** Theoretically, mentoring involves both the

psychological and emotional support to accomplish whatever aims mentors and mentees

determine as being useful to the mentee's development, regardless of the environmental

context (Nora & Crisp, 2007). Ultimately, mentoring is based upon the development of a

*bonded* relationship that takes place over time (W. B. Johnson, 2007a). According to

W. B. Johnson (2007a),

> Mentoring is a personal and reciprocal relationship in which a more experienced
> (usually older) faculty member acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor
> of a less experienced (usually younger) student or faculty member. A mentor
> provides the protégé with knowledge, advice, counsel, challenges, and support in
> the protégé's pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession. (p. 20)

What W. B. Johnson (2007a) considers to be critical components include skills,

personality traits, and knowledge of how to develop a new mentoring relationship. These

skills also serve to transform previously formed relationships into new stages, self-knowledge, and the ability to navigate unexpected developments and conflict.

In contrast to W. B. Johnson's (2007a) view, Hinsdale (2015) cautioned that, despite the commonly held notion that mentorship is often seen to be rich and enduring, often this is not the case in real-world mentoring relationship. She pointed out that published guidelines on developing these relationships are often highly instrumental, citing the Council on Undergraduate Research and the University of Michigan (2003). Hinsdale (2015) has noted Johnson's role in providing contemporary guidelines associated with the role of mentor and has commended him for his synthesis of extensive research around the topic of mentorship. However, she expressed concern that some of his advice stops short of a deeper awareness of the hierarchical nature of mentorship and its potentially negative implications. Hinsdale (2015) stated,

> I applaud the careful exposition of mentor skills and traits, and the honest appraisal of working across gender and/or race. However, Johnson's work does not go far enough. First, it is based upon a western normative assumption that the mentoring relationship takes place between two autonomous individuals who each occupy a "side" of the mentoring pair. Within the pair, there is an understood hierarchy in which the mentor occupies the more powerful position. Johnson acknowledges this hierarchy exists, and cautions mentors to be cognizant of power dynamics. However, the imbalance created by the hierarchical relationship between mentor and protégé can insinuate itself into relationships across difference in a destabilizing way. (p. 50)

Hinsdale's (2015) concern has to do with the fact that, very often, mentorship is employed in opportunity programs that can target privileged student populations (e.g., academically gifted, STEM majors, and those in certain professional tracks like medicine, law, and business). In this kind of scenario, historically underrepresented populations are

frequently excluded. Hinsdale (2015) critiqued W. B. Johnson (2007a) and others who have attempted to provide instrumental guidelines to mentorship practice; as such, ignoring the subtleties known to exist in working across differences. She asserted that all too often, when break-downs occur (e.g., not completing a project, not attending scheduled sessions, not following through on mutual commitments), the protégé tends to be blamed for not fulfilling his or her part of the relationship. On this point, Hinsdale (2015) attributed this perspective of blaming the protégé as a common habit of the academy, rooted in the traditional mentor's notion of hierarchy that continues to prevail. Maintaining that this hierarchical mindset is still the dominant worldview in the higher education environment, characteristics that reflect a different cultural expression are viewed as deficits, according to Hindsale (2015).

*Links between mentorship and academic success for student retention.* Broadly conceived, academic success in higher education is discussed in contexts ranging from maintaining a minimally acceptable grade point average to the ability to participate with the mentor in advanced research efforts, often as a protégé. At the lower end of this spectrum—focusing on the mentee's ongoing eligibility as an undergraduate in good academic standing—is the issue of student retention as a mentorship concern. In fact, studies that focus on retention efforts within undergraduate education have been of interest since the middle of the 20th century. During that era, however, the research produced was primarily correlational—aimed at superficial understandings of cause and effect specific to retention—with little to no theoretical foundation (Cash, 1990).

Overall, retention has become a very important and popular topic for college administrators (Barefoot, 2004). Within the past 20 years, few subjects have gained as much popularity as student retention research and graduation rates. Significantly, graduation rates have become a chief measure of quality across the nation for colleges, universities, and prospective students and their families (Barefoot, 2004). In turn, retention issues have given rise to research that includes comparative data for variables such as psychological, sociological, and economical characteristics. These studies also take into account the motivational and aspirational profiles of undergraduate students (Tinto, 2005). As a university administrator, I have been part of a team of university leaders who discuss using these models as predictive tools proposed to enrollment management and related policy development.

Emerging from such retention concerns, colleges and universities began to develop formal mentoring programs with the hope of effecting better student integration into the academic community (Bragg, 1994). According to Bragg (1994), the speculation has been that the lack of student persistence could be impacted positively by close relational connections with a mentor. Furthermore, he discovered a positive impact on the student's development of realistic expectations regarding the college experience as he looked at the relationship between early college adjustment and the availability of a mentor (Bragg, 1994). Because the new undergraduate's early adjustment to the college experience could presuppose her/his academic success and persistence (i.e., retention), I suggest that positive experiences with a mentor can lay the groundwork for relational connections that support the development of student self-confidence in this new

environment. In other words, self-confidence might be understood to manifest in the new undergraduate's overall college endeavors, ranging from the personal to the academic. In this context and reflecting research predating Bragg (1994), Huggins (1987) also discovered a positive impact on the student's sense of satisfaction with the college experience including academic success, although he did not make a connection between student satisfaction and success with mentorship. Since Huggins (1987) and Bragg (1994), numerous researchers have made positive associations between theoretical conceptions of mentorship linked to undergraduate academic success, dating from the 1990s going forward (Brown-Minis, 1999; Cousert, 1999; Petruolo, 1998; Salinitri, 2005).

　　To conclude this section, most of the research interest specific to mentorship in undergraduate education can be categorized as either related to (a) career development and job search functions (Kram, 1985; Olian, Carroll, Giannantonia, & Feren, 1988) or to (b) psychosocial functions (Lester & Johnson, 1981; Moses, 1989; Shandley, 1989). While there appears to be general consensus among the researchers as to the emergence of these particular research categories, there is less agreement about the effectiveness of formal mentorship programs versus the informal practice of mentorship. To clarify, formal programs generally involve the purposeful assignment of a student to a faculty member or professional staff member. Informal mentorship relationships are those that result from a mutual interest, as in the case of a student seeking the research guidance of a faculty member. Ultimately, and as I have previously pointed out, the growth of formal programs suggests a predominant acceptance of the mentoring relationship as an effective

strategy for promoting academic persistence and success (Conrad, 1985; Noe, 1988a, 1988b). However, the research has not provided conclusive results that speak to this presumption of acceptance because studies in this area are still limited. For example, one study considered the informal mentorship impact on the undergraduate, but was careful not to suggest that there was a causal connection due to the informal nature of the relationship (Erkut & Mokros, 1984). Further, while there is a robust collection of research that underlines the importance of contact with faculty for undergraduate students— considered a high-impact effect on academic success—collectively, this research does not present as an endorsement of a particular type of mentoring relationship based on the informal nature of the relationships studied (Astin, 1977; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977). Ultimately, I suggest that more focused research specific to the undergraduate experience, particularly within 21$^{st}$ century contexts, continue in order to build a stronger theoretical framework of mentorship that might substantiate the linkage between human relationships and individual development. This suggestion overtly calls to mind the conceptual framework of this study grounded in possibilities of (a) subjectification, (b) self-authorship, and (c) transformative learning experiences for the undergraduate student.

**Selected Secondary Studies of Undergraduate Mentoring Programs**

In this section, I summarize three research projects (reviews of research literature/other studies) that have contributed to the planning and implementation of my study. Specific to my process of reviewing the projects individually, I interpreted each as building upon the other. Thus, with a chronological order in mind relative to the

publication of their work—Jacobi (1991); Crisp and Cruz (2009); and Gershenfeld (2014)—I ordered the following discussions according to the titles of the researchers' articles. A final comment surrounding this process: after synthesizing my interpretations of all three projects, I developed an evolving clarity around issues and concerns pertaining to mentorship and the undergraduate experience that have persisted over time.

**Mentoring and undergraduate academic success: A literature review.** Jacobi (1991) undertook a critical review of the literature about mentoring that covered a 10 to 15-year span (note the 1991 publication date of her resulting report) in an effort to understand what had become a growing trend in higher education. As evidenced by the expanding utilization of the terms "mentor" and "mentorship" during the latter part of the 20th century, Jacobi (1991) was struck by a growing, general endorsement of the mentorship concept and its value as an education-based practice aimed at student retention and academic enrichment. In her research, however, she uncovered the lack of any widely agreed-upon operational definition of the term "mentorship" and its applied meanings. Furthermore, she noted that her research efforts revealed a weak link between mentorship and the assertion that it promotes academic success.

In her widely cited research review, Jacobi (1991) noted three important deficiencies pertaining to the application of mentorship in education: (a) no consensus on the definition of mentoring, (b) a lack of theoretical foundation, and (c) some methodological weaknesses. She was able to contribute to an understanding of mentorship and higher education by identifying four potential theoretical categories within which to focus: involvement in the learning process, academic and social

integration, social support, and development support. As a result of Jacobi's study of the literature, her recommendation for future research included looking at (a) the extent to which undergraduate students are mentored, i.e. the nature, quality and length of time of the experience, (b) how many students relative to the student body are provided this relationship (mentorship aimed at a particular population or opportunities for any student), and (c) the nature of the mentor-mentee relationship. My research project focuses of two of these three recommendations: the extent to which undergraduates are mentored, and the nature and quality of that experience.

*Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007.* Despite an apparent, ongoing lack of theoretical consensus around the concept of mentorship, the proliferation of formal mentoring programs has continued from the 1990s and well into the 21st century; thus, expanding the scope of Jacobi's research. In fact, the popularity of mentorship was so strong into the first decade of the 21st century that Crisp and Cruz (2009) felt compelled to revisit and update the Jacobi (1991) effort. These scholars attempted to synthesize and critically analyze the then more recent literature around mentorship and the undergraduate experience in order to provide the very things that Jacobi (1991) identified as missing. According to Crisp and Cruz (2009),

> More specifically, Jacobi recognized the lack in understanding of: a common definition and conceptualization of mentoring; the prevalence of both informal and formal mentoring relationships; the extent, and ways in which mentoring contributes to academic success; and the mentoring functions that are most important to the academic success of college students. (p. 525)

In addition, Crisp and Cruz (2009) noted the fact that mentorship research has lagged behind the actual development of mentorship programs within the undergraduate sector of higher education during the same time period. Furthermore, along with their review of the literature on mentorship studies in the academic disciplines of education, business, and psychology, Crisp and Cruz (2009) reviewed empirical research that investigated the potential impact of mentorship on undergraduate students' success. Expanding their reach even further, these researchers broadened the body of existing research (at the time) by including investigations of student populations who had experienced mentoring relationships in higher education institutions outside the United States.

Overall, Crisp and Cruz (2009) reiterated several of the same discoveries revealed by Jacobi (1991). For example, despite its historical and literary references dating back to Homer, the concept of mentorship has retained its ambiguous character. This was evidenced by the 50 plus definitions that surfaced across their research, with multiple and varied meanings further exacerbated by inconsistent use of the term (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Nonetheless, since Jacobi's original delineation of commonly held understandings of mentorship, the findings of Crisp and Cruz's (2009) literature review support the three ways in which mentorship research has fundamentally agreed: (a) mentoring relationships focus on the growth of an individual; (b) mentorship practices can provide professional guidance, role modeling, and psychological support; and (c) mentorship represents a personal and reciprocal relationship.

Concluding the findings of their review process, while Crisp and Cruz (2009) argued for some positive impacts of mentorship specific to the undergraduate student's

success, concerns about methodological issues continue. In particular, the issue of multiple operational definitions continues to contribute to inconsistencies in understanding and implementation of mentoring practices. Furthermore, Crisp and Cruz (2009) asserted that qualitative research efforts to examine mentorship fall into the realm of trying to capture and understand students' perceptions of mentoring experiences, but "appear to have not utilized procedures to ensure data accuracy, such as triangulation, member checking" (p. 533). Lastly, Crisp and Cruz (2009) noted an increase in the diversity of students involved in mentorship studies undertaken since Jacobi's (1991) time, also suggesting that there remains a need to better understand participant characteristics as an essential component of future research efforts.

*A review of undergraduate mentoring programs.* Gershenfeld (2014) conducted a review of undergraduate mentoring programs between 2008 and 2012. Her review involved 20 published empirical studies of mentoring programs in which undergraduates were either peer mentors or mentees. In her research, Gershenfeld (2014) built upon the two previously discussed studies by Jacobi (1991) and Crisp and Cruz (2009), both of which yielded a number of significant findings. As a result of these and other studies, Gershenfeld (2014) was able to use the limitations identified by various researchers of prior studies to guide her own research. To reiterate, such limitations included the exclusion of mentee characteristics as research factors, a lack of clear definition of what is meant by mentoring, and a lack of clarity around a theoretical foundation for the practices of mentorship that would be generally, if not universally, accepted.

Overall, Gershenfeld (2014) concluded that while there has been a "proliferation of mentoring programs on college campuses" (p. 365), there does not seem to be conclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of their practices. This conclusion begs the question, "Why have mentoring programs become so prolific in higher education?" Gershenfeld (2014) summarized her general supposition that undergraduate mentorship programs are most often established for the purpose of engaging and building student-faculty relationships in an effort to impact academic performance, retention, and career development. At the same time, she maintained, "Limited academic progress has been made on shortcomings identified in the previous reviews" (Gershenfeld, 2014, p. 380). These shortcomings refer to the ambiguity of the term "mentorship" as well as the lack of theoretical foundation. Without a solid theoretical foundation to underscore mentorship as both a concept and as a practice, it is difficult to align research strategies to determine the quality of the mentoring experience and the effectiveness of the programs currently in place. Further, without a solid and consistently framed theoretical foundation, the creation and implementation of new mentorship programs can be seen as somewhat arbitrary and subject to inconsistencies and misunderstandings. I suggest that this is a costly omission given the investments of financial and human resources supporting mentorship efforts in the realm of undergraduate education.

Based on her focused study of the undergraduate mentorship literature, Gershenfeld (2014) determined that 70% of what she reviewed had distinct theoretical frameworks, such as (a) cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973); (b) shared learning (Tinto, 1995); (c) social capital and social networks (Bozionelos, 2006); (d) social integration

(Bean, 1980); (e) social supports (Pearson, 1990); (f) borderlands paradigm (Anzaldúa, 1987); (g) feminist and network models (Benishek, Bieschke, Park, & Slattery, 2004); (h) capitalization (Judge & Hurst, 2007); and (i) student approaches to learning (Duff & McKinstry, 2007). She speculated that this breadth or range of theoretical constructs reflected the range of outcomes measured by these studies, thus indicating progress in terms of the individual researcher's or researcher group's intention to construct a theoretical framing of mentorship; yet, still recognizing the persisting multiplicity of constructs as a continuing challenge to realizing a common conceptualization of mentorship (Gershenfeld, 2014). Further, Gershenfeld (2014) recommended that future research on mentorship and the undergraduate experience take into account both subjective and objective findings that consider the actual experiences of both mentors and mentees as communicated through their individual testimonies. Only a limited number of prior studies have done so. Significantly, Gershenfeld's (2014) recommendation supports the purpose and design of this study.

**Concluding Commentary on Mentorship Research**

As a result of my investigation into the available, relevant research on the topic of mentorship and the undergraduate student, I reached a fundamental conclusion that the use of the term "mentor" is inherently inconsistent. In many instances across my research process, "mentor" emerged as a word that cannot be generalized across settings and contexts because the application of its varied meanings—again, depending on context, setting, and purpose—are often too abstract to effectively apply, universally, to the undergraduate setting. Furthermore, Gershenfeld's (2014) primary observations—lack of

a consistent theoretical basis for the proliferation of mentoring programs and the need for more balance in investigating the experiences of both sides of the mentor/mentee relationship—are fair assessments in my opinion.    As a result of conducting this literature review, and relative to my interest in developing and studying a culture of mentorship initiative at Private University, I perceived a serious gap in the available research. In other words, most of the studies I encountered address mentoring as a function of coaching students toward career preparation, with negligible attention paid to ways in which the mentoring relationship might contribute to the integration of academic success with the student's personal development. Thus, academic achievement is commonly acknowledged as the primary goal of mentoring in the literature, typically in the service of career planning. Lastly, while I found a limited amount of research about overall developmental aims for undergraduate students, the issue of student development was usually presented with a focus on overcoming a disability or an at-risk status (Jacobi, 1991; W. B. Johnson, 2007b; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005).

## Integrating the College Experience within a Mentored Environment

Today, university educators are collectively recognizing the possibilities of coordinating efforts throughout the university setting to achieve more holistic learning experiences for their undergraduate students; in particular, through an emphasis on allocating time and space for students to engage activities and relationships that encourage reflective thinking practices (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2002; AAC&U & Carnegie Foundation, 2004; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and American College Personnel

Association [ACPA], 2004). Moreover, within specific areas of research that have focused on undergraduate student life outside the classroom, it has become clear that the undergraduate educational experience is not limited to traditional academics (Barber, 2014). In fact, many theorists and researchers have been advocating that the undergraduate student experience, as a whole, be given more attention with regard to alternative teaching/learning strategies (Astin, 1993; Chickering, Dalton, & Auerbach, 2006). While there has been speculation about the value of reflective teaching/learning practices, more has been discussed regarding the context and implementation of such practices (e.g., journals within first year seminars, leadership roles within campus life, writing intensive courses) rather than precisely what a reflective "practice" entails or should entail (Barber, 2014).

As a result of this trend in the research on mentoring and alternative learning experiences—specific to more holistic teaching and learning approaches in and beyond the classroom—the concept of a mentored environment has surfaced to take into account widespread efforts on the part of college and university staff to work in partnership; in other words, to support the idea of extending the educational climate beyond the traditional classroom and across the student's experience of campus life. This is the approach behind Private University's culture of mentorship initiative. In a particularly meaningful study that supports the concept of a mentored environment, "Documenting Effective Educational Practice," Kuh (2005) suggested that purposeful activities be initiated beyond what is learned in the classroom and implemented across the campus community. Such purposeful activities could include: (a) first-year seminars, (b) planned

events designed to facilitate interactions between students and faculty, (c) upgraded

student advisement practices devised as valued forms of teaching, and (d) an institutional

approach that emphasizes the need to "Stitch together academic and social experiences"

(Kuh, 2005). Specifically, Kuh (2005) stated,

> Efforts must be made to intentionally connect the in-class and out-of-class spheres of students' lives. In general, efforts that tie the academic program to students' out-of-class experiences are likely to be the most successful. Examples of these are service learning, student interest groups, and other forms of learning communities. (p. 105)

In turn, and in alignment with the institution's mission, such activities can exert a

tremendous impact on a student's persistence to complete his/her degree. The broad

implication of the mentored environment approach is that student learning is enhanced by

experiences shared within a community and in relationships that provide more

substantive interactions, including activities that promote regular habits of personal

reflection (Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Terrion & Leonard, 2007).

Based on a book written by Parks (2000)—*Big Questions, Worthy Dreams:*

*Mentoring Young Adults in their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*—Frazzini and

Fink (2009) conducted a mixed methods pilot study to test three concepts thought to be

important to the design of mentor training at the University of Minnesota. Formatted as a

training program, the purpose of the pilot study was to support programs designed to

provide transformational mentorship practices at the university, thereby nurturing a

mentored environment/culture of mentorship ideal there. The three concepts that

underscored the training design behind the pilot study incorporated the following points,

as adapted from Parks (2000): (a) the significance of becoming aware of one's role in constructing reality, (b) the supposition that dialogue is critical in realizing one's own belief system, and (c) the importance of developing a capacity to act in alignment with that which is "just and satisfying" (p. 1).

As implemented, the pilot study involved the examination of two years of student evaluations and mentor feedback from a co-curricular program (classroom and non-classroom environment) that has been in operation at the University of Minnesota for over three decades, and which continues to this day. The program involves the formal pairing of mentor to mentee. While recognizing the anecdotal nature of the qualitative data, Frazzini and Fink (2009) asserted that the results of the pilot study demonstrated evidence of students' movement from self-awareness toward expanded communications with others and, ultimately, the tendency to act on the personal discoveries that resulted from this progression. Each of these stages of movement—from self-awareness, to communications with others, to acting on personal discoveries—represents a benchmark associated with Parks's (2000) developmental concepts. Ultimately, the study suggests that such transitional experiences were/are encouraged as a result of the mentorship practices embodied by the program at the University of Minnesota. Similarly, Frazzini and Fink (2009) recognized,

> [encouragement of] thought and interaction in a challenging environment are key to the development of critical thinking and self-awareness in young college aged adults . . . these important levels of maturity are achieved by providing situations that present us with both the challenge and the resources to accomplish that development. (p. 1)

Within the context of the mentored environment, Frazzini and Fink (2009) made an important distinction between types of mentorship praxis in an academic setting: informational mentorship and transformational mentorship. They described an informational mentor as one who is chiefly focused on the student's career objectives, also qualifying that sometimes this type of relationship may include elements of personal development, but that it is not the expressed intention of the informational approach. While Frazzini and Fink (2009) argued that informational mentoring relationships are important and aimed at important outcomes, they are not and should not be the only purpose for participating in mentored relationships during the undergraduate years.

In contrast, transformational mentorship is focused on the "personal growth and development of those mentored exclusive of career" (Frazzini & Fink, 2009, p. 2). They characterized this growth as being similar to the frameworks associated with the Social Change Model of Leadership Development (Astin & Astin, 1996), Self-Authorship Student Development Theory (Baxter Magolda, 2004b), and Ethical and Moral Development (M. J. Perry, 1998). The Social Change Model of Leadership positions leadership as emerging through relationships based on the shared desire to accomplish a particular goal. This cooperative approach stands in opposition to a more conventional view of leadership that emphasizes a single person's ability to lead others. The transformative quality of the Social Change Model emerges from the interaction that takes place between individuals as they work toward a common goal. In contrast to a more social orientation, the Self-Authorship Student Development Theory emphasizes the development of the intrapersonal aspects of self, including (a) learning to trust the

internal voice, (b) building an internal foundation from which to grow and lead, and (c) learning to motivate behavior as a result of an internal commitment to do so. In turn, M. J. Perry's (1998) theory of Ethical and Moral Development explains the individual's cognitive and ethical development as "positions" through which a person evolves in his or her meaning-making process. Each new position of cognitive and ethical development represents a point at which the person encompasses her/his former world view and extends beyond it. In transformational terms, each new position represents a transformation or a movement beyond the previous position in that one's view is no longer the same; it has been permanently changed.

While the three theories do not specifically address the mentorship experience as an impetus for developmental growth and change, they inherently support the view that transformation can happen within an undergraduate's college experience based on her/his fundamental constructs. Ultimately, transformational mentorship is concerned with helping students learn how to make connections with others by first understanding how they construct their own lives. Thus, transformational mentoring relies on the premise that the mentor and mentee can communicate in such a way that a new insight or new cognitive/ethical "position" can be attained by the student; as such, resulting in a larger view of life that distinguishes transformational mentoring from a more common view of mentoring as transferring information.

In contrast to more interactive communication processes that are supported by personal reflection practices, informational mentorship is characterized as the mentor disseminating information to the mentee—a one-directional form of communication.

Essentially, transformational mentorship—with its emphasis on personal growth, communication, and shared experiences— is an integrative process that serves to de-compartmentalize the entire undergraduate experience by disturbing a rigid developmental stage in which the world is seen and experienced as a dualistic one; in other words, a world in which student versus faculty/staff roles are concretely bounded and defined, and issues are either right or wrong, good or bad despite the context. Transformational mentorship practices serve to challenge such rigidly held thought processes in order to advance higher education as a genuinely developmental, human experience; one that can positively impact mentee and mentor alike. These practices support the notion that we both create ourselves from within through relationship with self, while we continue to create ourselves in the world through our relationships with other people.

**The Mentored Environment Informed by a Theory of Subjectification**

Biesta (2010) contended that a "good" education should be aimed at these three primary purposes: qualification, socialization, and subjectification. Briefly, qualification has to do with developing skills and abilities that ensure a person is productive in his or her adult life. Socialization is about becoming incorporated into one's culture in order to be able to understand the norms and values related to co-existing in the world. The concept of subjectification is more complex and requires a deeper understanding of the nature of human existence. To explain, subjectification is about the process of realizing one's unique expression of life (Biesta, 2010). It represents a state of being in which the individual realizes a sense of personal agency and a life purpose to which education can

contribute within the creative process of personal development. When a person begins to see her/himself as more than one of a objectifying, de-personalized category (girl, boy, conservative, liberal), it is at that point that creative possibilities surrounding one's role in life can be entertained. Subjective self-awareness marks a point at which the individual is positioned to assume personal responsibility for taking action in the world as a unique and empowered individual.

I would speculate that most systems of education, and particularly those in the U.S., have focused on qualification and socialization at the expense of subjectification. Biesta (2010) suggested the same. I expect that this is true precisely because of our obsession with measurement and positivistic ways of knowing. I suggest that this loss of perspective, emanating from the current system's instrumental and objectifying approach to student development, can result in the loss of the student's sense of self as a particular person in the world. Essentially, the individual's uniquely individual "being" is the state of existence to which subjectification really speaks.

Going further, as a person becomes more focally aware of her unique existence in the world, she can experience a sense of disconnect from the consciousness within which she has grown by way of family upbringing, schooling, and the acquisition of social norms. Initially, this experience of disconnection typically results in a generalized sense of uncertainty and anxiety about newly emerging self-identifications, issues of belonging, and an overall concern surrounding the future. As educators, we can be available to help students recognize this emerging self. We can support the student as she begins to disassociate herself from an externally imposed identify based on the culture in which she

was raised by providing guidance through new identifications grounded in self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-ownership—all defining features of subjectification. Thus, the core basis of subjectification signifies that, as a result of my unique existence, I have the capacity to assume and direct my personal agency to the purpose of rewriting my identity, my current story, and my future. On this view, how each of us develops as a human being is, therefore, dependent upon how we recognize ourselves as human subjects endowed with the capacity to think about our thinking; that is, how we use our thinking to make choices, take action, and assume responsibility for the consequences of our actions. Ultimately, I am proposing that subjectification represents a distinctly human quality of self-awareness that can lead to and inform transformational learning experiences for undergraduate students. According to Mezirow's (2000) adult education theory of transformational learning, subjectification requires this level of self-awareness. In turn, without self-awareness, the individual cannot author herself.

**The Mentored Environment and Possibilities of Student Self-Authorship**

During these early decades of the 21st century, those of us who view education as an integration of academic and human development remain centered on the following overarching purposes specific to higher education: (a) prepare students for lifelong pursuits of professional and civic involvement, (b) engage and guide students' capacities to manage personal challenges both within and outside the academic environment, and (c) educate students from the frameworks of both technical skills and life-sustaining skills in order to create meaningful and purposeful lives—all within the context of a highly complex world. Articulating these purposes, Daloz et al. (1996) wrote,

At their best, colleges provide space and stimulus for a process of transformation through which students move from modes of understanding that are relatively dependent upon conventional assumptions to more critical, systemic thinking that can take many perspectives into account, make discernments among them, and envision new possibilities. The deep purpose of higher education is to steward this transformation so that students and faculty together continually move from naïveté through skepticism to commitment rather than becoming trapped in mere relativism and cynicism. This movement toward a mature capacity to hold firm convictions in a world which is both legitimately tentative and irreducibly interdependent is vitally important to the formation of citizens in a complex and changing world. (p. 223)

According to Kegan (1994), the capacity to develop one's own belief system and forge a self-created identity is what enables the student to function both independently and interdependently,  signifying a concept he coined as "self-authorship", Kegan (1994) described self-authorship as a fourth order of personal meaning making in which all of values, ideologies, world views, beliefs, and assumptions, previously co-constructed with others exclusively outside the self, transform into an internally self-designed meaning making process. From this level of cognition, Kegan (1994) further explained,

[An individual] takes all of these as objects or elements of its system, rather than the system itself; it does not identify with them but views them as parts of a new whole. This new whole is an ideology, an internal identity, a *self-authorship* that can coordinate, integrate, act upon, or invent values, beliefs, convictions, generalizations, ideals, abstractions, interpersonal loyalties and intrapersonal states. It is no longer *authored by* them, it *authors* them and thereby achieves a personal authority. (p. 185)

To conclude the previous discussions of the mentored environment, subjectification, and self-authorship in an integrated fashion, I suggest that the concept of transformational mentorship supports the inherent potential of the mentor/mentee relationship, expanded through creative activities implemented across mentored environments. This intentional

process of relating can serve as a primary means through which undergraduate students might better develop their capacities to integrate the academic, personal, and social aspects of their lives during the college years. As such, Frazzini and Fink's (2009) construct of transformational mentorship, in conjunction with the mentored environment, can effectively contribute to transformative learning possibilities for the undergraduate student. In turn, the role of mentor moves well beyond a one-dimensional conception of mentor as information-provider toward a conception of mentor as a teaching/learning partner. Ultimately, the transformational mentoring relationship holds promise for promoting the student's capacity to achieve a greater awareness of personal identity creation through subjectification, leading to self-authorship and, thereby contributing to personal empowerment and agency.

In the following section, I address several theories of adult education and development to set the stage for a more direct discussion of Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning specific to adult education. From there, I draw from Mezirow's (1991) work to support a vision of higher education mentorship practice as it can be informed by transformative learning theory and, thereby, reinforce the concept of transformational mentorship as put forth by Frazzini and Fink (2009).

## Theories of Adult Development: Linkages to Transformative Learning and Mentorship in Undergraduate Education

I discovered very little else in the way of results concerning the research that matched mentorship and personal growth, transformational experience, or what is referred to as the psychosocial aspect of the undergraduate experience (Wolfe, Retallick,

Martin, & Steiner, 2008). In order to provide the necessary theoretical foundations for addressing transformative learning and its linkages to mentorship as I propose in this study, a brief overview of basic theories of early adult development is in order. After presenting these fundamental theories of adult development, I expand on Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning and reflect upon the ways in which mentorship might be considered an important correlate to transformative learning theory.

**Early Adult Development Theories**

Traditional students begin their college experiences at 17 or 18 years of age following high school. Coincidentally, this also happens to be the period in which the average young adult struggles with all the issues that accompany the development of an adult identity (Astin, 1977; Erickson, 1980; Kegan, 1982; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Based on the literature, there is general agreement that this point in life marks the beginning of a specific stage of development, marking entry into adulthood, although there are variations of opinion regarding exactly what this stage involves. For example, Erikson (1980) suggested that there are three stages of adult development: (a) early, (b) middle, and (c) late. Kegan (1982) described three stages of adult development in a very different way: (a) interpersonal, (b) institutional, and (c) inter-individual. Taking yet another approach, W. G. Perry (1968) proposed that the stages of adult development involve a progressive understanding of individual existence based on a dualistic worldview and, moving toward a relative worldview. More recent adult development theory has suggested that this particular time in a person's life, from the late teens into the early twenties, is a stage of "emerging adulthood" (Arnett & Tanner, 2006) in order to

distinguish it as a transitional phase that precedes full adulthood. Furthermore, researchers supporting a theory of emerging adulthood make this distinction as a way to account for the unique set of challenges with which the individual wrestles during this time of life (Arnett, 2006, 2007).

**Transformative Learning Theory**

Research into the theory and practice of transformative learning has developed in far-ranging and diverse ways. These diverse theories and practices have been described within dialectical tensions that do not always seem reconcilable. For example, dialectical categories include that which is rational and cognitive versus that which is emotional and/or spiritual; that which solely addresses the individual versus that which addresses social change (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Seeking to unify such disparate approaches to transformative learning into a cohesive theory, Taylor and Cranton (2012) asserted, "A more unified theory allows us to continue to speak of transformative learning while maintaining the diversity of approaches that are so important to the complexity of the field of adult education" (p. 3).

Transformative learning theory is underpinned by three grounding theoretical assumptions: (a) constructivist theory, (b) humanist theory, and (c) critical social theory. First, constructivist theory situates learning as an internal experience that necessarily requires the individual learner to manage perceptions by examining and revising those perceptions for the purpose of creating meaning. Second, humanist theory maintains that human nature is inherently good and capable of developing beyond self-interest or culturally imposed conditions. Therefore, humanist theory assumes that the

individual/groups of individuals are restricted only by a lack of imagination and creative impulse; as such, people are capable of making choices that impact themselves and their social world (Elias & Merriam, 2004). Third, critical social theory assumes a vital purpose to the transformational learning experience through the process of critique and its potential impact on societal change to promote democratic ideals. Even in democratic western cultures, critical social theory serves to expose hegemonic influences that need to be addressed and changed (Brookfield, 2005).

Tisdell (2012) offered her own way of organizing the discourse around constructivist, humanist, and critical social theories through integrating notions of individual being, the need for human interactions, and the importance of societal critique as they intersect across our understandings of intellectual, emotional, and social development. Through her work in this area, Tisdell (2012) has provided an informal, unifying framework in which the categories are not mutually exclusive but, at the same time, are equally subject to evaluation and critique singularly and as parts of the integrated whole. Ultimately, the ever-evolving interest in transformative learning and the experiences that stimulate transformation have been associated with discreet "waves" of theory building (Gunnlaugson, 2008). The first wave was predominantly built around Mezirow's (1991) work as initial architect of the theory within the context of adult education.

Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory involves a process grounded in a constructivist perspective that includes stages of examination, questioning, and revision of the way a person perceives life and the world. Mezirow (1991) began formulating his

evolving theory of adult education and development during the late 1970s by identifying

non-sequential phases found to be involved in shifts in the adult process of creating new

meaning. Prior to presenting the actual phases, I include the following passage that attests

to the implication of a pattern across the mechanisms of human learning and

understanding. On this point, Mezirow (2012) wrote,

> Our understandings and beliefs are more dependable when they produce
> interpretations and opinions that are more justifiable or true than would be those
> predicated on other understandings or beliefs. Formulating more dependable
> beliefs about our experience, assessing their contexts, seeking informed
> agreement on their meaning and justification, and making decisions based on the
> resulting insights are central to the adult learning process. Transformation Theory
> attempts to explain this process and to examine its implications for action-
> oriented adult educators. (as cited in Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 74)

Specifically, Mezirow (2012) identified the following phases as pivotal to the

process of adult learning and development, although they do not necessarily occur in a

linear order. Therefore, the items listed are numbered for purposes of clarity, and the

reader should keep in mind that these phases can be fluid.

1. A disorienting dilemma.
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are
   shared
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's
    new perspective. (as cited in Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 86)

Mezirow (2000) suggested that by passing through these phases, individuals are better able to integrate what may initially disrupt a current perspective and thereby broaden and contribute to a more meaningful understanding of their lives. Keeping these phases in mind, it is important to bring into focus the origin and expansion of his work since it was during the 1970s when Mezirow (1991, 2000, 2012) began formulating transformative learning theory focused on the adult learner. Since then, scholars of adult education—as well as scholars within other disciplines such as psychology, gender studies, cultural studies, philosophy, and nursing—have stretched the original framing of transformative learning theory by integrating its principles within their respective disciplinary constructs. Thus, this expanded integration and application of the theory brings into question issues such as the role of context, relationships, and the educator's role in cultivating transformative learning experiences for students across academic disciplines (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Certain theorists have critiqued Mezirow's (1991) work as being too focused on the individual and too driven by rationality in terms of emphasizing thought processes and limiting the role of emotions within the learning experience (Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Departing from an emphasis on the rational realm as associated with Mezirow (1991), Dirkx (2012) posited that the remaking of meaning goes well beyond rational thought to include the individual's "unconscious, imaginative, and extra-rational processes" (p. 116). Centered in a Jungian perspective, Dirkx (2012) explained the concepts of individuation and wholeness as they pertain to these uniquely human functions.

According to Stein (1998), "Jung used the term individuation to talk about psychological development which he defines as becoming a unified but also unique personality, an undivided and integrated person" (p. 175). Psychological wholeness involves conscious and unconscious aspects of one's psyche. This idea speaks directly to the interplay of conscious and unconscious, of outer and inner worlds. The concept depicts people as naturally moving toward wholeness through recognition of and relationships with the unconscious and consciousness. By working on these relationships, individuals differentiate aspects of themselves and foster integrated connections among the various parts of their psyches. (p. 117)

Essentially, Dirkx (2012) has expanded upon Mezirow's (1991) more formulaic transformative learning process by bringing to light the deeper human capacities of which the individual is not typically aware until confronted with a personally transformational experience. Even then, the individual—while experiencing a shift in thinking—may not be aware of the interplay between the conscious and subconscious.

Another branch of the research has been focused on the context of the classroom as a potential setting for transformational learning. (Brock, 2010; Glisczinski, 2007; Rush, 2008). Within the group dynamic of the classroom, it has become increasingly clear that the application of transformative learning theory is not a "one size fits all" approach. Rather, studies have shown that within such group contexts, consideration should be given to the variable impacts of social/relational connections and teaching/learning strategies (Taylor & Snyder, in Taylor & Cranton, 2012). I now move from addressing the context of transformational learning as a possibility within the classroom setting to the individual learner's sense of social responsibility resulting from a transformational experience. On this point, research about transformative learning and what provokes transformation has noted the social connection that can evoke shifts in

both the rational and the emotional realms of the individual learner—evolving from the

context of a personal experience that inspires the individual to recognize how he or she

constructs an expanded social reality to which he or she is responsible. How that

realization can influence the individual's confrontation of larger societal constructions

represents another wave of research and theory building. To fully understand this notion

of transformative learning experiences and the social realm, Taylor and Snyder (as cited

in Taylor & Cranton, 2012) situated transformative learning,

> At the intersection between the personal and the social, where a transformation is a reciprocal process (Scott, 2003)—a product both of others (social recognition, relationships) and personal change—which potentially leads to a greater sense of individual responsibility for and about others (social accountability). This sense of social accountability seems to indicate a moral outcome associated with transformative learning, possibility reflective of greater empathy. (p. 49)

Next, addressing research that is relevant to this study's focus on mentorship in

higher education, Taylor and Snyder (in Taylor & Cranton, 2012) discussed

transformative learning as a process that could be stimulated by those who serve as

learning companions. In this sense, the description of a learning companion is

comparable to that of a mentor.

> The learning companion met each learner in his or her individual context; recognized the individual as central to the learning process; strove to create a safe, trusting relationship with the learners; engaged in a sense of discovery while helping the learner overcome fears and insecurities; and acknowledged the whole person in the fostering of transformative learning. (Taylor & Snyder, as cited in Taylor & Cranton, 2012, p. 45)

From the concept of learning companion extended to the roles of mentor and mentee, it is important to integrate these various theories with real-world practice in order to effectively explore their transformational potential.

As both theory and practice, transformative learning gained more popularity after Richard Keeling (2004, 2006) published two reports: (a) "Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience" and (b) "Learning Reconsidered2: A Practical Guide to Implementing a Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience." In formulating and subsequently publishing his ideas, Keeling (2004, 2006) credited Mezirow (2000) and Kegan (1994) as being the primary influences on his views of transformative learning, maintaining that a holistic approach to education is imperative to promote critical thinking skills and deep learning habits. In "Learning Reconsidered 2," Keeling (2006) called for educators to enlist all of their resources, including co-curricular activities, as part of an intentional effort to move beyond superficial educational practices that typically rely on rote memorization and the conventional practice of one-way communication of information from teacher to student. Described as the new "playbook" for higher education, Keeling (2006) emphasized the importance of integrating students' academic and individual life experiences during the college years; in turn, communicating that considerations as to how this kind of holistic integration might happen have begun to be part of a growing national conversation (NASPA & ACPA, 2004). Contributing to this conversation, Wawrzynski and Baldwin (2014) stated, "To achieve this holistic learning, educators in and out of the classroom must be prepared to

offer the type of guidance and support that encourages students to integrate their varied

learning experiences and not leave this process to serendipity" (p. 51).

**Possibilities of a Transformative Learning Model in Higher Education Mentorship**

Much like the research previously reviewed using the terms "mentorship" and

"higher education," the search for an intersection between the terms "mentorship" and

"transformative learning" yielded a surplus of studies and theoretical articles. However,

the information derived did not seem consistent with the ways in which the concepts of

mentorship and transformative learning were utilized across the research. For instance,

some of the literature speaks to the significance of interactions between the individual

and others as communicative partners involved in a transformative process (Carter, 2000;

Fletcher, 2007; Gilly, 2004). One of the more profound insights to emerge from this

particular search process pertains to the evolving role of mentor, moving away from a

rigid conception of expert to being an active participant in a learning experience with a

mentee (Chipping & Morse, 2006). Some of the literature addresses the kind of

connection between mentor and mentee that positions the mentor as a guide in the

relationship, framing the role of guide as a benefit to both parties (Daloz, 1999; English,

Fenwick, & Parsons, 2003). Complementing the evolving or changing role of the mentor,

a small portion of the research specifically addresses the mentorship experience from the

mentor's perspective, particularly noteworthy since a large proportion of the research

focuses on the mentee. The emergence of this particular body of work was encouraging

in terms of providing a view of mentorship as a mutually committed relationship/

experience for both mentor and mentee. I submit that this perspective is especially

important because, too often, those of us who work with students look at education and research in terms of what we do *to* the student instead of *with* the student. Moreover, to look at the dynamics involved in the mentor/mentee relationship is to recognize that each experience is unique, while yet best served by a mutual acknowledgement of the common themes that underscore such relationships, including (a) the understanding that safe spaces in which to interact are required, (b) recognition that emotions can serve as catalysts in the relational experience, and (c) awareness that shifts in power between student and teacher often represent growth that is both holistic and complex (Tanaka et al., 2014).

As a professor at George Mason University, Berger's (2004) research interests, along with those of her colleagues in the Teacher Education Program there, centered on providing greater clarity about what is meant by transformation in an effort to address any assumptions that have gone unexamined in the practice of teaching and its potential to inspire transformative learning experiences. She positioned herself as an advocate for the role of mentor, deeming the mentor an essential participant in the undergraduate student's overall developmental process, further emphasizing the need for effective mentors to be aware of the range of situations and experiences in which students might experience transformation. Berger (2004) cautioned that mentors should be prepared to support their mentees in a variety of ways, primarily by listening deeply—for those moments when students are making sense, as well as for those moments when they are not making sense—and communicating that feedback. She also addressed the need for managing greater complexity in the process required to manage transformational learning

than would be expected with content-oriented teachers (Berger, 2004). In her research, Berger (2004) provided guidelines for those serving in the mentor role, offering concrete strategies that a mentor can use to facilitate the transformative learning process for her/his mentee.

In her work, Southern (2007) addressed transformational learning as an essentially relational process. She has described transformative mentoring relationships as those that promote a reciprocal sense of authority; in other words, positioning the student as sharing power with the mentor, while also sharing an equal responsibility to the relationship than had been allowed in more conventional contexts. In fact, in her work Southern (2007) utilized Habermas's (1985) distinction between *communicative learning,* that which is negotiated, and *instrumental learning*, that which is understood by rote. To clarify, communicative learning relies upon the interactive nature of a relationship in order to negotiate meaning, whereas rote learning requires very little in terms of relational interactions. Southern (2007) essentially stated that transformative learning is predicated on communicative learning, clearly extending this premise to the mentoring relationship. Therefore, relationships are essential to the processes involved in both teaching and mentoring as transformative practices, thereby correlating to Mezirow's (1991) contention that communication is essential to transformative learning experiences, and that communication requires human interaction.

**Conceptual Framework**

This study is built upon three theoretical perspectives or frameworks: subjectification, self-authorship, and transformative learning theory. A constructivist

worldview of life and education underscores all of these perspectives because it is predicated upon the idea that people and situations develop through the dynamics of relationships, interactive communications, and practices of personal reflection. On this view, life experiences and understandings are not pre-determined givens but, rather, human constructions. Transformative learning serves as a model, borrowed from adult learning theory, that I am applying to undergraduate college students who, as a group, are considered an emerging adult population. Based on the review of research concerning mentorship and transformative learning as an evolving theory applied to the undergraduate experience, it seems reasonable that the role of mentor can be a catalyst in the student's learning process (Berger, 2004). Furthermore, Southern (2007) addressed transformational learning as an essentially relational process that certainly would encompass mentoring relationships. As a result of this theoretical grounding, it seems appropriate to borrow from what has been considered an adult learning theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000, 2012) and apply it to the design and implementation of this study of mentorship. In this respect, I will use transformative learning theory to serve as a framework for my university's mentoring initiative, as well as the lens through which I will analyze study findings.

The concept of self-authorship, as a component of this conceptual framework, signifies the stage at which a person has reached a broader perspective of human existence and her/his place in it. I am interested in the possibility of achieving self-authorship for the individual undergraduate student as a direct result of mentor/mentee interactions underscored by a transformative approach to teaching and learning that

includes engagement and relationship-building with others in the college environment.

As stated previously, self-authorship is described as the stage of development within

which the individual is able to manage different perspectives and begin to think for

her/himself. Learning to think critically is characteristic of this stage, a period during

which a person begins to truly understand his or her personal agency and possibilities for

intervening in the world. It seems to be the essential mindset from which the individual

begins to experience personal empowerment and emancipation. As a theoretical stage of

development specifically correlated to the traditional undergraduate experience (Kegan,

1994), self-authorship informed my research questions because they were collectively

aimed at exploring the personal and academic development of students at my institution.

As such, I was attentive to the potential emergence of patterns and themes that spoke to

self-authorship across my data collection and analysis processes.

As an educator/scholar/researcher, I have been particularly attracted to Biesta's

(2013) theories on subjectification because they reinforce a philosophy of education that

situates both the student and the adult educator/mentor as individuals who necessarily

interact and engage each other, along with myriad others, within the academic setting.

Because subjectification privileges the individual as an agentic being in the world, I used

it as a theoretical foundation for my study, reinforcing a view of education as a uniquely

human endeavor in which the individual can exercise personal freedom to think, choose,

and act. Essentially, relative to the purpose of this study, I sought to challenge

contemporary educational policies and practices—including conventional mentorship

programs grounded in a one-sided authoritarian model—that tend to dehumanize the

educational process through its power-driven testing/assessment/job preparation approach. Similar to my focus on self-authorship as one of the study's theoretical frameworks, I used feedback from the collection of interviews (my primary data collection instrument), along with analyses of new documentation generated through the initiative's implementation process, to look for emergent patterns and themes associated with subjectification as a third theoretical construct informing this project.

To conclude this discussion, I designed this qualitative study around a conceptual framework informed by Biesta's (2010) theory of subjectification, Kegan's (1994) work on self-authorship, and Mezirow's (1991, 2000, 2012) transformative learning theory—three unique theoretical frameworks culled from the larger body of research presented in this literature review. As both a leader of the mentorship initiative and doctoral researcher, I used an exploratory interview approach to the following fundamental research questions, first presented in Chapter I:

1. How do faculty and students currently understand the mentor/mentee relationship and its purpose?

2. How does the culture of mentorship initiative impact the lives of traditional undergraduate students at Private University?

3. How are mentors affected by the mentor/mentee relationship as implemented in the university's mentorship initiative?

4. Does the mentorship initiative demonstrate the theoretical frameworks of subjectification, self-authorship, and transformational learning? If so, how?

Through my use of open-ended interview questions, study subjects communicated their reflections, reactions, and interpretations regarding the dynamics, possibilities, and eventual outcomes of the mentoring relationships in which they were involved. Ultimately, this study served to explore a new cultural phenomenon within the Private University community.

**Summary of Literature Review**

To summarize, I have addressed concepts and practices that have been associated with mentorship (even those not explicitly labeled as mentoring or mentorship) in order to explore both the practical and theoretical perspectives that have informed various mentorship initiatives undertaken in higher education over the years; in particular, since the 1990s, as documented by Crisp and Cruz (2009) in their attempt to build on the work produced by Jacobi (1991) in the area of mentorship studies. Similarly, Gershenfeld's (2014) work picked up where Crisp and Cruz left off. This review of the mentorship literature has reinforced my interest in addressing whether or not mentorship has been sufficiently utilized as a tool for integrating the college experience; that is to say, integrating the academic, personal, and social development of the undergraduate student in order to optimize the realm of higher education as a unique setting in which to address individual, social, and civic growth during such a pivotal time in a student's life.

In this chapter, I made a case for the importance of Biesta's (2010) theory of subjectification as one of the three purposes—along with qualification and socialization—of education, despite the reality that notions of individual subjectivity and personal agency are not emphasized throughout our public school curricula. I then

connected the realization of individual subjectivity (i.e., self-awareness of one's

personhood as a unique being in the world) with the process of self-authorship. Based on

its applied principles and functions, I specifically isolated Kegan's (1994) concept of

self-authorship as both a precursor to and a goal of the transformative learning process. In

other words, subjective self-awareness can lead to self-authorship—the ability to think

for oneself—as a precursor by predisposing the student to more intentionally embrace

transformative learning experiences. On the other hand, for many students, the

transformative learning experience itself can ignite the realization of subjectification that

leads to the goal of self-authorship. From this vantage point, I then introduced and

investigated the concept of transformative learning, initially associated with Jack

Mezirow's (1991, 2000, 2012) theory of adult education, as it might be applied to

mentoring relationships in colleges and universities. I ultimately suggested that

mentorship can serve as a catalyst for expanding the undergraduate student's capacity to

engage and benefit from transformative learning experiences. This last point fuels my

conception of mentoring as a holistic process aimed at an intentional integration of the

undergraduate student's overall development, the very basis of this study.

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

As researcher, my purpose was to gain an understanding of how faculty and students comprehend the purpose, function, and meaning of the mentor/mentee relationship within the specific context of the undergraduate college experience. As a corollary purpose, I also aimed to develop an understanding of how they interpret the culture of mentorship initiative as it has been formally implemented at Private University during the 2016-2017 academic year. Relative to the initiative's implicit goal of advancing a more holistic and reciprocal ideal of mentorship, I investigated the potential impact of a mentor/mentee experience crafted to encompass relational dynamics that extend far beyond conventional faculty advising tasks. I looked at mentors' and students' interactions within a relationship-building framework that has no prescriptive elements and no specified outcomes. By studying the unique experiences of individuals engaged in an alternative notion of the mentor/mentee relationship--one that focuses on mutual connection and the student's personal development over an extended period of time—I sought to offer important insights to others who are attempting to deepen the relational aspects of college life for undergraduate students. These "others" may be faculty and staff members on the Private University campus, the site of this study, as well as individuals working in other college and university communities. In terms of assessing and validating

the success of this kind of alternative mentorship initiative, I suggest that findings—as to its perceived success or failure—emerge in feedback from the students, faculty, and staff included in the study sample.

To reiterate, I proposed that this kind of mentoring model holds possibilities for producing transformative learning experiences and outcomes for students. Such experiences and outcomes implicate more profound understandings of the educational process that both broaden and deepen the student's academic knowledge base while also expanding his/her sense of personal awareness as a learner and as a unique individual, the latter speaking to Biesta's (2010) concept of subjectification. As explained in Chapter I, Biesta (2010) maintained that subjectification, is a more viable possibility for the undergraduate student if his/her academic life is integrated with his/her *whole* (my emphasis) way of being a member of the university community. On this view, I inquired whether transformative learning experiences are more likely to emerge from an integrative approach to education in contrast to more conventional approaches that, I suggest, tend to compartmentalize academics, extracurricular activities and personal growth experiences as separate, non-intersecting areas. Therefore, this inquiry was based on the following research questions:

1. How do faculty and students currently understand the mentor/mentee relationship and its purpose?

2. How does the culture of mentorship initiative impact the lives of traditional undergraduate students at Private University?

3. How are mentors affected by the mentor/mentee relationship as implemented in the university's mentorship initiative?

4. Does the mentorship initiative demonstrate the theoretical frameworks of subjectification, self-authorship, and transformational learning? If so, how?

The remainder of this chapter addresses the following points: (a) the rationale behind my selected research methodology/design, the exploratory interview research process; (b) the research setting/context for this study; (c) the research or study sample (i.e., participants); (d) data collection methods; (e) data analysis methods; (f) positionality and responsibility of the researcher, also related to researcher subjectivity, issues of trustworthiness, and study credibility; (g) limitations and delimitations; and (h) a concluding summary of the chapter.

**Rationale for Research Approach**

I designed this study as an exploratory research project that adheres to the qualitative research tradition. True to the nature of exploration, this approach maintains an open-ended focus that can lead to more in-depth studies based on what is revealed during this exploratory stage. According to Dudovskiy (2017),

> Exploratory research design does not aim to provide the final and conclusive answers to the research questions, but merely explores the research topic with varying levels of depth. It has been noted that "exploratory research is the initial research, which forms the basis of more conclusive research. It can even help in determining the research design, sampling methodology and data collection method" [2]. Exploratory research "tends to tackle new problems on which little or no previous research has been done" [3]. Unstructured interviews is the most popular primary data collection method with this type of research. (para. 3)

Because Private University's mentorship initiative was a new and still unexplored

undertaking at the time of its inception, I characterized my research approach as

exploratory in nature and design, based on my intention to study a new phenomenon—a

culture of mentorship—within the institution's designated campus setting. In turn,

through use of the exploratory interview format as my primary instrument for data

collection and analysis (supported by relevant document analyses and researcher field

notes), I sought to investigate the experiences and reactions of selected individuals—

university mentors and undergraduate student mentees—during the early stages of the

initiative's formal implementation process. With the use of purposefully designed open-

ended questions, the exploratory interview provided a data collection strategy grounded

in discovery. Reinforcing the difference between qualitatively-oriented research

questions and the more concrete questions associated with quantitative methods, Bruggen

(2001) wrote,

> It [the research design] should yield data that contain information about the
> various forms and guises in which people experience (a particular) status…the
> research questions being of a largely exploratory character means, among other
> things, that it is not immediately obvious in advance what exactly the eventual
> 'product' or yield of answering them will be. It is far less clear than with
> quantitative research questions by what method the question may be answered or
> when, in fact, it is 'sufficiently' or adequately answered. (p. 116)

Specific to my exploratory research process, I have been concerned–throughout—

with discovering insights that could potentially be used to further develop and reinforce

the university's goal of creating a "culture of mentorship" and, with that, provide the

impetus for future research in this area. More to the point, because this initiative does not

have a predetermined time by which it is to be considered complete, I foresee my study opening possibilities leading to an ongoing participatory action research project specific to Private University's mentorship initiative. Furthermore, and speaking to potential studies of other university-based mentorship programs, I suggest that the exploratory research method used here can serve as the launching point for ongoing research projects by providing information (through its findings and analyses) that better inform their design and implementation.

**The Qualitative Research Paradigm and the Exploratory Interview**

Fundamentally, qualitative researchers are interested in gaining better understandings of the human experience (Lichtman, 2013). How do people interact and create meaning within their social worlds? This is one of many overarching questions about the human experience that qualitative researchers seek to explore. As such, qualitative methods incorporate the kind of inquiry that promotes understanding in the context of natural settings within which to investigate human phenomena and interactions. Further, qualitative inquiry involves the use of rich description across the processes of determining/ analyzing/ reporting findings—in contrast to the more definitive development of hypotheses, implementation of research processes, and reporting of concrete results associated with quantitative research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2002). In fact, the qualitative researcher's reliance on rich description demonstrates the connection between the researcher and the research setting by incorporating enough detail with which to provide the reader as close an approximation to the lived experience as possible. A qualitative approach to research represents a largely

inductive process in that the inquiry focuses on a particular aspect of social life while yet allowing for the unique experience of the individual (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2011).

While qualitative research methods can include such study instruments as observations, field notes, photographs, videotapes, and focus groups within the study's natural setting, the qualitative interview frequently serves as the centerpiece around which other instruments provide additional evidence and support. Through having determined that the exploratory interview was the most appropriate type of research methodology/instrument for this study of mentorship, my interview process was predicated on a more open-ended approach as opposed to a "knowing" approach. In other words, study participants had to provide feedback on a new phenomenon or dynamic in which they were actively engaged at the time, without having had the benefit of ongoing or long-term experience in the process under study. For this study, I prioritized individual face-to-face interviews of selected mentors and mentees, as well as interviews involving paired mentors/mentees, as they were participating in the initial, formal implementation stage of Private University's mentorship initiative. In this context, the interview process was clearly exploratory in nature, inherently owning the potential to yield information—even in the form of discovery—for all parties involved, including the researcher.

Lastly, and in support of my qualitative, exploratory interview process, I used additional study instruments to add more depth to the study: (a) document analysis and (b) recorded field notes. Specifically, I analyzed documents pertaining to my institution's collection of reports on the planning and future implementation of the mentorship program, along with documents that were actually generated during the course of this

study, the latter reflecting the evolving nature of Private University's mentorship initiative. The use of recorded field notes involved my active documentation, as researcher, of my activities, concerns, and reflections as they emerged during the research process. Ultimately, my document analyses and recorded field notes provided extra layers of depth intended to: (a) enhance/support understandings of participants' interview responses and (b) illustrate the ways in which the mentorship initiative was impacted during its implementation, along with the ways in which implementation and related activities impacted both the study participants and myself; in my case, as researcher and leader of the mentorship initiative.

## Research Setting/Context

My use of a qualitative research approach was especially appropriate for this study of mentorship because the dynamics of human relationship sit front and center of Private University's mission to create a more humanistic mentoring culture. As noted in a previous section, qualitative research methods are fundamental to studies of the human experience (Lichtman, 2013). Consequently, since I am the designated leader of this decidedly relationship-focused initiative, as well as a long-time faculty member of the university, it was a natural choice for me to orient my doctoral research to the early stages of this project by addressing the experiences of mentors and mentees within my own academic community. Stated another way, as a small, private university intentionally creating an on-campus mentorship initiative, this institution served as the obvious setting for the study since the program was underway, and I was leading the charge. In terms of timing, the initiative's formal implementation process (fall 2016) provided an opportune

situation in which to merge my doctoral research interests and my professional

investment in this mentorship mission because the multiple roles of faculty, mentorship

program director, and doctoral student all merged at this intersection.

I chose the Trustees Conference Room, located in the Student Center of Private

University, as the site in which to conduct the multiple rounds of interviews for the study.

This room is situated on the top floor of the building and is in an area that is very quiet

and private. The room, itself, is furnished with comfortable cushioned seating and a large

conference table. I chose this location with the intention of providing a space in which

interviewees would be comfortable and willing to express their views, not only in

response to prepared interview questions, but also with the idea of providing a

comfortable and confidential space that would encourage additional feedback from

participants. This consideration aligns well with the exploratory interview approach that

is framed around an awareness of openness and discovery (Bruggen, 2001).

Overall, the university lent its support by serving as the backdrop for this venture,

providing an overarching context regarding the importance of this research to the

university community and its culture of mentorship mission. Yet, within this overall

context of university support, there were obvious contextual limitations concerning

representation—both across the campus community and within the study sample. For

example, the study could not encompass identifiers such as race, ethnicity, or other

demographic information due to the institution's relatively non-diverse faculty and

student populations, as compared to institutions of similar size that are located in more

diverse urban settings. To clarify, this study's mentees were selected by the participating

mentors; thus, I had no input as to specifying particular student demographics. As to selection of mentors, this process was based on my knowledge and interactions with current mentors who expressed interest in participating, without any conditions regarding the individual's identity. Most of the study participants discussed their personal backgrounds and any concerns about diversity issues (gender, race, age, etc.) within the confines of their interviews.

Ultimately, because Private University is a relatively isolated academic community located in a rural setting, relationships between students and faculty/staff have been historically significant due to limited contact with others outside the campus environment. On this view, the context of human relationship—as a priority for building a culture of mentorship—informed a perspective (on the part of stakeholders and myself, as researcher and initiative leader) of the mentor/mentee relationship as potentially being very influential in the lives of undergraduate students.

<div align="center">**Research Sample**</div>

I did not need to employ a formal method of faculty selection for the study sample because in my role as faculty peer and initiative director, conversations with colleagues – both informal and formal – had become the basis for our mutual agreements to work together on the mentorship initiative and, with that, to actually serve as participants. In fact, several had already established their roles as mentors prior to the start of the formal initiative/research process. Isolating this pool of known colleagues, I used email communications to explain the study more formally and to confirm/document those faculty members' who then agreed to participate as the study's mentors. By the end of the

selection process, the number of participating mentors represented 10% of the total number of full-time faculty on the main campus, totaling eight mentors.

In terms of mentor demographics, all eight mentors were Caucasian and equally divided according to gender—four males and four females. Relative to their length of time as faculty, three of the participants had been at Private University for less than five years, while one participant had been employed more than five, but less than 10 years. Another participant logged between 10 and 15 years of service at the time of this study, while two others served between 15 and 20 years. Lastly, there was one participant who had been employed over 20 years. Four of the mentors were between 30 and 40 years of age, three between 40 and 50 years of age, and one mentor was over 60 years of age. As for mentee demographics, all study mentees were Caucasian and also equally divided by gender. Based on the largely non-diverse demographic makeup of this particular university community—including students, faculty, staff, and administration—a wider range of demographic variety across study participants was not possible. Table 1 illustrates the mentor/mentee pairs according to researcher-assigned pseudonyms and their respective genders.

Finally, it should be noted that all participating mentors were exposed to the same initial, concept discussions and training sessions extended to all faculty around the topic of mentorship—both prior to and during initiative implementation. From the standpoint of available range and number of subjects relative to community demographics, I submit that my exploratory qualitative study of Private University's culture of mentorship initiative satisfied the basic criteria for sample selection as explained by Bruggen (2001):

> For the qualitative study, I had to find a selection of participants that satisfied two conditions: firstly, the selected participants should represent (as well as possible) the full range of empirical variety . . ., and secondly, the number of participants should be kept sufficiently small to avoid undue delay in consequence of excessive data management and analysis. (p. 119)

Table 1

Study Participants: Mentor/Mentee Pairs by Pseudonym and Gender

| Mentors: Pseudonyms (Paired) | Mentees: Pseudonyms (Paired) |
|---|---|
| 1. S female | 1. D male |
| 2. Da male | 2. S male |
| 3. C male | 3. J male |
| 4. J male | 4. Az female |
| 5. Db female | 5. E female |
| 6. R female | 6. C female |
| 7. A female | 7. Ay male |
| 8. M male | 8. L female |

Following are the actual steps involved in my sample selection process, first as applied to the selection of mentors and then to the subsequent selection of the study's mentees.

First, I identified 12 potential mentors for this study based on the fact that these individuals were already serving as mentors. Planning to approach each of them individually to determine interest, the first eight agreed to participate on the spot. Consequently, I stopped the selection process at this point having confirmed eight mentors as a sufficient number for this study. I then followed up with a confirmation email message sent to those who agreed to participate. In turn, I requested that they select

students (from their pools of current mentees) who were willing to participate in the

study. To reiterate it is important to emphasize that the selection of study mentees was

accomplished at the discretion of the mentor. As researcher, I had no influence on the

selection of student participants and considered this stance essential because of the pre-

established relationships between current mentors and mentees. As stated in the previous

section in which I addressed research setting and context, I did not impose any

restrictions or qualifications on the sample selection process relative to the gender, race,

ethnicity, etc. of participating mentors and mentees. Consequently, a demographic

snapshot of the selected mentees reveals little in the way of diversity, similar to the

situation of the mentors. For example, of the eight mentees selected by their mentors,

four self-identified as male and four self-identified as female. In terms of their

time/academic standing at the university, four of the students were seniors, two were

juniors, one was a sophomore, and one was a freshman. It should also be noted that four

of the mentors chose mentees of the same sex (two female-to-female and two male-to-

male). In contrast, two of the female mentors identified male mentees, while two male

mentors identified female mentees.

At the time of this study and correlating to the early implementation stage of the

mentorship initiative, Private University did *not* mandate that all serve as mentors, in

either a formal or informal capacity. Therefore, during this early phase faculty mentors

served on a volunteer basis. Going forward, as the initiative becomes more embedded

across the institution, the Provost and administrative leadership intend that the culture of

mentorship be a mandatory feature of faculty employment. In fact, current planning

includes a new design of faculty evaluation that would incorporate the mentoring role. To

reiterate, the pool of faculty from which I approached potential participants represented

those people that I knew who were already engaged in the mentor role. Finally, any

discussion of a study sample involving human subjects must address the requirements put

forth by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). As such, and in compliance

with IRB, I completed the preliminary training process to ensure that I, the researcher,

was properly educated regarding the components necessary to protect the anonymity of

my study participants. Further, I acknowledged and followed all the federal requirements

necessary to gain official approval of my research process—from addressing the issue of

participant identity to the proper storage of research interviews and other study materials

both during and after the completion of the study. With IRB approval in place, the

exploratory interviews began. Therefore, at the start of each interview, I shared a copy of

the official IRB form with each participant and confirmed the guarantee of anonymity

with each mentor and mentee. In turn, each participant indicated her/his agreement to

proceed by signing the copy. All 16 study participants reviewed and signed the consent

forms, thereby enabling this research project to go forward without delay.

In sum, subjects for this study sample comprised faculty who had agreed to

participate and the students they ultimately identified as their partners in Private

University's mentorship initiative. I designed the process to incorporate 16 individual

interviews (eight mentors, eight mentees) and eight paired interviews (mentors and

mentees together), resulting in a total of 24 interviews. However, while I was able to

complete all of the individual interviews, I was only able to conduct seven paired

interviews as one of the students experienced a health crisis which prevented her from participating in the final round of interviews.

## Data Collection Methods

**The Exploratory Interview**

My primary data collection instrument was the face-to-face exploratory interview of mentors and mentees, individually and in pairs, as previously stated. Specifically, I interviewed each of the eight mentors and eight mentees individually during the first round. During the second round of interviews I met with each of the mentor/mentee pairs with the exception of one pair due to the mentees sudden illness and departure from the university. During round one each interview lasted one hour or more, but under two hours. During round two the joint interviews tended to be of shorter duration, averaging one hour at most. Altogether, I conducted 23 interviews to complete the primary data collection process. The in-depth, exploratory interview provided the best opportunity for me to collect direct responses to my questions and, with that, the opportunity to gather additional and more elaborative feedback from interviewees based on their desire to expand on certain questions. Further, by designing this study to incorporate both individual and paired interviews (individual interviews with both mentors and mentees who were in relationship; interviews in which relational pairs were interviewed together), I aimed to reach a level of understanding that I would not have been able to secure from other means. As researcher, I created all the interview questions, and I conducted the actual interviews in person. Furthermore, I recorded all interviews which were later transcribed by an outside party and member checked each transcription with the

individual interviewed. Supplementary to the interviews, I used document analysis and researcher field notes as secondary data collection instruments. I address my use of these supporting instruments following my discussions of the interview questions.

In the following sections, I present the interview questions as I tailored them to address mentor and mentee study participants individually and as pairs. With the formal implementation of the mentoring initiative in the fall of 2016, I began the interview process in late November/early December, finishing up in January, 2017.

**Interview questions for mentors.** In conjunction with the first step of the data collection process, I interviewed each of the identified Private University mentors in order to explore the depth and scope of the mentoring relationships they had created with their students during the early stages of the formal initiative. Pertaining to the creation or design of the mentor interview questions, I intended that these questions retain an open-ended quality that would allow for communication of personal insights, elaboration on key questions that particularly resonated with individual interviewees, and that would generate reflective thought processes. The following questions comprise this particular interview instrument:

1. Tell me about your mentoring experiences.

2. What are the reasons that compel you to be a mentor?

3. Describe your image of an effective mentor.

4. In your opinion, how do you measure up to that image?

5. If applicable, describe the experience of seeing a shift in your mentee's perspective during the mentoring relationship?

6. In what ways have you been affected, personally and professionally, by the mentoring relationship?

**Interview questions for mentees.** I designed mentees' interview questions to be primarily open-ended and experientially oriented so that the students would be more inclined to engage in a meaningful conversation. Similar to the questions aimed at mentors, I created the mentee questions with the intention to stimulate reflective thinking processes, provoke instances of personal resonance, and encourage open communication. The following questions comprised this particular interview instrument:

1. Tell me about your experience as a mentee in Private University's mentorship initiative.

2. What were your expectations when you first entered the mentoring relationship?

3. Describe your image of an effective mentor.

4. Describe the responsibilities of a mentee.

5. In what ways have you developed an expanded awareness about yourself as a student, as a member of the university community, and as an individual (personally)?

6. Describe any other ways in which you have been affected by the mentor/mentee relationship.

**Interview questions for mentor/mentee pairs.** Similar to the individual mentor and mentee interview questions, I designed the paired interview questions to be open ended, reflective, and engaging. I created these questions with a special interest in

discovering how interviews involving both parties would either encourage or discourage feedback. Would paired interviews be more responsive, less responsive, more revealing, less revealing and would the quality of their relationship emerge, even in the early stages of this initiative?

1. Please share your insights about your particular mentoring relationship since your individual interviews.

2. Describe insights you have developed about yourself as a result of the mentoring relationship thus far.

3. How would you characterize the value of a culture of mentorship for teaching and learning?

4. Please share any other thoughts you have.

Upon completing the interviews, I sent the recordings to be transcribed. With transcripts in hand I proceeded to code each transcript individually, searching for emergent patterns and themes. In fact, I reviewed each of the transcripts several times to confirm my initial coding. From there I cross-referenced transcripts within the main groupings of "mentor" and "mentee," looking for common themes and patterns within and between coded categories.

**Document Analysis**

Defined as a process that takes a systematic approach to reviewing and evaluating relevant documents (Bowen, 2009), for this study document analysis served as an additional data collection tool in that textual materials provided a trail of data relevant to the planning and continuing implementation of Private University's mentorship initiative.

The systematic features of document analysis include reading and re-reading the data,

coding and constructing categories all in an effort to discover themes relevant to the

research focus. Further, Atkinson and Coffey (1997) affirmed that both print and

electronic materials can serve as "social facts," thus providing an organizing force in

human projects. On this basis, I determined that a review of shared documents generated

by those involved in the early phases of planning, along with reviews of those documents

generated during ongoing planning and implementation phases, would likely provide

additional insights that would bolster the interview data. Moreover, as a secondary data

collection method, document analysis can address the particular contexts within which a

phenomenon is to be studied—revealing questions that should be asked, providing

insights and information that can be useful to the study, and providing a benchmark for

change and development (Bowen, 2009). It should be noted that, as a newly instituted

program, documentation related to the culture of mentorship initiative has been gradually

accruing, some of it clearly informal in nature. At the same time, several planning

strategy documents were available prior to the start of the initiative. In fact, early

planning and implementation documents served as valuable resources for understanding

the initial purpose and goals informing the initiative. Overall, study-related documents

included a draft mission statement, meeting agendas, portions of an earlier version of the

university strategic plan, and training materials that proved useful for supporting

implementation procedures. For example, the initial mentorship training that was

provided during the spring and summer of 2015 produced documentation of a shared

language and communication skills that were incorporated throughout the interview

process, demonstrating a direct linkage between textual evidence and practice (the interview process), while also enhancing consistency and coherence across the research process.

Lastly, to reiterate and reinforce the "work in progress" character of this new mentorship initiative, any documentation generated/put into place during the time of this study was somewhat speculative in nature due to the fact that those documents also addressed future goals. In addition, while it was too early to have accumulated highly substantive, concrete assessments of mentor/mentee relationships during the first stage of formal implementation, early stage documents and ongoing forms of documentation yielded significant insights. Essentially, findings from the analysis of early planning and implementation documents revealed that they served as valuable resources for understanding the initial purpose and goals informing the initiative, and they laid the groundwork for ongoing and future planning.

**Researcher Field Notes**

I chose to incorporate a practice of making notes even before I began the interview process. I did this in part because we lacked much in the way of organizing documentation and it was useful to me as one of the chief organizers for the project of creating a culture of mentorship, to maintain notes regarding decisions made in the variety of meetings that took place as well as concerns and issues which needed further consideration. Due to the small number of institutional documents, this practice served as both a guide and a reminder of the perceptions and challenges that accompanies change in an organization. According to Tuckett (2005), field notes can contribute to the

credibility and dependability (of a research project), "because they are both analytical in themselves and because they contain immediate and later perceptions and thoughts about the research participants" (p. 3). In addition, this record can provide an opportunity to self-reflect about the research process and thereby contribute to insight regarding the role of researcher and how that can influence the collection of data (Koch, 1994).

To conclude this section, my primary data collection procedure involved completing three rounds of face-to-face interviews—individual mentor (first round) and mentee (second round) interviews, followed by paired (third round) interviews. In total, I conducted 23 interviews: eight individual mentor interviews, eight individual mentee interviews, and seven paired interviews, resulting in approximately 23 hours of interviews. As previously explained, there were only seven paired interviews (instead of the expected eight) because one of the mentees had to take a medical leave of absence during the course of this study. I employed an outside party to transcribe each interview. Consistent with qualitative data analysis processes, I then coded each interview to identify common themes and emergent patterns within and across the across the participants' responses. My use of document analysis, along with my purposeful recording of researcher field notes (providing both objective documentation of events and subjective reflections of them) provided supplementary data that underscored and enriched participants' feedback. In the following section, I discuss the methods I used to analyze all the collected data.

**Data Analysis Methods**

**Coding Process: Exploratory Interviews**

Throughout the interview and transcription stages of the study, I reviewed and examined each mentor and mentee transcript individually, employing a manual coding process in which I identified emerging themes within the text of each transcript. Essentially, I implemented the coding process in four rounds: (a) coding/identifying themes among mentors, (b) coding/ identifying themes among mentees, and (c) coding/identifying themes among the paired interviews, and (d) coding/identifying themes across all categories to determine if there were themes common to all interview groupings. Therefore, while the process just described encompassed three sets of interviews and correlating coding activities for each, the fourth phase of coding involved a broader perspective of emerging themes spanning the three groups taken together. Specific to the paired interview process, I constructed this interview format with the idea of engaging the participants together to explore how they mutually constructed their experiences. As a qualitative researcher, I anticipated that there would be similarities and differences across their singularly described experiences, potentially warranting further exploration. Therefore, I believed it would be especially meaningful for them to experience an exploratory interview about the mentoring relationship together, in addition to their individual interview experiences.

After conducting, recording, and transcribing the interviews, I followed the six steps that represent the movement from raw data to codes, categories, and concepts, as recommended by Lichtman (2013). The six steps are:

1. Initial coding—going from responses to summary ideas of subjects' responses

2. Revisiting initial coding

3. Developing an initial list of categories

4. Modifying initial list of categories (potentially generating subcategories) based on additional rereading

5. Revisiting categories and subcategories

6. Moving from categories to concepts (Lichtman, 2013, p. 252)

I was aware that the steps in this process would likely take multiple rounds before I would reach a level of confidence in which I could begin to see a coherence of themes and patterns. Ultimately, upon finalizing the identification of specific themes and patterns that emerged from all the interviews, I analyzed my findings in relation to the research questions that I designed to underscore the study. Findings are discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

**Document Analysis and Researcher Field Notes**

As supplementary data, I textually analyzed documents that were available before the study, as well as documents generated during the study. As to the process I used for analyzing the field notes I composed throughout the duration of the study, I read, reflected, reread, and reflected again upon my personal thoughts, concerns, and reactions as recorded. Throughout the field notes analysis process, my purpose was to determine how my implementation practices, necessarily impacted by my investment as both researcher and mentorship initiative director, showed up in the documentation of my own

thoughts and reactions; as well, to determine how these field notes indicated relevance to the study, and how they contributed to my research process.

Finally, analyses of initiative-related documents and researcher field notes proved valuable to the primary data collection instrument—the exploratory interview—by insuring and magnifying cohesion across all data. This textual data can also serve as foundational documents for ongoing refinement of the mentorship initiative as it continues to evolve and expand, as well as for future research in this area. In addition, these documents are particularly relevant because, as a new initiative aimed at developing a culture of mentorship at Private University, they represent the first and only textual evidence that can stand as records from which to work going forward. Ultimately, I submit that documents pertaining to both planning and implementation, along with my recorded field notes, demonstrate (and will continue to demonstrate) relevance because they were generated by the study itself, thereby providing real-world contexts based on the scope and depth of this unique research experience.

In the section that follows, I address the positionality and responsibility of the researcher as a subject/partner (faculty and culture of mentorship director) in the qualitative, exploratory research process, specifically discussing the concepts of researcher subjectivity and trustworthiness.

## Positionality and Responsibility of the Researcher

### Researcher Subjectivity

In qualitative research, the researcher is considered one of the primary study instruments. Therefore, the positioning of researcher, as subject, can represent an inherent

limitation while also representing an essential participant in co-creating reality within the context of the study experience. The researcher's subjectivity must be acknowledged and held in awareness throughout the project. In order to make every effort to clearly distinguish between the researcher and that which is being researched, researcher subjectivity should be made as transparent as possibly (Finlay, 2012).

In this study, I have acknowledged that I provided (and continue to provide) the principal leadership for the mentorship initiative undertaken at my institution. As such, I am invested in the successful implementation (as well as continuation) of this project, an investment that is further reinforced by the fact that I have also been a member of this faculty for close to 19 years. Throughout these years, we—as a community of faculty and administrators—have engaged in other initiatives that did not reach fruition. Consequently, and from the outset of Private University's mentorship initiative, I had been aware of a climate of distrust within our community that preceded this study. Nevertheless, while I have been sympathetic to the skepticism that has accompanied another new initiative, I genuinely believe in the purpose and potential promise of advancing a culture of mentorship at Private University. Clearly, this is a very subjective statement that reflects my multiple positions as faculty, administrator, and researcher; positions that I claim as relevant and appropriate to this kind of qualitative study predicated upon relationship and meaningful human interactions.

**Trustworthiness**

In an effort to ensure transparency in my research, I incorporated each of the following criteria as important to qualitative research: credibility, dependability, and transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Savin-Badin & Major, 2010).

**Credibility.** Credibility "is centered on the idea that results are credible and therefore to be believed" (Savin-Badin & Major, 2010, p. 174). According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), "This criterion refers to whether the participants' perceptions match up with the researcher's portrayal of them" (p. 112). Utilizing research methods that were understood and accepted by study participants contributed to the credibility of my study. To this end, I conducted member checks by providing a written document of the interview instrument to the study participants for their review to ensure understanding and accuracy of the interview process in terms of aims and content. Later, I provided the individual narrative, post interview, to the interviewee to insure fair and accurate representation of her/his responses.

**Dependability.** The criterion of dependability "refers to whether one can track the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret the data . . ." (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 113). In other words, the study's dependability rests on the researcher's capacity to provide detailed explanations pertaining to data collection and analysis methods so that a clear path remains to delineate the processes and procedures specific to the study. Transcribed interviews, ongoing study documents, and field notes which make up all the research instruments for this study serve as physical documentation of this study's procedures and therefore provides clear tracking of the process.

**Transferability.** "Transferability has to do with what is found as a result of the study and can be applied to other similar settings" (Savin-Badin & Major, 2010, p. 178). In their discussion of transferability, Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) explained,

> Transferability is not whether the study includes a representative sample. Rather, it is about how well the study has made it possible for readers to decide whether similar processes will be at work in their own settings and communities by understanding in depth how they occur at the research site. (p. 113)

Therefore, the findings of this study are likely transferable to smaller colleges and universities where mentorship is prioritized.

## Limitations and Delimitations

In qualitative research, it is particularly important to identify the conditions that impact the study's content and scope, including external conditions (limitations) beyond the researcher's control and internal boundaries or parameters (delimitations) intentionally imposed by the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012).

### Limitations

The first limitation of this exploratory study involved Private University's narrow demographic picture in that it demonstrated (and still demonstrates) a lack of diversity among both students and faculty. Because of this demographic limitation, the development of the mentor/mentee relationship was necessarily skewed in favor of cultural commonality as opposed to providing bridging opportunities to address cultural differences. Essentially, the only apparent participant identifications that emerged had to do with gender and age. I use the word "emerged" here because, as noted and explained earlier in this chapter, there were no demographic specifications used in the study sample

selection process, including the reasons why. A second limitation had to do with the abstract nature of the concepts in which I have been interested and which have formed the basis of this study, including notions pertaining to the purpose of mentorship and varied perceptions of what might constitute a transformative learning experience. Beginning with the ambiguity that has, historically, clouded a common understanding of mentorship relative to its intended purpose and goals (whether in business, academic, or other sectors), along with the unique possibilities of learning for individual transformation, this study was challenged by the limits of language (arbitrary, ambiguous, and abstract). As a communication scholar and educator, I have asserted that the language commonly used in traditional discussions of mentorship tends to position the mentor's role as authoritarian guide and the mentees role as novice, especially in relation to career preparation. A third limitation of the study, involving both the use of language and the limited knowledge around transformative learning theory, involved the challenge of communicating the theory's practical applications in the undergraduate setting and within the specific contexts of Private University's envisioned culture of mentorship. A fourth limitation involved the issue of timing in that I planned and implemented this study at an early stage of the culture of mentorship initiative; in fact, during the first stage of the program's "formal" implementation. Therefore, it remains to be seen what might be possible as we continue to learn from this early experience in order to implant and grow a mentoring culture at Private University over time. In this way, and with the benefit of more time and study, we can continue to refine our understanding of mentorship as a potentially transformative experience and its optimal application at the university.

**Delimitations**

The first delimitation of this exploratory study was my choice of a single setting context—that being the main location of this three-campus university in which I have worked for 19 years—due to the university's implementation of a mentorship initiative of which I am director. As such, I purposefully chose the location because it is the largest of the three campuses and only serves undergraduate students—the focal population as mentees—who largely reside on campus. A second delimitation involved the choice of faculty already serving informally as mentors to, in turn, formally participate as mentors/study participants. The third delimitation involved making the decision to transfer the responsibility of mentee selection to the confirmed mentees themselves; in other words, the study's mentees retained the responsibility to designate students with whom they would ordinarily work, expanding that relationship into the actual study. Overall, I imposed these delimitations in order to design the exploratory study as a research project that might yield insights and discoveries at the beginning phase in the life of this new initiative.

Significantly, the point at which I chose to implement the initiative, in my role as Private University's culture of mentorship director, coincided with the time that I was ready to conduct a research project worthy of a doctoral dissertation. Therefore, to advance a project in which I am personally and professionally invested, as well as one in which I am academically invested, seemed like an efficient and fortuitous opportunity available to me. On a deeper level, I realized that sometimes we remain unaware of the richness of the context or setting within which we live and work. In this case, by turning

my research efforts towards my own experiences within my workplace, I have meaningfully invited new possibilities into my life as a professional educator, as a scholar, and as a private individual.

**Chapter Summary**

I am invested in developing a process of mentorship that might empower students to discover a larger view of who they are as individuals. Furthermore, I suggest that the establishment of a humanistic culture of mentorship at Private University can provide students with opportunities to construct their own realities and their own experiences of subjectification within the college setting. Therefore, I designed this study to explore such possibilities by focusing on the participants (in this context, the mentees), themselves, as they engaged in the evolving relationships and processes that drove the early implementation of the university's culture of mentorship initiative. To reiterate, my research design was grounded in an exploratory approach because it correlated well to the dynamics of a newly implemented project. Ultimately, as both initiative leader and researcher, I aimed to contribute to a conversation in which a focus on human relationship—as a focal component of mentorship— could be explored in order to discover new/possibly better ways to support undergraduate students both academically and personally.

To conclude this chapter, I explained and justified my rationale for choosing the exploratory interview as my research methodology. I provided a description of the research process itself, including a sketch of the setting within which this exploration took place and descriptions of the research sample, including demographic information

pertaining to both mentors and mentees. I then addressed Private University's

Institutional Research Board (IRB) requirements and considerations, noting that I

complied with all required conditions, emphasizing actions/strategies taken to protect the

anonymity of study participants. Pertaining to my discussion of the study's data

collection instruments, I included the interview questions designed for individual

interviews specific to mentors and mentees, followed by a set of questions designed for

the mentor/mentee paired interviews. In addition, I addressed the secondary data

collection instruments used to augment the exploratory interview process: (a) initiative-

related, textual materials and (b) researcher field notes. I followed with a discussion of

my data analysis methods, elaborating on the coding process used for the exploratory

interview data; then, explaining the processes by which I reviewed and analyzed

documentation of the initiative and my researcher field notes. In turn, I reviewed my

positionality and responsibilities as chief researcher. In this regard, I detailed my

perspective on researcher subjectivity and addressed how credibility, dependability, and

transferability relate to the trustworthiness of the study. I ended the methodology

presentation by defining those conditions I deemed as imposing external limitations on

the study, as well as stating those delimiting conditions that I, as researcher, intentionally

imposed on the study in order to design an appropriate and relevant research project.

I believe that Private University's initiative to create a culture of mentorship holds

on-going possibilities and long-term opportunities for further research around

mentorship, transformative learning, and personal development. As such, the purpose that

has underscored my study, as both initiative leader and as researcher, remains embedded

in the belief that this research will positively inform our university's development as a culture that understands mentorship as an evolutionary and holistic process intended to humanize the faculty/student relationship, thereby benefitting all involved. Ultimately, I believe that this study can contribute to a shared understanding of the need to more effectively design and implement future training methods and systems that will motivate and reinforce the relational connections among all members of the Private University community.

**CHAPTER IV**

**FINDINGS**

**Introduction**

Throughout the pages of this dissertation, I have stated in many different ways that my primary interests lie in furthering relationships within Private University; in particular, within the contexts of the mentor/mentee dynamic. Essentially, my interests sit in contrast to the study problem that I have defined as a pervasive predisposition (cultural, social, and educational) within the realm of higher education to frame undergraduate education as a job preparation experience. I have maintained that this orientation to post-secondary learning has been precipitated by the neoliberal turn in educational culture; that is, a turn away from a model of human development (academic, intellectual, and personal), toward a business or marketplace model. Therefore, I submit that my focus on re-visioning mentorship as a holistic and relational undertaking aligns with a conception of education understood as a developmental process for the undergraduate student. On this view, my interests as both researcher and educator oppose the one-dimensional, instrumental view of undergraduate education as workforce training.

Furthermore, I have posited that the mentor/mentee dynamic is informed and influenced by the processes and systems of communication that predominate within the context of higher education, in general, and at my university in particular. Because I am

involved in leading Private University's mentorship initiative and due to my humanistic orientation, the themes of human relationship and communication play a large role in how I contribute to the discussions surrounding its planning and implementation. Therefore, by framing this study around the perceptions of selected mentors and mentees—emphasizing the relational aspects and influences of the mentoring process as it unfolds—I aim to contribute to a better understanding of what I consider one of the most significant purposes of education: the process of student subjectification; that is, the development of the individual (student) as a freely thinking, choosing, acting, and responsible individual in the world (Biesta, 2010).

Corollary values of this research lie in the following study-related factors: (a) its openness to the experiences of mentors and mentees as they occur in the field; (b) its concurrent timing with the formal implementation of the initiative so as to capture the initial, dynamic nature of this process; and (c) its potential to support ongoing/future studies of the mentorship initiative, thus serving as a foundation and resource for generating knowledge about university-based mentorship programs and informing practice as a process aimed at building relationships and promoting individual growth/subjectification.

Using the exploratory interview as my methodology, I conducted a qualitative research project during the 2016-2017 academic year. I utilized face-to-face interviews as my chief data collection instrument in order to address the following research questions around which I designed the study.

1. How do faculty and students currently understand the mentor/mentee relationship and its purpose?

2. How does the culture of mentorship initiative impact the lives of traditional undergraduate students at Private University?

3. How are mentors affected by the mentor/mentee relationship as implemented in the university's mentorship initiative?

4. Does the mentorship initiative demonstrate the theoretical frameworks of subjectification, self-authorship, and transformational learning? If so, how?

More specifically, I formulated these four research questions to align with my study's purpose: (a) to explore the possibilities of expanding human connections across the mentor/mentee relationship, (b) to determine the potential impact of mentoring on transformative learning experiences and personal development for undergraduate students, and (c) to explore the initiative, itself, as an ongoing work in progress. As a lens through which to view this formally constructed, college-based effort, I designed this research to serve as an exploratory first step in addressing a more humanistic construction of the mentoring relationship.

Finally, this chapter is organized to systematically review the findings from the exploratory interviews, supplemented by findings derived from study-related documents and to my researcher field notes recorded throughout the study process. Therefore, in the sections that follow, I provide the findings specific to two rounds of interviews—(1) mentors and (2) mentees, and paired interviews (each mentor and mentee together). Following transcription of the completed interviews, study participants reviewed their

transcripts in order to ensure accuracy (member-checking). I then follow with a

discussion of the thematic findings that represent the three groups collectively, thus

indicating common patterns across all. Specifically, study findings reflect an initial and a

secondary round of manual coding that I completed in order to identify common themes

generated for each group of interviewees. During this process, I immersed myself in the

transcribed interview documents, coding those parts of each interview that seemed

especially significant to each interviewee. In other words, I identified those responses that

seemed to subscribe meaning to the mentor/mentee experience within the particular

relationship under exploration. In all, I revisited the codes initially generated during a

second and third round of re-reading and re-coding, although very little changed

regarding thematic content after the first round of coding. Ultimately, meaningful

patterns and categories emerged from these codes, becoming themes that then developed

into this study's findings.

Following my presentation of the findings from the exploratory interviews, I

include a section in which I examine additional findings yielded by two secondary data

collection methods: (a) document analysis, involving a review of pertinent documents

produced by personnel at Private University, along with outside consultants retained for

special projects, specific to the culture of mentorship initiative and (b) researcher field

notes recorded throughout the project in my role as researcher. I textually analyzed all

pertinent documents, and I examined researcher field notes with an eye to possible

emerging themes. In the fifth chapter of this dissertation, I present an analysis of all

findings (exploratory interviews, document analysis and researcher field notes) in response to the research questions that ground the study.

**The Exploratory Interview: Mentors, Mentees, and Paired Interviews**

**Laying the Groundwork: Background Review of Study Participants**

Before I outline the findings from all of the interviews conducted, I wish to review key information pertaining to the study participants in order to re-orient the reader to both groups (mentors and mentees) and, thus, provide added grounding for the discussions of findings that follow. Note that throughout my discussion of the findings, I use pseudonyms to refer to those study participants whom I have either paraphrased or quoted directly.

**Mentors.** Pertaining to this study's mentors, the number of faculty from whom I requested interviews represented approximately 10% of the total number of faculty on Private University's campus. I chose these particular faculty members based on the fact that I knew them to be actively engaged in the role of mentor, taking on this relatively new identity through which we, as a collective of members of this institution, seek to become experienced advocates of a culture of mentorship. Actually, I had identified additional faculty in case I was unable to secure the first eight individuals on my list, but none of my initial requests were rejected. As a final point, I confirmed that all participating mentors were exposed to the same initial concept discussions and training sessions that had been extended to all faculty around the topic of mentorship—both prior to and during the initiative's formal implementation as of the 2016-2017 academic year.

As previously explained in Chapter III, all mentors were Caucasian and equally divided according to gender—four male and four were female—although not by design. Following is a breakdown of their length of time as faculty at Private University: (a) three participants—less than five years; (b) one participant—more than five, but less than 10 years; (c) one participant—between 10 and 15 years; (d) two participants—between 15 and 20 years; and (e) one participant—over 20 years. Next, a breakdown of the mentors' ages at the time of the study reveals: (a) four mentors—between 30 and 40 years of age; (b) three mentors—between 40 and 50 years of age, and (c) one mentor—over 60 years of age. Lastly, I determined that prior mentoring experiences would not be a factor regarding the selection process. However, during the interviews some mentors did share prior relevant experiences.

Specific to the exploratory interview process, I interviewed each of the identified Private University mentors in order to explore the depth and scope of the mentoring relationships they had created with their students during the early stages of the formal initiative. As detailed in Chapter III, I intended that these questions retain an open-ended quality that would encourage similarly expansive responses from the mentors. I provide the six, open-ended interview questions, again, in order to set the stage for this chapter's discussion of findings specific to participating mentors.

1. Tell me about your mentoring experiences.

2. What are the reasons that compel you to be a mentor?

3. Describe your image of an effective mentor.

4. In your opinion, how do you measure up to that image?

5. If applicable, describe the experience of seeing a shift in your mentee's perspective during the mentoring relationship?

6. In what ways have you been affected, personally and professionally, by the mentoring relationship?

**Mentees.** As addressed in Chapter III Methodology, I left the selection of mentees (as study participants) to those individuals already confirmed as mentors. Significantly, in my role as researcher, I determined that I would have no influence on the selection of student participants. I considered this stance essential due to the pre-established relationships (even if newly established) that existed between (then) current mentors and their mentees. Therefore, the selection of each study mentee was accomplished at the discretion of the mentor.

Because I did not impose any restrictions or qualifications on the sample selection process relative to the gender, race, ethnicity, etc. of participating mentees, demographic information for this group reveals little in the way of diversity, similar to the situation of the mentors. For example, of the eight mentees identified by their mentors, four were male and four were female. All were Caucasian. Following is a breakdown of their time/academic standing at the university: (a) four mentees—seniors; two mentees—juniors; one mentee—sophomore; and one mentee—freshman. It should also be noted that four of the eight mentors chose mentees of the same sex; in other words, two female mentors each chose a female mentee, while two male mentors each chose a male mentee. In contrast, the two remaining female mentors identified male mentees, and the two remaining male mentors identified female mentees.

As explained in Chapter III, I designed mentees' interview questions to be primarily open-ended and experientially oriented so that the students would be more inclined to engage in a meaningful conversation. Similar to the questions aimed at mentors, I created the mentee questions with the intention to stimulate reflective thinking processes, provoke instances of personal resonance, and encourage open communication. Here, too, I provide the six, open-ended interview questions for mentees as a reminder to the reader, as well as to set the stage for this chapter's discussion of findings specific to them.

1.  Tell me about your experience as a mentee in Private University's mentorship initiative.

2.  What were your expectations when you first entered the mentoring relationship?

3.  Describe your image of an effective mentor.

4.  Describe the responsibilities of a mentee.

5.  In what ways have you developed an expanded awareness about yourself as a student, as a member of the university community, and as an individual (personally)?

6.  Describe any other ways in which you have been affected by the mentor/mentee relationship.

**Interviews with Mentors**

Mentor interviews comprised the first round of my exploratory interview process. Based on the interview data, I determined that the following themes emerged as common

patterns among the mentors: (a) mentorship experienced as a rewarding process of personal development in the role of mentor;(b) mentorship experienced as friendship; (c) authenticity, compassion, trust and mindfulness as significant behaviors to the development of the mentor/mentee relationship; and (d) constraints and ambiguities regarding the formal role of mentor as an institutionally assigned guide.

**Mentorship as a Rewarding Process**

All of the mentors described their experiences as being positive and rewarding. At the same time, most conveyed that they had not had mentors in their own educational experiences as either undergraduates or graduate students. However, Mentor J and Mentor M had worked with mentors as former students themselves, each describing the experience as one in which the mentor communicated the mentee's potential in some way. Ironically, regardless of whether or not current mentors experienced mentorship as students themselves, all communicated that the fact that they either did or did not have a mentor motivated their interest in becoming a mentor as faculty members. In her/his own way, each suggested that the chief purpose of the role, as they saw it and lived it at Private University, was to be an active party to a student's developmental process of becoming an adult versus simply preparing the student for a particular job or career. Comments such as "leads a person to owning" (Mentor M) suggested a concern for individual growth and the subjectification process for undergraduate students in general. The following interview excerpt illustrates the expressed purpose of contributing to a student's processes of human development within the higher education setting.

> I may not have the kind of impact on a huge cross section of students in any given year, but those that I feel drawn to or who feel drawn to me—the relationship is very, very deep and that provides that opportunity to do as I understand—the kind of things I think a mentor ought to do. It is not about me solving a student's problems and being a fixer. It is to help that student understand the paths that they may take to take some ownership over whatever their issue is . . . academic or personal. (Mentor M, personal communication, November 28, 2016)

All of the mentors suggested that, while they found the experience to be

rewarding, it was also quite challenging. The most common challenge mentioned was the

issue of time. Two of the eight, Mentor A and Mentor C, discussed their own paradigm

shift regarding the way they had seen their roles as educators before entering into this

experience. For example, Mentor A discussed a sense of pleasant surprise at the prospect

of developing teacher-student relationships outside the classroom. As a relatively new

faculty member at Private University with only two years there, she described her initial

exposure to the culture of mentorship initiative and its training activities as "silly" at first,

but eventually began to appreciate what she was experiencing. Furthermore, while she

saw the role as a choice that she made, she also described her involvement in the

initiative as the "organization's assignment of a role" (Mentor A, personal

communication, December 9, 2016).

> I came into it with a preconceived idea of what that word [mentor] means for me and so in my interactions with students, I see mentor as not seeing a person leading a student down a particular path, but having them come to me with questions and helping give them resources, not giving them answers. But giving them tools or things to think about that will lead them to their own answers and um to me that is what a mentor does…um having the flexibility to be able to do that. To have that relationship with the student that I wasn't just put into this cookie cutter—no you just advise them on classes—that you have the freedom to interact with students and fill that role that they might not be comfortable talking to an assigned advisor to. So, I think just having that open door policy and

knowing I don't necessarily have the time that I would like to be a mentor, but knowing that is encouraged and that is part of what I will eventually be assessed on, if I choose to have a percentage on my evaluation that I do mentor and advise that I do have that flexibility on my own personal development and assessment to be able to do that. (Mentor A, personal communication, December 9, 2016)

As the interviewer, I sensed some struggle with exactly how Mentor A felt about committing to the role of mentor while, at the same time, experiencing an expanding sense of satisfaction with the relationship. She expressed appreciation of the opportunity to develop these relationships, yet she appeared overwhelmed with the demands of time. She was visibly agitated as she began to discuss her lack of time and what she perceived that the institution was requiring of her, referencing other faculty in her area who did not seem to take these roles outside of instructing very seriously. So, I sensed during the interview that her initial sense of satisfaction as faculty at Private University did include participating in this role, but the emotional content of her reaction to time constraints seemed to be more intense, overriding her expressions of satisfaction. It could be that, with only two years' experience as faculty, Mentor A felt some anxiety about meeting obligations and managing time given her relative inexperience.

Mentor C also expressed a sense of satisfaction in his role as mentor, conveying that the process of mentoring provided a very familiar relationship view within the frameworks of Private University's mentorship initiative. He had completed his undergraduate degree at this institution and felt that even during that time—ten years ago—Private University had elements of mentorship connections between faculty and students. The culture was one of familiarity and provided students with the sense that they were being nurtured and cared for. So, this formal initiative seemed familiar.

However, after attending other institutions for his graduate work, he felt that his was conditioned to develop a different mindset in regard to what constitutes a professional relationship between a faculty member and a student and what was appropriate pedagogy. He stated,

> It was hard to be a professional and being trained in how to think in a different way of talking to students . . . asking questions leading to their own answers . . . more of a discussion that puts us on an equal playing field. Talking with students and not at them. Finding a connection that is deeper than surface level where you know who they are, and what they are going through and see their potential. (Mentor C, personal communication, December 5, 2016)

Since receiving his undergraduate degree at Private University, and completing his graduate degree elsewhere, this individual worked in public education for over five years before returning to a faculty/staff role at Private University. During the time away, he described a somewhat constrained relationship with younger students that translated into his understanding of the teacher-student relationship as a cordial, but more distance and impersonal experience. He seemed very happy to be invited to enter into a more genuine and personal relationship with students through his role as mentor.

In terms of how they had been personally impacted by the mentorship initiative at the time this study was conducted, mentors collectively described the rewards attendant to this experience as encompassing the following areas: (a) the development of community and (b) a greater sense of life purpose, thereby providing them with a larger sense of their own selves as unique individuals. In some ways these two perspectives merged for mentors. Mentor M described,

Developing into this role of mentor—I think it has changed the entire way that I rate both the value of the things that I do and want to do here and the success that I have. I, as a young faculty member, my job here at Private University, I thought was maybe going to be a 2 maybe 3-year thing. This was my foot into the profession. This was a way station for me to finish my big book project. Um, and start maybe a new research idea or two. Build my chops as a teacher but not really dig any roots in too deeply and then move on. You know, bigger schools, better school however you want to define the next ambition up our academic um ladder . . . Building those relationships with students is why I sought out Private University in the first place. Um, and to the extent that I had choices of places that I wanted to apply to and types of schools that I was looking for—they all came back to that one core thing that you are going to be able to know and understand students. They are going to know you. There is a premium on building those relationships and that is kind of where the premium is for me. . . . Those [concerns with professional advancement] now are very secondary now to the positive impact that, that the kind of mentoring relationships that we are afforded. I often go through rhythms of the semester and kind of feel bad for myself that, I feel that our profession is somewhat lonely that we are trapped in our offices preparing lessons, grading papers, filling out reports, answering emails and we don't have a great deal of time for interaction or sometimes when we do and if we do we feel some sort of remorse that we wasted time or it was time wasted . . . that we are sort of scripted in terms of what we do—and um, so I think that there is something that is fulfilling about those moments that we have that sense of exchange and I think that is why I keep going back to this phrase—on a human level—that is not just me delivering content that people have to figure out and some way learn and translate later on. That there is—that there is real life at stake at these kind of mentor actions. (Mentor M, personal communication, November 28, 2016)

Mentor M described the changing sense of his purpose in regard to his profession while also pointing out the sense of connection that is often missing in the activities that are typical to the profession of college faculty. A little later in the interview he actually suggested that "being a mentor with others and navigating what that means has provided a greater sense of camaraderie, a greater sense of community that I have felt in previous years" (Mentor M, personal communication, November 28, 2016)

Mentor J related the role of mentor to fulfilling a sense of purpose, particularly

from his spiritual perspective, in the following excerpt,

> I see mentoring as an expression of my discipleship and that is why I don't put limits on it. I don't put time limits on it in terms of the 24/7 while they are here and I tell my freshmen mentees, I say look this is not a contract as far as I am concerned in terms of my relationship to you. I am paid by the university a salary. I do not think [of] my work with you in terms of financial compensation . . . when our class ends in the spring as far as I am concerned in the least, our relationship has not ended unless you want it to. So, if you need something as a sophomore or a junior or a senior or after you have left Private University, if there is some way that I can help you I will be glad to help you, as long as I am able, and there is something that I am capable of doing for you. So, um, you know that, that is beyond any kind of work obligation . . . Um, but I mean—I find that to be one of the most gratifying parts of my work if you will. (Mentor J, personal communication, December 1, 2016)

Based on the mentors' feedback, the concept of mentorship as a potentially

transformative experience (for the student mentee) was both a real possibility and a

somewhat vague reality. In other words, mentors confirmed a sense of growing

awareness around the idea of transformative learning experiences through which the

learner demonstrates expanded self-awareness and stronger capacities of self-reflection.

Such glimpses of student growth seemed more likely to occur for mentors as the

mentor/mentee relationship deepened through conversation and regular interaction.

Likely due to the abstract qualities associated with the concept of an individual's personal

transformation process, only three of the eight mentors expressed awareness that there

"probably" were moments of transformative learning experiences for their respective

mentees, but they could not offer examples specific to these students. Mentor M finally

thought of a special moment that occurred with a student several years prior, but again,

not with his current mentee. One of the three mentors, Mentor S, offered an example of

what she considered a transformative learning experience for a student who she

encouraged to attend a professional conference. She stated,

> I really feel it was after his first conference because he got really great feedback
> from an individual that I think was a Biologist—it was the undergraduate research
> conference—very well respected… There was a lot of PhD. Research there, but
> he got a lot of feedback . . . that is something that I really like about him, he is
> very receptive to what other people say and we both look into it . . . People would
> stop by to see his poster—the research and talk to him and tell him that it was
> quality research . . . Coming out of this small school and with no research facility
> is pretty amazing. And then he went to the American Colleges Sports Medicine
> Conference and that is when he said people were surprised that he wasn't a
> Master's student, but that he was an undergraduate student because he is very
> professional . . . But I really think after that ACSM conference, that is when he
> really saw his future differently and decided to go on and get his Ph.D. because he
> then probably realized, I mean he knew. (Mentor S, personal communication,
> November 29, 2016)

The transformative impact of participating in the conference inspired this student to

change direction regarding his future plans for a career in academia. In fact, Mentor S

described in depth her mentee's experiences before, during, and after the conference and

emphasized his shift in thinking once he could envision himself in a future life as an

academic. As a result of this relationship Mentor S exuberantly expressed,

> It has just brought a lot of joy, like honestly, to my life, it really expands my life. I
> have to be quite honest. It has been super great and I was thinking—oh gosh he is
> going to graduate in May, who will I be able to be work with next? (Mentor S,
> personal communication, November 29, 2016)

This Mentor demonstrated exuberance as she talked about how personally rewarding it

had been to work with this particular student. She also expressed curiosity and speculated

about future students with whom she would work in such a productive capacity. She

clearly maintained her desire to continue in her role as mentor.

Several mentors described working with their mentees around overcoming

challenges, in some cases leading to experiences of personal transformation for the

students involved. Mentor C and Mentor R shared conversations about their mentees,

discovering leadership qualities that these students had not previously recognized in

themselves. The following excerpt reveals a story shared by Mentor C related to his

student's experience of self-discovery as a leader, a concept of which this student had

previously been unaware.

> Okay, so the student that I recommended you interview, we have had two coaching sessions and what is really interesting is that he is very well-spoken, very well-liked by his peers, has great um . . . he is just a great honest individual and people kind of look up to him in class because when I ask questions, he is not going to be the first person to answer, he is kind of hesitant but he will be someone to contribute to the conversation in a very polite but meaningful way and he brings real meaning to the conversation and our first coaching session was about the EQI and his confidence level as very low and I said, you know the EQI is based on your feelings. I said I see confidence in class but you don't' take the step forward, but you are not noticing that other people are looking for you to take the step forward. And he looked at me like I was a foreign person calling him out and he said well I never looked at it that way and I said, you are performing very well in this class and others. You have a great presence in this class, but I don't think you see your presence in the class and so my challenge to him was to um seek a role on campus—out of his comfort zone—but to seek a role where, that pushed him to use his voice and um, two weeks ago, he ran and was elected as a representative of the freshman class. (Mentor C, personal communication, December 5, 2016)

Importantly, this topic came up in my interview with Mentor C's student mentee. This

student confirmed the observations expressed by the mentor. Both mentor and mentee

acknowledged the significance of their interactions in supporting the student's

transformed image of himself.

Mentor R told the story of her mentee's breakthrough toward personal

independence as she recognized that she no longer needed to be responsible for her

family's well-being. She realized she could create her own life in the university

community without losing connection to her home life.

> I think a lot of times you just have, you just have no idea where they are coming from. I don't want to say "baggage" because that seems negative it is not really baggage but experiences they have coming in and how they really rely on you to be their person more so than you, even as a mentor realize that you are impacting them so much because they—you don't know what their circumstances are outside of the university. So, one of my students she has already disclosed a lot of information about not wanting to go home on the weekends because it is a negative environment just because her aunt and uncle they actually adopted her— her and her brother—because her parents were killed in a car accident when she was very young. She was like 10 years old and so just talking with her, she felt very comfortable with my peer mentor and felt comfortable to talk about that much sooner than she did with me. But she was very forthcoming about things that were happening when she went home. And it wasn't that they were abusive it was just that they were going through the transition of her leaving and her not being there with them and they just had such a very tight bond—and they are much older . . . they are in their 70s and so I think just her leaving, there is just a little bit, I think that they are just a little bit angry because she has left. But we have talked through how she wants to deal with this and how figuring it out will benefit her in future dilemmas. It's like she has had this huge burden lifted. (Mentor R, personal communication, December 1, 2016)

Mentor R went on to explain that watching this student work through her challenge was

as much of a transformation for her as for her student. She shared,

> [Being in the relationship] is not just for them, it is for me. It is a self—it is something that I am able to fulfill internally that I feel that you know being able to be a mentor, it is hopefully guiding me to becoming, I am not just practicing what I preach, I am actually doing it and I think it is important to make sure that the

advice that I am giving my students that I am also living it. So, sometimes I get um, I may take a curve in the road and I have to think back okay, if I am a role model for my students I have to be doing things differently, and it makes me come back and align and think about my own actions. This is about my own growth! (Mentor R, personal communication, December 1, 2016)

In this case, the mentor—one of the youngest in this study—suggested that her own personal growth and transformation was the result of her experience as a mentor.

Overall, mentors interviewed for this study were very positive about their roles and their active participation in Private University's culture of mentorship initiative. Moreover, they expressed their satisfaction in experiencing the ongoing development of their own capacities to embody and enact what they described as the key characteristics of mentorship: Being a good listener, and being trustworthy, respectful, and compassionate. Throughout the interviews, all conveyed their enjoyment in discussing the role, and they demonstrated a sense of genuine care in answering the questions. However, none of the eight mentors offered any suggestions regarding possible changes in program implementation at that point. In turn, while I did not seek suggestions for improvement based on the open-ended nature of the questions that comprised the exploratory interview instrument, I had thought that I might get such feedback within the broader scope of those questions. This did not prove to be a significant issue for me as I was neither surprised nor disappointed.

**Mentorship Experienced as Friendship**

In several of the interviews the term "friendship" was mentioned as a characteristic to describe the nature of a mentorship relationship. The term was used to describe mentorship as being very similar to friendship, and they wrestled with

distinguishing between the two. In the following excerpt, Mentor J compared the nature

of personal adult friendships (including expressions of vulnerability) in contrast to the

boundaries that need to be maintained in friendship with students.

> I have noticed over the years and I have finally come to terms with it, especially when I was younger, after students would graduate I would invite them at some point to feel free to call me J if they wished to, rather than Dr. [J]. It never happened and after a while I processed that and I thought that is not who you are to them. And that is not who they want you or need you to be to them. They need you to be a Professor and mentor and so I don't do that anymore and now I have reached an age that is seems more ridiculous than it did and I am not as uncomfortable but I do think there is a difference between being a friend and a mentor. I generally--with my friends, and when I talk about friends—I am talking about a small group of people and I am not using friend in terms of the way that I mean of Facebook. With my friends, those are people that I often reveal my greatest vulnerabilities to. It would be rare and in my view probably inappropriate on my part, to do that with my mentees. I think it would be disturbing and unsettling to them um and I don't think it would be helpful or to me to do, um because I think that is the role for my friends and for them to do that to e and me for them. I don't think that the role of my students or my mentees. If occasionally they see the humanity in me, that is fine, but I don't want to set up some kind of relationship where I am seeking them out for comfort on my own part. I don't think that is their role. (Mentor J, personal communication, December 1, 2016)

In this next account, Mentor M described friendship with mentees as an authentic

relationship between equals as human individuals.

> I think of examples that I have told you either as I told you, or in the relationship as it was, or as it has grown and evolved moved into friendship, but I don't think of the students right now that I mentor regularly or I mentor well that I would consider them friends—but I do think it kind of goes back to that seeing one another as equals on just a human plane. Again, recognizing the differences between student and faculty/staff member and when or what my role is. But still just on that, that human plane that this is—not just some kind of role that you are playing. I think authentic would be the right word and maybe that is more the appropriate word than necessarily friendship. An authentic relationship where um, where the person being mentored feels safe enough to let their guard down, but that I also feel safe enough to us, you know, be open to the conversation and the

directions that it needs to go—wherever it needs to go. (Mentor M, personal communication, November 28 2016)

For Mentor Da, the mentor-mentee friendship must still maintain appropriate teacher-student boundaries during the undergraduate years. However, after graduation, Mentor Da described an attitude of openness to including former mentees into the realm of friendship as peers.

> I mean, we talked about that relational dynamic and I would say friendships. In the post-higher educational life, these are friends of mine now. So, these aren't— so they started as mentees but I don't expect them to have this reverence for me like outside of our organized formal relationship . . . So when I think back on some of the mentor-mentee relationships, these are now people that I want to hire. There are people that I want to be a—and it is—they are adding value not from a sense of I am an authority in their life, but it is a sense of true friendship. Like they are adding value to my life—they are adding value to my life during the process--but on the secondary side of it these are lifelong relationships and friends that I am better because of them. It is almost like a new 21st century sort of way to create community because we don't have the same kind of community when apprentices were, you know, where you were working side by side with somebody, and it is almost like we are reinventing a way to create community. (Mentor Da, personal communication, December 6, 2016)

In discussing friendships, Mentor Db described the importance of sharing a similar ethos with a peer. While she also used the term ethos relative to the mentor-mentee relationship, she expressed her belief that this is a qualitatively different kind of relationship.

> I would say there is a um, I mean, when I think of—this is going to sound weird in your research . . . but when I look at somebody as a friend, I look at this as a person that I have things in common with. Somebody who I believe is fun. Somebody [with whom] I have the same ethos. Somebody that I want to hang out with and just be able to be myself. When I look at that, I don't think of—when I look at a mentee, I look at it as someone that has similar ethos and of course

somebody that you would sit down and have dinner with—but I think of it as a different sort of relationship. A different, I don't know if a mentor/mentee can be friends. I must think there are different levels. But my, my definition of friendship might be different. (Mentor Db, personal communication, December, 6, 2016)

Despite the fact that this theme did not provide any definitive view of the comparison of mentorship to friendship, it actually emerged across the mentor interviews as an important dynamic worthy of attention. While mentors' perspectives on mentorship as friendship were different to varying degrees, the fact that they volunteered the word "friendship" in over half of the interviews seemed to suggest a conceptual association. In a later section describing the findings from the paired interviews, I discuss my observation of the nonverbal behaviors exhibited between the mentors and mentees signaling friendship.

**Authenticity, Compassion, Trust and Mindfulness: Significant Behaviors for Relationship**

One of my research interest was about understanding what mentors (and mentees) considered a mentoring relationship to be and what are the specific characteristics that embodies the role. I asked two questions to better understand: What are the characteristics of effective mentors? How did they (mentors) measure up in terms of those characteristics?  The following comments reveal mentor's responses in describing effective mentor characteristics.

Mentor Db focused on the listening process and acknowledged the need to be unscripted in order to be responsive and authentic.

It takes someone willing to give a little slice of themselves or their being to another person. Because we can put a label on it and just say—have a student come in. Have a meeting, have a coaching session with them and then you are mentoring them. Well . . . you are . . . acting—you are doing the actions of a mentor, but you are not necessarily mentoring. So, I think that is it very different—that authentic, um, nature of being um mentor. So, you have to be willing to do it. I think somebody that has some skills in listening and being able to question and somebody that has um a true desire to make a difference in a person's life. I don't think you can mentor everyone the same way. But I think you have to have some basic skill like being able to listen and ask questions and probe while still balancing that you are not—it is not coming from a sheet of paper, it is coming from within. (Mentor Db, personal communication, December 8, 2016)

In the next excerpt, mentor Da expressed concerns that demonstrate the significance of characteristics of compassion, trust and mindfulness with regard to attending to the needs of the mentee.

The first thing that comes to me is availability and um and I am reminded of a—a leader I had at a previous college. He said that one of the most disturbing things that a student said to him was—I know you don't have time right now, but can I—and he just shut that student down and said "You are the very reason I work here. Don't think that my busyness ever trumps you!" We have to be available to students, and then we have to be cautious that we don't give off a sense of busyness that dismisses our students . . . and you have to stay present while they are in your presence. (Mentor Da, personal communication, December 6, 2016)

Mentor M emphasized listening behaviors as contributing to establishment of an equal and authentic relationship with the mentee. His ideas about the mentorship as a partnership suggests a trust building approach.

Whew . . . I think, I think there are two—well like I am performing well as a mentor I am listening first, and I am trying to find, you know, the cues that the student is giving me. And, that may very well be listening to body language and sort of the emotional state that the student might be in. But, also just listening. Giving them the space to speak. Um, and I think there is also—I might have a

difficult time explaining what I mean here, but I think there has to be a show of respect to the person that you are mentoring where even though—I think they know and they are coming to me as a person of authority or that they trust and that they look up to—that when I look across the table I see an equal. I see another adult and not a child. Not someone that I am trying to tell what to do or that I am judging. (Mentor M, personal communication, November 28, 2016)

In the following excerpt, Mentor R encapsulated compassion, trust, and mindfulness under the broader umbrella of love for one's fellow human being. She also emphasized the importance of commitment to the relationship, the ability to listen and the desire to encourage.

I think just being there for them. Encouragement. Compassion. Definitely commitment. Committed to them. Availability and being able to listen to them and assist them with a sense of comfort. They want to trust you. So, I just think listening and being a good communicator, um but I mean—I mean I also think that you have to love them. I think that is a big important thing and most important role is to just show them love. Love, commitment, listening, communicator um—trustworthy. Those are all of the things that sum up to me about being a good mentor. (Mentor R, personal communication, December 1, 2016)

There was very little variation in the characteristics the mentors deemed important to effective mentorship. While often using the same words to name effective mentor characteristics, their wording sometimes varied only in the use of synonyms that conveyed the same meaning. A follow-up question asked how they (mentors) measured up in terms of those characteristics. Universally, they all said that they measured up to their own descriptions of effectiveness. Their decisively singular responses to this question did not warrant more attention.

**The Formal Versus Informal Role of Mentor: Constraints and Ambiguities**

The reality of the experience of creating a culture of mentorship, from the mentor perspective, is that it is both a formal and an informal model exists at Private University. Formally, all students are assigned to someone who is called either a mentor (as in the case of the first-year student) or an advisor (for transfer students and students beyond the first year). In both cases, the mentor/advisor is a formal role charged with providing information and guidance on matters ranging from preparing a class schedule to discussing issues that impact academic priorities. Discussing these issues requires setting an appointment time as a necessary formality. These times typically correspond to the academic calendar. Such procedures are part of the formal system of mentorship. In contrast, informal mentorship can be seen in both scheduled and unscheduled encounters that result in a synchronistic opportunity to manage an issue, celebrate a breakthrough, and otherwise reflect upon the ups and downs of college life. Based on the informal model of mentorship, the relationship is predicated on fostering more human connection and personal development. Competing notions of formal and informal mentorship practice can give rise to ambiguous understandings of its purpose and processes.

Along with ambiguity, mentors addressed various conditions and limitations that were perceived as hampering their ability to effectively function in the role of mentor. Therefore, while they collectively shared very positive experiences about their relationships with mentees, several cited the issues of time, emotional energy as constraints to the developing partnership.

Following are two excerpts in which mentors highlighted the issue of time as a particular

problem.

> The job that we have at Private University for mentoring is pretty involved. It is very time consuming. It involves not only the classroom contact time, it involves helping students plan academic schedules. It involves individual coaching sessions, service events and activities sometimes beyond the regular work day clock and that sort of things. But even with all of that, I give my cell phone number to my students. (Mentor J, personal communication, December 1, 2016)

> I don't think that we have the resources to be able to do it as they have told us it should be done . . . the time! The Time!  It is just literally the time because when you have a 4-4 teaching load, administrative responsibilities and 26 advisees? So, and you are trying to schedule all that within a week of advising and try to convince the kids in between, oh drop in in-between, and let's have this mentoring moment . . . oh yeah . . . um, and I understand mentoring moments can happen in a hallway, I get that. There are those other sit downs and let's have this professional conversation and let's sit down and plan the rest of your life and answer any of those bigger questions that you might have. I feel that we don't get to enjoy those moments. (Mentor A, personal communication, December 9, 2016)

The issue of emotional energy invested by the mentor to engage and guide the

mentee through a variety of life experiences (both academic and non-academic) emerged

as an area of concern for a few of the mentors, especially when the mentee was dealing

with personal/emotional issues. In other words, with the culture of mentorship initiative

focused on development of the "whole" student as a particular individual, mentors felt

both responsible and vulnerable in their roles as framed by the initiative. Mentor J

explained that often "there is a price to pay" (Personal communication, December 1,

2016) in terms of expending the emotional energy required to empathize with some very

heavy concerns communicated by mentees.

> I have seen a number of students in my classes over the years that seem to be looking and seem to find something. Some larger sense of self. Some grander sense of purpose and some, I have struggled with this, some healing you know of wounds. And I don't even know what the particulars of that are. I think part of it is because you know here at the beginning of the 21st century, students in large part live in states of just existential chaos. Um and I don't even know that I know all the things that contribute to that, but there is something about the struggle (got emotional), sorry I am just—I struggle with this myself—but I know that they are different. Um, I am a very empathetic person so there is a degree of pain, I think, associated with being a mentor. Um, there is a price to it. You know you invest yourself. You make yourself vulnerable. (Mentor J, personal communication, December 1, 2016)

Some of the constraints overlapped with the ambiguous nature of mentorship. Without much yet in the way of definition or clarification, people in this role at Private University bring their own experiences and agendas to it, creating barriers for themselves and potentially the mentee. For example, Mentor Da and Mentor A identified some potential barriers regarding gender. Of interest, Mentor Da is male Mentor A is female. They both speculated that they might have difficulty mentoring females, but for their own individual reasons. Mentor A communicated that it is more difficult for her to work with a female.

> I don't need to be touchy feely with everybody, and you get them as much as you can. And some might not be as comfortable having a female as a mentor. I know for me, personally, I get along much better with men. So, for my dissertation advisors, I definitely wasn't going to the female advisors. I needed my guys because that is—my dad raised me--and I am just more comfortable about men. And some of the kids might be feeling that way too, and we have not engaged that before we put them into that first-year class. (Mentor A, personal communication, December 9, 2016)

In trying to better explain her stance that males might make better mentors, Mentor A reiterated that she, personally, gets along better with men. She appeared unable to explain

why this was so. Instead, just shrugged and smiled when I asked her to, again, elaborate on this point.

Mentor Da expressed his theory that men have a penchant for developing personal relationships while participating in various activities with another male. As such, he disclosed his preference for working with male students because he prefers an action oriented approach that he thinks is not possible for him with female students.

> I think, especially with guys, maybe less with girls, but my own theory is I think guys—if I were to say, if a girl was to do a book club, okay I will come. And they have, but with guy, before you could do a book club or before you can do something that is intentional, I think you have to have a moment when they connect. So for guys, it would be going hiking or it could be this or that and now you have to drive to the hike. So, if I walked up to a random student I barely had a connection with, they would look at me weird, you know. But if I were to say, a group of us are going, do you want to join us, they would be all in—and then on the back of it, if I said, "hey you want to go get some coffee," they would say yes. So, I think for guys they need that, that event, that experience. But for a girl—yes, when, where. That is their language if you want to talk for two hours. Sometimes guys need that thing—that when they experience that, there is that connection and stuff. (Mentor Da, personal communication, December 6, 2016)

In this discussion of formal and informal conceptions of mentorship, three areas related to constraints and ambiguity emerged. For example, the issue of time correlated to the formal model in several ways: (a) precise scheduling procedures, (b) conflicts with teaching loads, (c) committee obligations, and (d) a general sense of confusion over investment of time. They expressed the need for guidelines in order to cut through the ambiguity and gain a better understanding of how to manage discretionary time. Those mentors who associated the expenditure of emotional energy to being a constraint were typically invested in the personal aspect of mentorship which corresponds to the informal

model. The issue of gender intersected across both formal and informal domains of mentorship.

## Summary of Mentor Interview Findings

In summing up this section on mentors' responses to the exploratory interviews and my subsequent findings, the following themes emerged as particularly relevant: (a) mentorship experienced as a rewarding process of personal development in the role of mentor; (b) mentorship experienced as friendship; (c) authenticity, compassion, trust and mindfulness as significant behaviors to the development of the mentor/mentee relationship; and (d) constraints and ambiguities regarding the formal role of mentor as an institutionally assigned guide. Among these four themes, mentorship experienced as personally rewarding stood out as the most significant finding. In contrast, the theme of friendship-in conjunction with mentorship-stimulated the most internal conflict due to personal and professional conceptions of friendship. All agreed that certain human characteristics and behaviors are necessary to being an effective mentor; in particular, compassion and trust. Specific to constraints and ambiguities as a theme, all mentors concurred that formal and informal notions of mentorship are complicated by issues such as time and expenditure of emotional energy. Overall, this studies mentors offered ample responses that reflected thoughtfulness and commitment to the role. On this point, all indicated that they wished to continue as mentors and support Private University's initiative going forward.

**Interviews with Mentees**

The responses from the mentee interviews were far less descriptive than those provided by the mentors. Nevertheless, some of the mentees made very insightful comments. In addition, I noted certain similar perceptions that were expressed across both sets of interviews. As for the overall findings, I derived the following themes from mentee transcripts: (a) mentorship as a rewarding process of personal growth; (b) mentorship as friendship; (c) authenticity, compassion, and trust as significant behaviors in the relationship; and (d) constraints and lack of expectations regarding the formality of the relationship. I now present findings for mentees according to these themes.

**Mentorship as a Rewarding Process of Personal Growth**

By and large, my sense was that participation in the mentor/mentee relationship was a very positive experience for these students. For example, based on one or two-word descriptors, Mentee E described the experience as "cool," while Mentee J described the mentoring relationship as "not stale." I interpreted "not stale" as meaning a genuine or authentic relationship because the student indicated that he initially expected to be treated like "an object" and not a person (a sensibility echoed by Mentee L). Two others, Mentee Ay and Mentee C, made similar comments regarding prior experiences in which each felt he/she was treated more as an object than as a person. The following interview excerpt illustrates how Mentee J communicated this significant point about being regarded as a person; that is, as a human being in contrast to an object. He was describing his expectations of the relationship.

I felt like it would be—my first impression was that it was going to be stale. You know what I mean? It wouldn't be a personal connection you would just like be—here is your schedule, you do this and I will do this for you. It would be stale. It would not be on a personal level and I would not be able to talk to them as if I was a real person—if that makes sense. Yeah, so I –it was kind of interesting going in and, um, meeting with my mentor and seeing that this person was a person and not just here to, you know, do his job. (Mentee J, personal communication, January 9, 2016)

Mentee L made comparisons between a prior mentor (her first formally assigned mentor) whom she considered unhelpful and her current mentor at Private University, an individual this mentee actually sought out. Basically, this student realized that she needed more guidance than she had received in that first situation.

Um, well when I first got here I was a CJ major and then quickly a Political Science major and I would say that comparing that time to when I switched to a history major and fell into the roles with [Mentor M], very different experiences. Um, just coming in, I wish I had more guidance I guess as a mentee. I didn't really have help with the schedules as I feel, as I do now with Mentor M—he really helps. I think he helped me get the major done in a year and a half I think it was, so that I could go to the DC program, and so he really helped me sort everything out. It was all so confusing, especially as a freshman. He helps with everything and his door is always open, so yeah. It is great. And we talk about soccer all the time, so we have a relationship that goes beyond school, but [laughing here] he is great and I think that is very beneficial. (Mentee L, personal communication, November 30, 2016)

Likewise, for Mentee Az, the relationship with her mentor also proved to be a supportive one beyond anything she had expected or imagined, as communicated in the following interview excerpt.

When I came here, I had 12 deaths within three months in my first semester—one was my boyfriend, at the time, of three years, a close family member, church members, friends—and I had a really rough start to my freshman year. And I had to talk to somebody about it because I am a good student. So, I went straight to

> him, and then the next year I got hit with the cancer, and I really went straight to him. I did not think I would be able to continue my education because the bills were really outrageous. And he actually went to his church and made a fund, and wrote me a check, and estimated what my textbooks would be, and paid for all my textbooks that semester. (Mentee Az, personal communication, January 10, 2017)

Mentees' responses as to whether or not they experienced stages of transformational learning were more varied than their responses to other interview questions. Yet, to some extent, they all suggested that such transformational processes—indicating greater awareness of one's own subjective stance and sense of personal growth—could be seen as an early dawning of self-authorship or personal agency.

Mentee Ay described experiences (during the course of the relationship with his mentor) that were discussed which "opened up my eyes" (Personal communication, December 12, 2016). He also talked a lot about how these conversational opportunities helped him move beyond seeing people stereotypically. For example, he discussed relating to individuals belonging to different religions, coming from different countries, or as openly identifying as gay. By coming to know people as unique individuals, and discussing this insight with someone with whom he was comfortable and trusted, Mentee Ay recognized the barriers set up by his earlier upbringing. Essentially, by opening up to interactions with people unlike himself, he was able to dissolve some of the prior limitations that prevented him from engaging others.

> Since I came to [Private University], and having talks with my mentor, I am more open to other things, and other people and different religions and nationalities—it's kind of like I'm learning how to have conversations--back home where I'm from you didn't see a whole lot of that . . . It really is amazing when you know people one-on-one versus just thinking about a group of people, whether it is a different religion or a different race, um . . . it is kind of surprising when you

come head on to people who have a different way of looking at things, and it doesn't necessarily make them bad. That is just their experience. Like you had yours (long pause). That is when respect comes into it. (Ay, personal communication, December 12, 2016).

Mentee L described feeling as though she was able to see more possibilities for herself as a result of time spent in conversation with her mentor. She stated, "I feel myself becoming more independent and thinking for myself" (Mentee L, personal conversation, November 11, 2016). Mentee Az described this same sense of self-authorship as "reframing issues [which] has promoted a more optimistic view of possibilities" (Personal communication, January 10, 2016). When asked about whether he had begun to see things differently Mentee J stated, "I feel like I'm getting close to the real world" (Personal communication, January 9, 2017). In the following excerpt, Mentee C expressed the sense of autonomy and interdependence that all of these mentees collectively communicated as a result of the mentoring relationship.

> I didn't know who I was, now I feel like I can think on my feet…I feel I am becoming my own independent person and able to work outside of myself [with others], even though I am becoming more independent, if that makes sense. (Mentee C, personal communication, January 12, 2017)

The final question—Describe any other ways in which you have been affected by the mentor/mentee relationship—invoked many of the same insights communicated by mentees in response to previous questions. Several mentees reiterated previously stated revelations about feeling more mature and being more comfortable making decisions for themselves. Mentee L offered that she felt closer to many of her other professors as a result of developing a relationship with her mentor.

> Um, I mean I think I have just become closer to professors and see them as more than approachable after being around Mentor M—like they are not so scary (laughing) because [named another professor, she is as much a mentor as [Mentor M], I mean she would talk to you about anything any time of day and I have developed better relationships with other professors and it has made me more outgoing in the class. I think because I used to never talk in class—ever—and being in their classes you have to talk. Still not as much, but I think um I am more outgoing because of it and maybe more of a confidence level because I don't think I was really sure, you know, with my direction. (Mentee L, personal communication, November 30, 2016).

In other words, Mentee L perceived fewer barriers in establishing meaningful connections with others who were in a position of authority at Private University that, she felt, was a result of being in the relationship with her mentor.

Reflecting upon another aspect of developing maturity as an outcome of the mentor/mentee relationship, Mentee Ay communicated that he was feeling more confident in relationships with females than he had been before the mentorship experience. He shared that in high school he intentionally gave his mother the impression that he had girlfriends, but he actually felt too awkward to manage having conversations with females.

> I might be funny for this, but I did not have many women friends in high school because I couldn't really connect or whatever. My mama thought I had a girlfriend but I didn't. When I met Mentor A she was an advisor and you had to have a relationship with her and talk to her and so that helped a little bit. So, I am more friendly or more approachable to other women because before I might walk past a woman and say hey but I would walk on and not stop and talk—it didn't matter if she was a younger girl, my age or whatever I just—I didn't know how to connect with a woman and carry on a conversation. In high school the woman teachers talked to you as a group—a whole class and I just never was asked to have conversations like I didn't have anything to say. (Mentee Ay, personal communication, December 12, 2016)

Overall, the mentoring relationship promoted growth and reward for these mentees by cultivating a sense of equality, by providing guidance and reassurance, by offering immeasurable support in the face of a life-threatening illness, and by serving as the point at which personal transformation could emerge. For many of the students, transformations occurred in the form of seeing people, formerly viewed only through the lens of socially constructed categories as approachable and worthy human beings.

**Mentorship as Friendship**

As in the case with mentors, mentees in this study often used the term "friend" as being a characteristic of an effective mentor. Unlike the mentors, they did not seem to wrestle with how mentorship and friendship differed. They seemed to be less constrained by the formality of the relationship and, once they overcame any barriers such as being fearful or unaccustomed to relating to an adult in an educational setting, they were comfortable in the relationship. When asked to describe an effective mentor, several mentees isolated the term "friendship." Mentee J described the general sense of friendship that eventually replaced the earlier anxiety he had felt around adults in the higher education environment.

> School wise and outside of the school I just imagine someone who has an open door all of the time literally and physically that you could go and talk to about anything, any problems. Help with a paper or homework and just be there to answer. They are very approachable and that you have like this relationship, where you don't have to be like "okay, I got to breathe before I go in there." They are just like—hey, how is your day going. More like a friend talking back and forth---but that friend knows more than you do. (Mentee J, personal communication, January 9, 2017)

In this next excerpt, Mentee L mentioned "friendship" and appeared to hesitate, so I

asked a follow-up question to explore what she meant, and how she would distinguish

between a mentor and a friend. Her response was,

> Let me think. Well, obviously, well—I don't know how to say this without it
> sounding weird or anything. But they [mentors] just have more experience and
> more knowledge and more of like the role model friend, not like my roommate
> per se because we are on like kind of the same playing field. We are the same age
> we have been through similar things these 4 years, and then your mentor is
> someone who has been around the block and has been around the block a few
> more times and has more experience in different aspects of life than maybe, they
> maybe have more connections so if they did not know the right answer or you
> know—well I know this person that can help you or something like that . . . so I
> think more, more . . . I don't know the word . . . cultured? (Mentee L, personal
> communication, November 30, 2016)

Most of the time, when "friend" was associated with the role of mentor, there was no

deliberation among the mentees about how they associated the term to mentorship. As

expressed by Mentee C in the following excerpt, they knew the boundaries.

> I would like to think that most of my mentors are my friends—uh…the faculty
> and staff that I look towards as mentors. I like to think that we are friends just
> because of the friendliness of their nature, but I know where there is that
> boundary between mentor and friend and so sometimes I am like "that would be
> awesome to tell that mentor" and "that is so and so" and that may be a little too
> much information. (Mentee C, personal communication, January 12, 2017)

Again, just as with the mentors, the terms "friend" or "friendship" came up

enough in the interview data to be considered a theme. Overall, students were not

preoccupied with distinguishing the terms "mentorship" and "friendship" because they

communicated a general sense of boundaries. Furthermore, they displayed a somewhat

limited vocabulary or interest in exploring how mentorship was like or not like

friendship. They seemed clear as to how they distinguished the two. To reiterate, as opposed to mentee's ideas about friendship, mentors expressed more conflicted notions about the nature of friendship relative to mentees versus friendship as experience in their personal lives.

**Authenticity, Compassion, and Trust: Significant Behaviors in the Mentor/Mentee Relationship**

This theme emerged as a result of discussing ideal characteristics of an effective mentor and how their own mentors measured up to the description. In all cases, responses to these questions, inevitably gave way to expanded discussions of their particular relationships with their mentors. With one exception, all of these mentees articulated mentor characteristics and behaviors based on these current relationships, because it was their first experience with mentorship.

Across the responses offered from this group of mentees, they shared many of the same characteristics associated with what they came to understand was effective mentorship. In fact, the characteristics identified by the mentees matched those identified by the mentors, with only one additional characteristic identified by several in the mentee group as being necessary to the role of mentor: being qualified. Mentee L described being qualified in a unique way by stating, "[an effective mentor] has more story behind them to grab from" (Personal communication, November 12, 2016). I interpreted this comment as speaking to the reality of the mentor having experience from which to draw more than anything else; as such, having both life experience and academic experience upon which to base an effective mentoring relationship.

Collectively, mentees ascribed other characteristics to their mentors as role

models and sources of support. These included accountability, proactivity, responsibility,

open-mindedness, friendliness, and authenticity. It seemed that the word "authentic" was

a somewhat ambiguous term for some of the mentees. In the following excerpt, Mentee E

associated the term "authentic" with a sense of closeness that she interpreted as unique to

her particular relationship with her mentor as compared to what she perceived to be the

experiences of other mentees.

> [Authenticity means] genuine. Some of my friends describe their [mentoring]
> relationship, and I guess they don't put forth the efforts. I guess, but their
> relationships aren't as—some of them—aren't as personable and unique as mine
> has been. (Mentee E, personal communication, January 16, 2017)

Finally, several mentees suggested that a sense of passion and "heart" are necessary to

being an effective mentor. All of them expressed that they had experienced the identified

characteristics within the frameworks of their relationships with their current (during the

study) mentors. Of importance, and based on the lack of any previous mentoring

experiences, findings suggested that most of the mentees likely formed their impressions

of an effective mentor based on the current relationship. This finding is similar to first-

time mentee's perceptions of friendship.

In answering the question regarding their own responsibility to the mentor/mentee

relationship, mentees offered a variety of responses specific to the behaviors and

characteristics that should be expected of them. These included being open-minded and

willing to entertain constructive ideas presented by the mentor, demonstrating trust in the

mentor and the mentorship process, and being proactive in helping to maintain the

relationship. For Mentee J, the issue of taking responsibility for meeting scheduled

session times was an important aspect of maintaining a positive relationship with his

mentor.

> I would say, (pause), I would say my responsibilities were to keep up with my schedule so that it does not affect my mentor and so that he doesn't have to correct something I have done wrong. So, I am supposed to keep that intact so they don't have to mess with anything—um, I like to keep—I like to keep a good personal relationship with him, so I think that would contribute to being a good mentee. (Mentee J, personal communication, January 9, 2017)

For Mentee L, being responsible meant being present in terms of the motivation,

commitment and an equal participation in the relationship.

> Well, I think showing up is a good start [laughed loudly here]. Because I can imagine the pain of trying to mentor students who just don't care. So I think there is a level that the mentee has to care enough to carry out the advice or whatever the mentor is giving them, and I think there is an equal. I think it is a 50/50 effort on both parts. You get, the mentor helps the mentee, but the mentee has to do the equal share of the work, but has to put forth the effort to get whatever it is done or whatever. So, but um, I think showing up. In every way. Having determination and just, and having an open mind, and not go in and say—so if you are getting help on a paper or something, and you have to meet, but you are "Well, my paper is already perfect and I don't need the criticism." You have to be willing to take the constructive criticism I think and just be an open book. (Mentee L, personal communication, November 30, 2016)

> Mentee S frames his responsibility to the relationship as being open and honest

with his feelings and concerns in order to be receptive to advice.

> I think if you really want, um, to get everything you can out of the relationship like that, you have to be honest and you have to um, you know, speak up if there are issues. Um, whether it is with yourself or somebody else and be able and, and take that mentors advice. Now again, it kind of goes back to what we talked about earlier, you might have some advice that you haven't either heard or don't

necessarily agree with—but if you really want to get the most out of that kind of relationship, you have to, to remember that this person has a lot more life experience than you do, um and, and specifically with my mentor, the wisdom that they have and especially the biggest part—the biggest part of my mentor relationship is the faith aspect . . . and 99% of the advice they give you is going to be good [chuckling here]. (Mentee S, personal communication, January 17, 2017)

To conclude discussion of this theme, I noticed that in identifying ideal mentor behaviors and characteristics, the mentees seemed to speak hypothetically in terms of a model mentor. Again, for most of the mentees in this study, this mentoring relationship was a first-time experience. As such, there was no basis for comparison and they were drawing upon this relationship to define ideal characteristics and assess how their mentors did or did not embody them.

**Constraints and Lack of Expectations Regarding the Formality of the Mentoring Relationship**

When asked about what they had expected of the mentor/mentee relationship at the start of the fall 2016 semester, most mentees offered that since they had had no prior experiences with mentors, they had no prior expectations of this new relationship in which they were entering. On the other hand, Mentee Az stated that she felt intimidated when she was initially introduced to her mentor; in fact, she said she was initially afraid of him. She described him as "*being older and wiser, and it was hard for me to talk to wiser people most of the time*" (Mentee Az, personal communication, January 10, 2017). Interestingly, this was the same student, discussed earlier, who had experienced so many deaths to people close to her during her first semester at Private University; and, it was

this mentor who designed and implemented the support system that enabled her to return

to school her second semester.

When asked about expectations, I heard several comments similar to the

following:

> Well, at first I wasn't sure—a big university like this because before, all I went to
> was a community college, but uh, so I was really shy. I was bashful at first, didn't
> know what to expect really. So, I just kind of went with it—I was really shy and
> bashful and stuck to myself, but uh—I just, I really don't know, I just kind of
> went with it. (Mentee Ay, personal communication, December 12, 2012)

In sum, while the theme of constraints and lack of mentee expectations was

common among these participants, their responses were limited. In other words, their

feedback reflected common concerns but they did not articulate these concerns at length.

Overall, I would say that these mentees' lack of expectations impacted how they

experienced the relationship with their mentors and constrained the relationship in these

early stages. Experiencing fear, being intimidated by adults, or just feeling shy represent

uncomfortable emotions with which to begin a relationship that is intended to guide and

support a new and unknown experience. Therefore, as perceived by these students, fear of

the unknown was an inherent part of the mentoring relationship, at least at the very

beginning.

**Summary of Mentee Interview Findings**

In summing up this section on mentees' responses to the exploratory interviews

and my subsequent findings, I submit that these students, collectively, described very

positive outcomes as a result of having experienced the mentor/mentee relationship as

initially envisioned and implemented at Private University; that is, as a humanistic

process focused on relationship and individual, personal growth that would, ideally, lead

to the student's expanded sense of subjectification and, with that, her/his increased

understanding and capacity for self-authorship. Many of their responses revealed other

similarities, such as (a) lack of previous experience as a participant in the mentor/mentee

relationship, (b) increased awareness of the significance of the mentor/mentee

conversation as a relational process, and (c) openness to questioning long-held

assumptions and developing corresponding changes in perspective. As a final qualifier

and to reinforce a point made in the beginning of this section, mentees offered less

information than did the mentors. However, to my point of view, that did not seem odd

given their ages and experiences by comparison.

## Paired Interviews

After completing all the mentor and mentee interviews, I then set up appointments

with each paired mentor/mentee in order to follow up on any afterthoughts that might

have arisen since the original interviews. Another, more significant reason for including

this third round of interviews was to enable me, as researcher, to observe the pairs

together in terms of their relational dynamics and to explore their tendencies (or not) to

communicate with each other. Overall, the process of setting up paired interview

appointments went very smoothly. While I had general concerns about undergraduate

students responding to another email request for an interview in a timely manner,

potentially complicated by the difficulty of finding the time for eight couples to set aside

an hour, each mentor and mentee responded and appeared very happy to continue the

conversations we had begun. In this instance, however, it should be noted that while I was able to schedule the eight mentor/mentee pairs, I was only able to interview seven of the pairs. This was because one of the students had ongoing health challenges, including a recurrence of her cancer, and had to leave school for treatment the Friday before our scheduled Tuesday interview. Unfortunately, she had not been able to return to school throughout the duration of this research project.

Once again, and similar to the individual mentor and mentee interview questions, I designed the paired interview questions to be open ended, reflective, and engaging. I created these questions with a special interest in discovering how interviews involving both parties would either encourage or discourage feedback. Would paired interviews be more responsive, less responsive, more revealing, or less revealing? Would the real quality of their relationships emerge when interviewed together, even in the early stages of this initiative? The following interview questions provide the necessary context for the discussion of paired interview findings that comes thereafter.

1. Please share your insights about your particular mentoring relationship since your individual interviews took place.

2. Describe insights you have developed about yourself as a result of the mentoring process during these early months of the 2016-2017 academic year.

3. How would you characterize the value of a culture of mentorship for teaching and learning?

4. Please share any other thoughts you have.

**Renewed Insights on Mentor and Mentee Themes**

Despite my optimism about the ease with which I was able to schedule these interviews, I was somewhat disappointed by the feedback obtained from this round. Neither mentors nor mentees offered much more in terms of insights about themselves or their relationships. While I observed that the rapport between them was equally comfortable within most of the pairs, they did not demonstrate any of the challenging conversational exchanges described by them individually. In addition, I found it more difficult to keep the conversations with each pair aligned to the interview questions, even taking into account the open-ended design of the questions. Overall, after reviewing the transcripts, I determined that most of the conversations were about the stories previously shared during their individual interviews. I noted tangents taken during the paired interview process— primarily on the part of the mentors—such as their thoughts about the use of social media in conjunction with the mentoring relationship, or how mentors might better utilize emotional intelligence assessments in the first-year program. Three of the seven mentors raised the issue/possibility of using mentoring conversations in the classroom. While this stream of conversation was speculative, it was very interesting and seemed to engage the mentees in the context of the paired interviews. While these conversations had a professional tone to them, they were actual interactions between the mentor and mentee. Overall, regardless of the topic of conversation, I noted an ease and compatibility not expressed in words.

Lastly, even after working through my coding process, I did not see much in the way of common themes that would point to findings relevant to each pair's thoughts and

ideas about the nature of their relationship; as such, no common themes pertaining to the quality and subsequent impacts of the mentor/mentee relationship upon each of the participants. Consequently, throughout the ensuing discussion of findings for this third round of interviews, I present various points of interest, but without any thematic sequencing.

Mentee A reiterated a point, originally made during mentee interviews, regarding the question of personal transformation and how the mentor/mentee relationship had actually impacted him.

> Hearing yourself talk about things that are going on inside that you haven't really formed or talked about, that you really haven't let out, that is definitely part of it—and have someone to just sit there and listen, and that understands what you are going through . . . was priceless. (Mentee A, personal communication [paired interview], January 13, 2017)

While his comments in the earlier round of mentee interviews had been positive, Mentee A's assessment of the relationship with his mentor seemed much stronger as he spoke with a great deal more conviction during the paired interview. Of course, Mentee A's strong feedback may have been due to the fact that he was in the presence of his mentor in that moment, implicating his desire to impress or complement the mentor. But another explanation could be possible. Perhaps the presence of his mentor triggered in Mentee A a greater realization of his personal gains from the relationship after participating in the first interview and upon reflection. As such, now that we were having a second conversation, he was possibly experiencing a more meaningful insight for himself which could, in fact, be interpreted as a transformational experience.

In one case of a particular pairing, Mentor Da turned what was intended as my interview process into his own interview of the student. His questions centered on conceptions of in-class mentored experiences. Mentor Da asked his mentee whether or not a student can be mentored by a lecture? On this point, Mentor Da seemed to be offering the opinion that the in-class experience can serve as a catalyst for establishing a mentoring relationship out of class. I observed that this line of question seemed confusing to Mentee S, and his lack of response seemed to prompt the Mentor Da to spend a good deal of paired interview time giving information/lecturing about this concept.

In another case, Mentor M offered that he had reflected a good deal on his role as mentor and what that meant to his own quest to better understand himself. He described himself as wrestling with the university-based role, particularly as other roles in his life (father, husband, and community activist) were so time-consuming. He described feeling conflicted about how much of his time he could devote to being an effective mentor to a student, given the time demands outside of the university. I did not detect any reaction from Mentee L other than what appeared to be an understanding agreement in the form of a head nod.

In two cases, I noticed that the mentees took on a mentor role with their respective faculty members/mentors. They very naturally began to ask questions of their mentors as each disclosed concerns and challenges that they had experienced during the mentoring process. One of those cases was an interaction between Mentor R and Mentee C. They were analyzing their relationship and very clearly pleased with the closeness they each felt. The Mentee then began to probe her Mentor regarding the transferability of what the

Mentor had learned. The following excerpts represent the exchange between Mentee C

and Mentor R.

> Mentee C: Do you think that the relationship you have with me has impacted the relationship that you, um, or you have had with other people in the class?

> Mentor R: Yeah, absolutely! Absolutely yeah definitely.

> Mentee C: Were you aware that you were doing that?

> Mentor R: I think with you it is just natural. Like we don't have to work—I mean I think if, let's say if I didn't work here, you and I would hang out. I just think that that is just how we have just very similar interests, and it is just different, and how can I say I would be like that with another mentee? I don't know if I would . . . I know a few of them I have relationship with like [name of another student] and [name of another student]. I have that relationship, um, but I have not had—I have never, like I said, I have never had someone dive so deep into their lives with others and really take it personal like you have. (Personal communication, [paired interview], January 15, 2017)

As researcher, I made note of the fact that Mentor R is much younger in age compared to

the other participating mentors. In fact, she appeared to be much closer in age to her

students and seemed very comfortable having her Mentee ask probing questions.

In the second case, Mentor Da and Mentee S analyzed their relationship by

comparing it to other relationships in general, also factoring in the influence of social

media. Here again, the mentee took charge of the conversation by asking his own

questions after Mentor Da first raised the topic of Facebook, specifically. While the

following exchange between Mentor Da and Mentee S took place during the paired

interview session, I functioned more as an observer during this particular moment.

Mentor Da: But if they send it out, I accept the invitation, but that is kind of my own life [Facebook activity]. I would say more recently, because I am managing our [program] page, that to tag pictures I have to be friends with them. I have initiated friend requests to be able to tag them on our page. That kind of thinking has been a little different for me.

Mentee S: I think that kind of goes back to last week when we were talking—as a mentee, if you are in that role like I am, you tend to have the responsibility of, you want that knowledge or want that help from that mentor, then you have to go to them. And yeah, there is give and take both ways, but if you really want to get the full effect from your mentor, like specifically from [first name of mentor], he has so much insight, not just in the [program] world but like in general, you know. Like life experiences and things like that, so if you want to take advantage of that you have to go get it. I mean, how do you feel about how you show up in this role with me?

Mentor Da: It was just kind of unique when we went to the game recently and had three or four cars, and I rode alone, which was fine, but I was just intrigued to see how the dynamics would work out because there were some cars that were full, and anybody could have jumped in for the 10-minute drive, you know. You all have your own social dynamic and you don't want to be looked upon as the teacher's pet, and some of those issues. I think you are put in a unique situation. You and I have a lot of unique things, you know, [lists several interests], but I also want to make sure I am also equally available to students who I don't have those commonalities with, and so I don't want mentoring to be about connecting the dots with commonalities.

Mentee S: Um, I know for me, there are a lot of different students that are my friends that we rely on that with each other. We just bounce things off of each other. Tell our experiences. Does being an adult, do you feel more like you are the leader in these relationships, a leader type figure? Being there as a mentor for the person that you are mentoring is, is really big and I don't know if some mentors might know how big that really is for us, but it is. It is huge just to be able to talk about personal stuff. Did you realize that? (Personal communication, [paired interview], January 17, 2017)

As a point of interest, regarding these two pairs of interviews, each mentee addressed the

mentor by first name. That was not the case among the other pairs.

In one of the interviews, a conversation ensued between Mentor C and Mentee J in response to the third question: "Characterize the value of a culture of mentorship for teaching and learning." Essentially, the conversation was about comparing the high school years to the college experience. Specific to Mentee J, a significant conversation focused on the issue of moving away from a conventional high school perspective of faculty as authority figures, with very little room to encourage thinking for oneself, to the college or university setting. In other words, there has been a perception that, in the realm of higher education, the student can function as an actual colleague of sorts. From there, the two began to analyze how the traditional classroom structure, regardless of the setting, does not lend itself—except with very intentional organization—to collegiality. That is to say, the traditional classroom is literally set up to support a two-way conversation between the instructor and whichever student asserts him/herself. The instructor typically actively delivers information to the passive students. Acknowledging this limitation inherent in the traditional classroom, Mentor C and Mentee J seemed to be asserting the need for teacher-student relationships that would encourage students to think and act for themselves as freely critical and creative individuals. The two concluded that, culturally, they were aware of a learned, socially sanctioned tendency to consider anything relational as "soft" and, therefore, unacceptable.

## Summary of Paired Interview Findings

Across the various paired interview dialogues, I had a very brief glimmer into the shared dynamics of mentor/mentee relationship. Based on my actual observations, during the interview process, each pair demonstrated a level of comfort and friendship that was

communicated primarily through nonverbal cues, including eye contact, proximity, and personal gesturing and contact. I sensed an ease between the two. In fact, they seemed more comfortable in the paired interviews than they had been during their individual interviews. I noted a higher energy level during the paired interviews than I recall from the individual interviews. Finally, except for the few times that a couple of mentors seemed to fall into a professorial attitude, most of the exchange between mentors and mentees resembled what we would expect from two friends interacting. Overall, the responses and conversations that emerged between paired mentors and mentees were interesting and distinctive, but they did not yield consistently shared stories of shared experiences and perceptions. Therefore, my attempts to code these interviews did not produce significant thematic findings across this group as a whole.

In the next section, I discuss findings related to two secondary data collection instruments used to further support my focal interview process: (a) document analysis and (b) researcher field notes. I chose to incorporate these two instruments as part of the study in order to gain and impart a more fully shared understanding of the culture of mentorship initiative—from early phase planning to formal implementation—in light of the mentor-mentee experience and including some commentary in my dual role as faculty and researcher.

## Triangulation: Using Secondary Data Collection Instruments

I used two additional data collection tools for the purpose of providing added depth and support to the interview data: (a) document analysis and (b) researcher field notes. The use of multiple instruments aims to triangulate the primary data (Denzin,

1970); that is, to strengthen the credibility of the study. To clarify, as a qualitative

researcher, I am interested in developing the credibility of my study findings by utilizing

more than one method of data collection in order to provide corroboration of the

exploratory interview data, thereby minimizing the potential for bias that can unwittingly

be demonstrated. In my case, this is a particularly important issue in that I focused this

study on a phenomenon occurring within my (the researcher's) own work culture.

In terms of this secondary data collection process, I first analyzed documents

pertaining to my institution's collection of reports on the planning and future

implementation of the mentorship program, along with documents that were actually

generated during the course of this study. Those more newly generated documents reflect

the evolving nature of Private University's culture of mentorship initiative. In turn, the

use of personally recorded field notes involved my active documentation of activities,

concerns, and reflections as they emerged during my research process. Ultimately, I

submit that my analyses of study-related documents and researcher field notes provided

extra layers of depth intended to: (a) provide context and actual background information

specific to the processes of visioning, planning, and implementing the mentorship

initiative; (b) reflect the evolutionary nature of the newly implemented initiative; (c)

enhance/support understandings of participants' interview responses; and (d) illustrate the

ways in which being involved in the initiative impacted both the study participants and

myself (as researcher and leader of this program).

In the next two major sections, I present the findings from these additional data

collection instruments. The first of these sections focuses on my document analysis

process specific to relevant mentorship initiative materials. I then follow with a section devoted to analysis of my researcher field notes recorded during the study. Document analysis findings primarily contextualize information specific to the document and to its relationship to the phenomena under study. Essentially, I consider my analysis of each document as the finding itself. Where possible, I address the findings from each of these data instruments as they pertain to the themes discovered in the exploratory interviews, also addressing any other factors that seemed noteworthy in relation to the study's underlying research questions.

**Document Analysis Findings**

According to Bowen (2009), document analysis can be used for several chief needs. First, they can be used to better understand the context within which the phenomenon was studied. In the case of Private University, there were not many documents available (at the start of the study) that directly defined and described this initiative in terms of purpose and implementation. However, those documents that were available exerted some impact on administrators' and faculty's conceptions of the role and practice of mentorship as considered from a more subjective, developmental perspective. Therefore, my examination of documents containing initial program guidelines were telling in terms of whether or not meanings supporting a more holistic conception of mentorship were shared during the early planning stages. Further, information contained in the early documents pointed the way for potentially alternative ways of exploring emerging features of the initiative with more understanding and precision as they appeared during implementation. In fact, documents generated during

the implementation process did provide evidence of change/ongoing development over time. In this case, the university's capacity to track development of a newly instituted program was and continues to be critical, especially in terms of changing a culture. As such, I selected the following documents for exploration and analysis.

- Early Stage Brochure (2014)—Originally developed in-house as an informational guide for both internal and external audiences. This brochure included key content that precluded later conceptions of a culture of mentorship initiative.

- Alumni Magazine Article (2014)—This was an article written for the Alumni magazine published in late fall 2014 addressing entitled "Private Journey: Cure for the 'Sophomore Slump.' It directly addresses mentorship.

- Administrative Meeting Agendas and Notes (2014-2015)—These materials contained information content specific to meetings designated to enlist support from deans and department chairs.

- Faculty Assemblies Agendas and Minutes (January 5, 2015 and January 11, 2016)—These were whole faculty assemblies in that address initiative concerns.

- Draft Mission Statement (2015)—Drafted by a core group of faculty, this brief document represents a very early state vision of the initiative.

- Faculty Workshop Notes (January 11, 2016)—These notes represent a collection of notes documenting faculty input pertaining to the initiative.

- Training Plans (2015)—These plans served as both agenda and guide for mentorship skills development sessions.

- Marketing Materials (2016)—These are materials produced by a public relations firm intended to promote the university and its programs, including the mentorship initiative. As leader, I provided informational copy about the initiative to the firm.

- Private University Mentorship Webpage—This is a single web page, devoted to the mentorship initiative, on the university's website.

Collectively, the copy contained in brochures, articles, notes and the website describe a "culture of mentorship" at Private University. However, it should be noted that specific to the website, some of the original copy posted there (addressing early phase documentation of the initiative) could not be retrieved because the website was revised in (2016). In this regard, the individuals involved in "rebranding" the university did not preserve the previous version of the website as archived material. Aside from random emails, these are the only documents that I could find offering any guidance about the intent or expectation of the initiative. Furthermore, while I have had a role in leading the initiative, the documents under review were generated internally by other parties/stakeholders, including the President's Office, Institutional Advancement, Communication and Public Relations, and the Provost's Offices. Similarly, the notes generated during the January 2016 Winter Faculty Assembly were written by a number of faculty members. The skills training materials were generated in collaboration between the Provost's Office and the trainer. As to the remaining documents, I provide

information about their originators where I discuss them in greater detail going forward in this section.

In terms of organization, I present the documents in a general chronological order, with the exception of some categories of documents that represent meetings and events covering a broad span of time. I also place them in the context of the dynamic changes that have been taking place at Private University since the early conceptualization of the mentorship initiative.

**Early Stage Brochure (2014)**

As an early stage document pertaining indirectly to the mentorship initiative, this brochure was written by consultants to the former President of Private University as a result of that administration's attempt to rebrand the university. Created in the form of a tri-fold, slick marketing brochure, it outlines the strategic plan for the university moving forward. I included this brochure in the document analysis materials because it was the first official document that we, as a campus community, saw that signaled significant efforts to organize change. At that time, we also experienced heightened sensitivity regarding who we are and where we were going in moving forward as an institution. In fact, the title of the brochure is "Private University Forward," and it was developed for both internal and external audiences. Besides the colorful blocked copy describing each of the university's 10 strategic goals, pictures of students, faculty, and campus buildings were placed to depict the range of students (adult and traditional) and each of the three campuses that make up the university. Among the 10 strategic goals outlined, the goal

most closely associated with developing a culture of mentorship was the first one in the list, reading as follows:

> We will deliver a distinctive undergraduate curriculum.
>
> Through a four-year program that assimilates intellectual, professional, personal, experiential, civic and spiritual learning, discoveries, and knowledge, [Private University] undergraduates develop into independent thinkers and leaders, prepared for lives of achievement and authenticity. (Private University, 2014)

While this goal did not directly reference mentorship, I regard it as the moment in which we began to pay close attention to our distinguishing features as an institution of higher education. Such attention gave rise to the mentorship orientation that had begun to distinguish the first-year experience for new university students, as well as the relational ease which has characterized Private University throughout much of its history. The last panel of the brochure illustrates this orientation with content that addresses the need to change, to innovate, and to provide a "professional and liberal arts education" (Private University, 2014). Because of anonymity issues and IRB stipulations, I am not at liberty to duplicate any document that would identify this institution. Based on the very early stage of Private University's mentorship consciousness, as reflected in this document, I submit that there is no correspondence to any of the themes that emerged from the exploratory interviews of mentors and mentees.

Before describing the second document of significance to this study, it should be noted that from the time the former President left in the summer of 2014 until the late fall of 2015, ensuing discussions extended a new model for advising and student success had been realized. This model used a coaching approach as a tool for mentors during the first-

year experience; thus, underlying currents in the continuing quest to create a more aspirational strategic plan. Most of the conversations that were between the then VP for Advancement and the Provost, with various other middle level administrators—including myself—invited in and out of the ongoing development process. I do not have documentation of those conversations. Nor can I locate the Power Point that was presented to Private University's entire staff and faculty community in August of 2014, depicting the university's educational approach as grounded in engaged learning and mentorship. Thus, as we began the new academic year in the fall of 2015, there was a sense of urgency to define and move forward with the mentorship initiative as it was being reconceived, especially considering the fact that engaged learning (potentially alluding to understanding mentorship as an engaged learning process) had been designated in the Quality Enhancement Plan for SACCOC reaccreditation and was already being managed and assessed.

**Alumni Magazine Article (2014)**

The article entitled "Private Journey: Cure for the 'Sophomore Slump'" was written to focus on the national trend to incorporate programming aimed to ensure persistence for the second-year student and to relay to alumni what Private University is doing toward this end. Though not intended for the widest external audience, it could be considered more external than internal, given that faculty and staff are not always likely to read these publications. It was written just after the Early Stage Brochure was published and reflects the stance that mentorship is a strategy to promote career development and to address retention. Unlike the Early Stage Brochure, it specifically

mentions mentorship and associates the Private Journey Program as "an individualized mentorship program designed to prepare students for success after graduation." The article highlights peer-mentoring as a particular feature of the Journey program in which sophomores are matched with seniors in their major for guidance and advice. It states that, overall, "mentorship is more than a leadership skill; it's a resume builder," suggesting that the students who are engaged as a peer-mentors are demonstrating their leadership ability with the development of career-related credentials in mind. It is important to point out that, until this article, nothing formal had been published describing Private Universities intentions for incorporating mentorship for any external audience and discussion had only just begun internally in the form of meeting notes and agendas. As a result of this very limited description of Private University's intentions for mentorship, as this point it could be interpreted that those intentions were solely career oriented as opposed to personally developmental. Regardless of the interpretation, the article was incomplete in articulating how a culture of mentorship might be experienced.

**Administrative Meeting Notes (2014-2015)**

These documents developed from conversations and meetings between the Provost and a new consultant with whom the university contracted to steer us into the development of a culture of mentorship. The consultant actually wrote the documents and offered copies to the Provost and myself for use as guides to conduct important meetings intended to enlist support from Private University's top and middle level academic and staff leaders. With this purpose established, these documents encapsulated general outlines for use at four different meetings that took place between late November, 2014

and early January, 2015. The four meetings were designed to address the following groups of participants: (a) the Provost and the Strategic Leadership Team, including all the top VPs and interim president, deans and chairs of all academic and staff departments; (b) pre-Assembly, the former academic leaders along with program heads; (c) Assembly, all faculty; and (d) staff members in attendance at staff meetings held during the Assembly. Along with the previously stated intention of enlisting support for the initiative, these agendas and guidelines also highlighted the importance of creating a vision and mission (statements) that would, thus, signal an official beginning for the initiative's planning process as an implementable, university-wide goal.

The Provost and I initially reviewed the original administrative documents that were informal in terms of intent and design. The significance of these documents—as a contributing factor to the eventual culture of mentorship initiative—was in the direction they provided for early stage of conceptualization and planning to an undertaking of potentially universal influence across the university. They also provided the underpinnings for crafting the draft mission statement which soon followed. Collectively, the most important point documented across the collection of meeting notes was the development of a rationale for creating a culture of mentorship at Private University; in essence, the idea of helping students think through who they are and where they are going with anything and everything that is a part of their academic and personal learning. I submit that this idea strongly suggests a philosophical correspondence to the overall experiences communicated by this study's interviewees. Significantly, the meaning behind the statement emerged as a thematic category within the findings: Mentorship as a

process of self-development that can enlighten the student's sense of purpose and personal development. As a final overall observation on the influence and impact of this particular document, it clearly did not prescribe any particular set of expectations regarding what mentorship should be and how it should be practiced. However, it suggested a conceptualization of mentorship that should incorporate a more receptive stance (on the part of the mentor) as opposed to a predominately advice-giving stance. On this point, the agenda documents actually set apart time in each of the meetings for attendees to consider how to have conversations that they could turn from an information and advice-giving process into a dialogical conversation. In the current context, such early discussions can now be seen as pointing to one of the most consistent behaviors mentioned by mentees as necessary to be an effective mentor; that is, the ability to listen.

**Faculty Assemblies: Agendas and Minutes from January 5, 2015 and January 11, 2016**

These agendas and minutes serve as documentation of two faculty assemblies that led to a more structured focus on the planning stages specific to creating the university's culture of mentorship initiative. Despite the fact that the topic was not listed on either of the agendas in relation to the assembly's meeting activities, the culture of mentorship initiative was addressed (both years), instead, as a workshop held in the afternoons following those morning assemblies. The minutes from the January 5, 2015 assembly referenced some concerns expressed by faculty to the Provost. In turn, the minutes documented the Provost's response to those anonymous concerns, "Wrote down a lot of questions from the mentored learning session from this morning. We will address your

concerns, nothing is set in stone." The Provost shared later that faculty concerns centered

on understanding the university's expectations of mentors in terms of time commitments;

in other words, would faculty be able to provide the amount of time needed to effectively

mentor students? As a point of correspondence between some of the content from the

January 5 meeting and this study, the issue of time actually surfaced as a common theme

from the exploratory interviews.

As for the second assembly's agenda and minutes dated January 11, 2016, neither

document included any items referencing mentorship. However, following the January 11

morning assembly, afternoon activities focally incorporated discussions about the

mentorship initiative specific to the interests of various university stakeholders.

Therefore, each division of undergraduate and graduate faculty met in smaller groups to

discuss the challenges, needs, and possibilities for each area that would need

consideration in approaching each step of the initiative's planning and implementation

processes

**Draft Mission Statement (2015)**

This draft statement was initially created in January of 2015 by 10 faculty leaders

and administrators. It reads as follows:

> Private University calls all members of its community into a mentoring culture.
> We foster self-awareness, empowerment, and resourcefulness through guiding
> relationships that equip servant leaders to add value to the world. (Private
> University, 2015)

The crafters of this draft intended to vet it with the entire faculty as had been done

the previous fall with a newly created mission statement regarding advising. I mention

advising because it is my belief that by clarifying the various aspects of advising—

informational, conceptual, and relational—we set the stage for the overarching aim to

become a culture of mentorship. In fact, concepts and roles involved in advising naturally

inform a developmental and holistic vision of undergraduate mentorship. Not all faculty

and staff are advisors, but all advisors, faculty, and staff members can be mentors.

**Faculty Workshop Notes: January 11, 2016**

For the past three academic years (2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017), we

have moved from a monthly, hour-long assembly to four day-long meetings—two in the

fall and two in the spring—set aside to conduct business. Based on this set-up, afternoon

workshops have been scheduled to follow each faculty assembly in order to dedicate a

portion of time to training or faculty development. For the session held on January 11,

2016, the entire faculty was divided by undergraduate and graduation schools. The

graduate faculty stayed in one group, and the undergraduate faculty were divided by

division. I retained notes from each of these groups that reflect, to some extent, the

understandings and expectations faculty had—within their respective groups/areas—

about (a) the meaning of mentorship, (b) how it could be established at Private

University, (c) identifying and defining the next steps in the process of establishing a

culture of mentorship, and (d) the needs that each group identified to effectively institute

the initiative. One group of undergraduate faculty expressed the expectation that

mentorship should extend beyond graduation. They suggested the importance of

educating our student population about how to best utilize the mentoring relationship; in

their collective words, how to "help students see how valuable the mentoring that is

happening to them really is." They did not offer suggestions as to how this should be accomplished. Further, they did not articulate what that value was. This same group recommended more training for "people." Again, collectively stated, "*It has to be differentiated for people . . . there are five designed courses that people can choose to go to. University provides opportunities for development*" (Faculty Workshop Notes, January 11, 2016). I have to assume that by "people," this particular group of undergraduate faculty members actually meant faculty such as themselves. This group made other suggestions: (a) the inclusion of a healthy budget to support ongoing training opportunities, (b) adding mentoring activities to faculty evaluations, and (c) revisiting office hour policies to allow more available time to students.

Another group of undergraduate faculty recommended implementing an end-of-course student reflection assignment so as to provide a basis for continuing discourse between student and mentor. Importantly, this group also strongly recommended that we need to consider all relationships—faculty to faculty, staff to staff, student to student (not just faculty to student)—in order to represent ourselves as a university-based culture of mentorship. This group also reiterated the need to educate incoming students regarding how to *"Show up as a mentee—more mental preparation and less, here is a box you need to place yourself into*" (Faculty Workshop Notes, January 11, 2016).

This group was most enthusiastic about genuinely promoting the institution, suggesting that we organize colloquiums to share research. And, in the spirit of true first-stage brainstorming, someone recommended that each mentee undergo an MRI to determine possible changes in brain activity—with and without mentoring sessions.

A third group of undergraduate faculty members considered how we might determine the level of comfort needed to ensure that a mentoring relationship is working. They also pointed to the need for students to take the initiative in engaging with their mentors, thereby implying some preparation for the relationship. This group addressed several other matters, including the issue of trust as an essential aspect of an effective mentor/mentee relationship. In turn, they discussed the issue of structure as it pertained to program implementation, while yet acknowledging that not all things can be orchestrated with precision and predictability. Finally, this group considered qualities important to mentorship practice, including effective listening, sensitivity, self-awareness, and empathy.

Turning to graduate school faculty members' contributions to the workshop, this group took the time to distinguish between advising and mentorship. They did this by associating advising with coursework, while associating mentorship with job-related opportunities. According to the notes from this group, once these concepts were clarified, they then established a very prescriptive list of components they considered essential to the mentoring process and also stipulated that expectations for mentorship be clearly communicated. First, they recommended getting to know the students by encouraging them to write self-reflection. Second, they suggested ways in which to engage students more personally, such as inviting cell phone contact and adding video and photographs to Blackboard so that students and their mentors could develop a sense of mutual recognition. This group further recommended that faculty mentors educate themselves around professional and career opportunities. In this regard, they should use and

encourage students to use LinkedIn and Facebook. They advocated that mentors be positive, encouraging, and clearly open to writing letters of recommendation for their mentees.

**Training Plans (2015)**

During the spring, summer, and fall of 2015, the same consultant who provided guidance about early initiative planning also designed and conducted training for faculty and staff. In April, training sessions were offered for faculty on the main campus and one of the other two campuses. In July, the same training was offered to staff. In all, eight sessions were scheduled for the same three-hour workshop, thus allowing staff members the convenience of choosing which session to attend. In October 2015, the consultant/trainer returned again and offered to conduct the same program on each of the three campuses multiple times in order to accommodate all faculty and any staff who had not been able to attend the original training sessions. As a result, 95% of the faculty and 56% of the staff attended a session. The training plan for the workshop listed guided discussions points around expectations and intentions specific to mentoring at Private University. Training plans also emphasized the importance of communicating by asking versus telling, and recognizing that each individual has the capacity to discover and answer her/his own questions. Furthermore, training plans were formatted with time to reflect upon communication skills, including listening deeply.

**Marketing Materials (2016)**

During the spring of 2016, the university hired a public relations consultant to focus on the promotion of academic programs across a variety of media formats,

including social media. They developed copy that could be used for marketing Private University in a variety of formats. The final scripting of copy that linked all the marketing materials reflects aspects of the mentorship training program plans: *We view students as whole, resourceful, creative and capable—and empower them to achieve their goals.* This copy reflects Private University's intention to be a culture of mentorship and outlines the university's commitment to *permeate all levels of Private University's student experience.* The copy actually reflects the extent to which both mentors and mentees expect mentorship to be a shared experience. Among various mid-range public relations efforts, a September 2016 press release introduced the university's traditional convocation ceremony and the speaker chosen to usher in the new academic year of 2016-2017. We designated that year as the starting point for the formal implementation of the culture of mentorship initiative, thus signifying the institutionalization of the new cultural model at Private University. This press release spoke to the invited speaker's support of mentorship practice and the university's efforts.

The most significant marketing tool, a professional brochure, was produced by this firm in the form of an eight-page booklet, created on slick stock with colorful pictures depicting campus life. Printed during the time of this study, this new brochure was ready for distribution as of the middle of January 2017. It includes quotes from students sprinkled throughout and also outlines the proposed four-year student experience. To be more specific, the first page (after the cover page) describes an ideal four-year model. The second page describes the culture of mentorship using verbatim quotes obtained from various members of the university community in support of the

initiative. This page also proclaims that Private University's mentoring relationships are

aimed at fostering the student's personal growth and development. It is highlighted by a

photograph of a faculty member in conversation with a student and concludes with the

following passage

> Our commitment to mentorship permeates all levels of the [Private University]
> student experience. A **mentored learning** approach is used by faculty who teach
> in all programs. Undergraduate students participate in assigned seminar courses
> with their **campus mentors**, gaining access to them **in the classroom** and
> scheduled mentoring sessions as well as during extracurricular and social
> activities **outside the classroom**. Mentorship is also a vital component of our
> degree completion and graduate programs. (Brochure, 2017)

Note that I duplicated the bolded words as they appear in the brochure. Each page

mentions a mentor or the practice of mentorship, describing the experience students can

expect as they progress from the freshman to the sophomore, junior, and senior years.

**Private University Mentorship Webpage**

As another source of marketing, Private University's website includes a link

under the heading, "Academic Experience." This link opens to a webpage— clearly

aimed at the external audience of prospective students and their families—that explains

what mentoring means at Private University. The copy outlines that each first-year

student will work with a mentor in order to navigate academic resources, explore and

decide on an academic major, and further explore potential career options that would

connect to the major. The information on the web page suggests that the mentor would

also assist the student in accessing real-world experiences such as externships and

internships. In addition, the page addresses the value of peer mentor relationships, with

peer mentors described as experienced student guides who help the new student navigate the campus, manage time, and sort through roommate relationships. As ongoing electronic documentation of the mentorship program, updates will be required.

**New Brochure (2017)**

This brochure was actually published in late February of 2017. It was not circulated until well after the final interviews were conducted for this study.

**Summary of Document Analysis Findings**

I now summarize the findings pertaining to my discussion of the preceding documents as part of the triangulation process designed for this study**.** Four of the documents in which content either discussed or alluded to a culture of mentorship at Private University were aimed at external audiences: (a) the early stage brochure, published in 2014 by the president's office; (b) the university mentorship, last revised in summer of 2016, (c) the university convocation press release, September 2016; and (d) the 2017 brochure published in January 2017. The other documents were and continue to be aimed at an internal audience, primarily faculty and staff. Such documents offer a sense of the overarching impact of mentorship that the administration envisions along with the business of ongoing implementation. On this point, the documents produced for the external audiences are more informative and compelling, while the documents provided to internal audiences retain a more institutional focus on programming goals and requirements to meet those goals.

**Researcher Field Notes**

The use of researcher field notes reflects a third source of data collection contributing to the triangulation process designed to further illuminate the study's interview findings. The recording of researcher field notes was most appropriate for this study because it offered a net by which I was able to capture my observations and thoughts regarding the study, along with my reactions to information that became available over time and, typically, through communication with various other people. In other words, while my field notes captured my subjective reflections, they also reflected an ethnographic quality through personally recorded data that served to describe a culture as I was witnessing the dynamics of that changing culture.

While researcher field notes can be utilized in both structured and unstructured ways, an unstructured writing process is most appropriate for qualitative research because it allows the researcher to observe and reflect upon phenomena from more than one perspective; in my case, one of total observer (researcher) to one of observer/participant (initiative leader) (Mulhall, 2003). Since this study took place in the context of a project for which I continue to share a leadership role, maintaining field notes was a useful tool for documenting the mentorship initiative's formal implementation during the course of the research process. In addition, and very importantly, the recording of field notes informed and enhanced my role as a qualitative researcher who has acknowledged her subjectivity across these dual roles and functions.

In June 2016, I began my researcher field notes by first documenting my recollection of the events that preceded the official/formal beginning of the culture of

mentorship initiative at the start of the fall 2016 semester. As researcher and initiative leader, I felt it critical to establish a foundation for the upcoming study about the important early discussions that shaped the more structured process to come. Therefore, these early entries to bridge the informal conceptualization activities with the actual implementation of the program.

At this juncture, it should be noted that no one made any particular point of designating fall 2016 as an official beginning point. However, I have chosen to make that distinction based on the fact that with planning, training, and marketing efforts in place it was time to take the program forward officially. In other words, we had been putting together marketing campaigns and laying the groundwork for a comprehensive and purposeful organizational shift that would position Private University as a culture of mentorship. Yet, several pieces had not fallen into place prior to fall 2016—most notably, a fully vetted mission statement. On the other hand, we had invited an individual from a mentoring organization to be our convocation speaker in September, 2016. Such seemingly contradictory examples of planning and implementation contributed to the challenge of formally getting the initiative underway. In some ways, we owned the identity—we publicly proclaimed that we were a culture of mentorship. In other ways, we did not own the identity of a university-based mentorship culture—practices were not fully in place, and there was/is no formal assessment tool or design to evaluate how effective we will be in establishing and maintaining this cultural model. Nonetheless, and coinciding with my study, those of us leading the way determined that fall 2016 would represent the official launch of the mentorship initiative.

Finally, in the discussion that follows, I present the findings from my field notes as they reflect numerous concerns (like the one above), observations, and reflections of the mentorship project as experienced throughout the course of this study. Overall, my field notes tend to be primarily focused on issues, concerns, and speculation concerning how to institutionalize and effectively implement this initiative. Furthermore, in reviewing my notes, I was reminded that I wrote entries at various times and in various locations throughout the study process, including post-interview times (but not all) and at other times when I could quietly reflect upon this research. My notes reveal that I came away from the interviews of mentors and mentees with a strong sense of solidarity in terms of interviewees' collective understandings of mentorship as relationship and as a vehicle for personal development that was particularly meaningful in the higher education context. Interestingly, tangential to the themes revealed in the exploratory interviews, I present two new themes that emerged as the primary findings from my researcher field notes: (a) corporatization versus humanization of education and (b) management and leadership issues. While these themes present apparent overlaps, I submit that there are clear distinctions between the two that I will clarify in the sections that follow.

**Corporatization versus Humanization**

To introduce this theme, I return to the notion that the concept of mentorship is both abstract and ambiguous. As such, and since the researcher field notes captured the conflict between philosophical notions of mentorship and the practical business of public relations and program implement, faculty and staff wrestled with how to create a new

frame for the institution. In this sense, I labeled this conflict "corporatization versus humanization."

Behind the scenes, faculty expressed frustration about the ambiguity that has persisted in terms of administration's expectations of them in their roles as mentors. In other words, faculty were concerned with time management and the perception that they would be assessed in this role. This view conflicted with their humanistic vision of the mentorship role as relational partner concerned with the overall development of the mentee. Administrators' frustrations revolved around concerns regarding the speed and expediency with which they would be able to adopt a culture of mentorship as a distinguishing feature of the university, especially in the eyes of prospective students and their families. I was privy to the conversations held in both camps and would often end the day with some reflections based on what I witnessed and experienced. Several accounts follow.

> I recall a time before the official "culture of mentorship" was announced   to the campus community in which I was asked to join in a conversation between [two top administrations]. The meeting had been underway and I was joining in to discuss one agenda item—the mentorship efforts. I wasn't so much discussing as answering questions. I felt as though I was not answering the questions with the right answer. It was as though there was right answer and I just wasn't getting it. [One administrator] was grilling me about what was being formulated for the [undergraduate student experience program]. He kept saying, but how does that distinguish us from other schools. I was clear that it was in the relational connections, the time we spend with students to engage them in the process of asking questions in order to foster their thinking for themselves. He seemed to dismiss that as if it were unimportant. He was looking for a slogan, for a sexy tagline and I felt as though he saw students with a $ sign over their heads rather than as human beings. We were just not seeing our work in the same way. (Research Field Notes, June 12, 2016)

As a result of reading the book *Leadership and Self-Deception*, recommended to me by a new faculty member hired to start a new applied science program, I became very aware of a philosophical orientation that applies to this conflict (above) and is based on Buber's (1971) I/Thou conceptualization. I recognized the organizational issue of objectification vs. subjectification that comes up between and among administrators and educators.

> Reading Leadership and Self-Deception, by the Arbinger Institute. Very eye-opening in its application of the Martin Buber concept of I-Thou as applied to the organization. When we treat people as objects, rather than as people with needs just like us, we are in our "box." In our box, we continue to look for reasons to justify our judgment of others and to make ourselves right. We are in collusion on this. It is what creates and perpetuates conflict. (Researcher Field Notes, June 12, 2016)

All too often we operate with extreme expediency which compromises humanistic orientation.

> I felt strange that entire year as the marketing needs seemed to stretch what we were promising before we were really able to "be" what we said we were. Saying something is so doesn't make it so. Sometimes I feel that we make our aspirational plans our reality and stop short [of] ensuring that we are doing what we say we're going to do. When I've had interviews with the Communication Office to help support an article for the Alumni Magazine, I have felt that I am being pushed to provide evidence for something that we've simply not had time to develop. (Researcher Field Notes, June 12, 2016)

**Management and Leadership Issues**

During this time period of preparation for the initiative's launch (2014 through 2016), administrators and faculty discussed various plans and tasks but they often did not carry them through to completion. In other words, I observed that we proposed many worthwhile ideas over time but we did not sufficiently consider some key issues: (a) the

lack of human capacity available within the institution, (b) the use of appropriate

channels of communication, and (c) time constraints. Therefore, a second theme that

emerged from my field notes reflected tensions around the dissemination of good

information via effective channels, using face-to-face meeting sessions for creative

planning and productive decision-making, and factoring in the limitations of human

resources during the academic year (contract year) and the summer break.

> Training took place for faculty in April of 2015—for faculty part 1—and during the summer for staff part 1 & 2 and Faculty Part 1. We finished faculty Part 2 during the fall of 2015. My recollection of these training sessions were mostly good. I was rather surprised at some of the faculty that showed up. I was very disappointed with the lack of cabinet level administrators that came. I felt that the staff and faculty on one campus were very impatient and did not seem to participate during the opportunity to discuss. It seemed that they did not consider this to be their priority, and I had the sense that they would do very little to ensure that anything was developed and sustained after this required workshop. (Research Field Notes, June 6, 2016)

> The committee [mentorship steering committee] never materialized. From my view, it just never seemed clear as to how all of this should be institutionalized. I did not feel that I should make any further decisions without other participants given that this was a university-wide initiative. I followed up on two different occasions. I made a premature attempt to bring a group together on my own in the late spring, but in the small private university, people wear too many hats and I am among that group. I was asked to Chair the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences about this time and that took a great deal of time to become involved in so many other programs outside of Communication. (Researcher Field Notes, July 6, 2016)

In the next excerpt, I reflected upon a leadership retreat that took place just before

the opening of the 2016-2017 academic year. Here, I conveyed the tone of affirmation

and hope that I experienced during the retreat. Those of us in attendance communicated

our desire to go forward and model the actual values of mentorship within our peer

relationships as well as with our students. In the moment, I felt this to be a very

encouraging sign. However, how to put this conversation into logistical action did not

come to fruition.

> August 1 and 2 Leadership Retreat, which included all of the Deans and
> Department Chairs. We discussed what we need as leaders to do our jobs. We
> talked a lot about communication and how to improve. We also reiterated
> discussion from last year's training and how, in each session, we discussed doing
> for each other what we do for our students. Mentoring each other in a more
> meaningful way. (Researcher Field Notes, August 3, 2016)

In terms of direction provided by leadership as a whole, I have noticed—as

faculty and as an administrator myself—that issues regarding lack of clarity and

inconsistency continuously cloud the administrative process. The following two field

notes excerpts illustrate my frustration with competing understandings of the efforts

required to advance the initiative.

> October 3, I experienced a mildly disturbing conversation sometime in the middle
> of the fall semester with [two other administrators]. I heard her telling me not to
> be concerned about the mentorship initiative as she really needed "a champion." I
> felt panic and misunderstanding as I couldn't be more of a champion and felt
> that—were I not to continue in a leadership role—my research would be
> inauthentic. I also felt rather irritated as we've not moved forward with anything
> because it is not clear who's in charge. [Another administrator] was officially
> overseeing the Advising committee, and we'd decided that mentorship would be
> under that umbrella. I am not privy to some decision-making processes used by
> [one administrator], and I probably wait for confirmation too much before taking
> action on my own. [Another administrator's] style reinforces the need to be overly
> cautious. (Researcher Field Notes, October 3, 2016)

> December 12, [An administrator] came by to ask about what we might do
> regarding mentorship in the January Assembly. First of all, go figure. Second, I
> hate this "throw something out there" approach to this. It feels as though so much
> of what we do is for the record. To look good by SACSCOC standards versus

truly taking an educated approach to developing programs that are meaningful. (Researcher Field Notes, December 12, 2016)

**Summary of Findings from Researcher Field Notes**

To conclude this section, two primary findings emerged from the researcher field notes: (a) corporatization versus humanization, and (b) management and leadership issues. As two specific themes that inherently overlap, the distinctions surface with regard to the subjectivity of human roles and relationships within the organization as contrasted with the organization's focus on operations and objective decision-making processes that are typically grounded in concerns for expediency. These themes represent a dialectic between the external and internal dynamics and priorities that characterize individuals, organizations and cultural change. On this point, I noted my concerns specific to an administrative perspective that represented itself as primarily concerned with how we might manage this new effort from an internal perspective, and how we want the public to view our efforts from an external view. In contrast, my perspective as initiative leader has been based in a humanistic approach that prioritizes the mentorship experience as a potentially developmental and transformative learning process for the undergraduate student. More specifically, field note findings identified what constitute those struggles both from philosophical and operational perspectives.

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings based on three data collections instruments: exploratory interviews, document analysis, and researcher field notes. In relation to the interview process I coded each individual interview transcript for both

mentors and mentees and ultimately cross referenced them to determine identifiable

thematic categories. I then textually analyzed documents I determined to be relevant to

the initiative, from its very early planning stages to the time of the study. Finally, I

discussed researcher field notes findings around the two primary emerging themes of

corporatization versus humanization and management and leadership issues.

Since this chapter is a report of the findings, I resisted developing too many

thoughts that would reflect my analysis of the responses derived from the collection of

exploratory interviews, document analysis, and researcher field notes. In Chapter V,

however, I provide such an analysis in relation to the research questions and the

conceptual framework that underpin this study. In turn, I will present my conclusions and

recommendations for future research in Chapter VI.

**CHAPTER V**

**ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

As a study-based lens through which to view Private University's formally constructed mentorship initiative, I have intended this research to serve as an exploratory first step in addressing a humanistic construction of the mentoring relationship. In this chapter, I analyze the findings presented in Chapter IV, emphasizing the exploratory interview data in relation to the study's research questions. In addition, I analyze relevant findings pertaining to study-related documents and researcher field notes. Through investigating the perceptions of mentors and their mentees, I aimed to explore the possibilities of expanding human connections across the relationship. Moreover, and related to my conceptual framework, I was interested in determining the impact of mentoring on inspiring transformative learning experiences for undergraduate students. Lastly, as initiative leader and faculty, I have been and continue to be invested in the possibilities of advancing the initiative as an ongoing work in progress. Therefore, I propose that this study serve as phase one of ongoing research specific to the culture of mentorship initiative at Private University, correlating with its initial stage of implementation. Going forward, I suggest that future research will provide more substantive findings, especially taking into account the university's efforts to diversify both its student and faculty populations. Over time, with the mentorship initiative becoming more embedded, future research will be able to examine the initiative with

more depth and experience. Specific to the organization of this chapter, I analyze

interview findings according to the study's four underlying research questions because

they directly address each participant's experiences as either mentor or mentee.

Therefore, the following sections are headed by each of the research questions.

Subsequent to these discussions, I address findings related to documents and researcher

field notes in separate sections that are more limited in terms of how they add meaning to

the study. In other words, findings from these supplementary study instruments do not

speak directly to the research questions directed at the mentor/mentee relationship.

However, as applicable, I analyze these supplementary findings as they serve to provide

additional insights into the challenging dynamics (especially from the administrative

perspective) associated with efforts to create a new culture of mentorship at Private

University.

<div align="center"><strong>Analysis According to Research Questions</strong></div>

**Research Question 1: How do Faculty and Students Currently Understand the
Mentor/Mentee Relationship and its Purpose?**

  **Mentors.** All of the mentors were aligned in their understanding of the

developmentally oriented purpose of mentorship as contextualized in Private University's

culture of mentorship initiative. They understood and agreed with the approach of

guiding the student developmentally (taking into account both personal and academic

needs), as opposed to emphasizing career preparation for the student and retention

concerns for the university. These mentors were focused on helping students better

understand themselves as particular individuals (subjectification); thus, empowering

students to make important decisions for themselves (self-authorship) and motivating them to develop as independently thinking people, capable of reflecting upon old patterns of belief and understanding in order to grow new perspectives—both academically and personally—signifying possibilities of transformation.

In general, mentors viewed the actual mentor/mentee relationship as significant to the growth of both parties. First, the ongoing relationship served as an additional opportunity to connect on deeper levels with students beyond the traditional classroom setting. Specific to the mentee, they viewed the relationship as wholly valuable and meaningful to the undergraduate experience because it provided a significantly deeper level of engagement that would not necessarily be available in typical advising environments. At the same time, mentors recognized the limitations and potentially inherent inequalities connected to a system in which mentorship was still being defined and institutionalized. As researcher, I interpreted that these study participants subscribed to the concept of the mentoring relationship as a humanistic process in which participants chose to invest themselves emotionally as well as professionally. Nevertheless, because none of these mentors expressed prior notions of what an ideal mentor/mentee relationship should entail, I could not determine if their positive approaches represented a change from an opposing perspective of mentorship, if they were positively influenced by the developmental orientation of Private University's initiative, or if they just naturally embraced mentorship from a more organically humanistic point of view. While a few of the mentors shared that they had prior experiences as mentees themselves, they did not indicate that those earlier relationships impacted their current roles as mentors. In fact, all

of the mentors—whether they had prior mentorship experiences or not—entered the

culture of mentorship on the same plane of meaning and purpose without a prior agenda.

To reiterate, while all participating mentors seemed to subscribe to the developmental

ideal of the culture of mentorship initiative, it is worth noting that two mentors raised

concerns about the potential impact of gender on their ability to maintain the integrity of

the mentor/mentee relationship. Clearly, each of these two mentors exercised their

options to choose their respective mentees based on their principles and self-knowledge.

Here, I want to suggest that self-knowledge for mentors, although not commonly

addressed in the literature, is a significant factor regarding the mentor's experience of the

relationship. As such, I submit that Biesta's (2010) theory of subjectification would apply

to mentors as well as their mentees. In this instance, the two mentors who expressed

gender concerns were revealing their subjectively held notions of potentially conflicting

interests. Therefore, with gender being an expressed concern for them, they used their

discretion in selecting their mentees specific to this study. Understanding their concerns,

as researcher, I yet interpreted their fundamental notions of the mentor's role as being

consistent with the initiative's purpose and focus.

**Mentees.** Only two of the eight student participants had actually experienced

college life anywhere else other than Private University. On this point, I suggest the

possibility that most—if not all—mentees assumed that mentorship was a typical feature

or service provided across the college experience. Along with communicating their

understanding that mentorship was a "normal" or available opportunity, this group was

very clear in their collective perception that not all students would seek a mentor in the

same way and with the same degree of appreciation as they, themselves, had done. In other words, despite the fact that mentorship was formalized and available to all students at the time of this study, these mentees suggested that a formal system would not ensure that their fellow students would take advantage of investing in such a relationship. Three of the mentees cited a lack of overall motivation as the probable cause for students, in general, avoiding or not seeking out this type of engagement. As a faculty member and a leader, I am certainly invested in the success of this initiative and the meaning I draw from these comments suggest that the student motivation for participating in mentorship must be addressed for both the student and faculty initiation and training. It is critical that we help both parties understand possible benefits as a piece of their introductory experience.

As with mentors, mentees also communicated a humanistic view of the purpose for being in relationship with her/his mentor. They only discussed the relationship in terms of balance, growth and personal development. There was very little by way of career consideration and advice giving, and what was discussed that could be categorized as such was framed within a larger context of concern for supporting the student's decision-making and not what the student should or ought to do. Only one student described the primary focus of the conversations with his mentor as being directly related to job preparation and future career goals. For Mentee D, however, the purpose of his investment in the mentoring relationship was strongly linked to preparing for work in the academy. Because he was encouraged by his mentor to present a poster at an academic conference, this student attributed the conversations with his mentor, along with the

subsequent conference experience, to be life-changing. As Mezirow (2012) highlighted, reflective discourse "in the context of transformation theory, is that specialized use of dialogue devoted to searching for a common understanding and assessment of the justification of an interpretation or belief" (p. 78). In this case, while being related to work/career goals, the transformational experience was the larger outcome of the mentoring relationship for Mentee D, because it inspired in him a greater degree of self-confidence and direction by risking a new experience in a larger academic realm. In turn, the transformative impact of the relationship served to strengthen the bond between mentor and mentee.

As a final commentary on this first research question, I offer the following concluding analysis. Without exception, all of the interviewees for this study—both mentors and mentees—considered the mentoring relationship and the experiences that ensued from them to be of value to them. They shared stories of personal growth and reward as particular individuals and in their roles as educators and students in relationship. However, despite the overwhelming sense of positivity regarding the relational opportunity, many of the mentees and all of the mentors discussed the ways in which their experiences also involved challenges. Overall, mentors expressed deeper concerns regarding their capacities and the availability of various resources to help them fulfill the role of mentor in a meaningful way. To reiterate, and as demonstrated in Chapter II, research specific to the role of mentor is limited in contrast to the available literature on the experience of mentorship specific to the mentee. This suggests that more studies focused on the experiences and concerns of mentors are needed in light of the

abstract and competing definitions of the term "mentor" that have historically persisted (de Fenelon, 1699; Hansman, 2002; Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). In contrast, many mentees expressed challenges related to their uncertainties about the nature of the relationship and, as a result, demonstrated an initial lack of preparedness for optimal engagement. Along with recognizing the universities responsibility for student preparation in advance of their participation in the mentoring relationship, this collective response from mentees could also suggest the need for the development of greater self-authorship capacities at this early stage of the college experience (Kegan, 1994). As to understanding the concept of the culture of mentorship, it is too early to claim that, but they gave indications that mentorship was an expectation. I did not hear anyone comment on mentorship as culture. I more fully develop what I understood as challenges to each of these groups of study participants as I consider their responses to the following two questions.

**Research Question 2: How does the Culture of Mentorship Initiative Impact the Lives of Traditional Undergraduate Students at Private University?**

Although this question can be interpreted as somewhat redundant with regard to the first research question, there are significant distinctions to be made between the two. I developed the first question seeking to initially explore study participants' interpretations of the purpose of the mentoring relationship and, with that, their understandings of their experiences within that relationship as a process. In contrast, Research Question 2 pertains to the *results or outcomes* of students' experiences as mentees, in particular. Nonetheless, in both cases of these research questions—the understanding of the relationship as an experienced process and the impact of the relationship—I begin at the

same point. The mentees considered their experiences to be overwhelmingly positive and beneficial to their lives in the context of the undergraduate experience and, in some cases, their personal lives.

As traditional undergraduate students (enrolled in college upon graduation from high school and ranging in age from 18 to 21 years), the connections that these mentees were able to forge with their mentors positively impacted their abilities to develop as individuals—as young adults—engaged in more mature adult relationships. As addressed in Chapter IV's discussion of the findings, Mentee A actually recalled being intimidated at the prospect of being in a less than formal relationship with her mentor. She admitted being afraid of her mentor, describing him as "being older and wiser," and confessed that it was hard for her to talk "to wiser people most of the time." The meaning behind this mentality lies in the conventional, dualistic roles traditionally assigned to students and teachers. In other words, the default mode for students is to see mentors as authority figures which tends to overshadow and foreclose on other possibilities for the relationship. Several mentees alluded to this barrier, not necessarily with all adult persons in their lives, but certainly with those individuals associated with formal education. Those mentees who shared their initial fears of engaging in a relationship with an adult perceived as an "authority figure" concluded their stories with reports of having achieved a level of comfort and a sense of confidence by successfully navigating through those early stages of the mentorship process. Could this shift from apprehension and fear to comfort and expanded self-confidence indicate a developmentally transformative experience for these students? While this question suggests a positive outcome, the

common experience of fear or apprehension at the onset of the mentoring relationship

remains a concern for mentors and mentees alike. Such comments suggest that Private

University could address these initial concerns—not expecting to eradicate emotional

reactions--but, rather, to validate them in future trainings and to affirm the possibilities

for participating in mentoring relationship.

The development of helpful and meaningful relationships with mentors, along

with each mentee's respective sense of general satisfaction, was somewhat surprising

given the distinct lack of expectation mentees communicated when describing their initial

views of the mentoring relationship. This sense of satisfaction could be attributed very

simply to being chosen by their mentor to participate in this study. Universally, these

study participants had no previous mentoring relationships (specific to the academic

setting) from which to draw and construct expectations. As discussed in the preceding

chapter, most of the mentees described the refreshing nature of this student-faculty

connection as being one in which they were treated as a unique human being; in other

words, being regarded as a particular person versus an object and being treated as an

equal, "like a friend." As a result of their interactions and experiences with their mentors,

mentees viewed this relationship as a platform that provided them a space in which to

enjoy the first vestiges of being respected as adults. This is the experience of a kind of

subjectivity Biesta (2010) described as "coming into presence":

> The idea of "coming into presence" articulates an educational interest in human
> subjectivity and subjectification but does so without a template, i.e., without a
> predefined idea about what it means to be and exist as a human being. It thus tries
> to overcome a humanistic determination of human subjectivity and
> subjectification. (pp. 80–81)

Because of the nature of this relationship as connected to Private University's culture of mentorship ideal, the students understood this to be an opportunity for engagement and connection that did not require a prescriptive set of rules to follow. As such, I suggest that these students relaxed into a more comfortable connection to themselves, as individuals, because they began to experience their own existences as subjects on par with their mentors; thus, in direct opposition to past experiences of themselves being objectified as students poised to receive information. The sense of being objectified was something they experienced throughout their years of formal K-12 education, and many mentees expressed their surprise to be invited into an adult-to-adult level of relating in an academic setting. While their vocabulary was limited in terms of describing their experiences, the non-verbal delight (smiles, affirmative head-nodding, etc.) in discussing a newly found sense of personal empowerment was notable. Thus, I posit that these mentoring relationships gave rise to mentees' sense of personal subjectification, despite the fact that most would not have been familiar with this term.

As previously stated, none of the mentees described any expectations that might have, in some way, prepared them for the relationship—from either a positive or a negative perspective. A negative expectation could have added more trepidation to a mentee's early fears of engagement with a mentor, even mild anxiety (for some) at being paired with an adult who was not necessarily someone they had already known as an instructor. On this point, students have been conditioned regarding how to communicate with instructors from very early on in their schooling experiences. The underwritten, but commonly understood, method of student to teacher communication carries with it a set

of expectations unique to the relationship, along with a script to follow. Students are conditioned to take a passive role in the traditional classroom. Even those who respond to questions with the nonverbal hand-raising know they must wait to be acknowledged before speaking. All of these prescribed behaviors demonstrate a more functional role for both instructor and student. In contrast, assuming the role of mentee requires an attitude of openness and responsiveness that is not necessarily familiar in the educational context. Furthermore, mentoring relationships are not transitory—as in the case of seeking guidance from someone in the business office, student development, or in the library--all of which can be described as interpersonal but not relational. Rather, although the mentoring relationships at Private University begin as formally assigned relationships, they also carry with them the expectation that the relationship will most likely continue over time—perhaps a year, perhaps throughout the mentee's entire four-year undergraduate experience. In all cases, these mentees/study participants did not shy away from the challenge of committing to the mentorship experience. They met with their mentors four to five times during the course of the two semesters (combined) during which this study took place: fall 2016 and spring 2017.

Along with achieving a deeper connection to their mentors and even with themselves, the relationship impacted mentees' lives in another very meaningful way. That is, commitment to the mentoring experience provided these students with a very personal touch point—the university, itself, as an established source of support, a guiding light, a place in which to contemplate new insights, engage a variety of learning experiences, and a space in which to reflect on issues that challenged them both inside

and outside the classroom. Such challenging issues included the following: (a) relating to people who are very different from oneself; (b) managing life and school while in the throes of serious illness and/or deaths of family and friends; (c) recognizing and coming to terms with certain aspects of self not previously considered; and (d) making academic decisions, such as what factors to consider when committing to a major plan of study and—in some cases—choosing whether or not and where to attend graduate school. For example, in two cases involving Mentee S and Mentee L, each discussed inner conflicts around contemporary political and religious issues as this study took place during a time in which factions of our culture have been at odds with the results of a contentious presidential election (2016). For many, if not all of them, mentees experienced a shift from their previously held perspectives regarding themselves and social issues; as such, possibly demonstrating effects of processes related to subjectification, self-authorship, and transformative learning experiences. This was one of my chief interests. Would participants recognize a shift in their perspectives and would that recognition, in part, be attributed to the opportunity to process with a trusted other? In the next paragraph, I discuss one such moment.

One of the most profound self-disclosures came from a young man, Mentee A, who had lived a sheltered life prior to enrolling at Private University. He came from a very small rural community and described his life back home as consisting of going to school and coming home to work on cars. There, he only had a couple of male friends. As to family dynamics, his father was a mechanic, and his mother worked as a receptionist in a doctor's office at the time of this study. His family was "strict on religion," and this

served as a moral compass for his worldview. During the interview, he confessed that he

had led his mother to believe that he had a girlfriend so she that would not "worry about

him—you know—being something else." I took all of these cues to mean that "something

else" meant homosexual, and I asked if that was correct. He nodded and then took great

pains to communicate to me that he was "normal." He admitted keeping to himself during

his first semester at Private University and gradually made friends with the maintenance

staff, even volunteering to help them. This soon turned into a part-time job for him.

During the course of our interview, Mentee A volunteered that his view of other "groups

of people" (other races, religions, regional origins, and ethnicities) had really changed

since he came to Private University. He acknowledged that he had discussed these

changes with his mentor because he felt that this relationship was a safe space in which to

do so. In other words, he felt that he could be open and honest without fear of being

judged. He expressed his newly developed awareness that his upbringing, including the

way he was conditioned to view other people not like him, was "not right." On this point,

Mentee A felt that he was developing a non-judgmental stance, and he felt good about

that as he stated, "Like I started shedding layers of skin that had kept me from feeling the

sun."

The preceding scenario involving Mentee A represents what other mentees

communicated as the kind of liberating and insightful conversations they shared with

their mentors. I submit that the tenor and depth of these conversations, as described by

the mentees, demonstrated students' early stages of independent thinking, or self-

authorship. In other words, the students brought these issues to the table, as opposed to

being planned topics within a guided discussion in a classroom lesson. Issues surrounding

self-understanding and the willingness to question long-held, externally imposed

assumptions about personal, social, and political matters were on the minds of these

students. Therefore, the opportunity to engage in an ongoing civil discussion and

exchange of opinions with a thoughtful adult (the mentor)—who was not invested in

forcing his/her own ideology upon the student—was communicated through the mentee

interviews as a welcome experience. Even in a relatively short mentoring relationship (in

terms of the amount/length of time spent together), mentees described a sense of the

opening of trusted space that held promise of remaining available to them during the rest

of their college years. This neutral space provided the opportunity for the students to try

out new thoughts and insights without being judged or assessed in any way. I believe

that, the trust level increased proportionally to the extent that these students were able to

experiment with their own self-authoring. Because they were able to do that, the trust

level increased.

Overall, I interpret the findings to indicate that the culture of mentorship initiative

did have an impact on some of these traditional undergraduate students, despite the

limited length of time afforded during this early implementation stage of the project. In

particular, several of these study participants/mentees prioritized stories about their

personal growth and development, thereby illustrating the deeper considerations

associated with a more profound sense of self-discovery and direction-setting relative to

their personal goals and learning experiences, things more closely associated with a

larger life design that overarches conventional career considerations. Ultimately, several

of the mentees' conversations revealed existential concerns that ran more deeply and

widely than concerns about the job search or networking activities associated with the

steps and stages of a job search. In the role as researcher I interpret this as a meaningful

sign in terms of our institutional claims that we are genuinely concerned with the person

as a person and not solely as a potential employee.

**Research Question 3: How are Mentors Affected by the Mentor/Mentee**

**Relationship as Implemented in the University's Mentorship Initiative?**

The mentor's perspective on how she/he was affected by the role represents one

of the aspects of the study that I felt might add new insights into the mentorship

phenomenon. Research about the undergraduate mentor's experience is

disproportionately low in comparison to studies reporting aspects of the mentee's

experience. Regardless of whether or not the relationship had a positive outcome for

mentees, there has been very little concern or discussion of the impact on mentors across

the existing body of research on mentorship; that is, as to the benefits accrued by either

the faculty or the university as a whole, aside from retention (Hoffer, 2010). This gap in

the research has been attributed to the fact that mentorship continues to most often be

defined as a unidirectional relationship. As long as we (the academic community) define

it in this linear way, it is unlikely that there will be any significant focus on both parties

in the relationship—in terms of both theory and practice.

Similar to my analysis of the first two research questions, my analysis of the

findings specific to the third research question begins with a reiteration of the

predominantly positive responses to my interview questions as they related to this

particular context. The enthusiasm with which the mentors expressed their connections with their mentees was palpable. In two cases involving Mentor J and Mentor S, I observed and felt their emotional reactions as they described being invited, by their mentees, into personally meaningful moments of grief or excitement that marked the mentee's life-changing shift in thinking about his/her personal and academic development. As described, these kinds of experiences went far beyond those related to an assigned role and far beyond teaching content in a required class. In turn, these mentors represented the kind of academics who would naturally seek to be involved in a mentor/mentee relationship simply because it falls within the purview of what they believe that life in the academy should include. Citing their own availability, these faculty members communicated that they were cognizant of Private University's expectation that each student would be given the opportunity to benefit from a mentoring relationship. Moreover, the commonality among these mentors' experiences, specific to this study, was astounding. Overall, findings indicated that the relationships developed very naturally and did not require much in the way of structure. However, it should be noted that in terms of structure, new students are typically assigned to each faculty on the average of 15 mentees per mentor. After completion of the first year, students are reassigned to a faculty member/advisor associated with students' declared majors. The fact that mentors and mentees are institutionally assigned presents a somewhat formal construct to the initiative, but again, I observed relational development as a natural process that was further confirmed by these mentors/study participants. In fact, several mentors used the term "friend" to describe the relationship with their mentees, but tended

to back off the term upon further reflection. They seemed to want to signal the

informality that the relationship afforded them, yet retreat from the term "friend" to

signal a boundary that may not be present in a genuinely personal friendship.

None of the mentors interviewed seemed to be in any way confused or uncertain

regarding their roles. All of them had attended the workshops and trainings provided

during 2016 preceding the 2016-2017 academic year which signaled the "official"

implementation of the mentorship initiative. To review, the intent of the workshops was

to provide some guiding concepts to the culture of mentorship ideal and a space in which

to create a sense of common purpose for members of the university community in order

to embark on the university-wide project in a clear and cohesive fashion. Of the eight

mentors interviewed, four had also participated in the coaching training for the "First

Year Mentors," which took place in 2013. Both of these workshops focused on basic

communication skills around deep listening and asking questions designed to draw out

and clarify thinking. I was especially interested in interviewing those four

individuals/mentors who had fully embraced this role prior to the initiative; in other

words, those individuals who already felt confident in assuming the role. I was affirmed

in my choices of mentors for this study as these individuals were certainly on board. At

the same time, I was curious to learn how these mentors interpreted their earlier

conversations with administrators regarding the initiative, along with what seemed to be

general lack of clarity among faculty and staff regarding how to proceed. For example,

did they experience any initial confusion regarding institutional expectations of their

roles and later outcomes of the mentoring process?  Surprisingly to me, none of the

mentors signaled any reservations about how to engage in the role from the outset of the official implementation stage of the initiative. My surprise stemmed from a concern I have had about the lack of official guidelines and how that might create angst so typical of a faculty being asked to take on yet another job. As a faculty member, I understand that concern. Even the most enthusiastic among us feel weary as new roles are added to existing responsibilities.

As communicated by all eight mentors, a sense of mission overshadowed any initial resistance that they may have experienced at the beginning of the initiative. In fact, what I discovered was a commonly expressed sense of purpose—regardless of whether or not some of the mentors were motivated by a previous mentorship experience of their own during the undergraduate years, or whether they were motivated by the fact of not having had a mentor during their college career. As a group, the interviewees were overwhelmingly transformed, in varying degrees, as a result of participating in a meaningful relationship with their students. To be that person who helped the student navigate personal and academic challenges, while not being a parent or relative who has claimed a stake in forming or influencing that individual, seemed to be intellectually and personally liberating. While the word "transform" can be interpreted as a very abstract term, I suggest that an adult mentor using the term "liberating" falls into the span of possible transformational experiences. Among numerous comments made, the following illustrate this expanded sense of growth and personal reward: "I felt that this expanded my life," "I have a larger sense of self," and "I now feel a grander sense of purpose." Several went so far as to assign their experience of mentorship as having some kind of

spiritual quality. To this effect, Mentor J told the story of his own undergraduate

experience with a mentor. She was an English professor, and he was an English major.

He described the relationship as being one that held him to a higher standard than perhaps

other students not committed to this academic discipline. Mentor J expressed the feeling

that being held accountable to this degree unleashed a conscious awareness of his own

potential as a future educator. As to the relationship's spiritual aspect, Mentor J shared

his belief that it was providential to have formed that relationship so early in his life, and

he has continued to maintain a very close connection 40 years after it was established. He

further explained that his former English professor was very near the end of her life. In

doing so, my colleague was unable to talk as he was overcome with emotion at the

prospect of no longer having her in his world. Essentially, Mentor J described his sense

of purpose in an existentially spiritual way, "Mentoring, for me, is bound to my identity. I

see mentorship as an expression of my discipleship, and that is why I do not put limits on

it. It is one of the most gratifying parts of my work."

My interpretation of the preceding testimonies rests on the very strong indication

that this role afforded the mentors expanded possibilities of experiencing their own

subjectification and agency as the drivers of their experiences as teachers and role

models. As for Mentor J, I suggest that he developed a unique sense of his own

subjectivity and capacity for self-authorship—at a much younger age—as a result of the

confidence placed in him by his English professor; in that case, a kind of mentoring

relationship even if not formally categorized as such at the time. Now, as adults and

faculty members, these mentors were yet able to acknowledge a new or renewed sense of

self-empowerment as key members of the campus community whose voices have been frequently silenced amidst the politics of university life. In fact, this expanded self-consciousness served to offset, at times, the way faculty have often experienced the feeling of being dismissed relative to their notions of meaningful work within the academic world. Echoing this point, Mentor M commented that *we* (in a global sense) have depersonalized our work in the academy. In contrast to that statement, my sense was that Mentor M began to view mentorship as a kind of creative outlet through which the mentor could realize deeper and more conscious levels of personal subjectification as a direct result of engaging with her/his mentee.

Mentor S offered a unique description of the experience of being a mentor. She linked this role to her own perception of a greater sense of community, describing an enhanced sense of connection to other faculty and staff in the common cause to develop Private University's culture of mentorship. I have given that conversation a great deal of thought and also addressed it in my researcher field notes. In that entry, I reflected quite a bit about what I perceive as a conflict between institutional efforts to claim mentorship as a brand by which to advertise and recruit new students versus reaching community consensus concerning how we describe our vision of what a culture of mentorship can mean to students (and faculty); in turn, develop the training and education needed to advance the initiative. To what extent do we, as a campus community, feel that we are authentic in claiming to advance a culture of mentorship at Private University that prioritizes the *whole* student? As leader of the initiative and as faculty, I was surprised to hear Mentee S attribute a growing sense of community to this early implementation stage

of the initiative because I have learned to be somewhat cynical regarding how administrators promote new ideas with little apparent understanding as to what it takes to make things happen. Consequently, it was encouraging, actually affirming, to hear this faculty member describe her experience and tie that into a sense of unity with other faculty in the role of mentor, thus demonstrating its positive impact on her.

Another interesting discovery revealed during the first round of mentor interviews was the group's collective agreement on the very specific qualities identified as being most closely associated with effective mentorship. Almost unanimously, the mentors cited the attributes of "respect," "honesty," "trustworthy," "compassionate," and "being open-minded" in their common list of positive mentor qualities. In addition, and as discussed in Chapter IV in more detail, several mentors described their connections with their mentees as a friendship. I consider these descriptors interesting for two reasons in particular: (a) because there was so little divergence from this list and (b) because they were unanimous in describing themselves, unapologetically, as possessing these qualities in response to a follow-up regarding self-assessments. I was left with the sense that these mentors personally identified with these qualities as individuals versus seeing themselves matched up to these qualities specific to the roles they have assumed in the mentoring relationship. It seems to me that an implication here, is that we cannot expect to train mentors to have these qualities. Recruiting people who already possess these qualities may be more appropriate.

For two of the mentors, personal perceptions of gender differences influenced their selection of mentees. It is significant here to reiterate that race and ethnicity were

not factors because, as noted in Chapter III Methodology, all study participants are Caucasian. I will address this matter from a critical perspective--further along in this chapter. Recall that across the eight pairs of mentors/mentees, four of the mentors chose mentees of the same sex (two, female to female and two, male to male). In contrast, the two remaining female mentors identified male mentees, while the two remaining male mentors identified female mentees. Across these pairs, only two mentors raised the issue of gender relative to their selection of mentees and their personal/professional approaches to mentorship. Mentor Da (male) and Mentor A (female) each chose a male mentee to participate in the study and made a point of discussing challenges they would anticipate in forming a mentoring relationship with a female. The male mentor explained his selection of a male mentee based on the male "penchant" for bonding through an activity to which the two could develop a relationship. He talked about men preferring to do something together instead of just having a dialogue by itself; that is without having another purpose for being together such as playing ball or washing a car while talking. He speculated that this "male" proclivity to action could make it more difficult for him to develop as meaningful a relationship with a female as a mentee.

The following entry from my researcher field notes captures my annoyance and dismay at Mentor Da's chauvinistic attitude as represented in his "male bonding" approach to the mentoring relationship. I wrote,

> When I heard [Mentor Da] discuss men needing to do something together in order to relate person to person . . . it was right out of a John Gray book [on gender communication]. Stereotypes and patronizing. I wanted to jump across the table and strangle him. (December 12, 2016)

I perceived Mentor Da's remarks as very "old school," especially for a relatively young man (late 30s-early 40s) who I would normally expect to be more inclusive regarding his attitude toward the issue of gender. It was even more disturbing to me when I reminded myself that he is the father of two daughters. From analytical and critical perspectives, this Mentor's words symbolize a cultural gap that has persisted at Private University up until very recently; that is, a historically unquestioned positioning of the university as a traditional institution based on its (a) geographical location in a rural, southern, non-diverse environment; (b) its traditional, patriarchal leadership represented by white male presidents (up until the first female president appointed in 2016); and (c) its historical male majority with regard to faculty and student populations. In other words, I recognized that while the culture of mentorship initiative is intended to create an authentic cultural shift within Private University, we have a challenging journey ahead of us. As such, I propose that we need to move away from an historically exclusive cultural orientation toward a notably inclusive culture; one that would entail expanding diversity across multiple categories of human identification—including gender, sexuality (LBGTQ), race, ethnicity, religion, class, etc.

Upon further discussion with Mentor Da, I discovered that he did not have any assigned female mentees—very unusual since we (mentors) do not have a say as to which students are assigned to us. They are either randomly assigned in the first year or assigned by discipline beyond that point, and this individual's discipline tends to attract more male than female students. (Note that for this study, all mentors were permitted to choose which of their mentees they wished to participate with as paired study subjects.)

While it is not representative of the initiatives impact on the mentor, in both of these

cases of Mentor Da and Mentor A (to be addressed next), by acting on their gender

preferences, I suggest that they were consciously avoiding any problematic issues that

they perceived could have impacted them negatively in terms of impeding their quality of

engagement with a different mentee.

Mentor A (female) chose a male mentee, suggesting that not only was she more

comfortable with male students, but that she thought males make better mentees without

providing a reason why. While not specifically related to the gender issue, she further

revealed her belief that students were not comfortable seeking her out, also not providing

a reason as to why this was so.  Adding to her unique perspective, Mentor A continued to

discuss gender-related issues by describing her own theory of relational connection. The

central tenet of her theory held that maintaining a focus on the relationship--as something

consciously considered throughout the mentorship relationship--suggests a softness that

perhaps, does not appeal to most men and some women. While I found her theory in

contradiction with her expressed preference for a male mentee, Mentor A did not provide

sufficient clarification on this point. Therefore, although I thought her comments to fall in

the range of interesting speculations, they offered very little to bolster an understanding

of the effects of the mentorship experience for her in terms of gender being an important

issue. All in all, it would seem that considerations of gender and its possible impact on

mentoring relationships would be a useful component of mentor training. Moreover,

going forward with the initiative, I can see how it will be both useful and necessary to

address diversity issues across the board. Rather, this line of discussion reminded me of

lingering stereotypes related to gender and how they can inhibit communication between genders. In considering the effects of gender stereotypes within this study's focus on relational connections, I am reminded of another comment made by Mentor C when asked about his experience with mentoring.

> It was hard for me at first, to be trained as a professional, and then be asked to consider relating to students by asking them questions rather than telling them what to do in these out-of-class conversations. All of this puts us on a more level playing field. (Mentor C, personal communication, December 5, 2016)

I initially interpreted Mentor C's comment as implicating a disconnect between being a "professional" and being in relationship with his mentee, further speaking to the hierarchy that has traditionally characterized the dynamics of the academic realm. At first, the comment surprised and disturbed me, signaling a lasting attachment to a construction of propriety created long ago. However, I also interpreted Mentor C's last statement, in which he acknowledged "a more level playing field" between the mentee and himself, as revealing a positive effect on this mentor's thinking going forward. In other words, this statement reveals to me a shift in thinking that might not have occurred without the benefit of the mentorship experience.

In contrast to the generally positive affect communicated by the mentors, two noteworthy concerns emerged from their interview responses with regard to the more difficult aspects of participating in this role: (a) the amount of time required of them (beyond their teaching duties and related responsibilities) and (b) the emotional price often associated with experiencing someone else's pain. Overall, the challenges related to issues of time did not seem to discourage anyone from assuming and maintaining the role

of mentor. Rather, in confronting time issues, the mentors were stimulated to consider

and discuss creative ways with which to carve out more discretionary time so that the

faculty could more comfortably devote themselves to being mentors. They recognized

that effective mentorship practices require time, sometimes scheduled and sometimes

spontaneous, to allow the relationship to develop; further, that the dynamics of  some of

the mentoring sessions cannot be controlled relative to pre-scripted time slots. As most

mentors are not trained to deal with psychological/emotional issues more commonly

referred to a professional counselor, it is still critical that the mentor create a safe space in

which the student can feel the respect that being listened to provides. In addition, most of

the mentors in this study had as many as 15-20 other mentees. While not all

mentor/mentee relationships require or result in large amounts of time spent together, the

time requirement is an unpredictable outcome. With multiple demands on faculty, most

particularly those in small colleges and universities like Private University, it is

frustrating to make the commitment to invest the time and effort needed to develop these

relationships only to experience a deficit of time that hinders faculty and staff mentors

from engaging in the program as effectively as they would like. Based on interview

feedback, these mentors were sincerely bothered by the time conflicts they experienced

because they genuinely valued the relationships they had established with their students

thus far. As stated earlier, these relationships provided a deeper sense of purpose to their

work lives that they deemed unlikely in a full classroom of students or through traditional

advisor-advisee relationships, the latter—intended to sort schedules and other mundane

issues related to managing coursework and persistence.

The second concern that emerged from the mentoring experience—emotional involvement and its impact on energy—was described best by Mentor J as the "price to pay if you are an empathic person." In other words, mentors were increasingly affected by their interactions with their mentees as the relationships deepened. Most agreed that emotional reactions cannot be turned off upon leaving the campus. In Chapter IV, I related the story of Mentor J who took his concern for his mentee to his church where he organized a fund that enabled his mentee to return to school after experiencing financial hardships. Mentor J shared the sense of tension he felt around the expenditure of emotional energy. He discussed the fact that his own growing family required more of his time and energy now; that he wrestled with the tension these roles—family man and teacher/mentor—created for him. Ultimately, he decided that he could no longer stay on campus as much as he had in the past in order to be more present for his family; at the same time, also realizing that he would not be available for many of those spontaneous, open-door opportunities that formally scheduled appointments do not always fully serve.

As faculty member, researcher and leader, I know that these issues are real and unavoidable. These stories validate the lived experiences of these individuals assuming the roles of mentors. Despite the challenges, however, no mentor ever suggested that the efforts were not worth the value of the experience for themselves or for what they saw for their mentees. The implications of these challenges suggest considerations that have not been part of any planning efforts thus far. To provide the structure and support for a program of this magnitude, means that administrators are going to have to address the need for more flexibility in terms of the numbers and types of roles that the university

values. In terms of the emotional support, these findings suggest that the university should consider ways to provide more emotional support for faculty. Perhaps that care could take the form of counseling arrangements or a more robust faculty to faculty mentoring program.

As a closing commentary for this section of the analysis (correlating to the third research question), it is fitting to address the meanings that I ultimately derived from the paired interviews as I considered the ways in which mentors were affected by the mentoring relationship experiences. In the previous chapter's report of the findings, I described the results of the third round of paired interviews (mentor and mentee together) as somewhat disappointing. While I described how they shared stories about their particular mentoring relationships, I also noted something of a role reversal with some of the pairs, whereby the mentee began asking the mentor very pointed questions regarding the meaning of a particular comment. I interpreted this interaction as a very adult-like approach that spoke to the mentees' collective sense of ease that might be expected in comfortable relationships—perhaps in friendships. As I considered those discussions more fully, I began to realize that there was more substance to those third-round discussions than I had initially thought. Essentially, I had observed real relationship dynamics that mentor and mentee had developed together. In fact, even though several mentors demonstrated a little discomfort with their earlier descriptions of the relationship as being friendship-like, I observed that they were very close to demonstrating a friend-like quality in their interactions with mentees during the paired interviews. Therefore, I suggest that, for the most part, the mentors and mentees actually did develop a kind of

friendship that extends beyond the teacher-student relationship as confined to the

classroom setting. Moreover, as a result of witnessing how they recalled some of their

own shared experiences and told stories that illustrated a unique account of their bond, I

determined that a friendship had been established—even if that friendship was qualified

by certain boundaries that come with the territory of the higher education setting. In fact,

two of the mentees—Mentee S and Mentee E— made a point of describing the

relationship they had with their mentors as being "unique" to the other mentor/mentee

pairs beyond the study group. Apparently, these students had compared their experiences,

if not through direct discussion, by observing and making note of the comments their

various friends within the university offered.

**Research Question 4: Does the Mentorship Initiative Demonstrate the Theoretical**

**Frameworks of Subjectification, Self-Authorship, and Transformational Learning?**

**If so, How?**

My final research objective was to explore the possibility that mentorship could

promote, with a focus on the mentee, an awareness of her/himself as a subject (the

process of subjectification) which would give rise to an internalized understanding of

self-authorship (the expression of oneself as an independent thinker and agent in the

world), as well as potentially result in a transformative learning experience. To this end, I

designed questions that spoke directly to this objective in both the mentor and mentee

interview schedules. Moreover, these three concepts/theories have served as the

conceptual framework of this study. Consequently, based on the findings that emerged

from the exploratory interview data, I submit that these states of being—subjectification,

self-authorship, and transformation—have been indicated as realizable, to both lesser and greater degrees, within the parameters of the mentor/mentee relationship. Importantly, I make this claim while, yet, acknowledging that this study was conducted during the very early stages of formalizing a culture of mentorship at Private University.

In reference to a specific question, I asked each mentor to share a particular moment that occurred either in discussion or during the course of their relationship that seemed to signal a shift in the mentee's understanding of him/herself as an individual. None of the mentors' responses to this question revealed much in terms of specific moments or stories of the student's newly acquired sense of self-realization as an independent thinker and as a unique, agentic force in the world—forever changed as a result. However, several of the mentors described conversations that centered on challenges their mentees were working through. As referenced earlier, Mentor S talked about a decision her mentee made to attend a conference; how that conference experience made a profound impact on the student's view of his future academic and professional possibilities. Other mentor comments that proved significant to this particular question came in answer to earlier questions aimed at understanding each mentor's lived experiences in the role. Examples of such comments included, "leads a person to owning" and "encourages the individual to unpack and repack the beliefs they hold." These comments related to the first interview question about the overall experience of mentorship. At the least, I posit that these earlier comments/insights suggested that the mentor was able to see the possibilities for this kind of student growth as one of many opportunities associated with the relationship.

As for the mentees, I asked them to describe a moment relative to a conversation with their mentors in which each experienced an expanded awareness of her/himself. Pertaining to a final question, I asked the mentees to describe how they have been impacted by their mentoring relationship. Only one of the mentees had no comment around either of these last questions, just a shrug and a smile. Mentee S stated that he probably had experienced an expanded sense of self-awareness, but could think of no specific examples. At the same time, he stated that his "thinking had changed" as a result of the relationship. Collectively, the remainder of the mentees expressed comments that reflected developing independence and self-awareness as a key outcome of the mentoring experience. These included: Mentorship "opened my eyes;" mentorship promoted the possibility that "I think for myself;" "I'm more open to and see more possibilities for myself;" and "I'm more independent." In other ways and using different words, mentees described how their mentors helped them to reframe issues in ways that promoted a more optimistic view of themselves and their future possibilities. Overall, I heard much of the same descriptions, with limited words used, which I ultimately interpreted to portray some movement toward a greater degree of individual subjectification and self-authorship. What I did not gain any insight around was the "how" they saw this happening for themselves. Stated another way, whatever happened during the process of a deeply meaningful dialogue did not seem to register consciously; for instance, as a kind of "light bulb" moment. The outcome in the form of a decision or a new lens through which to view a situation or challenge is what stood out for these students.

The participants in this study did not use the terms that I have used to discuss their experience. Despite this, the concepts with which I have framed and formed this research project and what was said in their descriptions of their lived experienced do, in fact, support a realization of the theoretical grounding that I would like to see the use of mentorship to embrace. I would like to introduce and reinforce these theories in a practical way as part of future training. While the focus is on the mentees, the results of this study demonstrate that mentors and the entire university can benefit from this conceptualization. This is an opportunity for theory and practice to come together.

## Document Analysis

In an effort to better understand the mentorship phenomenon at Private University, it was important to look at both the historical and organizational context. An analysis of the documents pertinent to creating the mentorship initiative provided a glimpse of these contexts. It was important to review documents that communicated aspects of this initiative for both the internal audience (faculty, staff, and students) as well as the external audience. There have not been many formal documents written regarding this initiative for either audience. What I was able to look at, however, offers a frame by which to understand the intentions for the way in which the institution is staking its claim. And, while there is evidence among these documents of some formative language, the lack of documentation offers room to shape this initiative to be both distinction in terms of setting private university apart as well as authentic in terms of providing the experience that it claims to offer. As I explained in the introduction to this chapter, these secondary data collection methods did not offer insight regarding this study's research

questions pertaining to the mentor/mentee relationship. For that reason, I have not organized this section by research question, rather I have focused the analysis of documents and researcher field notes on the administrative perspective of organizing the university to support the initiation of creating a culture of mentorship. And to provide context

The first documents I reviewed as peripheral to this study, included a brochure intended to communicate a strategic plan for the university formulated by a then new president and his cabinet. The strategic plan underwent considerable criticism by some board members and some chief administrations and faculty as being more of a functionally organizing instrument than a plan to set the future hopes and intentions of the university. The plan that it represents has undergone revisions as yet another new president has taken over. I include it in this study as it does suggest the beginning of this notion of a culture of mentorship. Although it preceded the proclamation of mentorship, it does recognize the intention to provide a distinguishing aspect to the undergraduate experience at Private University and that to ensure that experience is centered on "achievement and authenticity." "Achievement" is an abstract concept and does not lend itself to clarifying the vision for mentorship, but the word "authentic" could be seen as valuing that which is human and unique. Thus, if the audience could take this at face value, it could be interpreted that the leadership was aligning itself with a humanistic approach to an undergraduate experience.

An interesting result of the brochure's publication of the university's strategic plans was the conversation that ensued across several levels, including the Advancement

Office, the Provosts' Offices, and faculty. Among these groups, the general consensus was that this brochure was not sufficiently aspirational as would be expected of a new and dynamic strategic vision/planning document. The key goals either seemed generic, reflecting expectations of any college or university, or more operational in nature based on goals/titles such as: (a) "Expanding Our In-Demand Professional Offerings" and (b) "Raising (Private University) Visibility, Brand Identity, and Reputation" (Private University, 2014). These kinds of goal statements reflected both the culture's demand for job-ready training and a need to manage a waning recruitment trend.

This piece along with the article in the alumni magazine published in (2015) provides a first "official" articulation of what mentorship might mean at Private University. The article entitled "A Structured Mentoring Approach to Improve Student Success" states,

> A major component of the enterprise strategy for the undergraduate program involves implementing a comprehensive four-year mentoring model known as Private Journey. This model is based on a developmental sequence where faculty mentors guide students from their first day on campus through choosing a major, enrolling in appropriate courses and identifying meaningful career-related experiences to enhance their education and prepare them for today's competitive workforce. (Alumni Magazine, p. 2)

This article ties the enterprise strategy outlined in the brochure to the first institutional statement regarding the intention for a concept of mentorship. It describes an instrumental approach to mentoring practices that connects undergraduate education to job placement. In this article, it was suggested that the purpose and intent of mentorship related directly to outcomes that pertain to professional ends and did not mention a

developmental perspective. These documents do not answer the questions about how mentorship is currently experienced, what it actually means to the undergraduate, how it impacts the mentors themselves, and certainly does not verify if mentorship is or aspires to be a transformative experience. However, what they do is begin to set the stage regarding the institutional expectations. As stated above, these earliest iterations of what internal and external audiences would read and what might impact expectations suggest a corporate model. The name of the strategic plan was the "Enterprise" strategy. One of the synonyms for "enterprise" is "Business." The quote from the alumni magazine suggests that a mentored journey would involve getting down to business, choosing a major, enrolling in "appropriate" courses and getting on with the task of developing a career in a competitive workforce. Nowhere in either of these documents does the reader sense that the student experience may result in forming a person. Rather, the end result is forming a worker.

The next sets of documents provide a different view of mentorship that begins to steer toward the developmental model. Not only do these meeting agendas suggest a developmental model, they are the template for the organizational development that should be embraced as the institution undergoes its own transformational process to become a different culture. The first agenda that I reviewed was used to organize the collective thought including concerns, expectations, shared understanding and, perhaps a sense of timing and next steps for the initiative. The intention for embracing mentorship as a cultural distinction was stated in these documents as "helping students think through who they are and where they're going with anything and everything that's a part of their

academic and personal learning." I felt at the time that the agendas, which were a result

of the conversations between the Provost and the consultant that penned this statement,

mirrors the overall experience which I discovered during the interviews and which

emerged as a theme: mentorship as a process of self-development and development of a

sense of purpose. So, again as precursors to the experience, these documents—though

intended for a very small internal audience--align with the reported experience of mentors

and mentees, and give rise to the notion of the agentic possibilities for being in a

mentoring relationship.

The next set of documents—minutes from two faculty assemblies which span the

course of the 2015 and early into 2016—offer cursory acknowledgment of the initiative

with a reference to a comment regarding the issue of time and the expectations of

administrators for the amount of time this formal role may require. This document

foreshadows what the mentors in this study reported as their chief concern. As reported

earlier, in no way do the mentors who were interviewed consider mentorship to be

unworthy of the time. However, if administrators do not address the concern and

encourage collective thinking about how to reshape discretionary time, there is a real

danger to accomplishing what we are intending.

The draft mission statement was created during the time between the two above

referenced faculty assemblies and reads as follows:

> Private university calls all members of its community into a mentoring culture.
> We foster self-awareness, empowerment, and resourcefulness through guiding
> relationships that equip servant leaders to add value to the world.

It was created by a group of academic chairs and deans in a single meeting. I include the fact that it was drafted in one sitting as an indication that a fairly common view of the development of the person actually did exist as the chief motive for institutionalizing mentorship. The experience of those who participated in this study supports this intent both in terms of how the mentors approached their mentees and in terms of what the mentee experience seems to indicate. As I have already noted, the mentees were rather vague and had limited vocabularies for describing how the experience impacted their lives, but despite that shortcoming, they clearly indicated satisfaction and growth.

At this point on the chronological order of events, there are still no new documents aimed at an external audience. Training plans were developed for the faculty and staff workshops that took place during the spring, summer and fall of 2015. Again, the intent for the training was to ensure a common understanding of what and how mentorship would be instituted and to provide some differentiation regarding how mentorship differed from other student interactions such as advising or in typical business office or student development dealings. Overall, I believe this training plan either established or supported one of the themes revealed from the exploratory interviews regarding the characteristics of effective mentorship. The focus on the communicative skills of asking questions and listening during the training certainly were among the characteristics most often discussed by mentors and mentees. And, while there was early discussion in the training sessions about the participants own expectations regarding the role of mentoring, the constraints that were discussed during the interviews were more external than any ambiguity related to their internal understanding of their role.

The richest documents produced in an effort to further the culture of mentorship initiative were notes generated in January 2016 during a workshop associated with the faculty assembly devoted entirely to sorting out how the mentorship model might look, what concerns remained, and what next steps should be to institute mentorship across the university. The faculty was organized by divisions and by undergraduate and graduate school. This allowed each group to consider how they viewed the purpose of the initiative and what would work best for their area. The most noteworthy discovery here is the distinct differences between how the graduate faculty view mentorship in contrast to the undergraduate faculty. For graduate faculty, the purpose reflects the earliest corporate concept of career preparation. They outlined the need for them, as faculty, to get in touch with the job opportunities for their graduates and to provide a "professional" education. This faculty made note of how time should be scheduled, what the rules of engagement included such as when a mentor should touch base with the mentee, how much response time should be allowed in returning calls and emails, and how this role should impact their own performance review. It should be noted that the graduate school at Private University only offers master's level degrees in education, health administration and business. The largest program is the MBA.

In contrast, the undergraduate faculty—across all divisions—considered more humanistic needs such as the fact that they needed more and ongoing training to master the new (to some) communication skills, ways to better get to know their students, how to distinguish between advising and mentoring to ensure that this would happen, what

students needed to better participate in the process, and how to develop trust and empathy on the part of faculty.

These documents—still predating the study—demonstrate how we were building momentum to assume the task. Considering the responses to the interview questions and how those questions inform the objectives for this study, these notes, align. I can disregard the graduate notes for the moment as my study was not about the graduate student experience. That is a topic for another study. I do consider that these notes from the undergraduate faculty seem to be very much aligned with the lived experiences of those in the study one year later. They anticipate the challenges very well and demonstrate a sincere interest in creating a culture responsive to students and their needs and a genuine concern for being that which we were still verbally considering ourselves to be. None of these notes suggest that we were aspiring to address self-authorship or a resulting transformational experience, however.

During the months that followed this workshop, we began working with another outside consultant to work on the messaging for our external audiences. The objectives for our relationship together included developing a plan for social media, a brochure, identifying the formal platforms for communicating with both our internal audience and those outside the university community.

The messaging in these documents does reflect the extent to which both mentors and mentees might expect mentorship to be a shared experience. The findings from the exploratory interviews support this expectation in that there was no question that each party I spoke with had a very clear understanding of what Private University means by an

experience of mentorship. And, as stated in Chapter Four, these documents relate the mentorship initiative to an overall student experience, it speaks to how the university sees this as a form of distinguishing this institution from others (branding) and points out behaviors that are involved such as deep listening, effective questioning and coaching students for both their careers and beyond the workplace. These behaviors were also identified by study participants as important characteristics for effective mentorship.

The website copy and the document labeled the final brochure represent the two pieces of information released during this opening stage of the mentorship initiative. They are both intended for an outside audience--prospective students and their parents. They are stating what the institution currently offers as a culture of mentorship. They describe what a student would experience and for that reason should be most closely scrutinized in relation to the primary data collection methodology utilized for this study- the exploratory interview. The interviews sought to determine the current reality of those who are living the roles of mentor and mentee.

The best I can determine, the website copy was written by someone in the office of communication at Private University. Due to personnel turnover, I was unable to verify who actually wrote the copy. It should have been written in alignment with the work done by the consultants hired to ensure consistent messaging across all mediums, internally and externally. As one of the leaders for this initiative, I was not contacted to help edit this piece and did not know that it had been posted or when. It would have had to have been posted after August of 2016 as that was the last time I examined the website. What follows is a line by line analysis of what actually takes place, what does not, and in

what way either informs this study. To clarify for the reader, the "Journey" is a term used to describe the 4-year undergraduate experience-both academic and co-curricular. Within the concept of the Journey, the concept of mentorship is inserted as the means by which faculty and staff support the student throughout her/his experience. In other words, mentorship is the guiding process by which students navigate their Journey.

On the website, under the question "Why Private University" the drop-down menu offers an "about Private University," "a Presidents" page, and the "Mentored Learning." Once you click on that tab you will see the headline: "Mentored Learning: Private's Journey" and read the statement that is accented which follows: "All students participate in Private Journey, a four-year mentoring program that distinguishes Private U. from other institutions," at which point the reader may understand that the two are associated. In fact, the statement reads that this is the student experience (Private Journey) and involves a formal program of mentorship. This statement is somewhat problematic in that it implies that the student experience is situated squarely on the mentorship experience. The copy goes on to provide a wider lens by which to understand the scope of the experience, but this initial statement threatens to foreclose on the intention of both the Private Journey and the way in which mentorship is envisioned. The explanation continues by stating "Through Private Journey, a combination of seminars, retreats, professional opportunities and mentoring relationships foster the intentional development of all students into engaged, life-long learners." As a person behind the scenes, this reads to me as a string of buzz words intended to wow the reader but providing very little to clearly describe the experience. What are the seminars, what is the

purpose of a retreat, what is the connection to professional opportunities and what does intentional development mean?

There are two headings that organize the rest of the page: Faculty Mentors and Peer Mentors. Under each are bulleted statements that are intended to flesh out what each of these roles entail. The faculty role is stated as being one assigned to each student for the purposes of providing direction to academic resources, adjust to college-level work, discern a major and career options and to "secure personalized opportunities through clubs, organizations, internships, externships and the classroom" in order to "access real-world" experience."  Thus, we have the description of the corporate model of mentorship. There is nothing in this statement that speaks to the relational connection and the possibilities that the relationship with a mentor may provoke a deeper understanding of the self. Peer mentors and their roles are described as being a tour guide and extended orientation leader. While some of these objectives may result from these assigned connections, they are not necessarily the highest priority for either the mentor or the peer mentor.

The last heading on this page reads "Guidance, Support and Inspiration," and goes on to read:

> Our unique mentored learning program ensures every student develops as a whole person. We want our students to possess a deeper sense of self, confidence and place in their community. We want our graduates to be adaptable, skilled and active individuals. Through emphasis on personal growth, academic learning and career preparation, [Program Name] demonstrates our commitment to your success.

This strikes me as an afterthought but it does reflect a better match to the undergraduate faculty intentions for the initiative and to this studies mentorship experiences as reported in the interviews. I strongly object to the claim that mentorship "ensures every student develops as a whole person." We can certainly not ensure this possibility nor do we see what is meant by a "whole" person. I do agree, though, that the sentences which follow are aligned with our highest intentions. They also reflect the reports collected from the interviews. Students did describe a deeper sense of self, a developed confidence level and a sense of satisfaction in what they are learning and, in some cases, some clarity about decisions related to their careers. None of the students I interviewed made connections between mentorship and career preparation as a principle aspect of the role.

A final document for an external audience examined for this research is the most recent brochure, printed since the initiative has been underway this academic year. It, too, situates mentorship as an organizing feature of the undergraduate experience. It is designed to look like a passport and says that on the front cover to match the Journey concept. The purpose of the brochure is to describe what Private University considers the Journey to be: "a 4-year program that guides the overall student experience." The second and third pages highlight and –for the first time in public—describe a Culture of Mentorship.

> At Private University, we view students as **whole, resourceful, creative** and **capable**—and **empower** them to achieve their goals. This happens through a "culture of mentorship"—which includes experiences and relationships that foster exceptional personal growth and development.

This copy more closely resembles the function of mentorship from the perspective of the

undergraduate faculty (notes from Jan. 2016 and conversations) and seems to be

describing the experience reported in this study.

> Our commitment to mentorship permeates all levels of the Private student
> experience. **A mentored learning approach** is used by faculty who teach in all
> programs. Undergraduate students participate in assigned seminar courses with
> their **campus mentors,** gaining access to them **in the classroom** and scheduled
> mentoring sessions as well as during extracurricular and social activities **outside
> the classroom**. Mentorship is also a vital component of our degree completion
> and graduate programs.

This paragraph seems to be rather aspirational in that I am not certain that we can claim

that we use a "mentored learning approach" in all programs nor am I very clear about

what we mean by that phrase. We have had no conversations to which I have been privy

that outlines how mentorship is experienced in class and there have been no faculty

development opportunities around that topic. We have had workshop sessions a couple of

times a year that focus on engaged learning in the classroom as that has been this

universities Quality Enhancement Plan for SACSCOC, the accrediting body, but the

connection has not been made between pedagogy intended to engage students and

pedagogy intended to mentor in the classroom. In addition, this paragraph better

describes a first year's student experience.

> The final paragraph under the heading "Culture of Mentorship" reads,

> Our longstanding open door policy encourages communication between
> professors and students, often leading to natural opportunities for mentoring. At
> all campus location, faculty, staff and student mentors are trained in critical
> communication skills such as deep listening, effective questioning and coaching

to help students succeed through their Private Journey and prepare for successful careers and lives.

This is the first time that we insinuate that mentorship is both a formal and an informal program. It is important to point this out as we assess the results of our efforts as an institution and identify next steps and needs. Thoughts and needs for an informal approach to mentorship differs from the formal program approach and we need to address both of these.

In the six pages of this brochure that follow, each stage (freshman through senior years), are highlighted to include what a student may want to incorporate into that particular year. For example, the first year includes a seminar designed to promote connection to the university and other students, and to the co-curricular opportunities available; the sophomore year is an appropriate time to declare a major and to participate in a second tier seminar designed to explore interdisciplinary topics and competency in information literacy and critical thinking; juniors also sign up for a topical seminar that incorporates the competencies of communicate and collaboration along with incorporating outside of the classroom experiences such as internships or travel into their academic experience; and as seniors students participate in capstone courses, and solidify plans to launch a job search or pursue graduate school.

The brochure is an aesthetically appealing piece intended for recruiting purposes and serves to stimulate expectations that more closely connect to the experiences in this study in regard to mentorship. It was created from carefully facilitated discussions and fully vetted by those who initiated and are leading this project. The website, however,

seems disjointed and inauthentic in regard to the guiding expectations and describing the reality that we are actually experiencing in all of these realms. I make note of this as the documents developed to market the mentorship approach suggest that it is unique to Private University. The formal system may be unusual to the programmatic approach I have discovered are used at other institutions, but there seems to be a discrepancy between what we are advertising and how those in the role are describing their experience.  As I stated previously, my researcher field notes reveal a great deal of angst on my part as I was concerned about this notion of saying who we are to the public yet not managing our internal systems, training needs, and clarifying what remains ambiguous about how we are implementing the initiative.

None of the documents address what might be built into our process of initiating students or faculty, particularly for those with no former experience in this kind of relationship. In the training sessions, time was devoted to the encouraging participants to reveal what they thought mentoring involved, but I did not find, nor do I remember discussing, what might be considered clearly formed expectations. The training was only designed for faculty and staff. There is nothing built into the plans that provide training for students to be prepared to be fully present in the mentoring process.

**Researcher Field Notes**

The results from a secondary data collection which I proposed to include for this study were somewhat limited in scope and content. I believe this result was, in part, due to the delimitations I imposed by making the choice to conduct the study during a very early stage of a new institutional initiative. This data is relevant, however, because they

show the multiple hats I, as researcher and participant wear and demonstrate how I have experience the organization and development of the initiative under study. The field notes reveal my frustration and concerns as I address the document analysis and interviewing pieces of my study. These underlying frustrations are undeniable concerns from which I cannot divorce myself but could not bring to the interview but do bring to the study. We would not have the coherence that would allow us to have more insight into the disconnect between channels of communication were it not for these field notes which offer ongoing commentary regarding events that were taking place before and during the interviews. The Researcher Field notes provide the connective tissue between that which is experienced (interviews), that which organizes and describes what should be experienced (document analysis), and the anxiety produced when leadership and management attempt to provide a guiding vision for a program while anticipating how effective the program results really are. This kind of anxiety is exacerbated by my feeling of hope regarding the potential that new ways of providing support and guidance for our students can be realized yet also knowing that bureaucratic ineffectiveness often stands in the way.

In Chapter IV of this dissertation I stated that my field notes tended to be primarily about issues, concerns, and speculation about how to institutionalize this initiative. The review of these notes revealed two categories for which most all of my entries fell. They seemed to reflect either my concerns about the direction the institution would take regarding the purpose of creating a culture of mentorship which I characterized as either corporatization which, to me, reflects a business model in which

the exclusive aim for earning a bachelor's degree is employment, versus humanization. I

do not consider employment as unimportant, I just believe it to be limited in scope of

possibilities and should be a consideration only after a rudimentary self-assessment take

place by which to align career options. I return to the purpose of education and submit

that qualification for work life is one of three primary reasons to seek education. The

other two are socialization in terms of understanding how to become a contributing

member of a social world and the process of subjectification or becoming aware of the

unique self, capable of creating and expressing itself in the world, both of these seem to

be what I would consider the humanizing purpose for establishing a culture of

mentorship. A comment from my journal reflects my concern, "I felt strange that entire

year as the marketing needs seemed to stretch what we were promising before we were

really able to "be" what we said we were."

The second category revealed by reviewing my notes were concerns I labeled

"management versus leadership." Issues that belonged to this category included things

that seemed to be missing or overlooked as we seemed to be rushing forward.

> The committee never materialized. From my view, it was in the hands of the
> Provost (leadership to continue to provide vision) as to how this should be
> institutionalized. I did not feel that I should make any further decisions without
> other participants given that this was a university-wide initiative. I followed up on
> two different occasions. I made a premature attempt to bring a group together on
> my own in the late spring, but in the small, private university, people wear so
> many hats and I am among that group. As I was assigned a new position, my
> attention went elsewhere. (Journal entry: June 15, 2016)

As we began building this program both formal and informal parts of it took form.

Some of the parts of both versions were included because they were already in place and

fit the bigger picture. An example of this would be the first-year program and its model of mentor and coach. And, some of the parts were undertaken because it just seemed the thing to do. An example of this would be inviting the university community to the table to create a sense of shared ownership. The initiative, essentially, is a work in process that began by cobbling together what we have and what we might have. It is currently hanging in the balance of the intentions that we documented and some that were not along with what is being experienced and how we are shaping the expectations of those who will come.

Underpinning all of this were the tensions between the motivating forces intent to promote or sale this university and those forces dedicated to provide an experience that has academic integrity and matched the sales pitch. Leading, driving and navigating the field are the people at each level on both sides of this equation trying to make and influence what will result. I have been one of those people and have been privy to the conversations that—while not "official" or captured in the form of a document—had impact on how this has evolved. After leaving a meeting I would often sit down at the computer and make notes, usually venting about what seems to be a veneer that is intended to wish something into being. But, saying something doesn't make it so. As I compare what we say in the documents to what I recorded in my field notes, my concerns about the tension between the corporatization of mentorship and the humanization of mentorship and between leadership and managements corroborates my observations of the inconsistent description of what mentorship is on the website or in the most recent brochure.

All of the interpretations from this study's findings have been subject to the limitations and the delimitations that I have recognized as present during the course of this study. The following section will address those issues.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Limitations of the Study</h3>

The most obvious limitation was the short amount of time over which the individuals who participated actually knew and worked together. In most, but not all cases, these were relations that formed in the beginning of the fall (2016) semester. The interviews took place between last November and mid-January. This is a relatively short period of time within which to form a relationship. The goodwill which most reported could be a result of a pleasant stage that is characteristic of any type of newly formed relationship. The students and their mentors told the stories of a pleasant experience, but I believe interviewing them in another year or two, or as the students approach graduation, would yield a richer understanding of their experience.

A second limitation was the lack of documentation available to examine. Not only were there very few pieces to evaluate, in some cases it was difficult to determine who authored the documents. This is a concern that reflects a lack of clarity prior to the onset of the initiative, it demonstrates a lack of coordination between the design and informal and formal channels of organizational communication and contributes to the ambiguity that already exists around the concept of mentorship. In light of this study's limitations, this final section considers transferability of the findings to broader populations or others settings and conditions.

**Conclusion**

In this analysis, I have compared the findings from my primary method of inquiry, the exploratory interviews of mentors and mentees, along with the findings from the secondary methods I employed to consider how these collective findings provide insight for the guiding questions for this research project. I conclude this early stage assessment of Private University's initiative to create a culture of mentorship with an understanding that the experience of being in a relationship designed as mentorship is taken seriously and has proven meaningful for the parties who have participated in this study. My chief concern, regarding the lives of the traditional undergraduate and the impact of the initiative within this culture, is about the way in which we will seek to initiate them into the community. Providing a more effective means by which to build expectations, both as a prospective student and as a first year or transfer student have become a higher priority as next steps are considered and planned. Consideration as to how faculty incorporate this role in relation to their entire work responsibilities must be given more thought, in fairness to leading a balanced life and to preserve the "joy" currently associated with mentorship. Finally, research efforts must be put into place to continue to promote both the formal and informal aspects of mentorship and to continue to better understand the context which seem to hold promise for a humanistic version of mentorship.

**CHAPTER VI**

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

**The Inspiration behind My Ideal Vision of Mentorship**

I would like to highlight the forces and tensions that have impacted me as I have worked through this study—providing the connective tissue between my philosophical and pedagogical principles. I am philosophically committed to mentorship as a means of communicative and relational learning practices—dating to my background in Communication Studies. Communication has provided me an enduring theoretical model—the Johari window—which rests on the principle that we become the people who we are through our communications and interactions with others. Symbolically, it is a four-quadrant rendering of the individual: the public self, the private self, the blind self, and the potential self. For example, when utilizing sound and ethical communications practices, it is possible for a person to receive productive feedback and, thus, experience an opening or enlightening of one's self-concept to which he/she had been previously unconscious (the blind self). When in dialogue with a trusted other who demonstrates empathy and care, the individual can be further inspired to disclose certain private aspects that can lead to a release of self-imposed—conscious and unconscious—limitation. Experiencing life as a participant in ongoing dialogue can reveal aspects of ourselves and our approaches to living that can speak to potential growth of which we had previously been unaware. To illustrate, each of us has likely had those moments when, in deep

conversation with a trusted other, you have heard yourself say something that you had never thought or said to yourself before. We might call such moments "aha" moments in which we experience a fundamental shift in thinking that empowers our belief in our unique potential; as such, a shift that can signify personal transformation.

In turn, as a result of my intellectual/emotional reconnection with the Johari window concept, I connected strongly to Biesta's (2013) theory of subjectification; that is, the "subjectness" of the individual within the symbolism of a mental vision of the Johari window, along with the idea of emancipation and freedom being unlocked. Through my focus on communications and social justice education, I have come to understand that subjectification is profoundly realized through connections with others, moving the individual to understand his/her existence as part of a greater whole of existence. Along with Biesta's (2013) subjectification, Kegan's (1994, 2000) self-authorship has informed my reconnection to the Johari window as a framework within which to position my ideal vision of a culture of mentorship. Finally, the last course I took in my doctoral program addressed transformational learning as a deeper, personally significant learning process that impacts the individual on multiple levels. This was especially important to me as I now had a more solid grasp of the meaning of transformation as a possible outcome of education, in contrast to an abstractly and carelessly used term to signify an institution's attempts to positively frame its mission and goals.

## The Value and Meaning of a Culture of Mentorship

In my role as qualitative researcher, I conducted this study during the early (official) implementation stage of Private University's culture of mentorship initiative, commencing during the fall 2017 semester and concluding spring 2018. Specific to my roles as faculty member, department chair, and initiative leader, I have acknowledged my subjective stance and commitment to the establishment of a culture of mentorship at Private University to be embedded over time. At the intersections of all these roles, I looked to the findings of this study to substantiate (or not) the university's focus on mentorship as a particularly humanizing and developmental experience for students/mentees; one that might also demonstrate similar impacts on their mentors. Ultimately, the key findings indicated that the mentorship experience, as a developmental and potentially transformative process, was of value to both the student and the faculty member; that, in fact, the relationship had proven to be a positive experience for all involved in that they communicated their collective desire to continue in these roles beyond the time frame of the study. Essentially, as communicated in their rounds of interviews, all study participants conceived of mentorship as a function steeped in relationship-building and a humanistic means through which both parties were able to grow by focusing on the whole person rather than compartmentalizing one aspect of their lives (especially relevant to students as the focal recipients of mentorship efforts). At the same time, findings yielded from document analysis and researcher field notes (along with some commentary from mentors) indicated that Private University needs to continue to make plans aimed at more fully incorporating the values and behaviors associated with

humanistic mentorship practices into the culture of the university. Nonetheless, the overarching conclusion drawn from the study is that there is inherent value in providing mentorship opportunities to undergraduate students in ways that emphasize human values, mutual trust and respect, personal and academic growth, and comfortable integration within the campus community. As such, these findings situate mentorship as a meaningful practice through which to integrate and reflect upon issues that are pivotal to the undergraduate experience. In particular, the practice of mentorship provides a safe, relational space within which the student can learn how to address the many challenges of college life and holds possibility for promoting the development of emotional maturity and self-confidence.

Along with these generally positive findings, I also identified four distinctive issues or challenges that require strong critique. In other words, I have discovered that it is necessary to balance my vision of my ideal vision of mentorship with the harsher realities concerning barriers and resistance's uncovered as a result of this initial study. These issues can be summed up as follows: (a) how to effectively initiate students into the role of mentee; (b) how to identify, establish, and support both the formal and the informal aspects of mentorship; (c) how to effectively address faculty concerns around balancing multiple roles and obligations within the campus community; and (d) how to manage the tensions between the aims of a corporate approach to creating institutional distinction and the aims of an authentically humanistic approach to educational mentorship (as represented in its evolving design). These concerns are not insulated from one another, and they each represent a critical lens from which to view the overall

experience—particularly one that claims to be a cultural experience. They each require consideration from a different institutional function. Therefore, I suggest that the governance and oversight for each of these concerns may require a variety of managers throughout the planning and implementation processes in order to address, share, and better navigate around these issues.

**Establishing a Culture of Mentorship: Four Issues and Related Recommendations**

In the sections that follow, I individually address and draw conclusions from each of the four previously identified issues. Culminating each discussion, I make recommendations as to potential strategies that might address them in an effort to steer Private University's mentorship project on a firmer path going forward. On this point, I wish to reiterate that this study represents the first stage of potentially ongoing studies that could address a wider range of faculty and students with regard to their perspectives of the mentoring relationship in order to not only be more inclusive, but to genuinely expand the culture of mentorship across the university. At the same time, future studies might reveal reasons behind reluctance of other faculty members to commit to this role in addition to their teaching and research duties. Furthermore, in considering these issues, I suggest that recommendations aimed at Private University's mentorship initiative might be useful to other small liberal arts colleges and universities seeking to institute comprehensive, humanistic models of mentorship on their campuses.

**Issue One: Student Orientation to Mentorship—Need for Better Preparation**

As a result of this study, my chief concern centers on the lives of the university's traditional undergraduate students with regard to the initiative's impact on campus

culture. Specifically, I am concerned about more clearly defining and communicating best practices for initiating undergraduate students into the community in terms of what they can expect as mentees in this new environment. As one example, I concluded from the findings that there is a need to identify ways to more effectively build prospective students' expectations and understandings of a mentoring culture—both first-year and transfer students. As an initiative leader, I can attest to the fact that this challenge has become a higher priority in planning the university's next steps in establishing our culture of mentorship. Since the completion of this study, a new task force (formed in spring 2017) has been charged with moving the initiative forward, and one of the priorities is to address the issue of student orientation toward mentorship practices and related expectations. Task force meetings around ongoing work in this area have been slated for late fall, continuing into the 2017-2018 academic year.

Up to and throughout the time frame in which this study was conducted, none of the study-related documents addressed the issue of student readiness and related expectations of mentees. On this point it is critical to note that many of Private University's incoming undergraduates are first-generation college students who tend to be less prepared for living independently within an academic environment. Moreover, it has been my observation, with exceptions, that today's undergraduates have been conditioned to function within a much more structured and authority-driven K12 environment in which independent thinking and personal agency are not emphasized. Therefore, findings indicate that it is unrealistic to expect new students to easily embrace and engage in a mentee role without a concerted effort to orient them to the mentoring

process in a substantive and enduring way. One viable means to bridge this gap would be to design the first-year seminar around the culture of mentorship, including the practice of communication skills that would promote habits of interrelationship as a platform for experiencing personal growth.

None of the documentation addressed what might be built into our process of initiating either students or faculty into this newly established culture of mentorship, which is particularly problematic for those with no former experience in participating in mentoring relationships. As noted in the documentation of faculty training sessions, time was devoted to encouraging participants to reveal what they thought mentoring involved. However, I neither found, nor do I remember discussing, what might be considered clearly formed faculty expectations of students as first-time mentees. This raises the question of whether or not faculty and staff still retained a notion of mentor as leader of the relationship despite the training discussions that were purposed toward a more holistic view of the mentoring relationship as a partnership. From my idealistic perspective, I began this inquiry believing that faculty and staff shared my vision. Despite the fact that mentor/study participants were more positive than negative with regard to their interview responses, I recognize that this represents a small and more isolated grouping of mentors who personally selected their mentees, just as I had personally invited them to participate in the role of mentor for this study. The critical point that I want to drive here, is that my vision could not be fully infused into the initial implementation of this project with the faith and fervor with which I conceived it. This does not mean that I do not maintain my belief in greater possibilities in growth and transformation for students (even mentors),

but that my vision must be tempered by the current realities that stand as impediments. Overall, I have concluded that the initial training process for faculty and staff represented necessary first steps that laid the groundwork for continuing assessment and improvement of our planning and implementation procedures. Nonetheless, we must focally attend to preparing students for participating in the initiative and college life itself.

With this issue now more focally in mind, we have actually anticipated the need to better orient students to the mentoring relationship, making plans to incorporate some class time in the first-year seminar to instruct students as to the ways in which they can more comfortably and effectively engage in the formally assigned relationships with their mentors. By acknowledging the range of possible experiences and creating positive expectations for students in advance of their participation in the culture of mentorship initiative, I submit that administrators and faculty, together, can strengthen the cultural fabric of this institution. In more humanistic terms, by attempting to alleviate any initial anxiety through the provision of information and engaging students' questions about mentorship, I further suggest that the relationship would develop with less resistance.

**Issue Two: Formal and Informal Mentorship Models—Need to Identify and Support**

The most recent brochure (2017) includes a final paragraph under the heading of "Culture of Mentorship" that alludes to possibilities of both formal and informal models of undergraduate mentorship at Private University. While the content does not specifically identify formal versus informal modes of mentorship, the wording imparts a

holistic orientation with the inclusion of "open door policy" and "natural opportunities for mentoring" among other phrasings. This brochure's publicized content represents the first time that we (university leadership) suggest (without naming or defining terms) that the culture of mentorship initiative represents both formal and informal approaches within the program. As a point of fact, Private University actually has both a formal and an informal model of mentorship in operation. The formal model consists of officially assigning, on a random basis, each student to a specific person (e.g., faculty or staff member as mentor) whose purpose is to shepherd the student throughout various aspects of the undergraduate first-year experience. Each of these students is also randomly matched with a peer mentor (sophomore and above) who previously applied and interviewed for that position, ultimately receiving official university approval to serve in this capacity. I suggest that these random assignment policies could be interrogated in future planning session in order to possibly effect a more holistic matching of mentees and mentors, whether they be faculty or peer mentors. In addition, the university's Office of First-Year Experience provides both the faculty mentor and student peer mentors curriculum-based planning guides for the year, along with training to support their work and some evaluation or feedback in the form of surveys and assessments from students. All of these strategies and measures fit a traditional, formal mentorship model that incorporates a degree of hierarchy and associated power structures.

As to the issue of power within the formal model, I noted that this study's students/mentees communicated an initial feeling of fear and hesitation about the assignment of an official mentor, often resulting in a more reserved approach to the

mentoring relationship during the early stages. As a related aspect of power dynamics, the issue of intersectionality (the interconnections of identity across race, ethnicity, socio-economic, gender identification, etc.) also must be recognized and addressed within any institution of higher learning. On this point, I suggest that the basic challenge for Private University is to broaden the diversity of both its faculty/staff and student populations. Additionally, in targeting current administrators, faculty/staff, and student populations more attention should be given to heightening sensitivity around diversity issues while the institution takes steps to expand the presence of underrepresented groups across the campus community going forward. In fact, it has only been in the last two years (2015-2017) that official policies have begun to address diversity as a crucial missing link in our university culture and services have expanded to support the growing diversity in this institution. While its relative lack of diversity is glaringly apparent as compared to numerous other private institutions of similar size, I can attest to the fact that there is a general awareness among administrators to progressively promote a diversity agenda. At the same time, I am concerned that we do not, as an institution, take a colonizing approach in order to attract and retain underrepresented student groups for the sake of improving school statistics.

In response to this critique, I am compelled to point out the incremental progress that has been made in the area of student diversity at Private University. The school received its largest incoming first-year class in 30 years with the opening of the fall 2017 semester. Within this group of new students, the areas of racial/ethnic and religious identities demonstrated significant change from previous academic years. For example,

for the two years prior to the 2017-2018 academic year, demographics showed a distinct majority of Caucasian students over minority students: (a) 2015-2016, 69% Caucasian to 31% Minority students, and (b) 2016-2017, 61% Caucasian to 39% Minority students. In contrast, figures for 2017/2018 show 42.6 % Minority students, while the percentage of Caucasian students decreased to 57.4%.

These examples of changing demographics are relatively small in terms of representing a more authentic picture of intersectionality within our campus environment. However, I am suggesting that for a university that has been traditionally embedded in a small-town way of life, such seemingly small advances signify a turn in direction from exclusivity to inclusivity. Furthermore, I maintain that issues of power, including intersectionality, are implicit within a formal model of mentorship because they are historically driven by policies that underpin a more hierarchical design and purpose. In other words, from a critical perspective, formally constructed mentorship models tend to impose an authoritative approach to the process (Hansman, 2002). For Private University, I conclude that a formal model of mentorship, by itself, cannot drive progress toward a more diverse university community. Instead, I suggest that the issues of power and intersectionality, as related to the culture of mentorship initiative, can be uniquely addressed through an informal and clearly holistic approach to the mentoring relationship.

In contrast to Private University's representation of the formal model as previously described, the theoretical constructs of the informal model of mentorship often include the opportunity to self-select a mentor or mentee with whom to work and develop

a relationship (Hansman, 2002). Significantly, research has supported the probability that

self-selected relationships are the most productive and satisfying (Daloz, 1999). On this

premise, the informal model offers a more relationship-centered approach that serves the

psychosocial aspects of mentorship; as such, providing very little, for either party, in

terms of formula or script by which to operate within the relationship (Hansman, 2002).

As a more naturally occurring and fluid process, informal mentoring seeks to provide

emotional support and often grows out of the discovery of mutual interests between

mentor and mentee (Kram & Isabella, 1985). For example, as a long-term faculty

member, I have engaged in, as well as witnessed, the development of emotionally

supportive mentoring relationships between faculty and upper-class students—in addition

to those formal mentoring relationships established between students and mentors as

assigned among our professional staff. Moreover, I suggest that there is an implicit

understanding at Private University—evident from the institution's initial mentorship

training activities and from our collective perspective regarding our students' academic

and personal growth—that each student is an individual who is capable, resourceful, and

creative. As educators and mentors, our role is to assist each student in utilizing her/his

own capabilities throughout their years of undergraduate education.

Based on my conclusion that informal mentorship practices are desirable and

effective to supporting the undergraduate experience within official or formally

sanctioned institutional programs, I recommend that we (administrators, faculty, and

mentorship leaders) need to make visible the informal system of mentorship that has

given rise to the official model at Private University. Further, I recommend that we assess

the results of our efforts as a mentorship-focused institution going forward and, over time, identify next steps in order to grow and sustain our evolving culture of mentorship.

As a final recommendation, I submit that—like other established higher education programs—the culture of mentorship initiative should include a more precise and vetted mission statement. Specifically, it should directly state that the institution's aims include plans to better incorporate support of the formal initiative in terms of advancing training in the area of mentorship skills for both mentors and mentees. In turn, the mission statement should clarify the institution's goal to better educate the surrounding community about the purpose of the mentorship initiative and to deepen community members' understandings about the practice of mentorship as it serves this particular campus.

**Issue Three: Faculty Orientation to Mentorship—Need to Address Competing Roles and Obligations**

Faculty at Private University communicated feeling torn between their obligations to fulfill teaching and research expectations and their obligations to meet their commitments to their mentees specific to time and emotional expenditure. Other, external factors also played into the issue of time. For example, due to the increasingly competitive marketplace mentality that has infiltrated the realm of contemporary higher education, there is increasing demand for tuition dollars and student bodies to fill classrooms. As a result, faculty are faced with juggling new/additional demands on their time (e.g., taking on extra classes, serving in additional administrative roles, producing reports to meet greater documentation requirements, etc.). Similarly, administrators are

increasingly challenged in managing the college/university enterprise. I suggest that all of these forces require administrators and faculty to examine their values and professional commitment to higher education as they navigate these new challenges in order to maintain some sense of equilibrium. As we move forward, I suggest that incentives such as course release time as well as various forms of compensations (e.g., summer salaries, travel funding, etc.) be considered to attract faculty to the mentor role. As this study's mentors demonstrated their commitment to the role, they were simultaneously confronted with challenges related to the time and energy needed to "work" that role with their mentees. On this fundamental point, I concluded that the addition of the role of mentor to their already established teaching and research duties—further complicated by expanding responsibilities attendant to current higher education structures—represented both a blessing and a curse to them. Using these figurative terms, the "curse" represents the added stressors that accompany the significant responsibilities of the mentor role. The "blessing" of mentorship is situated in the fundamental finding (as previously stated in Chapters IV and V) that these mentors considered mentorship valuable to both students and themselves. As such, while they served as invested and caring contributors to a positive and meaningful undergraduate experience (academically and personally) for their mentees, they also gained a deep sense of personal fulfillment throughout the process.

I recommend that serious consideration must be given as to how faculty can effectively incorporate the role of mentor into their work responsibilities in order for them to lead balanced lives and to preserve the "joy" currently associated with

mentorship as expressed by study participants. Such consideration should incorporate the following points: (a) how to communicate and assess the various roles faculty are expected to perform, apart from the role of mentor; (b) how administration can demonstrate concrete support relative to providing ongoing training and open channels of communication, critical to promoting a sustainable and humanistic version of mentorship; and (c) how to validate and support the amount of time necessary to effecting a meaningful mentoring relationship for mentors and mentees alike. Specific to the primary issue of time, I suggest that there are a number of ways this concern might be addressed. For example, given the importance of this program, selected personnel could be exclusively assigned the role of mentor. To clarify, similar to some colleges and universities that have positions dedicated to advising, Private University could give consideration to alleviating time constraints experienced by faculty in this way. While this recommendation would require deeper exploration regarding its viability, I suggest that it is a worthwhile proposition. Another possibility could be to provide faculty mentors with course release time to allow them more opportunity to meet one-on-one with their mentees. In addition, perhaps the hours we currently dedicate to office hours for students could be distributed over a larger scope of time in order to allow evening office hours for mentorship. While this suggestion could be problematic for some faculty it is worthwhile noting that many classes are scheduled in the evening and that the contemporary university work day is not structured according to the traditional nine-to-five format.

As a more abstract constraint impacting the mentor's commitment and effectiveness, the expenditure of emotional energy emerged as a concern for several of the study participants as they grew increasingly aware of their own heightened subjectivities and vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities were rooted in the mentor's care and concern for the mentee—as a student and as a particular individual--as well as in the mentor's own human experience of him/herself. I suggest that this kind of investment of emotional energy can impact the mentor psychically and physically. Therefore, I recommend that training sessions for mentors incorporate discussions of this aspect of the role, providing a forum in which they can share experiences and coping strategies.

**Issue Four: A Corporatization and Management Orientation Versus a Humanization and Leadership Ideal—Need for Clarification and Consensus**

This last issue involved the recognition of two, sometimes competing, approaches to Private University's mission to establish a culture of mentorship. Throughout the study, I was particularly interested in exploring how closely the lived experience of participating mentors and mentees seemed to match the ways in which the institution was describing the experience in official documents. I have concluded that mixed messages permeated the landscape during the course of this project. On the one hand, those who reported their experiences revealed a humanistic approach (on the part of both parties) to being in the relationship. In other words, participants communicated the benefits of emotional support (mentees) and the quality of psychosocial development (mentees and mentors alike) that characterize a meaningful comfort level across their communications and interactions—much like the experience of friendship—even in their relatively short

time together. Additionally, workshops and training sessions tended to incorporate and foster a humanistic ideal of mentorship. In contrast, the documents that predated the official implementation of the culture of mentorship and the conversations that were referenced in my researcher field notes—as well as in my memory—concerning how to promote this initiative seemed to endorse the corporate model of mentorship. In fact, most of the documents that I reviewed were generated through the university's Communication Office, housed within the Advancement Department that manages public relations for various programs and initiatives. Typically, this function of the university is charged with the management of such undertakings through the use of established business models. Consequently, as revealed in the earlier documents, it appeared that the intent of the culture of mentorship initiative was skewed in the direction of job preparation. Hence, the competing tensions between a corporate worldview of mentorship and a humanistic ideal.

While it is certainly acceptable to incorporate students' career interests and aspirations within a more existential and developmental approach to mentoring practices, I suggest that it is more novel and altruistic to have our primary motive for establishing a culture of mentorship in support of a humanistic stance. Stated another way, if the university's mission is to establish its identity as a particular "brand" within higher education, would it not be more singularly attractive to stand out as an institutional community uniquely focused on the development and well-being of its undergraduates as individuals, citizens, and future workers? So harkening back to this dissertation's preface, I wish to insert here my critical stance against higher education as it has been

reconfigured within the neoliberal cultural model of education. That is, education (K12-college) has become corporatized—with issues of admission, retention, and branding taking on business-oriented connotations. In this scenario, budgets are more geared toward selling and advertising (new rec centers, student centers, resort-like amenities, etc.), and less toward funding faculty and academic resources. I submit that this approach disregards the developmental needs of young college students and forecloses on any possibilities of achieving the domain of subjectification and the agency of self-authorship. Simply stated, we are trading in developmentally driven student identity building for robotically driven "future worker" identities before students have the chance to more fully grow intellectually and emotionally. On this view, how can they authentically be ready to participate and contribute to the world of work?

In order to ease this tension between the two approaches at Private University, I strongly recommend—as stated earlier—that we bring those representing the various university functions together to talk through what the university's vision is or should be as we continue to advance our mentorship project. As faculty, administrator, and initiative leader who has participated in numerous meetings and planning sessions, I can attest to a collective aversion to meet in terms of fully confronting this issue. Instead, I submit that we should recognize the necessity of taking the time to commit to face-to-face meetings in order to complete the creative process of solidifying our vision and mission. While holding on to my idealistic vision of a culture of mentorship, I am aware that this will take much time and effort and may never happen.

In order for faculty, staff, and administrators to come close to reaching and maintaining a meeting of the minds, I submit that it is essential that academic leadership (associated with the humanistic ideal of mentorship) and advancement and admission officials (associated with management of the university's "corporate" or financial interests) come to the same table to ensure consistent messaging and authentic practice. As reflected in my field note documentation, I have repeatedly expressed my concerns regarding inconsistent and competing messages/representations of the university's vision and intentions for establishing a culture of mentorship. In particular, based on findings from field notes and document analysis, I have concluded that clear and consistent messaging—covering a variety of media formats as well as through informal communications across the campus community—is an issue that must be addressed at the highest levels. Essentially, I recommend that this core group of leaders, personifying the academic and business functions within the institution, unify their efforts and think systemically to ensure that all functions link effectively in order to promote Private University's vision, as well as support the training and education so critical to sustaining the mentorship program itself. In a similar light, and once this kind of unity is achieved across the university community, I recommend that marketing materials—particularly the website—be cautiously and judiciously produced, especially in terms of using language that can influence. In other words, it is one thing to promote an institution and its programs with integrity in the use of language, and it is another to use language intended to "seduce" the audience to believe or buy the message uncritically. I am suggesting that administrators pay more attention to this issue and commit to ensuring that those who are

actually creating and institutionalizing programs are also involved in creating and signing off on program descriptions. We should exercise caution and discretion in the use of marketing materials so as to ensure that the language or message does not override the educational mission in terms of "do-ability" and credibility.

From the vantage point of issues, challenges, and recommendations specific to Private University's mission to establish a culture of mentorship for their undergraduate students, I next address recommendations for future research in the area of mentorship.

## Recommendations for Future Research

As evident from this study, my recommendations for future research encompass a decidedly humanistic orientation and process. As such, I posit that findings and insights yielded by this research approach might serve to fill an apparent gap within the existing body of research on mentorship; meaning, studies that tend to emphasize career preparation over the development of the student's sense of self as an individual (subjectification), capacity for self-authorship, and the possibilities of internalizing transformative learning experiences that could contribute to expanding these more intrinsic qualities and capacities. Following are my three recommendations pertaining to future mentorship research at Private University and potentially beyond.

### Recommendation 1

With the understanding that the project of embedding a culture of mentorship is an institutional mission for a college or university, I submit that consideration should be given to the quality of the mentoring relationship over time. In other words, this research represents an initial study of the formal implementation of a new phenomenon at Private

University; in a sense, a "first" in terms of the research process and the initiative itself.

As a result of this work, I have become increasingly aware that more, ongoing studies of

Private University's mentorship program need to be conducted as the initiative grows and

continues. Beyond this institution, I recommend that longitudinal studies should be

designed around new and different models of mentorship in order to establish them as

credible as well as to be able to draw deeper findings from them over time. Moreover, I

suggest that longitudinal studies should target a variety of diverse student populations

with the aim of further exploring the impacts of intersectionality on mentoring practices

and the participants' experiences. On this point, and as stated earlier, Private University

cannot be described as having a diverse population at this time, but is taking steps to

move forward in this direction. Finally, given that the issue of gender differences arose

during the course of several interviews for this study, a closer look at cross-gender

mentoring relationships could yield important insights as well.

**Recommendation 2**

Based on this study's findings, mentorship is a reciprocal relationship between

two individuals mutually invested in a process predicated on interaction grounded in trust

and respect. Because most of the existing research focuses on outcomes related to the

mentee, I recommend that future studies be conducted to examine the positive outcomes

that mentoring practices provide faculty serving as mentors. An understanding of faculty

and institutional benefits could have an impact on faculty involvement and, thus, serve to

strengthen university policies that support mentoring by addressing workload and time

constraints. Perhaps research devoted to exploring what motivates faculty and student

participation in formal mentorship programs would yield important insights to institutions

committed to implementing new programs or improving programs already in place.

**Recommendation 3**

Throughout the early stage of implementation of the culture of mentorship at

Private University, coinciding with this study, faculty and staff expressed interest in

participating in peer to peer mentorship. As a peripheral issue, the study of which could

yield important insights, I posit that faculty peer-mentoring makes sense on several

levels. First, it supports the concept of a culture of mentorship inclusive of the university

community as a whole. In addition, it provides a natural and forgiving channel for

developing confidence and experience in the best practice behaviors recognized in

effective mentorship. Therefore, I recommend that more research be conducted in the

area of faculty peer to peer mentorship for the purpose of more humanistically integrating

the roles of educator and mentor among the participants themselves; thereby,

experiencing mutually shared insights and opportunities for growth.

**Concluding Comments**

In this dissertation's Preface, I outlined the recent history that preceded Private

University's adoption of mentorship as a distinguishing characteristic of campus culture

and the university's current strategic plans. In Chapter I, I described the broader context

within which Private University is currently operating to formally advance its culture of

mentorship initiative. That context, or setting, can be characterized as a highly

competitive environment in which undergraduate students who are academically-oriented

strive to achieve, but who—at the same time—possibly risk losing focus on developing

other human capacities along with their connections to the social context in which they live as undergraduates (Sullivan, 2016). While I maintain that the concept of mentorship continues to be ambiguous and challenging, sometimes appearing to be "overdone," the sheer amount of energy that administrators, faculty, and staff at Private University have devoted to understanding the benefits of mentorship—beyond academic achievement and retention—signal something deeper to be gained from an embedded culture of mentorship than that which the majority of formal and informal programs are currently addressing (e.g., career development).

Sullivan (2016) addressed the notion that education of the whole person (i.e., the student as a multifaceted individual) might counter the impact of the Spellings Commission Report of 2005 that articulated the purpose of higher education as being to upgrade the workforce. Applying the term "apprenticeship" as an analogy to describe three primary areas that should underpin the design of an undergraduate education, Sullivan (2016) offered, "The key point of the analogy is that genuine learning of a formative kind is, like apprenticeship, the initiation of a beginner into a domain of knowledge, skill, and comportment" (p. 42). Expanding on this statement, the first of the three apprenticeships emphasizes the academic development (knowledge) of the student. However, Sullivan (2016) warned that to only focus on this piece is to run the risk of capturing the passion of those who are academically competitive and lose the attention of those less academically driven. The second apprenticeship is concerned with developing life and social skills intended to help the undergraduate student effectively transition into adulthood, typically the domain of the student development function on college and

university campuses. Sullivan (2016) described the third apprenticeship as the "connective tissue" (p. 45) that is frequently missing in the college experience. He described this linkage as being about the student's development of purpose for her/himself that she/he then expresses in bearing and behavior (comportment), which is also inclusive of the other two areas of apprenticeship. I suggest that this third apprenticeship encompasses the theoretical frameworks that guided this study: (a) subjectification, the student's development of a deeper understanding of self as a particular individual; (b) self-authorship, the student's development as an independent thinker, chooser, and actor; and (c) transformational learning experiences, based on the development of the student's capacity to reflect on prior, formative assumptions and worldviews and alter or transform such assumptions and views relative to new and expanded insights. Therefore, I see this third apprenticeship as the domain of mentorship based on humanistic ideals.

The context of our national debate around the value and purpose of a liberal arts degree (viewed as unnecessary and impractical based on the current neoliberal worldview) lacks the focus to connect the instrumental purpose for a college degree to the value of exploring oneself as a particular individual who is, necessarily, in relationship with others in the world. Ultimately, I see the humanistic contexts of mentorship providing the connective tissue of Sullivan's (2016) third apprenticeship. While research has indicated the usefulness of mentors in guiding students toward careers and serving as role models in this light, we have quite possibly overlooked the most significant purpose that the mentoring relationship holds for human development. In other words, in

attaching its value to academic achievement, career development, and job search, we have spent far less time and energy recognizing the need for the third apprenticeship that speaks to the student's sense of life purpose (beyond one's career plans).

I am satisfied that I have explored mentorship within the context of an academic community sorting out how to organize itself in terms of its values and mission as they serve the campus community; further, sorting out how to act on this mission to establish a culture of mentorship as an authentic ideal while communicating this purpose on multiple levels. Moreover, in terms of both scholarly passion as a researcher and the timing of the initiative's formal implementation, it seemed to be a practical choice to focus on this initiative as my dissertation project. As faculty and project leader, I determined that it was important to conduct such a study during this early stage of program implementation in order to guide and direct next steps and future intentions. Conducting this study also benefitted my ability to make recommendations and alterations to other internal functions around education and training designed to ensure that we, as invested members of Private University, were learning together and creating what we said we wanted.

During my preliminary research processes, I was overwhelmed with the number of studies that addressed certain aspects of mentorship. As noted in Chapter II's Review of the Literature, the topic of mentorship became more popular toward the last decades of the 20th century and spiked during the first two decades of this century. Thus, based on the existing body of research, it could easily be concluded that the value and need for mentorship is self-evident. However, as I sorted through the range of studies that involved mentorship, the contexts within which the relationship was made available and

the form it took varied greatly. Now, as opposed to earlier concerns about tapping into a

topic that may appear to have been overdone, I am convinced that I have discovered for

myself another significant reason why so much interest in mentorship continues to exist;

in my view, that reason stemming from the relational void that we (students and

educators alike) experience in almost every facet of contemporary educational practice.

Moreover, in an age of high technology use across all sectors in modern cultures, we

cannot afford to ignore the need for human connection on a relational level in the

physical world in which we live, learn, and work. I submit that without real-world human

connection, it is impossible to truly experience education. Gergen (2009) skillfully made

this point by stating,

> We marvel at the idea of the lone genius, the Galileo, Newton or Einstein, all symbolically embodied in Rodin's classic pose of The Thinker. We spend long hours developing curricula to help students "think for themselves." . . . We also hold that thinking takes place prior to, and separate from speaking or writing . . . the individual mind is primary; relations are secondary and optional. In this tradition, we draw a clear distinction between the knowing teacher and the ignorant pupil; we believe the purpose of education is to fill the minds of individual students; and we presume that a knowing mind is good preparation for a successful future. All of these presumptions derive from the tradition of bounded beings—separate and independent minds. But, why should we suppose that knowledge is an individual possession, or that education is about "filling" or "fashioning minds?" (p. 241)

According to Gergen (2009), we need to think about education differently. Rather than

focusing on developing the individual for a concrete purpose, which lends itself to

objectification on many levels, we should expand our field to see all knowledge and the

acts of engaging knowledge as a communal experience. What takes place in the most

meaningful educational experiences is shared. Describing relationship as the larger view

of developing the whole person, Gergen (2009) proposed that "the primary aim of education is to enhance the potentials for participating in relational processes—from local to global" (p. 243). Within this relational/socialization context, I yet maintain its connection to the notion of subjectification because the individual must be aware of the agentic force of her/his own existence as it both impacts and is impacted by others. Stated another way, individual self-consciousness is necessary to other-consciousness (and vice versa) in order to step deeper into the potential of relational connections, along with the knowledge and experiences to be gained from them.

In the end, I see the significance of this study in a new light. In Chapter I, I stated my assertion that the mentorship initiative is an important step at Private University—a response to the instrumental, non-relational focus of 21st century educational policies and practices that dominate the higher education scene today. In fact, I feel more certain about that position now than I did preceding the study. I continue to hold to the belief that Private University's culture of mentorship mission, along with any other avenues we might imagine to strengthen the relational connection between students and educators, is critical to the development of our students as more fully competent and responsible human beings. In fact, I would go on to say that the mentorship initiative is equally important to the ongoing development of educators. Moreover, as our institutions become more entrenched in technological innovation and marketplace concerns, we must always revisit and consider the ultimate and higher purposes of education—for the good of our human condition. In turn, from the standpoint of critical pedagogy, it is incumbent upon us--as citizens, educators and social justice advocates—to challenge neo-liberal ideology

from the seemingly more mundane issues (e.g., a university program) to challenges that threaten democratic educational processes (e.g., immigration and student debt, racial division, etc.). On this point, I submit that the educational community at large needs to pursue and expand our thinking about research specific to the humanistic aims of mentorship; how they might inform potential benefits for students and society as a whole. Using the theoretical lenses of subjectification, self-authorship, and transformative learning as the frameworks of this study, I have maintained that the actual internalization and practices of these concepts can significantly contribute to a humanistic ideal of mentorship. In concluding this work, my belief in the possibilities that these concepts can be incorporated in a meaningful college experience been cautiously affirmed.

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262

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