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# The Impact of Mentoring Relationships on Leadership Development

Josiah Hatfield  
*Taylor University*

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THE IMPACT OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS  
ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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A thesis

Presented to

The School of Graduate Studies

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

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by

Josiah Hatfield

May 2012

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**Higher Education and Student Development  
Taylor University  
Upland, Indiana**

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MASTER'S THESIS

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Josiah David Hatfield

entitled

The Impact of Mentoring Relationships on Leadership Development

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree  
in Higher Education and Student Development

May 2012

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Herrmann, Ph.D.      Date  
Thesis Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Scott Gaier, Ph.D.      Date  
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Scott Moeschberger, Ph.D.      Date  
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Herrmann, Ph.D.      Date  
Director, M.A. in Higher Education and Student Development

### Abstract

A detailed understanding of the various impacts on students' leadership development is needed to best inform how to create environments conducive to growth in this area. This research examines the impact of mentoring-oriented relationships on the formation of student leaders. The qualitative research gathers responses of nine student leaders who have exhibited excellent work in their roles and teases out the ways in which mentoring relationships impacted their growth as leaders and, in turn, their approach to leadership. A detailed description of these relationships is presented alongside characteristics of the mentors themselves.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

A quick survey of society provides many examples of failed leadership. There is a clear need for individuals who not only know their profession well, but who are also able to lead those around them. The routine stories of dishonest financial executives or church leaders caught in moral letdowns highlight the need for leaders in every corner of society. In many ways, this has been the primary goal of higher education for hundreds of years (Rudolph, 1990). Not only are the college years meant to educate students in a specific field, but they also should prepare students to work well among their peers and make decisions that better society. The specific need for leadership has garnered a lot of attention recently and the term itself has become convoluted in its widespread use. Higher education has certainly spent a lot of time focusing on the issue as there are a number of leadership models that have been created and almost every university has some sort of leadership center. Roberts (2007) highlights a few of these models that range from servant leadership to relational leadership. The variety and quantity of these models only emphasize the interest of numerous parties in the development of students as leaders. With such a need for leaders from the societal standpoint and higher education having an interest in meeting that need, the formation of student leaders becomes an important task.

As the formation of student leaders is part of the role of college educators, an understanding of students is central for those working in higher education. Entering

students are at a pivotal time in their lives. All students have a unique background that has helped to form them into the people they are. However, the college experience has the potential to add to and modify the influences that affect the identity of students. Chickering's (1969) theory of identity development proposes that students develop in areas such as interpersonal relationships or becoming more autonomous and eventually more interdependent. The growing sense of identity in college students is marked by a better understanding of self and the discovery of their strengths. In order for this to happen successfully, Parks (2000) suggests that students need a support system comprised of both peers and adults to encourage and confirm them in their various pursuits. Her ideas build from the work of Fowler (2000), who suggests that a student's environment and community factors heavily into the student's ability to sense a vocation or calling. A positive environment and community allows many students to function in roles that may be unfamiliar to them while maintaining a sense of assurance and support, encouraging them to carry on and do their job well.

One of the ways in which these support systems are created is through mentoring relationships. A number of studies have been conducted measuring the effectiveness and practice of mentoring relationships in various contexts (Crisp & Cruz, 2008). For college students, mentoring programs have had both academic and psychosocial benefits for the mentee (Terrion & Leonard, 2007). Much of the research conducted thus far investigates the success of specific mentoring programs, comparing students' progress before, during, and after the program or comparing students involved in the program against those not in the program (Cruz, 2008; Shotton, Oosahwe, & Cintrón, 2007). Whether or not a student has a formal mentor, many of the students who demonstrate leadership skills have people

who serve informally as mentors and who provide encouragement and challenge (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992).

If the formation of leaders is central to the role of higher education, universities should be doing everything within their power to enable their students to feel support and comfort in their ability to lead. While mentoring relationships are capable of creating space for students to grow in their leadership abilities, much attention should be paid to both the mentoring relationships and how they form student leaders. Thus, research in the area of how mentoring relationships have helped students in leadership positions progress to their current state is necessary. The higher education professional will benefit from this research by being better equipped to assist their students in finding appropriate mentors that will aid in developing them into leaders. This knowledge and understanding on the professional's part will likewise benefit students by providing a greater quantity and quality of mentors by informing the professional on how to mentor well in addition to enabling others to mentor. This research will thus investigate the nature and nuances of mentoring relationships experienced by those students who have proved themselves in leadership to see how they are best supported and encouraged. As the need for leaders is important and mentoring relationships help to form these student leaders, the research question, with subsequent follow-up questions, that will guide this investigation are:

- What is the impact of mentoring relationships on student leaders?
- What characteristics of mentoring relationships mark them as beneficial in the formation of student leaders?

## **Chapter 2**

### Literature Review

#### **History of Student Leaders**

From their inception, American universities have produced societal leaders (Rudolph, 1990). Although the type of leaders desired and the methods by which this is accomplished have changed drastically over the years, the general goal has remained the same. While early universities were places for those highly motivated to lead their societies, higher education has now become a standard step for many young adults who are simply looking to get an education to support themselves. As college student enrollment increases (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011), the expectation of the college student is not as lofty as it once was. Attending college no longer assumes that every graduate will be a significant changer of society, yet the mission and goal of many universities remains committed to fostering environments that develop leadership abilities in many of their students. Part of this mission is done within the universities by the creation of systems that necessitate student leadership. As students emerge as leaders within their universities, they also emerge as potential leaders in the broader society. In looking at college campuses, a question arises: What are the distinguishing factors contributing to the formation of these student leaders? One proposed factor in leadership development is that of mentoring within higher education. As a subject of study, mentoring within higher education is a topic that is large in its breadth. Adequate

attention and overview is necessary to cover this subject, which is independent from the broader scope of leadership. Even still, the subject of leadership requires an in depth analysis, as well.

### **Mentoring Relationships**

While mentoring is certainly not a new idea, its popularity has revived in recent years in higher education environments and has been implemented in a variety of contexts (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). As the process of mentoring can have differing meanings for a number of individuals, a couple of definitions explain what is meant by mentoring in this study. Traditionally, mentoring has been defined as:

A situation in which a more experienced member of an organization maintains a relationship with a less experienced, often new member to the organization and provides information, support, and guidance so as to enhance the less experienced member's chances of success in the organization and beyond. (Campbell & Campbell, 1997, p. 727)

This definition assumes a hierarchical approach to the mentor/mentee relationship. The mentors in higher education settings might be professors, residence directors, or other staff members from the campus, all of whom would have clear professional and social experience surpassing the mentee.

An alternative to this type of mentoring is the peer mentor. Peer mentoring can be defined as a:

helping relationship in which two individuals of similar age and/or experience come together, either informally or through formal mentoring schemes, in the pursuit of fulfilling some combination of functions that are career-related (e.g.,

information sharing, career strategizing) and psychosocial (e.g., confirmation, emotional support, personal feedback, friendship). (Terrion & Leonard, 2007, p. 150)

Examples of these types of relationships include fellow classmates, upperclassmen (for underclassmen), or graduate students. While the mentor in peer mentoring relationships typically holds a higher level of experience than the mentee, they are usually more approachable and easier to relate to due to their commonalities with the mentee (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

While there are distinctions to be made between hierarchical mentors and peer mentors, there are also differences in formal and informal mentoring relationships. Formal mentoring relationships are “managed and sanctioned by the organization” (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992, p. 620) while informal relationships are “not managed, structured, nor formally recognized by the organization” and are more impromptu than their counterpart. Generally speaking the difference in these relationships is in how they were formed.

### **Risks and Benefits of Mentoring**

Although the benefits of mentoring relationships have been found to outweigh those of the risks, the risks are noteworthy. First, mentoring relationships have the potential to become a crutch for the student. As Colvin and Ashman (2010) report, students have the capacity to rely too heavily on their mentor, not allowing the students to develop the autonomous behaviors they need to function. Another risk lies with the mentor and occurs when that individual takes on too much responsibility and cannot give the mentee the time needed for a productive mentoring relationship. A supporting

relationship that does not last can be detrimental to a student. Lastly, a risk for both the mentor and mentee is that of putting oneself “‘out there’ and risking rejection” (Colvin & Ashman, p. 129). As in all relationships, a level of risk is required when entering into an interpersonal action.

The benefits of mentoring are broken down primarily into two groups. The first advantage of having a mentor is academic in nature. The research done by Campbell and Campbell (1997) report those students who had a faculty mentor achieved higher overall grade-point averages when compared to students who did not have a mentor. Another study done by Fox, Stevenson, Connelly, Duff, and Dunlop (2010) showed that the mentees who participated in a peer-mentor program “‘achieved higher deep, strategic and surface apathetic scores after their involvement” (p. 150). Compared to students not engaged in the peer-mentor program, the mentees in this study scored significantly higher not only on grades but also in *how* they were studying, scoring higher in “‘deep and strategic” methods of studying. The deep methods of studying are characterized by intentionally learning the material of the course and the strategic methods are focused heavily on receiving the highest grade one can (Fox et al., 2010). Collectively, the effects of mentors have been positive when taking academic performance into account.

The second major benefit of mentoring for the student mentee is the psychosocial encouragement received. Stress is listed often as one of the major reasons for student attrition, yet Terrion and Leonard (2010) point out that a peer mentor “‘can serve as one source of support to reduce the stress experienced by a younger and less experienced student” (p. 156) which will, in turn, reduce the attrition rate of universities. The research of Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintrón (2007) listed three ways that peer mentors

helped their mentees: “connecting students to the community, providing support, and providing guidance” (p. 94). The roles a mentor plays for the mentee are many and cover a broad spectrum of the mentee’s needs.

### **Peer Mentors**

The introduction of peer mentors into the literature surrounding mentorship is a recent development. Even though peer mentors are becoming increasingly involved in academic assistance compared to faculty/student mentor relationships, the peer mentors’ strongest ability lies within their capacity to show psychosocial support. This support is characterized by “confirmation, emotional support, personal feedback, and friendship” (Terrion & Leonard, 2007, p. 150). Unlike the more traditional, hierarchical approach to mentoring, peer mentoring involves a two way exchange of encouragement (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

The research actually found students quite willing to participate in programs where they get to play the role of mentor. For one school, the primary reason for volunteering to become a peer supporter was the wish to help out their peers (Muldoon, 2008). Other reasons these students participated included: “to meet people, to get more involved, to give something back to the university and to develop skills and personal attributes such as mentoring skills, communication skills, confidence levels and leadership skills” (Muldoon, 2008, p. 210). While not all of these are completely selfless, they do indicate that students are certainly willing to help others develop, especially when it also adds to their own skill set. Another study found that students who played the role of mentor found themselves in multiple roles of mentorship ranging from teaching, facilitating, co-constructing, observing, and learning (Kafai, Desai, Pepler, Chiu, &

Moya, 2008). This indicates that the mentor not only increases their own skills as a mentor and communicator, but they also understand a particular subject matter to a greater degree. One student from this study reflected that “I think it changed from being thought of as being a tutor/teacher and turned into something more like a supporter/companion” (Kafai et al., 2008, p. 201). The rising popularity of peer mentorship stems from the many benefits for both the mentor and the mentee.

### **Communities of Mentors**

Peer mentoring, at its most organic and informal, suggests a community of peers with varying experiences of both type and depth where students can join together in their development. Parks (2000) argues that a student needs more than a single mentor in order to allow ideas and possibilities to take hold; a mentoring community is needed. She continued by stating that these communities include a network of belonging, room for large questions, encounters with otherness, and access to the realization of dreams. Other research stated that this type of mentoring best occurs when there is “a commitment to attend; confidentiality; rapport between circle members; and voluntary attendance” (Darwin & Palmer, 2009, p. 134). As groups are formed, students learn alongside each other in an atmosphere of trust and close relationships. Some studies push beyond the peer mentoring model, moving to the idea where relationships develop naturally through normal connections and there is a collaborative spirit that is present amongst peers (Angelique & Taylor, 2002).

### **Characteristics of Mentors**

There are a number of characteristics that are important for the mentor to possess in order to be a benefit to the mentee. A study conducted by Terrion and Leonard (2007)

found good mentors to have the following eight qualities: “communication skills; supportiveness; trustworthiness; interdependent attitude to mentoring, mentee, and program staff; empathy; personality match with mentee; enthusiasm; and flexibility” (p. 156). Interestingly, and specifically for the peer mentor, absent from the list is the need for a large knowledge base. For the mentor, it is primarily important that “they discover that mentoring is not wholly about the exchange of knowledge, skills or advice but that it is often an exploratory process which needs time” (Garvey & Alred, 2000, p. 124). Rather than transferring information to accomplish tasks, the mentor should be more concerned with helping the mentee use the methods of understanding, exploring, and taking action (Garvey & Alred, 2000). This should relieve worries the mentor may have concerning their knowledge base, yet it also requires the mentor to be more invested and patient with the mentee when going through this process.

### **Developing Student Leaders**

Moving from mentoring relationships to a discussion of student leaders allows exploration of defining student leaders and their motivations for leading play into the scope of this study. In Astin’s (1984) student involvement theory, he proposed that students excel when they were more involved in their campuses, including their academics, living environment, places of work, and student roles on campus. It is assumed that the desire is for students to be involved in their campuses through varying outlets such as student leadership roles. Encouraging students to get involved in their campuses can be a complicated endeavor as students have varying reasons for participating in an assortment of roles. According to a study on students’ motivation to involve themselves in university governance roles, reasons included personal

development, advocacy, systems positioning, and compliance (Lizzio & Wilson, 2009). As these reasons suggest, the motivations students have for involving themselves in leadership roles can vary between an intrinsic motivation to see themselves grow and develop to an extrinsic force of advocating on the behalf of those around them. Another psychological study identified that reasons to lead could include everything from personality to values to past leadership experience (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). As the variations are rather diverse, attributing student leaders' motivations to a single cause cannot be done. Rather, when contemplating the effect one factor may have on a student's desire and ability to lead, it should be considered within the context of other possible factors.

Reasons for pursuing leadership positions can be complex, yet some researchers have attempted to put the leadership identity development process into groupings or stages. These stages include: awareness, exploration/engagement, leader identified, leadership differentiated, generativity, and integration/synthesis (Komives, Longbeam, Owen, & Mainella, 2006). Researchers suggest that developing students into leaders is a completely teachable task (Parks, 2005). This theory actively works against the idea that some students are inherently meant to be leaders. A look back at the history of leadership perceptions will help to clarify what is meant by the term leadership.

### **History of Leadership**

There have been a number of leadership theories throughout history, many with differing or opposing ideas on the substance of a leader. Throughout time, general trends characterize how the general public assumed leaders emerged. Roberts (2007) outlines a few of the theories from the past. One of the oldest theories proposes a great man

approach including a Darwinian, survival-of-the-fittest model in which leaders are born. This is followed by a traits theory that emphasizes that great leaders are identifiable by their unique and special characteristics. Moving into the twentieth century, a more proactive approach believed in a behavioral theory, one that could be learned. This is followed by a situational theory, allowing for recognition that a specific situation requires specific leadership. After the situational theory gained momentum, additional ideas brought forth the influence theory, recognizing leadership as a social exchange process. This naturally flowed into a reciprocal theory that values the importance of relationships. Lastly, a chaos theory allows for complex situations in which leaders are aware of the complexities of the world (Roberts, 2007).

### **Model of Leadership for this Study**

This research uses a model of leadership that falls within the reciprocal theory. Researchers at the Higher Education Research Institute (1996) created the Social Change Model (SCM), which seeks to create positive change within the society in which the leader functions. In this model, leadership is recognized as a process, not necessarily a position, and incorporates collaboration through leadership that is accessible to all people. It focuses on the values of the individual, the group, and society, within which one finds the 7 C's of the model. The individual values are consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment. The group values are common purpose, collaboration, and controversy with civility. Finally, the societal values consist of citizenship.

Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007) detail the Relational Leadership Model (RLM). This model is born out of the SCM and, as opposed to many of the previous theories, is referred to as a model instead of a theory. In defining leadership as “a

relational and ethical process of people together attempting to accomplish positive change” (Komives et al., p. 74), this model also sees all participants as being a part of the leadership process that is centered on purpose. Around this purpose are the elements of the inclusion of people, the empowering of those involved, and being ethical. The RLM requires those participating to have a level of self-knowledge before they can work with others, emphasizing the need for a “knowing-being-doing” (Komives et al., p. 76) that recognizes a holistic view of leadership.

### **Conclusion**

Thus far, ample amount of research has gone into the idea of mentoring relationships (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). The benefits, types, and characteristics of healthy and productive mentoring relationships have been studied extensively. While the benefits include many psychosocial areas, the direct connection to leadership positions still allows room for study. Leadership development, another area of interest amongst researches, also has a number of voices contributing. As higher education continues to develop student leaders, it is an important task for higher education professionals to understand the process of how student leaders are formed and investigate for any basis in previous mentoring relationships.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

The present study employed a grounded theory research method for investigating the impact of mentoring on underclassmen and how it relates to the development of future student leaders. Because the desired outcome included a variety of perspectives and experiences, an interview method was utilized. Creswell (2008) defined grounded theory as “a systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or an interaction about a substantive topic” (p. 432). The process by which students develop into leaders through the support of mentoring relationships is a complex one, and the use of a grounded theory design gave adequate attention to this multifaceted progression. Within the grounded theory approach, a systematic design helped to categorize the responses from the interviews. The systematic design calls for open, axial, and selective coding, leading to the creation of a theory that is wholly reliant on the responses of the interviews.

Ultimately, the goal of these interviews was to answer the questions: What is the impact of mentoring relationships on student leaders, and what characteristics of mentoring relationships mark them as beneficial in the formation of student leaders?

### **Participants**

Participants in this project came from a small, faith-based, liberal arts university situated in the Midwest. The participants for this study were juniors and seniors currently

in positions requiring an academic leadership class prerequisite that is offered at this particular institution. Though other students exemplified leadership attributes outside of these positions, by virtue of being selected for the course, it can be assumed that the participating students were recognized for exhibiting basic leadership abilities. Student development staff and faculty were then asked to recommend two to three students who had performed particularly well in their roles. Thus, participants chosen for this study showed leadership ability and demonstrated effectiveness in their respective role.

After completing the vetting process, nine participants were selected. Final selections worked to stratify the sample in a manner that best represents the desired demographic qualities including a variety of leadership positions and adequate gender representation.

### **Measures and Instruments**

The researcher designed an interview protocol in a manner that allowed the interviewer to understand the student leaders' underclassman experience through guiding research questions. The questions focused on the various students mentoring relationships by asking for descriptions of the nature and quality of those relationships. A pilot interview was conducted to test the protocol on the appropriateness of the questions in answering the research questions. Modifications were then made to ensure a sound protocol.

### **Procedure**

Interviewees were contacted via their university email accounts, requesting participation in an interview process that asked them to reflect on their leadership experiences. Interviews took place with current student leaders in the 2011-2012

academic year. The interviews lasted 33-65 minutes with an average of 50 minutes. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and transcribed at a later date. These semi-structured interviews took place in a private meeting room and followed the list of questions from the protocol (included in the Appendix). The researcher then asked relevant follow-up questions where appropriate.

### **Data Analysis**

The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed for themes providing a greater context on how mentoring relationships impact the formation of student leaders. General groupings of themes focused on who filled the role of mentor, the beneficial characteristics of those relationships, and the students' perception of their leadership effectiveness and specific strengths of leadership as relating to their mentoring relationships. These themes were originally drawn out in large, general categories, such as a mentor providing support or introducing challenge. Saturation was achieved in order to find a large base of these themes. From this point, more specific themes were drawn out of the larger ones, such as describing ways in which a mentor provided support or introduced challenge. These themes were then checked against the previously mentioned research to consider areas of agreement or disagreement, as well as new areas of interest.

## Chapter 4

### Results

This qualitative research included nine interviews with student leaders in roles such as residence life, students programs, and campus ministries. Questions were directed toward important relationships held by the participants in their early college experiences as well as how they view leadership in their current role. Nine themes were drawn from the interview transcripts that shed light on how mentoring-oriented relationships impact student leadership formation.

A review of the student leader interview transcripts led to the conclusion that although each student is a unique individual and has had an experience specific to himself or herself, there are common themes that, broadly speaking, may be observed throughout all student interviews. Additionally, it is clear that not every relationship or experience that the participants have had offers direct influence on their leadership development. As one student stated:

Yeah, it would be a lie to say that my sister didn't have impact on me but it would also be untrue to say that any of my experiences were solely in relation to her. But yeah, everything has impact. (Jennifer)

To better understand the student participants, a brief overview of the high school and early college experience is detailed, and from there, nine themes relating to the research questions are outlined below. The themes drawn from the participants' responses are

grouped into three different categories, including a description of mentoring-oriented relationships, a description of the mentors themselves, and the participants' perception of leadership as it relates to past relationships.

### **Participant Descriptors**

**High school experience.** When asked about their co-curricular involvement in high school, most participants were either slightly or moderately active students. Activities involved student council, honors activities, sports, youth group, and band. Only one participant cited more than two activities. Many participants compared their level of high school involvement as less than their involvement in college.

When asked about strong relationships that they experienced in high school, many participants stated that their close group of friends was comprised of just one, two, or three other people. Some participants cited a teacher, youth pastor, or coach as influential in their lives. All but one participant cited their family, their parents, or a grandparent as influential people during their high school experience. All three male participants cited a specific older male as someone they referred to as their mentor. Generally speaking, the participants did not cite large groups of friends as their primary support, they did cite their family as important, and the males all had a mentor figure.

### **Freshman and sophomore experience.**

**Positive.** Generally speaking, many of the participants enjoyed their freshman and sophomore college experience as it brought many new relationships and experiences coupled with a feeling of comfort. As one participant stated:

...I loved sophomore year so much because I knew a lot of people. Like I was friends with a lot of people from all different dorms and I was involved with a lot of things. I just, we did a lot. Like, I was just experiencing new things. (William)

Seven of the nine students found their primary community of relationships in their residence halls. Three of the four American ethnic or international students found their greatest level of comfort with peers with similar backgrounds. As Sara said, "...Whenever I would hang out with the MKs [missionary kids] and third culture kids, I could be myself and it was really, um, I could just, I was comfortable there."

**Challenging.** Although every participant described their freshman and sophomore college experience as positive, a few did state that there were elements that were difficult, disregarding any idyllic attitudes toward their first two years. The few issues described varied in content. One American ethnic student was frustrated with a limit put on her identity when she said, "...it was just really frustrating because you're (her professor) just putting me in this box and stuff like that would happen all the time..." (Evangeline). Another student expressed frustration with his wing saying, "...when I came in my freshman year I didn't feel like there was anybody that was more spiritually mature than I so that was a real struggle ... I was just like, 'OK, where is the leadership?'" (Dave).

**A time to process.** Many students saw their freshman and sophomore year as a time to process and ponder themselves and the world around them. Linda said the following in reference to her freshman year, "I think I grew a lot that year of learning just more about whom I am [and] my identity apart from my family but also how my family plays into that." This time was described as formational, a time of self-discovery, and a

time where the participants grew in their faith. Molly described her entry into a faith journey starting with:

...seeing people that I respected more, people that took their faith seriously ... especially peers, it was like the first time I'd really ever seen that level of faith and that level of just like, how they lived their life. Which made me want to, you know, get to know them in hopes that it could help, you know, change me.

Many students saw this as a time to internally process.

Several students also saw this time as a chance to learn and process large external issues. Dave cited many theological conversations with others on his wing, and Alan described the number of books and music albums he would consume and discuss with his peers. Jennifer, who studied abroad her sophomore year and was involved in multiple globally-focused clubs, described her first two years as, "...gigantic in my formation but it wasn't like, 'oh, those were good years.' It was more like, 'hey, the world sucks and what can we do to help it now?'"

### **Themes Drawn from Participants**

**Description of relationships.** The participants described many of their important and influential relationships that they experienced early in their college careers. The breadth of relationships varied greatly and included peers of the same age, older peers, a formal relationship with a faculty or staff member, an informal relationship with a faculty or staff member, a family member, and a group of students. As themes are discussed, the type of relationship will be cited when specific examples are shared. The variety of relationships provides a variety of elements within mentoring that affected the participants. The following themes are descriptions of the relationships

themselves, both what the participant received from the relationship as well as what characteristic the acting mentor demonstrated.

*Support.* One of the primary themes to describe the types of relationships that the participants cited as important were those that were supportive. The following are elements, or subthemes, of this idea of support.

*Affirmation and encouragement.* Many participants felt especially affirmed and encouraged by their close peers and their formal faculty or staff mentor. Brenda felt “affirmed and encouraged for the first time by more than just one person” when referring to the other women on her wing.

*Openness.* Many participants appreciated the openness of their relationships. Many felt like they could be completely honest with their peers and valued that greatly. When relating to older, formal mentors, vulnerability and openness were appreciated when the mentor also exhibited these attributes. In reference to her formal staff mentor, Linda said, “...there’s just a humility and an honesty and just the willingness to share her story, to share her struggles” that opens up lines of communication.

*Care.* This subtheme was one of the most cited attributes of a relationship that the participants valued, ranging from professors to wing mates to formal relationships. Participants appreciated the feeling that their mentors were invested in them. Sara described an older senior that she was close to, “...she really helped me whenever I had something to talk about, I always went to her room and she listened to me.” This subtheme was often characterized by significant time spent together.

*Advice.* The specific advice of a mentor was cited as beneficial. This generally came out of a relationship with an older staff or faculty member or an older peer. Alan

described a piece of advice that he received from an older friend, "...that idea of pursuing wisdom and knowledge I think has stuck with me." One participant recognized the room to process ideas that the mentor provided, and another participant, in debating whether or not to fill a leadership position, said, "But I think meeting with [my mentor] has really helped with that a lot. I think just developing my views on that" (Dave).

*Friendship.* Many participants recognized how much they appreciated the friendships that they developed with their mentors, marked with both fun and deep levels of connection. This attribute relates to peer relationships but was also appreciated in formal, faculty or staff relationships. Jennifer, in referring to her older friend and mentor, said, "Like, she's not just my friend. Like, I'm her friend because she's telling me personal things and crying. Whoa." This sense of interconnectedness was appreciated by many.

*Challenge.* Mentoring-like relationships often pushed the participants to become more disciplined, to be more honest with themselves, and to develop spiritually. The relationships challenged the students to go above and beyond in their efforts and aspirations.

*Accountability.* In pursuing many of their goals, participants cited both their peers as well as formal staff or faculty mentors as keeping them accountable to working toward becoming more disciplined people. William, when describing his peer accountability partner, said, "...we just kind of keep each other accountable with a lot of things ... he's always trying to grow and that's kind of what attracts me to him."

*Spiritual development.* Many students cited the effect their mentor has had on their spiritual development. Dave appreciated when his formal faculty mentor would

share from his life experience in relationship to issues of spirituality. Evangeline prayed with her older peer mentor every week and, "...that was huge in my life because I never really met with someone to pray."

*Speaking the truth.* One of the most often cited elements related to challenge was the ability of mentors to speak truth into the participants' lives and to challenge them to work harder. Linda appreciated when her formal staff mentor "... was definitely willing to speak the hard truth ... but she always comes across as one of my biggest fans but also like, sees the whole part of me." In addition to their personal lives, participants also mentioned how many professors pushed them academically to work hard or, in Brenda's case, she described how her professor "challenged my thinking in a lot of ways and ... it was understanding that something like research ... can be something I look at as an opportunity for something more..."

*Broadened perspective.* Many participants appreciated the new perspectives that they were able to gain from the variety of relationships that they had made on the university campus. This was exhibited in several specific ways.

*Varying viewpoints.* A few students mentioned how their professors introduced new ideas and, even if they did not agree with them, how they appreciated the new ideas that they were learning. A few participants recognized how refreshing it was to have a formal faculty mentor give a perspective on the students' lives that was free of other influences. Brenda mentioned how a group outside of her wing helped her gain perspective and that "...opportunities for growth are going to look different in different places."

*Self-awareness.* The effect of many of the new perspectives allowed several of the participants to become more self-aware and more aware of their surroundings. These attitudes varied from peers and older peers telling the participants what they saw in them to faculty or staff mentors or parents telling the participants what abilities they saw in them.

*Potential.* Similar to the last sub-theme, mentors often point out strengths within the mentees' lives. Calling out potential opens up the creative approach for what students think is possible. Evangeline reflected on how an informal staff mentor saw potential in her, "...so it's really helpful for me to be encouraged because he saw potential in me..."

**Description of mentors.** The following three themes reflect characteristics of the mentors themselves. These results come primarily from the section of the interviews in which participants were asked what made mentors approachable and what they looked up to about their specific mentor.

*Resource.* Many participants appreciated how they could go to their mentor for help in both practical and personal matters. This is one theme that for the most part is absent of peer mentors. Although occasionally, older peers would fill this role, the majority of the examples were about older staff and faculty or a parent.

*Practical resource.* Many students appreciated having the availability of someone older who could answer detailed questions about the specifics of the university. A few students mentioned that they appreciated having adults that they could chat with on occasion around campus where they would feel comfortable directing questions. Oftentimes, these relationships were informal yet had a significant effect. For Jennifer, the suggestion and encouragement of a faculty acquaintance "...definitely steered my

direction more because if I hadn't had a personal relationship with her then perhaps I wouldn't have gone that route."

*Experienced in life.* Many students cited how much they appreciated what they could learn from a more experienced person. This subtheme extended to some of the older peers but was most often cited about staff with whom the participants interacted. Many formal relationships with faculty mentors were sought out. Sara expressed this wish when she said, "I was missing those mother-like relationships, I guess." When Evangeline needed to find help for a friend who was in a serious situation, she was able to turn to a staff member who she described as, "... the kind of person who could just be like, 'OK, this is what we're going to do,' and not panic and she was just so good ... she just took over."

*A one-way relationship.* A few participants appreciated how some of their more formal relationships with a faculty or staff mentor were primarily one-way relationships. Many participants felt responsible for many of their peers, yet in some of the relationships with faculty mentors, they were alright with focusing primarily on themselves. In speaking about her staff mentor, Linda said:

...it was a relationship where I didn't feel like I had to give equally or I didn't have a ton of responsibility for the other person and that was pretty unique. I think I really appreciated that ... I mean it sounds selfish but it was a time for me, basically, rather than being on the same level. I really appreciated that and having that opportunity.

The participants liked that they were able to focus on their own growth through those relationships.

*Connection.* The participants greatly appreciated characteristics of their mentors that provided them a connection with those people. This theme applied to all varieties of mentors.

*Present.* Many students valued the persistent presence of those relationships that they considered influential. Often, this subtheme was mentioned in reference to peers who cared about both trivial and important issues. William reflected on his residence assistant his freshmen year, "...it was kind of small but he'd always ask, 'you going to dinner?'"

*Shared ideas.* Many participants found themselves in relationships that provided a shared or common experience. For Alan, there were, "a handful of relationships with other guys who I felt like were just asking a lot of the same questions..." Connections were also made with older faculty or staff mentors when similar opinions were held. Jennifer found it beneficial to converse in this context as they "...tend to basically agree on lots of things..."

*Trustworthy.* Many students appreciated when they could confide personal and confidential information with their mentor. In this sense, they highly valued their confidentiality. This subtheme relates to both peers and formal staff or faculty mentors.

*Open.* Most participants cited how they valued the openness of their mentor. Many times, the participants would describe them as humble and/or vulnerable. While some participants appreciated the one-way nature of some of their relationships, they also appreciated other relationships that could be a two-way relationship. This was evident in all peer and older peer relationships, but was especially appreciated with older mentors.

*Good model.* The last theme relating to characteristics of mentors simply refers to traits of mentors that the participants respected and valued. These attributes often were spoken of in ways that made it apparent that the participants desired these characteristics to be incorporated into their own lives.

*Christian model.* Many participants cited the strong Christian faith of their peers and those older. A few mentioned how they appreciated how their professors incorporated their faith into their vocation and others appreciated the example that older Christians had set for them. This was especially true for students coming from public schools. Admiration of older peers was also present. Molly said of her older peers:

I was blown away with the level of confidence they lived, even if maybe they didn't think they did but maybe just how seriously they took their faith and really wanted God to work in their lives and really wanted to give it their all was something I had not seen in anybody close to my age.

*Consistent.* Mentors were often described as being consistent people. Participants drew upon the importance of their mentors being genuine and intentional about their actions. This referred both to the mentors' lives in general, as well as how the mentors approached the relationship.

*Passionate.* The participants most often cited their mentors as role models when they mentioned how passionate they were about life. Many professors were cited as having a love for their field as well as being highly intelligent. Many faculty or staff members were described as strong and driven. This was especially true for the female participants who valued this as something they could aspire to. Sara described her faculty

mentor as, "...really passionate about her career, like teaching to students and serving the community."

**Approach to leadership.** The participants were asked about their leadership positions: how they got involved, if they felt prepared, how they perceived their ability to lead, how they viewed their role, and the joys and difficulties of their leadership position. Three themes outlined below relate to the participants' approach to leadership and how that correlates to relationships in which they were involved.

**Identity.** Many students approached their positions as being a part of their identity. This entailed a holistic approach to their role, resulting in a congruent method of leading. Likewise, what they learned in any area of their life seemed to affect the way they led.

*Already functioning in role.* Many students found themselves assuming a role of leadership in which they were already functioning in many of its characteristics. Both Alan and William found themselves leading and instigating events on their wing before they worked as resident assistants. Likewise, Jennifer passionately pursued conversations relating to global problems that are at the core of her current role.

*Ability to use strengths.* Many students commented on how their role allowed them to utilize their strengths. Oftentimes this pertained to their relational style of leadership, but occasionally related to more specific situations. Evangeline, in working with ethnic minority student groups, said, "I always understand the other because I'm always the other in every situation." Like many, she enjoys her job because she is able to exercise her strengths.

*Role becomes a part of identity.* In considering their roles, many feel like Molly, who said, "...it has become so much a part of [me]." For a few, they did recognize how it can be difficult to never step away from their title. Yet most appreciated the role becoming part of their identity, thoroughly enjoying the experience and realizing how "...natural it felt and ... nothing felt different about me or who I felt I had to be" (Brenda).

*Leadership as relational.* Almost every student mentioned how they lead through their relationships. This theme has a few connections to their mentoring relationships.

*Entrance to role stems from relationships.* Many students became interested in their roles because of relationships previously held with mentors. Almost every resident assistant cited their previous resident assistant as someone they looked up to or who encouraged them to fill the role. Those in roles outside of residence life were commonly encouraged by both peers and faculty or staff who saw leadership abilities within the student that would pertain directly with their given role.

*Enjoy relational portion of job.* Almost every student enjoyed the relational aspects of their job. Multiple participants appreciated when they could encourage honest conversations among their peers, like Dave, who said, "I love it when people go deep and ... they're like, 'hey, this is what I'm dealing with.'" The largest difficulties cited were most often shallow relationships or when the participant was only seen as their leadership title, an indication of a lack of depth in relationship.

*Able to use relationships to do job well.* A few students mentioned how they were able to use the relationships that they have with those in faculty and staff positions to collaborate and put on great events. Evangeline, in describing her position, said, "I think

I've learned though that it really comes down to the relational. The more students I know... the more I can be effective..."

*Following interests.* Many students attributed their appreciation of their role to what it allowed them to pursue. Through many of their relationships, they found themselves in positions where they could pursue their passions.

*Involvement.* A few students, when asked about their motivation for entering their role, cited that they just wanted to get involved. Many students mentioned how much fun they were able to have in their role, as well as the number of new friends they had made through their role. Many students appreciated the school's environment, which made them want to pursue positions where they could further involve themselves.

*Vision for surroundings.* Many students found themselves in situations where they saw room for improvement and thus had a vision for what could be. A few of the residence assistants cited mediocre wing culture as an impetus to create a healthier sense of community and took it upon themselves to model living well. Others found times that they could educate others as rewarding. Jennifer said, "I know it's so trivial but it's like, something that I was a part of expanded someone else's viewpoint."

## **Conclusion**

The themes drawn from the participants' interviews indicate a development of the students. The description of the mentoring relationships provided both support and challenge while broadening the students' perspectives. This was all made possible by the character qualities of the varied mentors themselves, who often served as models of leadership for the participants. Likewise, the participants' approach toward leadership

was greatly influenced by their various mentors and the door to leadership often was opened by mentor-oriented relationships.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

This study attempts to determine if mentoring relationships assist in the formation of student leaders and, if so, what characteristics of mentoring relationships mark them as beneficial in the formation of student leaders. Thus, the results of this study helped in the development of a model describing how mentoring relationships impact the formation of student leaders. The mentoring relationships have four core characteristics that will be discussed in depth. These relationships serve as an important element in informing the participants' approach to and understanding of leadership. Thus, enhanced understanding of leadership may be regarded as a significant outcome of mentoring relationships. This chapter will also discuss the connection of the results from this study to the findings of current research. This discussion will be followed by the implications for practice, limitations of the research, and implications for future research.

#### **Core Characteristics of Mentoring Relationships**

While mentoring relationships are not the only contributing factor to students' leadership development, the responses from the participants in this study indicate that these relationships served as instrumental in their leadership development. These relationships were marked by support and connection, challenge, an exploratory process with broadened perspectives, and role modeling.

**Supportive relationships.** One of the chief benefits of mentoring was that it

created a place where the students felt at ease and could be themselves. Students found affirmation, encouragement, and care from these relationships that afforded them the confidence and comfort to look forward to leading in the future. Affirmation aligns with Parks' (2000) work which indicates that affirmation and acknowledgment of personal strengths provide an important support for young leaders. This environment also contributed to the students' ability to pursue and step into their vocation. This idea is consistent with Fowler's (2000) emphasis on the type of development that found vocation to draw on all aspects of one's life, especially environment. The relationships described by participants provided mentors who were open with their lives and motivated students to be open as well, creating a sense of understanding that instilled a feeling of being "at home." Participants also received advice from the mentors that guided them in crucial decision making, allowing them to feel more confident, knowing that they had someone who could provide direction. These relationships also provided a mutual friendship between the mentor and mentee.

For many of the participants, the personal connection served as beneficial in and of itself. This sense, along with openness, facilitated the establishment of a solid connection between the parties. Similar to the beneficial mentor characteristics found by Terrion and Leonard (2007), in addition to openness, participants appreciated when those they described as influential were trustworthy and held similar views on issues. While it would be educationally and developmentally counterproductive for mentees to connect only with people who "thought the same ways as they did," some level of connection on important issues appears to be important.

Another characteristic that was often mentioned was the value of “presence.” Many participants simply enjoyed having a consistent person who was involved in their life and who demonstrated concern for them. The openness and trustworthiness of the mentors all pointed toward the desire of the mentees to interact with someone who was authentic in their approach to the relationship and who was willing to invest in them. All participants cited a personal connection with mentors despite the fact that the mentors often differed greatly in personality and style.

**Challenge.** The mentoring relationships pushed many of the students toward growth. The mentors’ demonstration of support created a safe environment in which participants could be receptive to challenges. In this study, many students reported being challenged to grow spiritually in a way that they had not experienced before college, giving many of the participants a desire to lead others and to become more personally disciplined. Many students viewed their mentors as people who kept them accountable to living up to these standards. This was done explicitly when mentors asked how the participants were doing in their work and implicitly when mentors continually honored their own commitments and pushed the participants to hold fast to their goals. The mentors also challenged the participants by speaking truth into their lives. Although sometimes this involved words of encouragement, other instances related to mentors raising difficult topics that were hard for the participants to hear or deal with. All of the elements of challenge added to the personal development of the participants, equipped them to engage more deeply in healthy and productive lifestyles, and urged them to lead more effectively.

**Exploratory process and broadened perspective.** The mentoring relationships

also had an exploratory nature. Garvey and Alred (2000) observed this in their research, finding that relationships often need time to explore. The relationships discussed in the present study provided a chance for the participants to discover new aspects of themselves as well as to develop a deepened understanding of the world around them. This opened the eyes of many of the participants to challenge them to aspire to more and be more intentional about their own maturation. Many students specifically benefitted from becoming more aware of who they were as individuals and were able to explore the related implications of their selfhood. This is similar to Komives, Longerbeam, Owen and Mainella's (2006) finding that self-discovery is the first step in leadership and is instrumental to the next steps of being aware of others and then taking action.

The exploratory process also created an opportunity to discover the leadership potential provided by many of their skillsets. Many mentors challenged the participants to think more critically about the way they approached situations or introduced them to campus, domestic, or world issues. As the participants learned more about themselves and the world through the mentoring relationships, they developed a better understanding of how they could fit into the world most effectively and meaningfully. Students mentioned the developing broadened perspective through multiple relationships with a combination of staff, faculty, and peers. This is very much in keeping with Parks' (2000) view that it is not just individuals who mentor, but rather that communities of people can form a mentoring presence in students' lives. Some participants specifically spoke of appreciating the one-way nature of some of their mentoring relationships in that they spent the with their mentors interactions focusing on the students' questions, needs and

issues. Other participants clearly recognized the two-way nature of the relationships and enjoyed being seen as equals and even as a support for their mentor. Both approaches had their advantages and the model-type seemed to depend on the specific developmental level, needs and interests of the student as well as the characteristics of the mentor.

**A model to observe.** Many participants saw their mentors as models of characteristics that they wanted to imitate. High on this list of qualities were Christian character and maturity. Participants also noted the consistency and passion of their mentors. These attributes contributed to the participants' idea of how they could live their lives and gave them examples of the sort of lives to which they can aspire. Many of these examples were filled by older staff or faculty who provided a model of what students could strive for in the long term. Peers also gave the participants a more immediate idea of what is possible for a college student and how they realistically could live in a more meaningful or exemplary manner. While all of those identified as mentors were influencers in the participants' lives, there were also a number of people who were slightly removed from the participants' lives who still served as models. These individuals would occasionally emulate a few mentoring characteristics, but may be more appropriately identified as influencers and models rather than mentors. Even still, these models served as a foundation for the community of mentors that benefitted the participants.

### **Impact of Mentoring Relationships on Leadership Styles and Values**

Participant reflections indicated that individual approaches to leadership were influenced by mentoring relationships. The participants understood their leadership roles as a part of their identity and tended to embrace a relational leadership model.

Furthermore, their involvement in leadership opportunities seemed to align with their interests.

**Lived out leadership.** Many of the participants performed aspects of the functions of their leadership roles before they officially entered them. This is perhaps an indication that students are attracted to the types of roles that most naturally align with their interests and natural skillsets. The concern for how one performs in leadership is part of Komives, Lucas, and McMahon's (2007) Relational Leadership Model (RLM). The manner in which many of the leaders functioned was very much in keeping with RLM, which consists of including others, empowering others, and working out of an ethical framework. Many of the participant's conceptualizations and approaches to leadership utilized these elements. A few of the participants described needing to be convinced to officially fill their leadership role, because they were content simply doing the work without the title. Others sought these roles because they believed that the position could enhance their ability to live out their identity. The Social Change Model's (HERI, 1996) discusses consciousness of self as being cognizant of one's beliefs, values and emotions that influence one to act. In keeping with this idea, many students were aware of their strengths and utilized them in their leadership roles. Some welcomed this, demonstrating a sense of congruency in their style of leadership. For others, the connection between leadership title and their identity became difficult because they could not escape the title and felt limited to their job description. Ideally, students integrate their leadership role into their identity, but do not allow others to define them solely by what they do.

**Relational approach to leadership.** Many of the students indicated that their

leadership involvement was relationally initiated. Most often students sought their leadership roles because a mentor encouraged them to do so. Sometimes, however, rather than individuals, this influence came from “mentoring communities” consisting of peers, staff, or faculty. In both instances it seems clear that mentoring provided a strong motivation for involvement in leadership. Many students also reported that this relational element contributed to their enjoyment of their roles and enhanced their leadership development. This was seen clearly in participant’s tendency to employ a relational approach in their work with others. Their concern for the growth of those with whom they worked was consistent with the RLM’s emphasis on the empowerment of others (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007). As a corollary, this also enabled participants to work collaboratively in forming and accomplishing their vision for their area of leadership. Many of the participants recognized that they were best able to do their jobs by depending upon and working with those with whom they had formed relationships.

**Fulfill vision.** Many students just wanted to be a part of something in which they believed. Many of the participants were supportive of the institution’s larger mission and thus wanted to be involved in roles that served this mission. All wanted to make a positive change in their environments and surrounding community. This strongly reflects elements of the Social Change Model’s (HERI, 1996) focus on working toward positive change in one’s organization. Through the mentoring relationships, many developed a greater level of self-awareness and learned how to create positive change for their community. Specific interests ranged from local interpersonal issues in the residence halls to large global issues. Whatever the specific

vision, mentoring relationships aided and empowered the participants in moving toward the fulfillment of their priorities.

### **Implications for Practice**

This research has yielded information that is valuable to those working in higher education and student development. What follows are a few specific ways in which these findings may be used to inform the work of those involved in serving college students.

**Knowledge of mentoring characteristics.** This research detailed a number of attributes that students admired and sought out in those they considered influential in their lives. The characteristics of support and connection, challenge, exploratory and broadened perspective, and modeling are either possessed by or can be developed by many individuals. Clearly, in light of their roles as peer mentors, student leaders should be informed of and encouraged to develop these characteristics. Professionals working with students should evaluate how their own mentoring relationships reflect these characteristics. If they are not present, mentors would do well to consider how they might develop and incorporate them into their mentoring relationships. If an increase in faculty or staff interaction with students is an institutional goal, the development of these characteristics should be encouraged by those currently employed and sought out during the hiring of new staff.

**How to approach mentoring relationships.** The findings of this study encourage healthy and beneficial mentoring relationships. Many professionals in higher education are in mentoring-oriented relationships regardless of whether they seek them out or not. The description of the relationships here can inform professionals how these relationships are best lived out. Although each person possesses a unique set of

attributes, everyone is able to challenge, provide support, and broaden mentee perspectives.

**Detailed leadership formation.** In considering the participants' descriptions of their leadership roles, many students allowed the role to become a part of their identity, almost all students described leadership as relational, and many students were able to incorporate their interests into their roles. While these cannot be considered a direct result of influential mentoring-oriented relationships, these relationships certainly had an impact on these students. These attributes were not entirely positive but, as a whole, are important and influential examples of student leadership. Institutions would do well to investigate the necessity and desire for opportunities for mentoring relationships because the type of leaders that many of these relationships produced were positive.

### **Limitations of Study**

Although the research done in this study attempted to be as comprehensive and thorough as possible, there were a few limitations that should be considered in reflecting upon the results. This research utilized interviews at one institution. Because of this, it will be difficult to generalize the findings for other institutions. Additionally, this specific institution places a strong emphasis on students finding areas of leadership and offers many platforms to do so. Consequently, the institution attracts many students who are interested in leadership roles. While these are positive attributes of the institution, it must be acknowledged that this may have had a distinct effect on students' entrance into and motivation to take up leadership roles.

Although efforts were made to include students from a wide variety of leadership roles, there was a greater supply of residence life leaders than any other position. Five of

the nine participants had served in the resident assistant role, although two of them also discussed other leadership roles in which they had served. While the emphasis on relational leadership was prevalent through many of the interviews, students serving in the resident assistant position were functioning in roles that required a certain type of leadership through relationship. If the participant base had been distributed more evenly, it is possible that the emphasis on relational leadership may not have been as prominent.

Due to the limited amount of time for the research and limited amount of available participants, the number of participants was not as high as desired. To assure complete saturation of results, a greater number of participants would have benefitted the research.

### **Implications for Future Research**

As there was a heavy residence life participant base, it would be beneficial to have a greater focus on students in a wider variety of roles. Distinctions may be made as to how students in particular roles are most impacted in their leadership formation that may relate specifically to the expectations placed on the particular role.

While the interviewing of student leaders offered some valuable information and insight into their specific journeys into their roles, it would be useful to develop a study that compared leaders and non-leaders. Students not in leadership roles may have had equal opportunities for mentoring-oriented relationships, yet it would be interesting to observe what type of impact these relationships have had on their formation and development.

This research has gone into great depth attempting to understand the effects of mentoring relationships on the mentee. As all relationships have multiple participants, a

more complete picture would include the experience of the mentor. Possible correlations would be interesting to observe how both parties perceived the relationships. It would be interesting to observe if the intentions of the mentors matched the admiration the mentees had of them.

### **Conclusion**

The deep impact of mentoring relationships was very apparent in the present study, and it was clear in many of the participants. These relationships provided support for the participants, pushed them to develop personally, and gave them a broader perspective on themselves and the world. These relationships were enhanced by the attributes of the mentors. The mentors served as a resource and model to the participants and then provided a relationship with which the participants could connect. Finally, the mentoring relationships aided in forming the participants into the leaders that they have become. The participants integrated their leadership into their identity, approached leadership as a relational endeavor, and were able to follow their interests in their role. As these elements of mentoring and leadership development are intimately intertwined, this research proves useful in promoting a larger quantity and quality of mentoring relationships for students in the future.

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## Appendix

### Interview Questions

1. On a large scale, tell me about your freshmen and sophomore year experience including your reflections on who you connected with the most and who had the most impact on you.
  - a. Who did you connect with in the residence hall? Who did you connect with in your classes? Were there other areas that you were involved in which you made strong relationships?
  - b. Did these relationships last beyond your freshmen and sophomore year?
2. In a formal sense, did you meet with any peers, faculty, staff, or community members during your freshman or sophomore year?
  - a. If so, how would you describe this person (/people)?
  - b. What did you receive or contribute from this/these relationship(s)?
  - c. In what ways did your mentor go about mentoring?
3. Informally, is there anyone you spent time with or considered as a mentor?
  - a. If so, how would you describe this person (/people)?
  - b. What did you receive this/these relationship(s)?
  - c. In what ways did your mentor go about mentoring?
4. In a professional or academic sense, who did you look up to?
  - a. Describe the relationship you had with them.

- b. What was it about them that made you admire them and how did you relate to them?
5. Looking back on your high school experience, was there a presence of any sort of mentor figure? How did that change upon entering college?
6. Moving into the leadership role in which you are currently serving, describe what you do and how you view your role.
  - a. What are your specific strengths and how are you able to use those?
  - b. What are you enjoying about the responsibilities and opportunities your leadership role provides?
  - c. What made you want to fill this role? Was there anyone or thing prior to this role that pushed you toward filling this role that hasn't been discussed thus far?
  - d. Prior to your leadership role, did you ever feel like you were lacking mentor-like figures in your life?
7. Excluding the preparation you received in August and what you are learning now, how prepared did you feel stepping into the leadership portion of your current role?
8. Within the context of your college relationships, what do you consider as some of the most influential aspects in forming the person who you are today? How do you think these relationships impacted your ability to serve in your leadership role?

