Master of Arts in Higher Education Thesis Collection

2015

Mentoring Self-Authorship: A Qualitative Study on the Impact of Mentoring on Self-Authorship

Grant M. Henry
Taylor University

MENTORING SELF-AUTHORSHIP:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF MENTORING ON SELF-

AUTHORSHIP

_____

A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

_____

by

Grant M. Henry

May 2015

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL
_____

MASTER'S THESIS
_____

This is to certify that the Thesis of

Grant Michael Henry

entitled

Mentoring Self-Authorship:
A Qualitative Study on the Impact of Mentoring on Self-Authorship

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

Master of Arts degree
in Higher Education and Student Development

May 2015

_____   _____
Timothy Herrmann, Ph.D.   Date   Todd Ream, Ph.D.   Date
Thesis Supervisor   Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

_____
Skip Trudeau, Ed.D.   Date
Member, Thesis Hearing Committee

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

Abstract

A deepened understanding of the impact mentorship has on the formation of college student self-authorship proves necessary to best inform the mentoring practices of student affairs practitioners. The present study therefore examined the impact a mentoring relationship with a student affairs professional has on the development of student self-authorship. Through a qualitative approach, the current research took the responses of sixteen student mentees to determine the impact of mentorship and then identified the key aspects of mentoring most significant in fostering self-authorship. The report below presented essential characteristics for a student affairs mentor and effective mentoring approaches.

Acknowledgements

I first want to thank the members of my cohort—Cohort 7. Collectively you served as a family during the two years in MAHE and individually you have been my closest friends. Specifically to the guys of the "Watermelon House"—you have seen me at my worst and my best while loving me like a brother through it all. I would like to thank Dr. Tim Herrmann. Not only have you served as my thesis supervisor and professor, but you have also served as my biggest inspiration as a developing student affairs professional. You showed me grace and understanding throughout the thesis process while also pushing me to grow. Thank you for your mentorship. I also want to thank every MAHE professor. You challenged my thinking and effectively modeled what you want to see in your students. I too want thank my family. In the thick of graduate school busyness, you showed me grace and understanding while supporting me from afar. I must also thank my assistantship supervisor and friend, Sara Hightower. You mentored me amidst my own journey though self-authorship. You embody mentorship in such powerful ways. As I go forth and mentor students of my own, I will always think of you. I also thank my God. You have given me the space to grow in ways that I have never allowed myself prior. Amidst the uncomfortable stretching, you provided amazing people in my path that modeled aspects of you I had never fully embraced nor understood. Because of what I have learned from those in my life during these two years, I am thoroughly inspired to put my research to practice.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1

Introduction

In today's world, emerging adults struggle to find their identity, sense of purpose, and sense of meaning. From this uncertainty arises a generation lacking the proper basis for thinking critically about their own ideas, experiences, outcomes of their lives, and the bigger issues around them (Parks, 2000; Smith, 2011). Today's college students seem without the intrinsic motivation necessary for engaging issues of morality, politics, differing views, and other significant matters (Smith, 2011; Twenge, 2006). These emerging adults, therefore, need self-authored lives, internally grounded in what they believe as true and worthy of pursuit. They need a catalyst to foster intrinsically driven purpose, meaning, and critical thought in their lives. This catalyst must come through personal exploration as well as growth fostered by the help of others.

Society can provide care and constructive aid as these students explore what it means to live purposeful lives (Smith, 2011). Within the right environments, college students have the opportunity to construct thoughtfully self-authored lives, understanding better their identity and their potential for meaningful contribution to society.

Background

Higher education has the expectation to effectively prepare students for the world beyond college. In this preparation, students need more than basic attainment of knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 2004). To face societal challenges, they need to experience

holistic development (Baxter Magolda, 2000; Meszaros, 2007; Pizzolato, 2007). Students need to feel equipped with a greater understanding of who they are, what they value and believe as true, how to interact interpersonally, and how to make sense of the world around them (Baxter Magolda, 2009b; Pizzolato, 2007). Self-authorship captures this journey of self-discovery through the process of questioning, clarifying, and grounding individual understanding (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Kegan, 1994; Pizzolato, 2007). It involves a shift from accepting knowledge from authorities to constructing one's own knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 2004).

Self-authorship takes place when others' perceptions no longer define personal identity; instead, the identity becomes defined by one's own internally constructed goals, beliefs, and values (Baxter Magolda, 2004, 2009a). This process unfolds a progressive knowing and depth of understanding to achieve a self-authored life. In keeping with the broad aims of higher education, student affairs professionals have the opportunity to foster elements of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Schoper, 2011). By better understanding the concept of self-authorship and the impact that significant relationships play in nurturing this form of identity development, student affairs professionals have the chance to determine how to most effectively invest in students, particularly through the use of mentoring relationships.

The Need for Critical Thought

On the journey to holistic development, students must deepen their understanding of the complexities of life (Kegan, 1994; Mezirow, 2000; Pizzolato, 2007). This process requires critical thought, which expands what one currently knows into a broader scale of reality (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Pizzolato, 2005). Critical thought then generates a greater

sense of awareness, allowing students to better understand themselves, others, and the world around them, as well as develop a greater sense of purpose and meaning (Baxter Magolda, 2009a; Parks, 2000). This awareness of purpose and meaning then provides students with a necessary framework of thought through which they can make sense of challenges they encounter and develop true self-authorship.

Self-Authorship: A Developmental Process

Self-authorship brings critical thinking to a personal level and serves as an internal voice, guiding one's decision-making (Baxter Magolda, 2009b; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). The movement toward self-authorship helps students become "self-initiating, guided by their own visions, responsible for their experience, and able to develop interdependent relations with diverse others" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269). Self-authorship provides a basis for making sense of the many aspects of life that do not make sense without the ability to engage in critical thought and without a strong sense of self. Students who experience self-authorship thereby become prepared to make sense of the world around them and interact appropriately.

As a process, self-authorship does not occur exclusively during the college years (Kegan, 1982). Baxter Magolda (2009a) described the process as occurring throughout adult life. Sense making continually experiences challenge, sharpening, and further understanding over time. Though not occurring throughout the extent of the adult years, college provides a perfect environment and context to foster self-authorship through a learning partnership model (LPM) (Piper & Buckley, 2004; Pizzolato & Ozaki, 2007). The LPM consists of three essential components: validating students as knowers, situating learning in students' experience, and defining learning as mutually constructed

meaning (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). By its collaborative nature, an institution of higher education offers an ideal setting for inviting students to interact with these components.

Mentoring to Foster Self-Authorship

In the holistic approach to higher education, both the classroom and co-curricular environments provide opportunity to foster self-authorship through the LPM. Much research has addressed the potential for developing self-authorship in the classroom. However, few studies focus on the impact student affairs professionals have on student self-authorship, especially through mentorship (Baxter Magolda, 2003; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Parks, 2000). A need therefore exists for research on how student affairs practitioners can impact and guide students' self-authorship through mentoring relationships (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). The potential for fostering self-authorship through mentoring relationships exists "if the appropriate challenge and support are available to enable it" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 271).

Through mentorship, students have someone to assist them in making necessary connections and processing through new challenges to their thinking, thereby cultivating self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2003, 2004, 2009b). Mentors soon become considered "good company" as students understand who they are and what they offer to those around them and to the communities of which they are a part (McNair, 2011, p. 28). When students experience "role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship" they feel "supported in developing a sense of competence, confidence, and effectiveness" (Kram, 1983, p. 614). A mentor holds great potential of positively impacting college students.

Research Questions

The present study sought to determine how mentoring relationships between student affairs professionals and students impact the development of self-authorship. Additionally, the study aimed to identify which components of student affairs mentoring relationships prove most significant in fostering student self-authorship. The following research questions guided the study:

- What impact does a mentoring relationship with a student affairs professional have on the participating student?

- What aspects of a mentoring relationship are most significant in fostering the formation of student self-authorship?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Self-Authorship: A Necessary Element of Holistic Student Development

Holistic student development does not occur optimally without intentionality and purpose. Intended outcomes, and ways to achieve such outcomes, must be set forth to succeed in reaching the end goal of a holistically developed student (Baxter Magolda, 2009b; Meszaros, 2007; Mezirow, 2000). The college years prove a crucial time for young adults to develop personal identities that ground everything else learned in college and beyond. Ideally, students undergo a restructuring of thought in regards to what they believe, understand about themselves, and the meaning of their interactions with others (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Love & Guthrie, 1999; Meszaros, 2007). They experience a respective epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal transformation of thought that generates a holistic and internal grounding for who they are and what they believe to be true (Kegan, 1994; Meszaros, 2007; Mezirow, 2000).

The Theoretical Foundation of Self-Authorship

Self-authorship refers to a theory of identity development focused on the cultivation of one's internal voice, a critical internal guide for thought and action. More specifically, self-authorship entails "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relations" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269). This process involves the very authoring of one's life through the declaration of new meaning and a shift in thinking. A

new internal framework develops and serves as a guiding force in making decisions about what individuals know and believe.

From External to Internal Formulas

Whether from teachers, parents, or peers, external sources guide the understanding of students' sense of meaning and purpose coming into college (Baxter Magolda, 2002, 2009a; Parks, 2000). Self-authorship challenges these external sources and provides a new basis for determining understanding. Self-authorship leads an individual to take claim to that which they believe as true. As this claim begins to form internally, it increasingly becomes less rooted in or bound by external sources (Hodge, Baxter Magolda, & Haynes, 2009). Validity of what remains true becomes framed by what an individual concludes on his or her own. This internal claim provides a complete shift from the externally defined meaning making that shaped one's previous sense of understanding (Baxter Magolda 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Baxter Magolda & King, 2012).

Baxter Magolda (2009b) described the use of these external sources for meaning making as a method of "external formulas" (p. 629) and outlined these external formulas through a series of three distinguishable stages: early, middle, and late. In the early stage, college students rely solely on the expectations and assumptions of others, identifying themselves based on the insight and judgment of those around them. The middle stage still includes reliance upon external influences but introduces a new degree of uncertainty. Seeking resolution, the individuals turn to their external sources to make sense of the uncertainty. They begin struggling with the possibility of multiple perspectives, the idea that the external sources they have come to trust do not prove exclusively true. This realization leads to the late stage in which individuals begin to

identify the deficiencies in following external formulas alone. From this stage, students reach a critical intersection in their way of thinking.

The Phases of Self-Authorship

Pizzolato (2005) described this intersection of thought as a crossroads, the point at which external and internal voices meet. This experience of dealing with conflicting voices often becomes an uncomfortable experience for individuals. They know they need to construct a system for the challenged beliefs and values but do not have the current internal capacity to accomplish the task (Baxter Magolda, 2009b; Pizzolato, 2005, 2007). Students must undergo two steps in dealing with this issue. They must listen to their internal voice and learn to cultivate it (Baxter Magolda, 2009a). In a longitudinal study conducted by Baxter Magolda (2009a), participants described listening to their internal voice as "identifying what made them happy, examining their own beliefs, finding parts of themselves that were important to them, and establishing a distinction between their feelings and external expectations" (p. 7). The same participants described the cultivation of their internal voice as "developing parts of themselves they valued, establishing priorities, sifting out beliefs and values that no longer worked, and putting pieces of the puzzle of who they were together" (p. 7). The process of moving from external to internal voices demands a restructuring of thought.

Making the full shift through the crossroads relies on individuals' ability to bring the internal voice to the forefront and reframe their interpretation of external sources (Baxter Magolda, 2009b). The steps necessary for moving out of this stage draw from Baxter Magolda's (2008) three elements of Self-Authorship: trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments. Trusting the internal

voice asks individuals to challenge external sources and validate their own voices (Baxter Magolda, 2009a). "Coming to trust one's internal voice requires cultivating it, questioning it, and refining it" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 275). They must recognize the presence of the internal voice, validate it as a reasonable source of authority, perfect it as the best option available, and willingly act on it. Thereby, final decisions to act ultimately come from the ensuing personal convictions of a developing internal foundation (Baxter Magolda, 2009a; Creamer & Laughlin, 2005).

Further building the internal foundation nurtures a core set of values. As individual thinking feels challenged along the way, the core values provide a platform upon which to stand (Baxter Magolda, 2009a). The resulting internal foundation becomes grounded on an acceptance of oneself through the construction of a philosophy that guides one's response to reality. This philosophy remains fostered by on-going exploration through making choices that both challenge the sense of reality and substantiate it (Baxter Magolda, 2008, 2009b). Developing purpose and understanding of one's life comes through a firm internal foundation and commitment that then guides the appropriate response (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). In this regard, external sources no longer hold influence on the newly developed sense of internal certainty (Baxter Magolda, 2008). One cannot accomplish this shift, however, without challenge that may require assistance (McNair, 2011).

Promoting Self-Authorship by Way of Mentoring

In order to promote self-authorship, internal sourcing—recognizing and validating one's own sense of awareness and ability to make decisions—must become fostered. "Moving toward self-authorship requires support for cultivating one's internal voice,

particularly until the fragile internal voice becomes strong enough to hold its own against external pressures" (Baxter Magolda, 2009a, p. 250). An individual must begin to listen to his or her own internal voice and cultivate it in order to strengthen it. Supporting relationships can encourage the recognition of this internal voice through providing the necessary circumstances that reinforce it (Baxter Magolda, 2009b; McNair, 2011). Such relationships may involve direct mentoring relationships.

Mentorship: A Relationship for Development

Within the context of a college environment, mentoring creates the opportunity for student growth through intentional investment (Canton & James, 1999; Parks, 2000). This investment provides the chance to meet students in their current state and help them in moving forward in their own development. Forward progress often finds guidance through asking big questions that challenge one's understanding of life (Parks, 2000; Smith, 2011). These big questions refer to ideas worth believing in—about morality, one's meaning in life, what merits pursuit, as well as civic and political engagement. These questions "reveal the gaps in our knowledge, in our social arrangements, in our ambitions and aspirations" (Parks, 2000, p. 137). These questions matter and prove worth asking. Asking the big questions brings an understanding for emerging adults on how to think and behave (Smith, 2011). Mentoring environments provide the space to ask "the questions that begin to arise in the imagination of the young adult, from the inside, from that emerging inner authority" (Parks, 2000, p. 139). A mentor can ask the questions that foster the development of inner sourcing. Additionally, environments offering mentorship create an avenue for posing questions that intentionally challenge thinking in ways that would not have occurred otherwise.

Mentoring can happen in a number of settings, capturing a wide-range impact. This impact has the potential to affect students in transformative, lasting ways. Breaking down the concept of a mentoring relationship can better reveal its potential impact.

Defining Mentoring

Literature on mentoring has lacked a consistent definition and understanding over the past twenty-five years (Colley, 2003; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). However, in three significant ways, researchers seem to agree about mentoring (Colley, 2003; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). First, mentorship focuses on the potential and on-going growth of the recipient in the mentoring relationship. Second, the mentor provides consistent support that may include "professional and career development, role modeling, and psychological support" (Crisp & Cruz, 2009, p. 528). Third, the mentoring relationship consistently appears both personal and mutually appreciated. Most mentoring research consists of qualitative psychological studies that involve relationships demonstrating progressive depth and connection over time, mutually benefiting mentor and mentee (Colley, 2003).

Parks (2000) defined the classic sense of mentoring as "an intentional, mutually demanding, and meaningful relationship between two individuals, a young adult and an older, wiser figure who assists the younger person in learning the ways of life" (p. 127). Age, though, does not prove the crucial identifier for a mentoring relationship. For instance, with mentoring between peers, the relationship includes two individuals of similar age (Barker, 2006; Kram, 1983). More critical than age, Parks focused on the necessary components of intentionality, mutuality, and meaningfulness. There must exist a sense of purpose around which the mentoring relationship binds. These key components serve as pre-requisites to defining a mentoring relationship. However, not

all perceived mentoring relationships truly provide mentoring.

Parks (2000) argued the overuse of the term. While mentoring may describe each respective situation, "other terms may apply more appropriately: parent, teacher, sponsor, role model, hero or heroine, counselor, coach, companion, supervisor, guide, colleague, or helpful friend" (p. 128). She then suggested, "the term *mentor* is best reserved for a distinctive role in the story of human becoming" (p. 128). By way of critical thought, mentors help guide individuals toward a growing sense of identity in becoming the people they are meant to be (Parks, 2000; Pizzolato, 2005).

Mentoring in Theory

As captured in the research, mentoring describes a process and a practice. With this concept in mind, a number of theories support the idea of mentorship. The traditional mentoring theory encompasses the idea of "skills-based, goals-oriented learning" (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012, p. 10) transferred down through generations, developing both parties involved (Barker, 2006; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). The learning and development occurs for the mentee through receiving the new information and the mentor through modeling and passing on the information. An effective mentoring setting holds the formal intent of psychosocial development. Fletcher and Mullen (2012) described this form of development in the following way: "Psychosocial functions incorporate role modeling, social acceptance, and counseling; the psychosocial dimension of mentoring is enacted when mentors actively listen, provide advice, and encourage development" (p. 8). Mentoring thereby serves a developmental purpose with the mentor fostering the development.

The ideal relationship proves one of intentionality, support, and nurture. It

actively promotes learning by way of critical thought, socialization by way of a
broadened understanding of others, and identity transformation by way of internal
framing (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012; Mezirow, 2000; Parks, 2000; Pizzolato, 2005). As the
relationship continues to develop, a mentor fosters this growth and internal framing by
progressing through a series of general, yet intentional, phases (Chao, Walz, & Gardner,
1992; Colley, 2003; Kram, 1983; Parks, 2000). These phases begin with initiation,
involve cultivation, and require a healthy separation between both parties, eventually
releasing the mentee to a redefined state (Barker, 2006; Kram, 1983). Either the mentor
or mentee can initiate the relationship. However, once initiated, the pursuit becomes one
of intentional investment by the mentor into the life of the mentee. The mentor focuses
on ways to cultivate deeper learning through critical thought, thinking beyond oneself,
and internal identity transformation. The intent remains for the mentee to reach a
redefined state of individual identity and understanding. Once they achieve this outcome,
the two parties may continue to meet together, but they do not necessarily need to.

In the process, each phase becomes marked by "particular affective experiences,
developmental functions, and interaction patterns that are shaped by the individuals'
needs" (Kram, 1983, p. 621). Mentoring can address these needs by cultivating an
internal purpose that guides the mentee through life, even beyond meetings with the
mentor (Parks, 2000).

Mentoring in Practice

The practice of mentoring demands both purpose and cause. "Mentoring that is
centered in shared principles and practices that are internally generated create the
conditions not only for innovation to be possible but also for a desirable education"

(Fletcher & Mullen, 2012, p. 20). Thinking stretches to larger views of the world, people, and civic cause. Students begin processing themselves and the world around them (Fletcher & Mullen, 2012; Parks, 2000). Amid the mental processing, a mentor comes to support and care for the individual (Parks, 2000). However, having support and care does not lead to growth on its own—it requires a healthy degree of challenge.

Challenge serves as the agent doing the actual stretching of thought and understanding (Ward, Trautvetter, & Braskamp, 2005). "Mentors dance an intricate two-step, because they practice the art of supporting and challenging more or less simultaneously" (Parks, 2000, p. 130). The mentor pushes understanding by challenging thought. This push only proves effective when, on the onset of their relationship, the mentor can able to determine the mentee's readiness for challenged thought and actively challenge thought to new understanding (Parks, 2000; Mezirow, 2000; Ward et al., 2005). To occur, challenge needs fuel from inspiration. "In the midst of this sometimes rocky, sometimes exhilarating learning, the mentor serves as a steady, inspiring point of orientation, beckoning toward the possibility of meaningful commitment on the other side of the achievement of relativized and critical thought" (Parks, 2000, p. 131). The mentor embodies an inspirational model for the mentee to strive toward.

However, within this idea of inspiration lies the need for caution. In dialogue, mentors must remain mindful of their presence as an external authority (Baxter Magolda, 2009a; Parks, 2000). As mentors symbolize inspiration for the protégé, they must consider the influence they have on the protégé's framework of thought. As an external source, they potentially subjugate the thinking and understanding of individuals. The danger lies in the degree to which new understanding for the protégé becomes shaped by

the mentor as an external source. Just as the mentor provides necessary support and care, protégés may cling too much to their mentor as their source of authority and basis for understanding. According to Parks (2000),

> At their best, mentors keep finding ways to call forth the kind of dialogue in which the protégé's experience and the distinctive voice it may birth can learn to speak with integrity and power in the force field of life. (p. 131).

Productive dialogue thus provides an avenue for asking big questions that challenge ways of thinking and generate new thought frameworks, an internal foundation. Mentors seek to keep a healthy tension between their own thoughts and what they want mentees to discover in the dialogue. They focus on offering themselves in good company as mentees wrestle through critical thought and cross into new possibilities (Parks, 2000).

Student Affairs Professionals as Mentors

For many reasons, higher education serves a crucial role in the life of young adults (Baxter Magolda, 2002). This reality becomes captured through the learning and meaning making offered in both the curricular and co-curricular settings. Astin (1984) described college student involvement inside and outside the classroom as directly proportional to student learning and personal development. Students experience more individual learning and development when they become more involved. Within the realm of higher education, most research studies focus on the impact faculty members have on the development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2000, 2007; Parks, 2000). However, college students feel challenged and supported just as much, if not more, outside the classroom (Astin, 1977; Baxter Magolda, 2003). The setting, in which learning takes place, involves multiple mentoring environments (Astin, 1977; Baxter

Magolda & King, 2012; Parks, 1995, 2000, 2008). These environments exist to offer students the necessary space to grow and develop personally with support available through mentoring relationships with faculty and staff across campus (Canton & James, 1999; Long, 2012; Parks, 1995, 2008; Philip & Hendry, 2000).

Multiple studies focused on faculty investment in the lives of students, but fewer studies highlighted mentoring relationships with student affairs professionals (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Darwin & Palmer, 2009; Long, 2012; Schoper, 2011). There stands a gap in literature on how this form of mentoring relationship actually impacts self-authorship. Baxter Magolda (2003) highlighted the role of the student affairs professional in the context of fostering self-authorship to ensure students meet standards and regulations, develop students through academic advising, educate, and foster a general transformative vision. The explicit mention of a formal mentoring relationship, however, remains absent. Thus, the present study aimed to determine how mentoring relationships with student affairs professionals impact college students' development of self-authorship.

Conclusion: Self-Authorship by Way of Mentoring in the College Environment

Mentoring and self-authorship go hand-in-hand. As self-authorship requires young adults to think critically about what brings meaning to their lives, mentoring offers a coaching mechanism that guides the discovery process. While any stage of life can facilitate this process, college offers a prime developmental space and time to begin the discovery. Higher education institutions, therefore, foster in college students what is necessary for their self-authorship. Within the mentoring environments of college, student affairs professionals have the chance to support students along the way.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Methods

To conduct the current study on the impact of mentoring on self-authorship, the

researcher used a grounded theory research method. Grounded theory refers to "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"

(Creswell, 2008, p. 432). With the complexity of mentoring relationships and the manner

in which they specifically impact the development of self-authorship, grounded theory

provides a helpful approach to making sense of the complexity, and its progression. To

draw from varied experiences that highlight this complexity, the researcher used

interviews with participants (Mosier, 2012). The researcher also used a systematic design

to analyze the data through coding (Creswell, 2013). This coding specifically involved

three phases—open, axial, and selective coding—and provided a basis for the

development of a formal theory (Creswell, 2008, 2013; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). During

the open coding phase, the researcher identified initial categories of information

pertaining to the phenomenon being studied. The axial phase involved taking the

individual categories identified during the open coding and determining how they relate

to one another. The selective phase finished the coding process with the development of

a grounded theory based on the interrelationship of the categories during the axial phase.

Participants

Participants in the study came from a large, public, land-grant research university located in the Midwest. The institution consists of an undergraduate population of 29,440 students and a graduate population of 8,407 students. The top five undergraduate majors include the colleges of engineering, health and human sciences, science, liberal arts, and technology. The ethnic diversity of undergraduates includes 19,706 white; 4,981 international; 1,449 Asian; 1,169 Hispanic or Latino; and 948 black or African American students. Participants included sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduate students enrolled for the 2014-2015 academic year. They consisted of students who have actively engaged in a mentoring relationship with one or more student affairs professionals in a given department of the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) and Residence Life. The four principles guiding the work of ODOS includes student support, student advocacy, student engagement, and student success. Additionally, the institution promotes holistic learning through programs and services fostering student development intellectually, interpersonally, and ethically.

The researcher asked participating student affairs departments to make recommendations of students involved in their departments who had received mentoring within the past 1-3 years and over the duration of at least one semester. The criteria used in defining a mentor relationship consists of a one-on-one setting in which a student regularly (i.e, weekly or bi-weekly) meets with a student affairs professional in a mentorship that is "developmental, intentional, and generative" (Mullen, 2012, p. 7). In this regard, the study defined mentorship as a supportive and nurturing relationship that actively promotes learning, socialization, and identity development (Mullen, 2012).

After receiving the initial recommendations from the student affairs professionals, the researcher contacted the recommended students via email and selected the final student participants based on the first sixteen responses. The total number of 16 participants included an equally distributed ratio of male to female students, a mixed representation of sophomore to senior class and ethnic backgrounds.

Interview Protocol

The researcher used questions (see Appendix A) that drew descriptions from participants' mentoring experiences and provided relevant data on the phenomenon of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; Mosier, 2012). Questions invited students to describe their experiences with mentoring relationships, particularly those involving reflective thought, critical thinking, consideration of multiple perspectives, and validation of the learners as capable of knowing (Baxter Magolda, 2003; Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Literature indicated each of these elements foster transformative thinking as consistent with the development of self-authorship. To test and assure the effectiveness of the interview protocol, the researcher conducted a pilot interview.

Procedure

The researcher contacted participants via their university email to request their participation in an interview process that would ask them to reflect on their mentoring experience with a student affairs professional(s). The researcher used an incentive to encourage participation in the study. Students had their name put in a drawing for the chance to win one of four $20 Amazon.com gift cards. They also received an informed consent agreement via email and a briefing on the purpose of the study, the expected time needed for the interview (30-60 minutes), location of the interview, and assurance that all

gathered information would remain confidential.

Self-authorship appears a relatively new term used in the realm of higher education and more than likely unrecognized by the average undergraduate student (Creamer, Magolda, & Yue, 2010). Therefore, the protocol questions highlighted mentoring conditions potentially relevant to one's development of self-authorship. Interviews followed the interview protocol, and the researcher used follow-up questions to gain further explanation as needed. After voice recording the interviews, the researcher then transcribed the recordings. To validate the accuracy of the interviews, the researcher sent the transcriptions to each respective participant asking for verification.

Data Analysis

Using the coding processes of a grounded theory methodology, the researcher reviewed the interviews for common themes and categories (Creswell, 2008, 2013). The themes provided insight into how mentoring impacts the development of self-authorship in college students. Open coding involved a first screening through the interviews to identify themes, axial coding determined connections between themes, and selective coding provided a basis for the formulation of a grounded theory (Creswell, 2008, 2013).

Benefits

The present research benefits student affairs professionals by providing increased understanding of how they can impact students' development of self-authorship. Students profit from the research through the knowledge received and applied by student affairs professionals in mentoring relationships. The study investigated if and how mentorship impacts self-authorship development in students actively involved in mentoring relationships with student affairs professionals.

Chapter 4

Results

The current qualitative study attempted to identify the impact a mentoring relationship with a student affairs professional has on the participating student. In addition, the study examined key aspects of these particular relationships that foster the formation of student self-authorship. The research included 16 interviews with students involved in mentoring relationships specifically with student affairs professionals. Their responses contained reflection on the mentoring relationship and the personal growth they experienced as a whole. Six themes highlighted the overall impact of the relationship, and four themes emphasized the main aspects of the mentorship that contribute to the development of student self-authorship (see Table 1).

Table 1

Major Themes and Sub-Themes

	Impact	Contributing Aspects
Themes & Sub-themes	**Mutual benefit** **Perceptions of the mentee** **Best version of self** • Taking ownership of one's own growth **Self-authorship** • Better sense of oneself • Broadening perspective / thinking critically • Understanding what one believes, values, and sees as important • Increased confidence/Ability to articulate ideas • Better sense for the future **Additional development** **Desire to mentor others**	**Characteristics of mentor** • Student affairs professional • Relevant experience • Viewed as role model • Perceptive • Caring **Mentoring approach** • Taking time to get to know mentee • Approachable and available • Providing feedback • Guided discovery

Impact

　　Mutual benefit. In describing perceived benefits of the mentoring relationship, half the participants expressed a mutual benefit for both the mentor and the mentee. The students believed their mentors enjoyed the time they spent together and also learned from the time. Christopher stated, "[T]here is a reciprocating value of when I'm spending time with him—we are not wasting it—we are enjoying time, having laughs, we are growing from each other, learning from each other. I think that has been valuable." Thus, the participants viewed the relationships as personally and cognitively enriching for both parties, with the mentor and mentee each contributing in beneficial ways.

Perceptions of the mentee. All participants felt valued and cared for in their

mentoring relationships. Some participants expressed this sense more explicitly than

others, but the participants expressed a perceived care on multiple levels. Students also

expressed feeling understood and known, especially when mentors took the time to get to

know them, could speak to who they were, and knew such things as their specific

workload and needs. Ashley mentioned how her mentor showed this care by asking her

"how life is going" and about the "small things—things that may seem small to them but

you know to you it is big."

In addition to feeling cared for and valued, 13 participants specifically mentioned

feeling challenged by their mentors or pushed to grow, to think deeper, to consider issues

more critically, and to look at the bigger picture. The participants felt challenge often

impacted how they saw themselves and the world around them. Paired with challenge,

nearly every student mentioned feeling a sense of support from his or her mentor. This

feeling appeared to impact the students' willingness to open up and invite the mentors

into their lives because they did not feel alone and therefore felt optimistic about moving

forward. Jane expressed her need for this support through challenge by stating how

> . . . if I had to truthfully handle it on my own, I wouldn't know where to begin. I
>
> wouldn't know how to start. And I probably would be so far down in that dark
>
> hole that I wouldn't know how to get out.

Becoming the best version of oneself. Reflecting back on the overall

progression of their mentoring experience, a few mentees explicitly expressed their desire

to become the best versions of themselves. This result impacted not only their

perspective of the mentoring relationship but also their mentor's perspective as well. Both parties wanted the other to achieve the best version of himself or herself.

Taking ownership of one's own growth. Many students expressed a realization that they needed to take ownership for their own growth, understanding that a mentor could only do so much in this regard. Most students noted they initially approached the mentoring relationship passively but at some point had a moment of "coming to self." The mentor or the mentee could initiate this moment, but, either way, this turning point always required the mentees to gain a sense of ownership for their growth. Charles described this moment and the nudge of his mentor:

> It wasn't like—here you go—it was like, I want you to go do this and figure it out. Um which I think was really helpful—it put it on me to do it. Um so you know I had to want it more than he did obviously.

Self-authorship. The components of self-authorship that emerged included gaining a better sense of oneself; broadened perspective and thinking critically; understanding what one believes, values, and views as important; decision-making; increased confidence and ability to articulate ideas; and a better idea for the future.

Better sense of oneself. Eleven participants explicitly highlighted examples in which they gained a better sense of self. Whether recognizing similarities to or differences from their mentors, participants indicated basic interactions played a key role in their developing self-awareness. Matthew captured the impact of these interactions: "I think a lot of the things that she taught and the things that she believed ultimately impacted the way that I reinterpreted myself." He referred to a "self-transformation" through the impact of his mentor. Some mentors clearly stated what they saw in the

mentee while others took on more of a guiding approach, using various means to help their mentees discover, on their own, who they were.

Broadened perspective and thinking critically. Especially through the challenges mentors provided their mentees, every participant mentioned gaining a broadened perspective and thinking critically. They felt pushed to think more deeply and broadly and to work through struggles and responsibilities to develop a deeper understanding of themselves, and an understanding of the world around them. Matthew described his broadened perspective and critical thinking in the following incident:

> My first thought wasn't well that is funny—my first thought was well of course it is a man sitting and two women kind of serving. And it was oh my gosh like—[my mentor] has like opened my eyes to these things so much that I can't even enjoy a simple internet joke anymore.

Understanding what one believes, values, and sees as important. Twelve participants mentioned gaining a better understanding of what they believe, value, and see as important personally. Whether through recognizing differences of opinion from their mentor or receiving the space and prompting to declare their personal views, the students felt they had a better idea of what they believed and valued, especially in relation to others, as a result of their mentoring experience. Additionally, this understanding drove their thinking for the future in discussing what they now viewed as most important. In reference to his mentor, Simon stated, "She was like—you know, you don't have to have all the money in the world to be happy…she just really kind of opens your eyes to different things and different values and ideas that you can take away."

Decision-making. Half of the participants explicitly mentioned their mentor's impact on their decision-making. Often the impact started with the mentor's influence on the mentee's thinking, getting the mentee to "think more critically on making decisions." The mentees implicitly or explicitly gained a set of guiding principles from their mentors that they then could apply to future decisions.

Increased confidence and ability to articulate ideas. Drawing from their developed understanding of self, the participants mentioned increased confidence and ability to articulate their own ideas and opinions. They gained an appreciation for self and what they brought to the table. Matthew compared himself from before starting his mentorship to how he felt now: "I think some of the reason that I wasn't able to articulate what I wanted to do beforehand was because I didn't really know." The students felt having a mentor helped them process their identity, gain a distinct voice among others, and embrace their newly processed identity with confidence.

Better idea for the future. As students gained a sense of confidence in what they believed and could articulate their thoughts and opinions, this confidence often directly guided their thinking for the future. Tom mentioned the opportunity to "reinvent" himself after graduating as a result of his mentor helping him see that he can be whoever he wants to be. Jeanne also captured this connection:

> I think prior to…having [my mentor] more in my life…I would have never thought to do as much advocacy and activism as I'm doing—not only am I doing but I really like doing…I don't think activism was even in my idea of what I would be doing or that I could be doing or that I should be doing.

Additional development. In addition to self-authorship, participants' other areas of development often reflected the particular experience and knowledge of the mentor. The participants described emulating the mentor as well as gaining an overall broadened perspective in these areas.

Leadership development. Each participating student served in some sort of leadership role. Thus, leadership development likely interested both the mentor and the mentee. Every student mentioned how he or she grew in his or her leadership role as a result of mentoring. Jeanne specifically highlighted a push from her mentor toward

> . . . learning one's own definition of leadership—kind of reimagining leadership from taking it from this like vertical power structure into a horizontal one— thinking about how our identities inform what we think of leaders and how also. . . . we are leaders currently.

Career and professional development. Because the present study took place in the context of higher education and preparation for a career, a natural by-product of the mentoring relationships emerged as career and professional development. Charles emphasized his need for help in this area of development:

> I don't necessarily know how focused I would have been able to get on what I wanted to do with my career if I hadn't had any exposure to [my mentor] that I had. . . . I think my mentor relationship with [my mentor] has definitely like accelerated that. I'm not sure you know how far I would have been able to get just on my own.

Seven participants mentioned their mentors' interest in developing them in this way while using this area of interest as a platform for further personal development.

Desire to mentor others. All participants valued their mentor relationships, with five explicitly desiring to mentor others. Whether they already mentored individuals or planned to in the near future, they desired to take what they had learned from their mentoring relationship and apply it to their work with others. Harriet mentioned:

> I wanted to become an RA as to sort of translate how I have benefited from mentorship and take that to my residents. So I really strive to take these qualities of thoughtfulness or demonstrating maybe some healthy behaviors or being really authentic and demonstrate that to my residents in hopes to benefit them in the same way.

Factors Contributing to the Formation of Self-authorship

Characteristics of the mentor.

Student affairs professional. Each mentor worked as a student affairs professional. Most mentees started their mentorships due to a connection with the mentor as the direct supervisor for their leadership role. The students appreciated their mentors' positions as student affairs professionals in that they could interact with the mentor in multiple settings and utilize the mentor's extensive knowledge of campus and working with students. Nine participants described student affairs professionals as having the necessary connections to provide students with opportunities in relation to their personal or academic interests while expanding learning to a broader spectrum. Harriet stated:

> . . . that is what is really neat about student affairs professionals is like maybe the emotional intelligence involved in being a student affairs professional and being in an academic environment but there to support you both in your academics and otherwise. . . . I feel like student affairs professionals just kind of get it.

Relevant experience. The majority of participants viewed their mentor as beneficial because of the mentors' experiences relating well to the students' personal and professional aspirations. However, the relevance of a mentor's experience did not always prove necessary. Participants also indicated appreciation for the mentor at times having different interests and goals. Jeanne emphasized this benefit for her own self-authorship:

> [T]he conversations with [my mentor] have helped because she and I increasingly see eye to eye about some things. But we also don't see eye to eye about a lot of things. So it has also been like me deciding what I can and cannot keep.

Viewed as role model.

Personable and vulnerable. Every participant identified his or her mentorship as enjoyable to spend time with because of the personal connection they felt, expanding beyond simply a mentorship into a friendship. This personal connection required the mentor to express friendliness, vulnerability, and authenticity. Because of these characteristics, the mentees felt connected and displayed a willingness to open up further. Additionally, the mentees expressed that knowing the interests and passions of their mentors helped them to identify their own interests and passions.

Power of observation. Observation proved essential, and most participants viewed their mentors as role models. Ten participants specifically described a situation in which observation of their mentor caused them to think more critically. The students saw how their mentor reacted in particular situations and decided whether or not they wanted to exemplify the same attitudes, opinions, and behavior. With reference to her mentor, Ashley described what she observed and desired to embody as well:

If you just like walk with her, people will talk to her every two seconds. . . . [E]ven when she is stressed. . . she still finds time to either talk to you or like look and seem really happy. I think that is huge because before if something was stressing me out it would magnify everything. . . . So now I just kind of step back and say you know, this isn't the end of the world and I still have these friendships and that really helps with being more outgoing and connecting with people.

Perceptive. Six students discussed their own limitations. At times, they needed their mentor to look deeper into what they (the students) said and push them to engage further if they started to limit themselves. For instance, Matthew described his mentor's awareness of the "gaps" in his perspective on an issue. Samantha also captured this idea:

[My mentor] realized just off the bat. He was like, what is going on? He could like read my face that I was kind of getting overwhelmed and just kind of stressed out. So even in those moments I mean he like could pick it out and then we would just talk through things.

Caring. Eleven students mentioned feeling cared for because of the mentor's genuine desire to know them on a personal level. Steven felt cared for through recognizing his mentor "had a sincere interest" in him and his development, often demonstrating this care by taking the initiative in scheduling their meetings. Eleven mentees felt especially cared for when their mentors wanted to see them grow, and this enthusiasm served as an inspiration for the students in desiring to grow as well.

The mentoring approach.

Taking time to get to know mentee. Nine students mentioned a mentor's intentional effort to get to know them. Ava emphasized how her mentor knew her

"personality," the importance of "religion" in her life, and things about her "family." In feeling known by their mentor, students proved more open, teachable, committed to the mentorship, and willing to engage bigger issues. Participants also highlighted their mentors' efforts to learn about their "personal interests," "aspirations," and "goals." Through these aspects, the relationships deepened, and mentors could cater their discussions to topics and issues that would benefit the mentee.

Approachable and available.

Trustworthy and unbiased. As a result of seeing their mentors as trustworthy and unbiased, seven students proved more vulnerable about things going on in their personal lives. Trust came with time and through a deepened relationship. Students wanted to know their mentors had, to a degree, an unbiased opinion and would not pass judgment if the students practiced openness and honesty. Much of the trust came first from the vulnerability of the mentor. This honesty often communicated their approachability to the students, reaching a "turning point" in the relationship with a shared level of trust.

Availability and meeting frequency. Along with approachability, a mentor had to show availability. Three participants described their encounters with their mentors as organic—taking place when the students needed their mentor to help process through an issue or challenge. Seven participants specifically highlighted their appreciation for knowing that their mentors were "readily available." Seven participants also wished they could have more "frequent" and "consistent" mentoring meetings.

Providing feedback.

Addressing what the mentee needs to know. Nine students mentioned times when their mentor simply told them what they needed to know, advising or guiding them

through an issue. Often the mentor provided this direct feedback after first allowing the student to process on his or her own. If the student then needed help or continued to struggle their way through, the mentor would share his or her thoughts or opinions. For efficiency, mentors sometimes practiced a sort of "boom, boom, boom, here are the highlights, here is what you need to take away" approach to providing advice. The students who received this straightforward approach seemed to appreciate it. Christopher said, "I hadn't been in that type of situation before. So he was very integral in helping me get through that process." Participants expressed their ability to then walk away from the mentoring time and further process the information they received.

Encouragement and constructive criticism. Similarly, eight participants said their mentors provided them with direct encouragement, particularly speaking directly into the student's life and calling out strengths the mentor observed. Students also appreciated mentors' commendations for jobs well done. Ava talked about times when her mentor explicitly said, "I trust you with this [task]. You don't have to come to me and ask me this—you can just do it cause I trust that you can do it." Through this encouragement, students felt valued, trusted, and respected by their mentors. For some, encouragement came with constructive criticism. Three participants highlighted the value of criticism in determining specific ways they could grow and improve. Steven highlighted a time when he "wasn't getting there" through a particular method, and, in response, his mentor seemed "very frank and candid," saying, "I think this or here is what you are missing."

Guided discovery.

Creating space to process and let the mentee discover own thoughts. Every participant described ways their mentors created space for them to process their thoughts

and reach their own conclusions. No mentee described a mentor relationship in which they simply received answers—they had to endure and push through the struggle.

Use of questions. As a helpful strategy to guiding discovery, nine students mentioned their mentors' use of questions. Multiple times, mentees reported asking a question and receiving a question in return, which helped them to engage their thinking and to discover on their own.

Providing engagement opportunities. All sixteen participants received some form of engagement opportunity from their mentor that encouraged deeper thinking and ownership of their growth through topics related to their interests, goals, and needs. Participants highlighted three different types of opportunities: conversing about bigger topics/issues; connecting the student to relevant involvement opportunities/resources; and assigning a specific challenge or task to complete. When discussing social justice issues, Jeanne mentioned:

> I like the dialogue. I like the challenge that she presents me which is to be
>
> educated on issues and ask critical questions of things that are going on in the
>
> world and to not just be complacent in what is happening.

Harriet described a situation in which her mentor presented an opportunity and left Harriet with the decision to follow through: "[My mentor] was like, 'Hey, my office is running this service spring break trip. You should do this. Here is the application. Check it out.' . . . I ended up going on the service spring break trip and . . . it changed my life." Through the various engagement opportunities, students saw their own depth of thought stretched and solidified in new ways.

Role of failure. Three participants highlighted failure as a significant aspect to their growth. Christopher's mentor told him, "I'm not going to let you completely fail but I will let you get to a point where you are about to fail." Christopher then reported, "Sometimes he says, 'It is necessary that you do fail.'" David personally saw the benefit of failure for his own growth: "I'm a big advocate for the struggle. I think that is like when you really grow. Um, cause it is like in those lowest points when you are most accepting of change." Students who mentioned failure highlighted ways their mentors help them to see the bigger picture and learning opportunities amidst the challenge.

Broader and critical thinking to keep the bigger picture in mind. Students saw evidence of their own growth when reflecting on the times they felt challenged to think critically. Twelve specifically described moments when they benefitted from challenge in this way. Tom mentioned:

Sometimes it is frustrating cause you can't really tell how supportive he is. But definitely beneficial just to see different perspectives on things and kind of think holistically on the picture...I can plan out 90% of it really well but he will find that other 10% that oh I didn't think about or oh I didn't do it in this way.

Likewise, Jeanne described her personal growth:

There are a lot of questions that I don't think I would have thought to ask of myself beforehand. . . . I think it has helped me come to terms with like the ways that I work and the ways that I think and the ways that I take in knowledge.

Evidence showed thinking critically helped the students find a better sense of self and take a step out of the situation with a critical eye to foster their own growth.

Pushing mentee to move through crisis and challenge. Participants described

dealing with crises or challenges as one of the hardest thing they had to work through.

When giving up would have felt easier, seven participants described how their mentors

stepped in and pushed them to move through the situation. In dealing with a struggle,

Jane saw much benefit when her mentor said, "I'm going to push you…there is no way

I'm going to sit here and let you not go anywhere and not do anything to benefit you to

get over this." The mentees described their mentors as having high expectations for them

and wanting them to push to achieve their goals. In this pushing, the students voiced that

they did not want to let their mentors down and instead aspired to more than perhaps they

would have otherwise.

Conclusion

The 10 themes drawn from the participants' interviews demonstrated a significant

impact resulted in the lives of the students in the mentoring relationships. The themes

also indicated specific aspects to a mentoring relationship that can foster student

development. Overall, the student affairs mentors impacted the student mentees' self-

authorship by providing support, challenge, and a broadened perspective.

Chapter 5

Discussion

The present study served to determine the impact mentoring relationships with student affairs practitioners have on the students with whom they work. Additionally, the study examined the aspects of the relationship that help foster student self-authorship. Therefore, the findings of the research guided the development of a model that describes how mentoring relationships with student affairs professionals impact the formation of self-authorship. This chapter discusses these results and how they connect to the research questions that guided the study. Mentoring relationships served an important role in the lives of students as they experienced the different elements of self-authorship. Clearly, effective mentoring contributes to both the process and content of self-authorship. This important finding proved significant to the work of student affairs professionals. This chapter also relates the study's findings to current literature in an effort to draw additional meaning from the context of existing research. The discussion concludes with implications for practice, limitations of the research, and implication for future research.

The Impact of Mentoring Relationships

The participants' reflections indicated the mentoring relationships had significant impact on their growth and development. The impact included both broad levels of development and elements of growth related directly to self-authorship.

Broad impact. From a general perspective, mentees described their mentoring relationships as impactful on multiple levels. Most of the impact seemed personal, but participants also emphasized the existence of mutual benefit. They developed a close connection and even friendships with their mentors over time. These friendships allowed them to learn more about one another and contribute to each other's lives in different ways. They experienced growth themselves but also believed their mentors experienced growth as well. These findings proved consistent with the literature, which emphasized mentorships can offer various benefits to the mentee, while also providing benefit to the mentor (Colley, 2003; Crisp & Cruz, 2009). The depth of relationship also impacted how the mentees felt. They expressed feeling cared for, valued, known, challenged, and supported. These feelings empowered them personally and professionally and allowed them to approach their mentors to learn from them as trustworthy and valuable resources.

Tapping into mentors' experience and knowledge, mentees also grew in the areas of leadership and career development. The participants highlighted mentors with wide ranges of experience in each area, and the mentees sought to grow in these areas while their mentors actively trained them. As a result, students also saw their mentors as role models. They appreciated their mentors, aspiring to emulate them in many ways. These aspirations show the broad impact mentoring relationships had on participating students.

Specific impact on self-authorship. A more specific impact lies with how the mentoring relationships influenced the development of self-authorship. As described in the literature, self-authorship represents a journey of developing one's own internal voice to define one's identity in connection to what one believes, values, and views as important (Baxter Magolda, 2008, 2009b; Pizzolato, 2007). Instead of relying on the

authority of others for understanding, individuals experience and claim their own internal sourcing (Baxter Magolda, 2009b; Kegan, 1994). Individuals must journey through a process of recognizing their internal voice, cultivating and claiming it as a foundational source to gain a personal sense of purpose and meaning based on one's own internal foundational understanding.

Although literature mentions many aspects of self-authorship, the participants demonstrated four essential elements. These elements included a broadened perspective and critical thinking; self-awareness; a better understanding of what the individual believes, values, and sees as important; and mature decision-making.

Broadened perspective and thinking critically. The students highlighted multiple examples of situations or conversations in which mentors directly stretched their thinking. Mentors used strategies to engage students in thinking critically amidst challenges, struggles, and responsibilities, while gaining an understanding of self and the world around them. They felt challenged to think beyond themselves, receiving training on how to step out of situations with a broadened view. This critical approach also pushed them to trust what they bring in their own understanding, trusting their own internal voice. In order to trust one's internal voice, one must cultivate, question, and refine it (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Critical thought pushes a student through this journey. Students have to engage with critical thinking to broaden their perspectives and begin to foster their self-authorship.

Self-awareness. Students gained a greater sense of self. Crucial to the development of self-authorship, students need to undergo a restructuring of thought with regard to their understanding about themselves (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004;

Meszaros, 2007). This internal reflection and self-awareness helps in continuing to foster

the cultivation of one's internal voice (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Baxter Magolda,

2009b). Through simple observation of their mentors, students gained a keen sense of

identity. They could pinpoint specific ways they seemed either similar to or different

from their mentors. This self-awareness provided the students with a personal acceptance

and validation of themselves and constructed a platform for continued self-authorship.

Better understanding of what they believe, value, and see as important. The

participants explored a combination of what they understand of themselves and the world

around them. The exploration came with strong influence from others in their lives,

mainly mentors who provided space to explore. Considering what others believe and

critically thinking about whether they believe the same things, the mentees identified

what they could or could not embrace. This practice helped them develop a foundational

stance on what they believed. Developing a firm foundation and commitment to one's

belief helps individuals take on purpose and increasingly understand the meaning of their

own lives (Creamer & Laughlin, 2005; Laughlin & Creamer, 2007). This commitment

also helped students claim their own internal voice and gave them increased confidence

in knowing and articulating their thoughts and opinions. Additionally, they gained a

broader sense of the world around them and the future ahead.

Mature decision-making. In establishing a foundational understanding of

themselves and what they believed, the students exemplified an increased level of

decision-making ability. Literature stated mature decision-making requires a significant

degree of critical thought and self-understanding (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Kegan, 1994;

Pizzolato, 2007). The participants in the current study emphasized situations in which

they implicitly or explicitly gained a set of guiding principles from their mentors that they then could apply to their own future decisions.

The Essential Aspects of a Mentoring Relationship

Two particular aspects of the mentoring relationships proved beneficial for the student mentees in developing their self-authorship: how their mentors provided care and support and how the mentors facilitated students' discovery. Both components crucially impacted the development of their self-authorship.

Providing care and support. Students described mentor relationships in which they felt valued, known, empowered, and supported. They felt like they could authentically express themselves and easily open up to their mentors. The chance to practice vulnerability helped the students feel comfortable in reconstructing their identity and gave them space in which to wrestle. In the wrestling, participants described levels of discomfort and feeling overwhelmed. Having a degree of support through this process proved both beneficial and necessary for moving forward. Literature supported this reality of an individual needing someone to help navigate the process of self-authorship. The process of moving from an externally sourced understanding of life to developing one's internal foundation often feels uncomfortable and can require assistance (Baxter Magolda, 2009b; McNair, 2011; Parks, 2000). Participants described their mentors as approachable and offering the necessary guidance when the mentees needed it most.

The feelings mentees described in the interviews directly evidenced the support extended to them. As mentioned earlier, the mentees expressed feeling cared for, valued, known, challenged, and supported. Mentors therefore brought with them certain aspects that caused the mentees to feel this way. These aspects related generally to the

personality of the mentor, but the mentee's feelings also seemed impacted by the mentoring approach. The participants mentioned their mentors' desire to see them grow. They emphasized how mentors made themselves readily available, willing to do whatever necessary to lead mentees in their personal growth. The literature emphasized mentors should serve as support in this sense, guiding individuals toward a growing sense of becoming the people they are meant to be (Parks, 2000; Pizzolato, 2005). Mentors seemed to provide a combination of perception and feedback to guide them in this way. They perceived specific ways in which the students need to grow and provided mixed levels of feedback to facilitate the growth.

Facilitating discovery. The mentorships created a space for students to discover, explore, and process their newly developed identity. Three specific approaches helped in this initiative. They involved the use of questions, invitation into broader conversations, and connection to engagement opportunities related to the mentee's interests, goals, and needs. These approaches allowed mentees to engage in critical thinking and broadened perspectives as well as process big questions with their mentors referring to ideas worth believing in about morality, one's meaning in life, what merits pursuit, and civic engagement. Parks (2000) mentioned these questions merit asking because they reveal gaps in thinking and understanding. Participants expressed that, once they engaged with their mentors on these bigger issues, they felt pushed to come to their own conclusions on the matter; doing so confirmed within them an increased understanding of themselves while also providing them with a broader context on the issue.

In facilitating discovery, mentors had to make sure their voices did not dominate to or become over-bearing. With regard to fostering self-authorship, the literature

emphasized mentors must remain mindful of the influence their voices can have (Baxter Magolda, 2009a; Parks, 2000). They must work toward keeping their voices at a distance since they still serve as external authorities. Not all participants mentioned this approach, but a number of them described how their mentors emphasized the need for the mentees to take ownership of their own discovery. Mentees saw the benefit of this independence because they realized deepened understanding results from a person willingly wrestling with a matter.

Implications for Practice

The present research captured information beneficial for professionals working in higher education and student affairs. It connected mentoring to self-authorship while emphasizing specific ways individuals working with college students can foster student self-authorship.

Mentoring characteristics. The study highlighted many characteristics students appreciated in their mentors, including relevant experience, knowledge, shared interests, authenticity, being personable, perceptivity, and genuine care. These personal qualities directly impacted students' development of self-authorship. Student affairs professionals should therefore remain mindful and look introspectively at whether or not they embody these characteristics. If they find that they do not, they should consider how they might develop the characteristics that seem to align with effective mentoring relationships.

Mentoring approaches. The results of the study emphasized the value and particular benefits of mentoring relationships. In the field of higher education, where mentoring appears frequent and extensive, the approaches to mentoring highlighted in the study provided a helpful guide for practitioners as they consider and approach mentoring

relationships. Student affairs professionals often serve in supervisory roles with students, and these roles hold great potential for student impact and learning. Even in supervisory relationships, a mentoring orientation proves possible and valuable. The mentoring approaches highlighted in the present study emphasized the importance of holding a student-focused mentality. The study also showed the importance of placing attention on students' development—specifically the development of self-authorship. Even if a professional in the field does not possess all of the characteristics discussed, he or she still has a opportunity to provide support to a student in a manner that facilitates discovery.

Understanding of self-authorship. The concept of facilitating discovery proves incredibly important when seeking to promote the development of self-authorship. Students must take ownership for discovering their identity and their understanding of the world around them, as well as for establishing a guiding internal voice that sustains their understanding of self and world. In keeping with this idea, student affairs professionals must recognize and remain sensitive to the level of impact their voice may have on students. To promote self-authorship necessitates the incorporation of discussion around bigger questions that engage students' critical thinking and broaden their perspectives.

Limitations of Study

Though the researcher gave careful attention to the study's design and conduct, there remain several limitations that require consideration when reflecting on the results.

The mentorship relationships described by the participants each looked different. Some overlap existed between participants sharing the same mentor, but between mentors, the approaches, meeting structure, meeting length, and meeting frequency all

varied significantly. This variation makes total isolation of the most effective practices or arrangements impossible.

Additionally, all the students interviewed served as student leaders. In comparison to students who do not have leadership roles, student leaders often possess certain characteristics and understandings that may impact their drive to grow and develop.

The final limitation of notable significance came with the institution type and size. The researcher gathered participants from a large R1, public land-grant university in the Midwest, and this particular context might have impacted the results. Thus, knowing how students in other types of institutions experience mentoring remains impossible within the scope of the present study.

Implications for Future Research

As mentioned, the participants of the study all served in leadership roles. For future research, a comparison study with students who do not serve in leadership roles but do participate in mentoring relationships may prove both interesting and helpful.

The researcher solely conducted interviews with mentees. Because of the focus on self-authorship, gaining the mentee perspective proved desirable; however, a future study that also interviewed mentors would add great insight regarding the mentors' perceptions and approaches.

Higher education environments encompass a wide range of individuals who influence the lives of college students. Peers represent one such influence. Further research could examine the impact of peer mentorship compared to mentorship with student affairs professionals. Such a study might also increase the practicality of

implementing mentoring across campus, as every institution has only a limited number of student affairs professionals.

The final limitation came in the large size of the institution type. Often smaller, and liberal arts institutions become know for having a tighter-knit community and intentional investment. With that fact in mind, a comparison study between institution types would provide a valuable contrast.

Conclusion

Mentoring relationships offer incredible value. In the present study, the impact emerged deep and clearly mentioned by the majority of the participants. Mentorship fostered growth and development for the mentees on many levels. Specifically, mentor relationships with student affairs professionals had an impact on student self-authorship. Parks (2000) offered that "the promise and vulnerability of young adulthood lie in the experience of the birth of critical awareness and the dissolution and the recomposition of the meaning of self, other, world, and 'God'" (p. 5). Clearly, having a caring and trusted guide to help lead students through these experiences offers incredible benefit. College students, as young adults, desperately need to have this broadened and yet core development of self-authorship fostered in their lives. Through mentorship, student affairs professionals have the opportunity to support and facilitate self-discovery for college students. Student affairs professionals hold great power in mentoring self-authorship and would show wisdom in stewarding this influence well.

References

Astin, A. W. (1977). *Four critical years: Effects of college on beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel*, *25*, 297–308.

Barker, E. R. (2006). Mentoring: A complex relationship. *Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners*, *18*, 56–61. doi:10.1111/j.1745-7599.2006.00102.x

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2000). Teaching to promote holistic learning and development. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*, *2000*(82), 88-98.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2002). Helping students make their way to adulthood. *About Campus, 6*(6), 2-9.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2003). Identity and learning: Student affairs' role in transforming higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, *44*, 231–247. doi:10.1353/csd.2003.0020

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2004). Self-authorship as the common goal. In M. Baxter Magolda & P. M. King (Eds.), *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship* (pp. 1–35). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2007). Self-authorship: The foundation for twenty-first-century

education. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*, *2007*(109), 69–83.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2008). Three elements of self-authorship. *Journal of College Student Development. 49*, 269-284.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2009a). *Authoring your life: Developing an internal voice to navigate life's challenges*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2009b). The activity of meaning making: A holistic perspective on college student development. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*, 621–639. doi:10.1353/csd.0.0106

Baxter Magolda, M. B., & King, P. M. (2004). *Learning partnerships: Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Baxter Magolda, M. B., & King, P. M. (2007). Interview strategies for assessing self-authorship: Constructing conversations to assess meaning making. *Journal of College Student Development*, *48*, 491–508. doi:10.1353/csd.2007.0055

Baxter Magolda, M., & King, P. M. (2012). *Assessing meaning making and self-authorship: Theory, research, and application* (ASHE Higher Education Report, Vol. 38, Num. 3). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Canton, M. E., & James, D. P. (1999). *Mentoring in higher education: Best practices*. Pacifica, CA: Canton Associates.

Chao, G. T., Walz, P. M., & Gardner, P. D. (1992). Formal and informal mentorships: A comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts. *Personnel Psychology*, *45*, 619–636.

Colley, H. (2003). *Mentoring for social inclusion: A critical approach to nurturing*

mentor relationships. London, UK: RoutledgeFalmer.

Creamer, E. G., Baxter Magolda, M., & Yue, J. (2010). Preliminary evidence of the
reliability and validity of a quantitative measure of self-authorship. *Journal of
College Student Development, 51,* 550-562. doi:10.1353/csd.2010.0010

Creamer, E. G., & Laughlin, A. (2005). Self-authorship and women's career decision
making. *Journal of College Student Development*, *46*, 13–27.
doi:10.1353/csd.2005.0002

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating
quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson
Education, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five
approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the
literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education*, *50*, 525–545.
doi:10.1007/s11162-009-9130-2

Darwin, A., & Palmer, E. (2009). Mentoring circles in higher education. *Higher
Education Research & Development*, *28*, 125–136.

Fletcher, S., & Mullen, C. A. (Eds.). (2012). *The SAGE handbook of mentoring and
coaching in education*. London, UK: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Hodge, D. C., Baxter Magolda, M. B., & Haynes, C. A. (2009). Engaged learning:
Enabling self-authorship and effective practice. *Liberal Education*, *95*(4), 16–23.

Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self: Problem and process in human development*.
Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kegan, R. (1994). *In over our heads: The mental demands of modern life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *26*, 608–625. doi:10.2307/255910.

Laughlin, A., & Creamer, E. G. (2007). Engaging differences: Self-authorship and the decision-making process. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*, *2007*(109), 43–51.

Long, N. (2012). *Fostered learning: Exploring effects of faculty and student affairs staff roles within living-learning programs on undergraduate student perceptions of growth in cognitive dimensions* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from DRUM. (http://hdl.handle.net/1903/12663)

Love, P. G., & Guthrie, V. L. (1999). Kegan's orders of consciousness. *New Directions for Student Services*, *1999*(88), 65–76.

McNair, D. E. (2011). Developing a philosophy of supervision: One step toward self-authorship. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2011*(136), 27–34.

Meszaros, P. S. (2007). The journey of self-authorship: Why is it necessary? *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*, *2007*(109), 5–14.

Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mosier, S. K. (2012). *Creating experiences that matter: A qualitative study exploring honors program peer mentoring and self-authorship development* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from Digital Commons @ University of Nebraska. (http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cehsedaddiss/93/)

Parks, S. D. (1995). *The university as a mentoring environment*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana

   Office for Campus Ministries.

Parks, S. D. (2000). *Big questions, worthy dreams: Mentoring young adults in their*

   search for meaning, purpose, and faith. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Parks, S. D. (2008). Leadership, spirituality, and the college as a mentoring environment.

   Journal of College & Character, *10*(2), 1–8.

Philip, K., & Hendry, L. B. (2000). Making sense of mentoring or mentoring making

   sense? Reflections on the mentoring process by adult mentors with young people.

   Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, *10*, 211–223.

Piper, T. D., & Buckley, J. A. (2004). Developing learning partnerships in campus

   housing. In M. Baxter Magolda & P. M. King (Eds.), *Learning partnerships:*

   Theory and models of practice to educate for self-authorship (pp. 185-212).

   Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Pizzolato, J. E. (2005). Creating crossroads for self-authorship: Investigating the

   provocative moment. *Journal of College Student Development*, *46*, 624-641. doi:

   10.1353/csd.2005.0064

Pizzolato, J. E. (2007). Meaning making inside and outside the academic arena:

   Investigating the contextuality of epistemological development in college

   students. *The Journal of General Education*, *56*(3), 228–251.

   doi:10.1353/jge.0.0004

Pizzolato, J. E., & Ozaki, C. C. (2007). Moving toward self-authorship: Investigating

   outcomes of learning partnerships. *Journal of College Student Development*, *48*,

   196–214. doi:10.1353/csd.2007.0019

Schoper, S. E. (2011). *A narrative analysis of the process of self-authorship for student affairs graduate students* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest. (3479067)

Smith, C. (2011). *Lost in transition: The dark side of emerging adulthood.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 217-285). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Twenge, J. M. (2006). *Generation me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled—and more miserable than ever before.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Ward, K., Trautvetter, L., & Braskamp, L. (2005). Putting students first: Creating a climate of support and challenge. *Journal of College and Character*, *6*(8), 1–5.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Questions are derived from the four phases of Self-Authorship development based on Dr. Marcia Baxter Magolda's Theory of Self-Authorship.

1. From your perspective, what does it mean for you to be a mentee (i.e. mentored by someone)?

2. How would you define a mentor?
   a. Would you say that you observed this in your mentor?

3. How did you get involved in a mentoring relationship with a student affairs professional?
   a. How were you paired with your specific mentor? (Did you pick them or did they pick you?)
   b. Would you want to be mentored by a student affairs professional again?

4. Has your mentor relationship been a priority for you? If so, why?
   a. Have you enjoyed working with your mentor and getting to know them?
   b. Do you view your mentor as a role model? If so, in what ways?
   c. Do you still keep in contact with any former mentors? What benefits do you see from this on-going relationship?

5. From your perspective, how did the mentor view your time together?
   a. What have they done or not done to give you that perspective?

6. How often do you meet with this mentor?
   a. How long do your meetings last when you meet?
   b. How long have you been in this mentoring relationship?

7. Describe your mentoring relationship.
   a. What does your time together look like?
   b. How is the time structured?
   c. Does it look the same every time?

       d. Who guides the time? What does that look like?
          i. Do you find that to be beneficial? If so, in what ways?
       e. Does one person tend to dominate the conversation?
          i. Do you find that beneficial?
       f. What topics do you tend to discuss?
       g. Do you have anything "assigned" between meetings?
          i. Do you find that beneficial? If so, in what way?
          ii. Are there any additional strategies or methods he/she uses?

8. Can you describe a time when your mentor helped you through a crisis, or challenging situation? What specific crisis or challenge comes to mind? Anything personal?
    a. How did your mentor help you through this challenge?
    b. Would you have been comfortable solving this challenge on your own?
    c. If you were faced with the situation again, would you handle things in the same way? Why or why not?

9. Has he/she had any influence on your decision-making? If so, in what ways?

10. Does your mentor simply tell you what you need to know or help you to discover it?
    a. How does he/she do this?
    b. Do you find that to be beneficial? If so, in what ways?

11. Does your mentor challenge your thinking, or get you to think deeper?
    a. How does he/she do this?
    b. How do you respond to being challenged?
    c. Through being challenged, has that helped you to come to some of your own conclusions about life and what you believe?
    d. Are there other ways this has impacted you?

12. Has your mentoring relationship helped you to grow as a person? Has it impacted your understanding of who you are? Has it impacted your understanding of the world around you? If so, in what ways?
    a. Has this impacted your thinking for the future or confirmed any passions? If so, how?

13. Can you think of any additional ways that you have been impacted or may have grown as a result of this mentoring relationship? If so, in what ways?
    a. What caused these changes?

14. Looking at your whole mentoring experience, what would you like to see repeated? What would you like to see done differently?

15. Is there anything you would like to add about your mentoring experience?