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Short-Term Relationships with Eternal Impact: Mentoring Male Students at Faith-Based Institutions

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SHORT-TERM RELATIONSHIPS WITH ETERNAL IMPACT: MENTORING

MALE STUDENTS AT FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS

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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

Joshua R. Craton

May 2016

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Thesis of

Joshua R. Craton

entitled

Short-term Relationships with Eternal Impact: Mentoring
Male Students at Faith-Based Institutions

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

Master of Arts degree
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Abstract

Mentorship serves an important role in college student development. It provides individual support and guidance to students as they explore their identities and look for answers to life's big questions. Over fifty running definitions of mentorship appear in social science literature (Crisp & Cruz, 2009); therefore, this study sought to describe mentorship in the context of university faculty members mentoring their male students. In order to define mentorship in this context, the researcher interviewed ten male college students who claimed to have a mentor. Their perspectives on mentorship provided a deeper understanding of how best to mentor men in college. The results determined the benefits mentees receive as well as the methods mentors employ to develop their students most effectively. Although the participants had differing experiences with mentorship, they universally agreed the personal development spurred on by their mentors would last well beyond college. University faculty members can use this research to find deeper value in mentorship and train themselves to mentor their male students more effectively.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Being a mentor with young adults is one of the most significant relationships available to

a man in middle adulthood. The distinctive satisfaction of a mentor lies in furthering the

development of young men and women—facilitating their efforts to form and live out

their Dreams, to lead better lives according to their own values and abilities.

(Levinson, 1978, p. 253)

Navigating college can be a challenging task for emerging adults. Arnett (2000)

referred to "emerging adulthood" as the stage of life between adolescence and young

adulthood, typically ranging from 18-25 years of age. Emerging adults experience a

phase in which "many different directions remain possible, little about the future is

decided for certain, and the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is

greater than any other time in life" (p. 469). The great amount of possibilities can be

equally exciting and overwhelming for college students. As emerging adults face the

challenges of independence and exploration, mentors can assist in guiding students

through their journey of self-discovery (Dunn & Sundene, 2012).

Mentors provide stability and direction for emerging adults. Mentorship offers a

relationship in which a more experienced individual helps guide a less experienced

mentee through a series of repeated, meaningful interactions. Through these interactions,

university faculty mentors have a great opportunity to guide students through the

exploratory phase of emerging adulthood. Faculty members can play a significant role in the lives of their students; they represent a balanced combination of parent and peer. Too much of a parental style can impede open communication, but approaching the relationship as a peer does not provide the mentee with a model he or she needs (Levinson, 1978). Faculty mentors have the unique opportunity to provide the combination of both experiential wisdom and open conversation.

The combination of wisdom, openness, and guidance leads to a variety of academic, personal, and developmental benefits from mentorship. Successful mentoring programs lead to better student GPAs, higher retention rates, and increased student loyalty, among other benefits (Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). It also allows students to feel known as individuals and gain a better understanding of their own personal identity (Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007). Conversations with mentees regarding their perceptions of mentorship help give a clearer picture of the more abstract benefits. Gaining a full picture of the benefits of mentorship helps faculty mentors at universities determine direction and purpose for their relationship with mentees.

In recognition of the many benefits of mentoring college students, faculty members need to understand how to mentor their students most effectively. On a college campus, students commonly claim to have a mentor—or at least express the desire for one. What exactly do students mean in such comments regarding mentorship? What do students want from their mentor? What qualifies a faculty member as a mentor? Answering these questions proves difficult due to the lack of research on university mentorship from a qualitative perspective. A helpful approach to understanding mentorship allows mentees to define the function and benefits of it in their own words.

When mentors know exactly what students seek, the mentors can approach their duties with more confidence and skill. According to Levinson (1978), "Mentoring is defined not in terms of formal roles but in terms of the character of the relationship and the function it serves" (p. 98). Determining the function of mentorship leads to more effective growth for the mentee. The first step in preparing for such a relationship comes with defining the function of mentorship; however, it does not have a single, uniform definition (Crisp & Cruz, 2009).

This research sought to provide more clarity regarding the roles mentors play in the lives of college students. Mentorship proves more successful in settings in which the roles and learning outcomes appear more defined, such as businesses, nursing practices, and student teaching programs (Barker, 2006; Fletcher, 1998; Jules, 2008). College students have a wider range of needs and desired learning outcomes; therefore, learning how to mentor them most effectively requires focusing on the goals of a more specific demographic of student. Therefore, this research focused solely on upperclassmen male students. Examining the college-aged male's perspective of mentoring relationships assists in building a framework for mentorship in a higher education setting. Determining the qualities students seek in a mentor, benefits they want to achieve from mentoring relationships and their perceived definition of the role of a mentor helps mentors learn how to interact with their mentees. This research explored the following questions:

- After reflection on personal mentoring relationships, what do students perceive as their greatest benefits?

- What practices did mentees find most helpful and meaningful?

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The Importance of Mentorship

Holistic student development stands as one of main the functions of higher education (Baxter Magolda, 2003), and skilled mentors can offer a variety of benefits that allow students to grow in this manner (Gopee, 2011). The flexible, individualized nature of mentorship affords students the opportunity to develop in the areas that are most important to them. The social learning theory by Bandura (1977) reinforces the need for students to have a more developed individual to model their life after. People learn most of their behaviors from the influence of example (Bandura, 1977). However, "simply exposing persons to models does not in itself ensure that they will intend closely to them" (p. 5). One needs to make an intentional effort to learn by example most effectively. The intentional nature of mentorship makes it a powerful opportunity for influence. Having a mentor to model one's life after gives students the opportunity to reach their maximum potential of holistic development.

Social learning theory also speaks to the effectiveness mentorship has on educational and developmental efficiency: "New modes of response can be developed without needless errors by providing competent models who demonstrate how the required activities should be performed" (Bandura, 1977, p. 5). Although students can still learn through failure (Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007), mentorship can quicken the

educational process by mentees using another more experienced person as a model (Bandura, 1977). Developmental effectiveness remains more important than efficiency, but shortening the educational process allows for more learning opportunities.

Mentoring relationships offer unique learning opportunities because of the personal attention a student receives unattainable in a classroom. This individual attention often produces a deeply personal and close relationship (Garvey, Stokes, & Megginson, 2014). Mentoring relationships are dyadic—by definition, they can only exist between two individuals (Simmel, 1950). Students prove more prone to share goals, emotions, and secrets than in the classroom because they only have to learn to trust one other individual (Garvey et al., 2014). Sharing personal information creates closeness that leads to more effective development (Simmel, 1950). The deeply personal nature of mentorship gives mentors more influence in holistically developing their students.

College provides an important time for personal identity development (Scott, Havice, Livingston, & Cawthon, 2012). Students enter the "emerging adulthood" phase and explore their personal identity through a series of life decisions and opportunities (Arnett, 2014). This transition into adulthood has lengthened over the past few decades, now extending well into the twenties (Arnett, 2000). Mentors can serve as guides on the long, winding path to adulthood. While exciting, the many opportunities in college can also paralyze students (Arnett, 2014). Mentors act as transitional figures for college students and assist them in developing their own personal identity (Levinson, 1978).

Mentorship Defined

Any line of work necessitates practical job descriptions to provide clear direction. Describing mentorship prove difficult, however, without a current universal definition.

In fact, over fifty distinct running definitions of mentorship appear in social science literature (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). Each mentoring relationship differs based on the need of the mentee and mentor personality. Levinson (1978) emphasized this point in saying, "Mentoring is defined not in terms of formal roles but in terms of the character of the relationship and the function it serves" (p. 98). The dynamic nature of mentorship makes it difficult to create a collective definition.

The context of the relationship also determines the role the mentor plays. For example, models for mentorship look entirely different in the fields of business, education, and nursing. Business executives often mentor those they directly supervise in preparation for promotions (Jules, 2008); experienced teachers mentor first-year teachers to share effective methods of education and classroom management (Fletcher, 1998); advanced practice nurses (APNs) mentor newly hired nurses in order to help them transition smoothly into their practice (Barker, 2006). These three models for mentorship offer easy approaches and ready success because they have defined goals and outcomes. Mentoring students in a university setting becomes difficult because of the broad scope of learning goals.

In addition to vocational differences in mentorship, distinct variations also exist between what men and women seek in a mentor. Jeruchim and Shapiro (1992) addressed these differences in claiming, "Male mentors give more instrumental assistance and sponsorship whereas female mentors give more emotional support and personal advice" (p. 12). Men tend to look to their mentors for guidance and practical solutions to problems (Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992). Addressing personal issues proves harder when mentoring men as they find emotional vulnerability more difficult than women (Dunn &

Sundene, 2012). The Psychosocial Development Theory by Erikson (1959) speaks to the importance of emotional intimacy, warning that the lack of vulnerability can lead to isolation and loneliness. Of particular importance, male mentorship allows men to become more emotionally aware and develop stronger future relationships (Dunn & Sundene, 2012). Men also have higher satisfaction and feel more challenged by mentoring relationships if mentored by a man (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Gender differences change the way both mentors and mentees function within their relationship.

Despite the difficulties of defining mentorship, a common thread to all beneficial mentoring relationships comes in the idea of *cura personalis*, Latin for "care for the whole person" (Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007). Whole-person care means examining and speaking into all areas of a student's life—not just academics. *Cura personalis* separates faculty mentorship from academic advising, a much more common practice at universities. According to Baker and Griffin (2010), "Mentors have an emotional investment and a care for the student's long-term professional *and* personal well-being" (p. 2). Although every mentoring relationship differs, consistently caring for both a student's personal and professional goals appears universal.

The Role of a Mentor

The wide range of developmental opportunities for college students requires mentors to play many different roles. Helping students achieve their goals plays an important part in student development, and mentors can serve a vital role in the goal-setting process. Mentors need to encourage their mentees' goals without too much questioning while still creating room for failure (Levinson, 1978). When setting goals, a given student may not feel sure of what he or she wants or may know but feel unsure of

how to achieve the goal. Mentors can help students identify goals to reach or skills to improve and create opportunities for the students to do so (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Identifying and making plans for achieving goals helps students develop both personally and professionally. College provides a pivotal period of life for goal-setting, and mentors help set healthy goals.

Mentors are effective communicators and listeners; they should be able to talk "*with,* not *at*" their students" (Barker, 2006, p. 58). They listen to their mentees and can gather information in order to best help the mentees develop. Trust remains necessary in these relationships because it allows the students to feel comfortable with vulnerability. When student become open and honest about questions they have about life, mentors can help give the students answers. However, in many occasions, the best results do not come through *giving*. Rather, mentors know how to ask appropriate questions strategically to encourage the students to draw their own conclusions (Healy, Lancaster, Liddell, & Stewart, 2012).

Asking students good questions proves especially helpful in allowing them to form their own belief system. For many, college may represent the first time beliefs and values students have adopted from their parents feel challenged. Marcia (1966) labeled this stage of identity formation as Foreclosure. In this phase, students have not experienced any sort of identity crisis and tend to conform to the beliefs of those close to them. By asking their mentees questions about personal values and beliefs, mentors can force students to reflect on the students' own personal identity (Healy et al., 2012). Reflecting on and questioning identity leads students into Moratorium (Marcia, 1966). This phase allows students to explore their personal beliefs and prepares them to make a

commitment. Mentors guide students through the identity formation process by asking the right questions.

Helping a student form his or her own identity requires a great deal of commitment. Mentors need to have "the memory of an elephant, the patience of a saint, and an unremitting sense of humor" (Fletcher, 1998, p. 109). Not an easy job, mentorship requires an emotional and mental investment. Mentors need commitment to their students to learn about their lives, remember what they say, give them direction, and have patience while they seek answers and reach their goals (Biehl, 1996). The amount of required effort makes it difficult for busy college faculty members to pursue mentoring. However, the benefits for the students, university, and faculty mentors themselves make the entire process worthwhile.

Mentee Benefits

A mentoring relationship would completely fail if the mentee did not benefit in any way; therefore, the focus of mentorship should center on the benefits of the mentee. College offers a prime time for students to seek out mentors because they increase the ability to make their own decisions, need direction for their futures, and need help to turn what they learn in the classroom into practice (Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007). Mentees have the most to gain out of mentoring relationships, and they experience these benefits through personal, professional, moral, and academic development.

One of the biggest personal impacts a mentee can experience comes in the recognition of his or her own potential. When an older, respected individual points out a student's strength, the encouragement the student receives can be turned into inspiration and renewed enthusiasm (Stanley & Clinton, 1992). "Sometimes students need a nudge

and the social validation that comes from someone from an authority approaching them and acknowledging their potential" (Baker & Griffin, 2010, p. 7). It also allows them not to depend solely on their peers for social validation (Tierney, Corwin, & Colyar, 2005). Students may or may not notice some of the strengths they possess; therefore, recognition from a mentor allows for validation or recognition of personal skills.

When a student becomes aware of his or her individual skills, he or she must then learn how to put the skills into practice. Mentors not only further develop these skills but remain instrumental in creating opportunities for their mentees to use them. The practice of one's personal abilities allows for a smooth transition into a career. Vocationally, college can become a very confusing time for students (Stanley & Clinton, 1992). Many students enter college without a declared major, and changing majors has become even more of a commonality (Stanley & Clinton, 1992). College students often feel unsure of what field of study provides a good fit for them. By identifying and encouraging vocational skills, mentors can point out specific career paths and majors to lost students.

If a mentor did not have the available resources to handle a student who needed vocational direction, they could rely on the campus' Career Development office and direct the student there. This idea demonstrates another role a mentor can play. Mentors become skilled in identifying physical, emotional, spiritual, and academic needs (Tierney et al., 2005). With these needs identified, mentors can refer students to other skilled professionals for help. Mentors can use academic enrichment, career development, and counseling centers as resources to help create a well-rounded student. Many students would not otherwise make the effort to seek out these professionals. Residence Life

faculty and staff have the best opportunity in this regard because they get to see students in many different areas of their lives (Scott et al., 2012).

Mentees experience growth in yet another facet of development: moral reasoning. All mentoring relationships must build off of trust, and trust allows for exploration of truth and moral assumptions (Healy et al., 2012). By asked thought-provoking questions, mentors can create dissonance in a student's belief system (Scott et al., 2012). Dissonance causes students to examine their worldview and come to their own conclusions about moral issues. Dissonance often sparks from conversations around issues that speak to the human condition, such as fear, regret, and grief (Healy et al., 2012). Moral development does not end with a discussion of tough issues, however. Mentors can speak to students' gifts and show them how to take action against the injustices of society based on the conclusions they draw.

Mentoring relationships allow students to flourish academically as well. Students who engage in mentorship in college have higher GPAs than those without a mentor (Terenzini et al., 1996). Students who have frequent contact with faculty members in and out of class also appear "more satisfied with their educational experiences, are less likely to drop out, and perceive themselves to have learned more than students who have less faculty contact" (Cross, 1998, p. 5). A variety of different factors contribute to academic improvement. For instance, many students have mentors within their chosen field of study. Interacting one-on-one with an experienced professional provides a potential model for their life and gives them more enthusiasm and interest in what they learn (Stanley & Clinton, 1992). Having a mentor to discuss classroom learning also helps them bridge the gap between the educational process and real world experience (Barker,

2006). Dialoguing about classroom experience with a mentor helps make the education process more personal.

The transition into college can feel overwhelming for freshmen, and mentors have proven especially helpful for them. Freshman with mentors show greater gains in problem solving, goal setting, and decision making compared to their non-mentored counterparts (Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007). Taking the benefits for freshman into consideration, Our Lady of the Lake University assigns a faculty mentor to each incoming freshman and transfer student (Farrell, 2007). These faculty mentors focus on setting goals and helping students recognize the importance of education. Implementing this strategy has significantly improved retention. From the fall semester to the spring semester, 89 percent of freshmen returned to continue their studies, a five percentage-point increase over the previous year. The rate proved even higher (93 percent) for students who attended at least seven coaching sessions (Farrell, 2007). Faculty mentors provide stability and guidance for transitioning freshman.

Faith-based Institutions and Spiritual Mentorship

Faith-based institutions have distinct missions that impact the education and formation of their students. The work of Christian education proves deeper than a business or educational responsibility; it provides a "calling—a ministry in the Body of Christ" (Mannoia, 2000, p. 4). Holmes (1987) stated, "Education has to do with the making of persons" (p. 25). Faith-based education seeks to make graduates more like Christ while preparing them to serve others (Mannoia, 2000). Christian institutions educate students by means of a "creative and active integration of faith and learning" (Holmes, 1987, p. 6), and faith development serves as a fundamental part of this process.

Emerging adults explore worldviews and systems of belief, and faith development greatly impacts these changes (Desmond, Morgan, & Kikuchi, 2010). The Stages of Faith Development Theory by Fowler (1981) determined college students experience a shift from "Synthetic-Conventional" faith to "Individuative-Reflective" faith. In other words, their adopted, conformed religious beliefs become more personalized from an exposure to the beliefs of others. As an imitative faith, Christianity is meant to be taught from one person to another (Anderson & Reese, 1999). However, Christian mentorship does not seek to force mentees into a religious mold; rather, they create an atmosphere to dialogue about spiritual issues to further faith development (Barry & Abo-Zena, 2014).

These conversations stem from a genuine desire to care for students and express the biblical commandment to love in a social form (Setran & Kiesling, 2013). Relational and social interactions within a religious community prove instrumental in faith development (Barry & Abo-Zena, 2014). Experiencing love and care through mentorship creates more potential for influence. A recent faith development study found that, when college seniors receive advice or correction in a way they experience as loving, they more likely make positive life changes by means of the supportive relationship (Powell, Tisdale, Willingham, Bustrum, & Allan, 2012). Research also indicates modeling as most influential when coupled with a loving friendship: "Mutual affection serves as a motivating force for the internalization of character qualities admired in the mentor" (Setran & Kiesling, 2013, p. 98). The expression of love and care through Christian mentorship impacts the amount of influence a mentor has on the mentee.

Formal Christian mentoring does not have a uniform definition (Lewis, 2012). Even when one approaches mentoring with a more specific people group, issues with

creating a definition remain. The most distinguishing feature of Christian mentorship comes with its inclusion of a third party in the relationship. As articulated by Anderson and Reese (1999),

> Spiritual mentoring is a triadic relationship between mentor, mentee and the Holy Spirit where the mentee can discover, through the already present action of God, intimacy with God, ultimate identity as a child of God and a unique voice for Kingdom responsibility. (p. 12)

Christian mentorship recognizes the importance of bringing the Holy Spirit into the relationship.

Allowing involvement by the Holy Spirit does not discredit the role of the mentor. Rather, it requires the mentor to identify how God already works in and guides the life of the mentee. Christian mentors help mentees pay attention to the work of God in their everyday routines, life patterns, and mundane tasks (Setran & Kiesling, 2013). Lewis (2012) spoke to this idea by defining Christian mentorship as a relationship that "identifies and promotes the work of God's Spirit in others' lives, assisting them to access God's resources for their growth and strength in spirituality, character and ministry" (p. 20). The task of a mentor becomes to unlock spiritual gifts and strengths in the mentees in order for the mentees to better understand themselves and their potential for impact in the world.

Christian mentorship defines the role of mentors differently. The most important qualities for Christian mentors include "wisdom, unselfishness modesty, confidence self-giving to God, sensitivity to the Spirit, and a desire to live rather than talk about the Christian life" (Anthony, 2001, p. 234). As the most important element, Christian

mentors must to remember to recognize the role of the Holy Spirit in mentoring relationships (Woolfe, 2002). They also cannot just want to *talk* about what a healthy Christian life should look—role modeling becomes significantly more of a priority (Anderson & Reese, 1999). Christian mentorship relies on the Holy Spirit for direction and holds mentors to a higher standard of living a life that glorifies God and guides others to do the same.

Summary

College students have a need for direction, validation, and encouragement, and mentors can fulfill all of these requirements. Recognizing the significant benefits that come with mentorship implies the need for extra effort in making mentoring relationships accessible. Faculty members must do all they can to make themselves more approachable. This accessibility includes conveying availability by in-class and syllabus statements, having an open door policy, remaining visible on campus, and using small time slots between classes to interact with students (Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007). Faculty can also achieve approachability by maintaining an environment in which students feel free to express opposing viewpoints, allowing for further conversation and development (Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007).

Regardless of how approachable faculty appear, however, many students will not seek out an opportunity for mentorship, even if they want one. Faculty members need to become proactive in identifying students they believe they can mentor and take initiative in inviting them into a mentoring relationship (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Training also needs to become available for faculty who want to improve their skills in mentorship. Unhealthy mentoring relationships feel draining for both faculty and students (Barker,

2006). Furthermore, the benefits of mentoring need further research and must become more fully communicated with university faculty members. Many college mentoring programs only describe *what* they offer rather than a rationale of *why* they do it because attributing outcomes directly to mentorship is difficult (Tierney et al., 2005).

To get the most out of their mentoring of students, higher educators must consider all benefits need to be considered and receive proper training. By reflecting on the benefits of mentoring relationships, mentors can build a framework for approaching such interactions. A necessary element to consider in this reflection is the perspective of the student. If mentorship focuses on the mentee, mentors need to focus on what the students desire from the relationship. What qualities do students look for in a mentor? What benefits do students hope to receive? How do students define mentorship? Exploring these questions provides a healthy model for mentorship.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Design

This research utilized a qualitative methodology to analyze the greatest benefits of

mentoring on college-aged males. Qualitative research proves best suited for "exploring

a problem and developing a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon" (Creswell,

2012, p. 16). The abstract nature of mentorship and its broad scope of benefits require an

exploratory approach. This study followed a phenomenological design in order to

"describe the experience of several individuals through their experience with a certain

concept or phenomenon" (Creswell, 2013, p. 60). In this case, mentorship serves as the

phenomenon, and the researcher interviewed individuals who encounter this phenomenon

to gain a better understanding of their experience. Having students use their own

wording to define the relationship with their mentor and their perceived benefits gives a

more accurate picture of mentorship. Creating a model for mentorship in higher

education requires a careful study of how students define the term, and personal

interviews allow for the most comprehensive approach.

Context

The researcher conducted interviews at a small, private, Midwestern faith-based

institution. This particular institution places a strong emphasis on mentorship. Its

purpose statement focuses on whole-person development, seeking to "foster the

intellectual, emotional, physical, vocational, social, and spiritual development" of its

students. The holistic nature of mentorship (Cramer & Prentice-Dunn, 2007) makes it an

effective method of attending to this mission. Consequently, faculty members emphasize

mentorship in their work. Many individual departments, including Sociology, English,

Biology, Honors, and Student Development, refer to the importance of mentorship on

their websites. The university's value of and dedication to mentorship likely influence

the way students experience it.

Participants

One obstacle of defining mentorship in higher education settings comes with the

wide breadth of its learning outcomes. When one narrows the scope of a certain

demographic, more focused definitions appear. Businesses, teaching programs, and

nursing programs, for example, have more defined models of mentorship because of their

clear goals (Barker, 2006; Fletcher, 1998; Jules, 2008). Narrowing the demographic of

participants helps provide a clearer, more focused purpose and definition of mentorship.

In order to narrow the context of participants, the study used purposeful sampling

by intentionally selecting certain students to help understand the phenomenon of male

mentorship (Creswell, 2012). Participants were all upperclassmen male students who

reported having been mentored for at least one semester by a faculty member at their

university. Although each participant claimed a faculty member as a mentor, two

participants also referenced experiences with local community member mentors as they

discussed their experience with mentorship. Therefore, participants claimed members in

the following professions as mentors: academic faculty, student development

professionals, pastors, and counselors. Also, no stipulation existed as to the form of

mentorship, whether formal or informal. Formal mentors typically become assigned as some part of required responsibility, while informal mentorship takes place more naturally (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). In total, the researcher interviewed ten students who match the described conditions.

The researcher initially gathered names of interviewees through references from both academic and student development faculty. The researcher contacted faculty members from a variety of departments via email to create a list of possible participants. The researcher then invited viable candidates via email to participate. After the first few interviews, the researcher gathered more participants through snowball sampling: the researcher asked students to recommend other participants for the study (Creswell, 2012). The researcher made specific selections to give variety among the respondents (i.e., claiming different individuals as mentors, living in different residence halls, different academic majors).

Procedure

The university's IRB approved the methods and protocol of the study before the data collection began. Prior to interviewing the participants, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with a student outside of the study. This interview served to evaluate the effectiveness of the protocol. The researcher employed a uniform framework of questions, but the nature of the study required additional clarifying questions to explore the responses. After reevaluating the list of questions, the researcher conducted the interviews over a one-month period. The interview times ranged from 30-45 minutes. With the permission of the participants, the researcher recorded the interviews for later transcription of the conversations. The researcher transcribed each interview, and in

order to maintain confidentiality, assigned each participant a pseudonym. Each student

quote included below credits a pseudonym as opposed to the students' real names.

Analysis

Upon completing the transcriptions, the researcher themed and coded the

responses. The explication process followed three main steps: delineating relevant units

of meaning, clustering units of meaning to form themes, and extracting general and

unique themes to from all interviews to make a comprehensive summary (Groenewald,

2004). In other words, the researcher highlighted "significant statements" that provided a

better understanding of how students experience mentorship (Moustakas, 1994). These

important statements separated into categories, and common themes emerged among

each category. Analyzing the common themes provided a model for mentorship that

university faculty members can use when taking on the role of a mentor.

Chapter 4

Results

Mentorship serves a different purpose depending on the environment in which it exists. Due to the malleability of its definition, mentorship in university settings has distinguishing qualities that set it apart from other contexts. This study sought to define the unique qualities of mentorship for college-aged men. Exploring this definition considers the benefits male students receive from mentorship as well as desired qualities of mentors.

The results of this study emerged from identifying common themes in the interviews with the ten participants. Participants had the opportunity to discuss their experiences with mentorship, examining their relationships and reflecting on benefits they received. While each participant's experience proved unique, the phenomenological approach helped identify common generalities. The following three main themes emerged from the interviews: defining characteristics of a mentoring relationship, benefits from having a mentor, and desired qualities of mentors. Each of these three themes involved corresponding sub-themes discussed in this chapter. Not all participants addressed these sub-themes, but these additional concepts did emerge in many of the interviews. Despite the complexity of mentorship and its unique, individualized nature, many common themes emerged and cooperated to distinguish the defining characteristics of mentorship with male students at faith-based institutions.

Defining Mentorship

As one of its research goals, this study explored the unique characteristics of mentorship with college-aged males. Mentorship looks different based on the context of the relationship, and defining mentorship for men in the college environment brings clarity to what the students seek. Too much specificity in defining mentorship proved difficult because each student had a unique experience, and the participants expressed difficulty in giving a broad definition of a mentor. One student, Luke, said, "A mentor—I feel like there is really no way to generalize it. I don't want to say something super specific." Jack also addressed the difficulty of forming a generalized definition: "I know my relationship with [my mentor] looks different than most guys with their mentors, so my experience is unique and hard to say what it should look like for everyone." Despite the participants' tentativeness about generalizing mentorship, many similar themes brought uniformity to their definition of mentorship. Distinctive characteristics of the definition of mentorship for male college students at this faith-based institution include five main themes: (1) deep individualization, (2) involvement of faith development, (3) age difference, (4) a focus on the future, and (5) disparity of formal terminology.

Individualized nature. The fact that the participants had difficulty in creating a definition of mentorship for everyone speaks to the individualized and personal traits of mentoring relationships. Each student had a unique background with his or her mentor, and the students wanted the relationships catered to their specific needs. Participants expressed the importance of their mentors knowing them as individuals. Aaron spoke to this importance, saying of his mentor, "He was very involved in my life and seeing things through my perspective...I was so thankful that he was so involved in my life that he

could speak directly to me in many different ways." By feeling known on a personal level, students value the perspective of their mentors more, and the mentors gain an ability to speak more directly into the lives of their mentees. Blaine reinforced the need for feeling known:

> It's just a feeling of identity, these guys know who I am, and they personal affirm me by speaking truth into me. They took time to share what they had to say with me. It raises the expectations high when you're listening to other mentors when they know what you're capable of, and they raise the bar for you. They affirm you, they clarify what you're going through because you hear them understand you, and they raise the bar for me.

All participants recognized the need for feeling known personally or understood deeply, and this necessity wove itself into their definitions of mentorship.

Faith involvement. Since the researcher conducted this study at a faith-based institution, faith development proved an important piece of the way students define mentorship. All participants mentioned mentors either demonstrating characteristics of God or helping them develop in their own faith. Conversations about faith do not just happen by chance; students value these discussions deeply. Jack said, "There were a few areas where he could bring scripture into the discussion, which is something I really value." Incorporating Bible passages and Scripture into meeting times emerged as one method of involving faith in mentorship.

None of the students reported seeking someone only to discuss theological concepts from the Bible, however. As mentorship has the opportunity to become deeply personal, participants expressed a desire to grow in their own personal faith. Discussing

Biblical concepts allowed students to grow, but they expressed more a desire to talk about their own faith journeys. Matthew said,

> Honestly, those are not the primary topics---theological discussions. Most of it is asking, "What is the Lord doing, and how can I encourage that?" My relationship with my mentor is more focused on what the Lord is doing and what the Lord is teaching me, not "what do you think about Genesis?"

Students want someone to talk to about their current relationship with God, and mentors serve as someone who offers a listening ear and asks questions.

Involving faith in mentorship sometimes does not require actual conversation. Participants noted that their mentors—just in how they acted and carried themselves—displayed characteristics of God that the students wanted to learn from and adopt. Observing these characteristics often proved one of the main reasons students wanted those particular people to mentor them in the first place. Matthew addressed wanting to become more like his mentor:

> …who is intentionally pouring into and developing you in a way of helping you become more like them. Obviously the goal is for you to become more like Christ…but there is a sense where the person is bringing you along to become more like them. My thought process—I kind of want to be like this guy, so I'll ask him.

Faith development serves as an important component of mentoring college-aged men. Students expressed growth in their own faith by discussing the Bible, talking about their relationship with God, and observing Christ-like characteristics in their mentors.

Age difference. Fundamentally, a mentor is a person from whom a mentee learns. The process of growth and learning looks quite different for every student, but 7 out of 10 participants included a necessary age difference in their view of mentorship. Students talked about age difference in many different ways, spanning from "at least a few years" to necessarily "intergenerational." Tyson spoke to the value of age difference:

> A mentor is not a peer. I would say that's important. I think peers can give mentorship, but I think a formal mentor needs to be able to offer some wisdom or experience that isn't there for the other person.

The students who specifically mentioned a needed age difference often commented on the importance of how the age gap gave them someone to look to for more wisdom and experience. Jack said,

> We reflected on mentorship and realized that it's something our generation is missing. Mentorship kind of just becomes discipleship. What mentorship really is, we're training someone along the way because we're years ahead of where they are. So [my mentor] mentors me because he is somewhere where I want to end up.

Mentors "a few years ahead" in life experience give mentees a living example of what to aim for in their development process.

Jack mentioned discipleship as he discussed the importance of age difference. The participants all attend a university in which discipleship receives much attention, and age difference seems to emerge as a distinguishing feature between discipleship and mentorship. Whereas one can engage in discipleship with peers, mentorship requires some sort of age difference. Matthew said, "There can be discipleship in the same age

groups, but mentorship needs to have a tie in with being intergenerational. Discipleship can be intergenerational, but mentorship kind of has to be." Sharing wisdom and experience brings an important element to mentorship, and most students need someone older than they as a mentor.

Future-focused. All participants mentioned the importance of mentors helping them work towards some sort of future goals. More often, students use mentorship as a tool for preparation for life after college rather than a method of navigating day-to-day life. Mark talked about the future perspective he gained:

> I would say the mentors who have spoken into me are always thinking about me in my current state but also me in my future state. And that makes every interaction intentional in building me up and moving forward in my career after college, or marriage, any of those areas. They want to see me be a whole person—a wholly developed person, recognizing they have an opportunity to share their experience of how that happened to them, how they fell short. And in that, I learn a little more about what those processes looked like.

Mentorship allows students a glimpse of what life looks life after leaving college, and it prepares them for the next steps after graduation.

Participants also expressed that having a mentor often "removed stress" or "took pressure off of what [they] were doing right now." The future perspective contributed to this stress relief. Aaron said,

> Mentorship is such a positive thing because it gives me a better perspective and it gives me wise counsel that is beyond my years and helps me recognize that the

"now" is not "it." Life will go on and eventually I will be at that stage of life.

Life will continue and I don't have to be stuck here is this problem.

Mentorship offers guidance for students in their current state, but most participants

expressed more of an importance in preparing them for the future.

Irregularity in defining the relationship. In the process of finding participants

for the study, the researcher spoke to university faculty members to gain the names of any

students whom they mentored. Most of the faculty members who responded seemed

tentative in claiming they officially or formally mentored students. Interestingly, a few

of the participants claimed these same faculty members as mentors. This difference of

labels speaks to the language irregularity of mentorship felt by both mentor and mentee.

Participants synonymized many different words with "mentor": friend, brother, coach,

father-figure, and counselor. Luke said,

> My other mentor is my coach and I've seen him three times a week for the past
>
> couple years and I always knew he was wise, but I looked at him as more of a
>
> coach and a friend. But now I look at him as more of a second father figure
>
> because of everything he has done for me.

Mentoring relationships often never become verbally defined as such despite students

claiming individuals as their mentors.

Other times, students begin to meet regularly with men or women just to talk, get

to know them, or ask specific questions. As meetings become semi-regular or frequent,

relationships begin to form into something that students define as mentorship. Mark

discussed the process of gaining a mentor by this method:

My current mentor actually initiated conversation with me. He made a point not to say specifically "I want to mentor you," but said "I want to spend time with you and get to know you." In doing so, he became a mentor. I ask questions, and he gives answers.

Often, mentoring relationships do not begin with either party knowingly walking in as a mentor or mentee. Over time, the relationship grows and aspects of more formal mentorship begin to emerge.

While most students define mentorship as a relationship that starts naturally over time, a few students define mentorship formally from the beginning. Two out of the ten participants started relationships in this manner. Tim said, "It began because I asked him if he would mentor me—and I phrased it that way. It wasn't just hanging out. Using mentor implies a little more of a one-way relationship." Whether or not mentors or mentees use these formal labels with each other, the impact of the relationships appears similar for each student.

Benefits of Mentorship

Participants unanimously reported receiving significant personal benefits from their relationship with their mentors. Students displayed excitement about how they had been shaped by mentorship. Participants noted a wide range of benefits from their experience, and all participants spoke to growth in more than one area of their life— career, school, faith, relationships, etc. A focus on whole-person development seemed important to each student. Philip spoke to this significance:

I would say that the way I would define it is a holistic approach. They're focusing more than on developing skills for a particular area, they're more

focused on developing the whole person—how can you use these things to create

meaning, purpose, or your desires.

In the college setting, mentorship has a focus on whole-person growth, and students seek

someone who can develop multiple areas of their lives. Due to a focus on holistic

growth, students experience a wide range of benefits.

Mentorship in a college environment typically determines that the relationships

remain short-term. Students have mentors while at college but then move away after four

years. All participants projected that their relationships with their mentors would not

look the same after graduating. Nevertheless, participants widely accepted that the

benefits of mentorship while in college would last well beyond graduation. Tyson

remarked,

The impact [my mentor] has made on me is eternal—there is no doubt in my

mind... I know as I look ten or fifteen years down the road, I think that I'll look

back and realize that they have shaped my direction of life after college.

The individualized nature of mentorship creates a wide variety of perceived benefits, but

students recognize these benefits as long-lasting and even "eternal."

Career. Future career benefits proved a common theme among participants.

Five out of ten participants had a mentor who currently worked in the field the students

wanted to enter after college. These students expressed their interest in having a mentor

who could give direction in vocational path, network connections, and advice in how to

progress throughout the career. Aaron appreciated the support he received from his

mentor:

[My mentor] tells me all the time that he gets emails from churches all the time
saying the types of people that they need for their church, and he's told me he
would recommend me to anyone in a heartbeat. And to know you have those
connections--someone that will vouch for you--he's written a billion
recommendations for me--to the point I feel bad about asking him for more. He
instills a lot of confidence in me and can help set me up well for the future.

The support Aaron felt from his mentor was verbalized but also acted upon in the form of
career networking and job recommendations. Tyson had a mentor who guided him in
entrepreneurial business; the student grateful for the mentor's wisdom and advice over
the years, saying, "I was working on a business and realized that if it became a real thing,
who would I owe? If I was giving an acceptance speech for an award, I would have to
thank my mentor more than anyone." Career guidance emerged as an important
component of mentorship to many students.

Spiritual growth. All participants experienced spiritual growth as a result of
mentorship. This growth did not necessarily manifest as an understanding of Scripture or
increased knowledge of God—it typically developed as a result of a more personal
relationship with God. As mentorship can become deeply personal and intimate, mentees
could talk about their own individual spiritual life. One participant, Luke, felt quite
thankful for the spiritual guidance given to him by his mentor:

I decided I was going to stop drinking and read my Bible and pray every day. He
told me that it was all good and dandy, but that's all religion. I don't want you
just practicing religion, I want you to practice your faith. Don't just not drink and
do all these things because it's the right thing to do. Stop drinking because it will

separate you from a relationship with the Holy Spirit. It's more about the

relationship than practicing these legalistic things.

Mentorship provides an outlet for students to talk about their own spiritual journeys and get individual attention and advice.

Participants also discussed that mentorship helped prevent them from experiencing spiritual apathy or laziness in their faith. Blaine said, "There is a sense of not wanting to let them down" when it comes to spiritual growth. It provides accountability for students who want to grow, and mentors can push students to deepen their faith consistently. Aaron experienced this push from his mentor:

He definitely encourages me in my walk with Christ. One of the main things he's encouraged me in over time is to step out and be a leader, and recognize that God is working in you, recognize your gifts and what you've been equipped to do. Move out of that comfort zone and into the unknown and watch God work. He definitely pushed me like an athletic coach I wouldn't have liked. I would not have shared the Gospel like I did, I wouldn't have gone on missions trips, I wouldn't have had the impactful experience of recognizing God at work if he hadn't pushed me to go there.

The participants at this faith-based institution tended to look for mentors who would help them in their own personal spiritual development.

Thought-processing. Mentors provide an outlet for students to process through their thinking. Eight out of ten participants felt that having someone with whom to discuss what the students had on their minds proved helpful for their development. Aaron said,

> It makes me more aware of changes I'm going through, and it makes those
>
> changes more effective. I'm a verbal processor, so sitting in my room and
>
> reflecting doesn't work, but when I share the way I feel and people filling in what
>
> they can't see, I'm able to get a fuller picture.

The act of talking and thought-processing may not always create changes in and of themselves; however, this approach helps students become aware of how they already experience growth and areas in which they need to grow, thus making their development more effective.

Talking through thoughts and emotions also prevents students from disengaging from decisions or repressing feelings. Discussion forces them to address their ideas and feelings head-on. Jack said,

> I feel more willing to not shut down my mind. Sometimes I feel like I have to
>
> stop thinking a certain way. As I've reflected on those thoughts I've been able to
>
> determine where my thoughts are coming from instead of just shutting them
>
> down.

He clarified that verbal processing allows students to identify the reasons for their thoughts while also giving them an opportunity to continue pondering.

Components of Effective Mentorship

Participants of this study also outlined effective practices and qualities they appreciated in their mentors. Each of the participants' mentors had a distinct, personal style, but five themes emerged that determine the qualities and practices most beneficial to students in their experience mentorship. These themes included (1) listening skills, (2) wisdom, (3) informal interactions, (4) male mentor preference and (5) availability.

Listening skills. All participants addressed the importance of their mentor

actively listening to them. Eight of ten students reported, in general, mentors should

spend at least half of their time listening to their mentees as opposed to talking. Tim said,

"He listens a lot more than he speaks. When he does say something or gives advice, I

really know that I need to pay attention to it." Listening impacts the relationship by

silently demonstrating care, making the mentees value the advice and direction from their

mentors. Philip valued feeling understood by having a mentor who listens to his

perspective:

> It's really important that I feel heard and understood by my mentor. I've had times
>
> where I've been given advice by a mentor when I don't feel like they fully
>
> understand my perspective or the situation, how I feel about it, and I think, 'that
>
> was really cheap.' You don't know me. So really the mentor needs to try to listen
>
> and understand, and that creates a space where the advice is valued, and it's not
>
> just a generic response, but that they understand me uniquely as individual.

Participants expressed a desire for mentors who emphasize listening because this trait

communicated care and understanding to the students while also lending credibility to the

advice they heard.

Participants also noted a stronger desire to feel heard in college more than other

times in their lives. Jack said, "The older I've gotten, I've wanted to talk more because I

have a better understanding of what's going on with me. I'm better at articulating my

thoughts." Students grew in the ability to talk about themselves as they aged.

Wisdom. Although listening skills emerged among the most desired qualities of

mentors, students also look for mentors who could share wisdom. Seven of ten

participants identified wisdom as an important quality of mentorship. Wisdom even served as a foundational piece of Blaine's definition of mentorship. He said, "A mentor is someone you intentionally query for information or wisdom. You're intentionally looking for their input on how you should live your life." Another student, Tim, pursued a mentor because he wanted someone wiser to speak into his life:

> I didn't have any good father figures growing up, so I was curious how I could benefit from the guidance of an older man. What could he have to say about my life? What have I been missing out on? What kind of perspective would he have? We have mentors because we want to learn, we want to see what they have to say, see what they've gone through, and knowing how they turned how--using that for our own lives. You learn from the older and learn from the wiser.

The wisdom that participants desired from their mentor rarely came from academic knowledge, intellectual pursuits, or theological understanding. More often, the wisdom they valued came from mentors sharing their own personal experiences and what they learned from those happenings.

However, the participants' desires to have a wise mentor did not mean they sought someone who would solely share wisdom from their experiences. The balance of wisdom-sharing and listening distinguishes mentors from other roles. Blaine desired this balance:

> I want to hear how they dealt with that stuff when they were in my position in the past. I also want them to think about the current circumstances. If it's just wisdom sharing without any listening, I think that's a different relationship than a mentor. Then it's just a teacher—a lecturer.

 The combination of sharing wisdom and listening helped participants define mentors in

their lives.

       Informal interactions. Formal interactions—such as meeting over coffee or

stopping by a faculty member's office—typically resulted in students experiencing the

greatest benefits of mentorship. However, all participants said they valued informal

interactions or wished they had more of an opportunity to spend time with mentors

outside of formal meeting times. Students had many different examples of informal

interactions: going to athletic events, watching movies, visiting their mentor's homes for

meals, playing sports, etc. Participants expressed a desire to interact in a variety of

environments in order to have a deeper mutual understanding of one another. Philip said,

"I think the informal times are really good at de-arming and taking down lots of walls and

barriers, and it really normalizes him as a person. It makes him easier to relate to."

Stephen reinforced the benefits of having formal and informal times, saying,

> I think there's got to be a certain balance between informal and formal stuff. I
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> think for guys, they need to do something. I like sitting around coffee and talking
>
> about deep stuff, but if that's not wrapped up by some goofy or fun thing, it would
>
> only be good and not great. I think mentors should try to be fun. It makes them
>
> seem less lofty.

When mentors and mentees get to see each other in a variety of settings, the informality

broke down barriers in the relationship, and mentees feel more comfortable sharing about

their lives.

       Spending time informally also allows the mentees to see how their mentors act

and carry themselves in everyday situations. This insight allows role modeling to have a

positive impact on the relationship. Mark felt appreciative of the more full picture he gained through informal interactions:

> In an informal setting, you get a much fuller picture of the person because we live most of our lives in an informal setting. I think that would definitely transform those intentional moments where we are really seeking to grow—him growing me in a lot of ways—I would be able to feel that deeper level of trust and understanding of who he is and what he's getting at.

Mark also affirms that informal interactions have a way of making formal mentorship meetings more meaningful. When mentors look for ways to engage with their mentees outside of formal meetings, they demonstrate care, gain more understanding, and develop stronger influence.

Male mentor preference. Not surprisingly, the participants, all male, agreed that, with deep, holistic mentorship, they preferred to have a man as a mentor. When a man mentors another man, participants identified a "more natural connection" and felt as though "it's easier to be understood." Mark felt a more natural, organic connection with male mentors he had:

> As a general norm, men mentoring men and women mentoring women is a more natural form of mentorship. That commonality of gender really helps establish already a greater sense of trust and understanding of each because of the fact that I'm a man, he's a man, we have similar tendencies and struggles that are almost universal across the board.

Participants universally expressed desire for mentorship by other men, as the dynamic helps male mentees feel more understood and creates more potential for relational depth.

Availability. Issues in the lives of college students often arise outside of regular meeting times they have with their mentors; therefore, availability offers a helpful component of mentorship. Six of ten participants highlighted availability as an important quality of mentorship. Philip felt thankful for his mentor's availability, as this element made him feel valued:

> I really think engagement is the biggest thing—availability is a good word for that. I always feel like I could email [my mentor] or meet with him if I needed to. There's always an open invitation, and that's huge because that lets me know that he cares about me—he really does.

Matthew also expressed similar feelings, saying, "One thing I appreciate about my mentor now is even though I know he's really busy, the time he sets aside. I think there has to be a willingness for the mentor to bring their mentee into their life." Students appreciate when their mentors make an effort to remain available, which helps mentees feel values while also providing an outlet to discuss issues as they arise.

Summary

Mentorship had a profound impact on the lives of the participants. They expressed gratitude for the ways they felt changed through a relationship with their mentor and could identify specific benefits they received. The results of this study highlighted distinctive qualities of mentorship, benefits noted by participants, and components of effective mentors. Students at this faith-based institution experienced holistic development as a result of mentorship and recognized the lasting impact mentorship will have on their lives.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

College students enter into the phase of "emerging adulthood" and begin

exploring their identity through a series of making decisions and asking big questions

(Arnett, 2014). As a tool, mentorship can guide students through decision-making and

answering questions (Parks, 2011). The exploratory nature of this phenomenological

study allowed participants to share their greatest benefits received from mentorship.

Their discussion of qualities they appreciated in their mentors also helped determine how

to best engage male college students through mentorship. In combination with other

research literature, the findings provide a more specific approach to mentorship when

mentoring male students at faith-based institutions. This chapter includes implications

for practice, recommendations for continued research, and limitations to the study.

Connecting Results to Literature

Individualized nature. The one-on-one nature of mentorship facilitated the

deeply personal of the relationship. This form of connection produces a rich and intimate

friendship, as referenced by Garvey et al. (2014). Five of ten participants referred to their

mentor as a friend. Matthew said, "I would also consider him somewhat of a friend. It's

not strictly this relationship where he's imparting wisdom to me—there's a friendship

there." Stephen also identified a friendship, saying, "They can go out and have fun with

you and then come back and have a good conversation. He's just being a friend but really he's mentoring you." Mentors should not strive to solely play the role of a friend in their mentees' lives, but the friendship allows them to gain more influence. The personal intimacy of friendship creates closeness that leads to more effective development (Simmel, 1950). The individualized makeup of mentorship often leads to a friendship, which can lead to finding deeper growth in the mentee.

Although the mentor can gain more influence and impact by developing elements of friendship with their mentee, boundaries must exist within the relationship. Warren (2005) warned mentors against having students as their confidants regarding personal concerns. Such disclosure negatively affects the mentors' ability to influence and evaluate their mentees. Philip understood the need for boundaries, saying, "It's like this fine line because I know there has to be boundaries, but I do like getting to know him as a person." The individualized nature of mentorship can bring positive elements of friendship, but mentors need to maintain boundaries to make sure they mentor rather than befriend.

Whole-person focused. Holistic development for students stands out as one of the main purposes of higher education (Baxter Magolda, 2003). Due to the individualized nature of mentorship, students can experience more direct whole-person growth. Philip defined mentorship as "a holistic approach. They're focusing more than on developing skills for a particular area, they're more focused on developing the whole person. How you can use these things to create meaning, purpose, or your desires." Philip's response aligned with the definition of the mentoring role by Parks (2011) as one who helps students search for meaning, purpose, and faith. Mentees experience whole-

person growth through conversations, but they also grow by using mentors as role models. The social learning theory from Bandura (1977) emphasized the effectiveness of learning through modeling, and the research participants developed holistically by watching how the mentors lived life. Blaine appreciated the variety of ways he grew by watching his mentor's "success in marriage, with his kids, his personal life, in philosophy, his kick-butt racquetball skills." College student development requires caring for the whole-person (Baker & Griffin, 2010), and mentorship offers an excellent method of whole-person growth.

Faith involvement. At the faith-based institution at which the researcher conducted this study, the participants' definition of mentorship proved similar to the purpose of Christian mentorship. Christian mentoring refers to a "triadic relationship" between the mentor, mentee, and the Holy Spirit, with the ultimate goal of developing characteristics of Christ (Anderson & Reese, 1999, p. 12). On the purpose of Christian mentorship, Blaine said, "The goal is for you to become more like Christ," aligning with the definition by Anderson and Reese (1999). As a method of developing faith, mentors point out ways in which God appears currently at work in their mentees' lives, and they help students experience the presence of God (Lewis, 2012; Setran & Kiesling, 2013). Aaron grew in his faith by becoming more aware of God's presence through mentorship:

> I'm studying Christian ministry, and by myself I focus on the day-to-day and not think big picture or how I've been affected by all these things, and the outside mentor can look at my life and habits I've been forming and recognize things I haven't noticed.

All participants addressed faith development as an important value in their experience

with mentorship, and, as Matthew said, was accomplished because "ultimately you

follow someone because they embody a good Christ-like character."

Participants defined their ideal mentorship as a relationship extending beyond

simply faith development. Overall, the connection proved of great value to them, but the

significance included more than spirituality. Matthew said, "We're not in deep

theological conversation all the time…I picture discipleship as something more spiritual.

Not that mentorship isn't as spiritual, but mentorship can cross the line into the secular

world." Whereas discipleship purely focuses on faith development, mentorship—even in

Christian environments—brings all areas of students' lives into the picture.

Male mentor preference. Men in this study reported higher satisfaction and felt

more challenged by mentoring relationships if their mentors were also men. This finding

upheld the research of Ragins and Cotton (1999), as they all said they would prefer to

have a male mentor. However, they had difficulty articulating specific reasons for their

preference. Stephen said, "Experiences that men and women have are just very

different," and Tim said a female mentor would prove more difficult because "there

would definitely be barriers." Jeruchim and Shapriro (1992) addressed these differences

between male and female mentors in saying, "Male mentors give more instrumental

assistance and sponsorship whereas female mentors give more emotional support and

personal advice" (p. 12). Men tend to look to their mentors for guidance and practical

solutions to problems (Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992). Many of the benefits participants

received—discussed in chapter 4—deal with "emotional support" and "personal advice"

(Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992). Nevertheless, the participants desired a male mentor

because of the deeper level of understanding and ability to relate. Matthew said, "Men go through things that men get. There's something—I don't know how to qualify it— there something about a man's relationship with another man that's unique." The deeper level of understanding between the participants and their male mentors allowed them to feel more known and experience greater satisfaction with the relationship.

Listening. The ability to listen emerged as an important quality participants desired in mentors. Blaine valued how his mentor listened to him; he said, "In an ideal setting, the mentor is going to keep asking you questions." Blaine's desire for good questions reinforces the research by Healy et al. (2012), which asserted that mentors need to ask appropriate questions strategically to allow students to explore truth. Tim also valued having a mentor to listen to him as he processed through his own thoughts:

> In my experience, a lot of the importance has come from me getting to process through things. I have to be willing to acknowledge it in my own head and be willing to say it out loud, be able to say it to him.

Barker (2006) concluded that mentors can become effective communicators and listeners; they should be able to talk "*with*, not *at*" their students (p. 58). Emerging adulthood offers a stage of formational exploration of truth and identity (Arnett, 2000), and the skill of listening allows mentees to process through their own discoveries.

Implications for Practice

This research revealed practical applications for universities and faculty members as they seek to provide more effective mentorship for their students. On an institutional level, the amount of time faculty members spend meeting with and mentoring students needs to be considered when measuring workload. While not the most efficient form of

education, mentorship proves extremely effective due to its personal nature and numerous

benefits. Some faculty members spend many hours a week mentoring students, and

universities need to demonstrate their valuing of mentorship by reducing workload to free

up time for their faculty to engage with students one-on-one.

Some universities set up formal programs to assign faculty mentors to their

students in order to improve GPA (Terenzini et al., 1996), retention (Farrell, 2007), and

educational satisfaction (Cross, 1998). However, mentorship becomes most effective

when it begins and exists organically. Participants in this study expressed greatest

satisfaction and growth when their relationships with their mentors developed organically

and remained so. When assigning mentors to students, universities need to pay careful

attention to compatibility between specific faculty members and students. Relational fit

has a positive impact on mentorship.

Universities should provide opportunities for professional development in regards

to mentorship. With mentoring as an improvable skill (Biehl, 1996), formal training

would help faculty members more effectively mentor their students.

This research also revealed practical applications for those who mentor students.

Mentors should willingly discuss a wide range of experiences in mentees' lives. At a

university, students often look to professors in their academic major as their mentors. Six

of ten participants claimed one of their professors as a mentor. These relationships often

start off by talking about career goals or academic issues, but the students reported

experiencing the greatest growth when they began to discuss other areas of their lives.

Faculty members who remain open to mentoring students need to make an effort

to appear approachable and emphasize their desire to mentor. This effort allows students

to initiate conversations. Aaron said, "I had class with [my mentor] twice and I just think that his discussions in class and the way he revealed his own character let me recognize that he would be safe to talk to." Students often recognize the busyness of faculty members, which sometimes prevents the students from pursuing the faculty as mentors. Matthew said, "One thing I appreciate about my mentor now is even though I know he's really busy, the time he sets aside." Faculty members who prioritize mentorship to develop their students should make an effort to seem approachable and communicate that they set aside specific times to mentor their students.

Mentors also need to make an effort to engage their mentees in informal settings, and they should pursue a balance of listening and sharing experience. These qualities seem universally appreciated, but each mentee has unique desires and expectations from their mentor. Mentorship exists for the benefit of the mentee, so mentors should ask what their mentees seek and remain open to adapting their approach to make the relationship more beneficial.

Mentors can feel pressured to share wisdom and answer big questions, but students benefit from simply getting to talk and spend time with someone they respect. Stephen said,

> If they hang out or talk with you, you feel like a million bucks. Even if the session wasn't that great, if you have in your mind that this guy is your mentor, you still feel great afterwards that they took the time to be with you. It creates feelings of worthiness and belonging.

Mentors may feel pressure to initiate big changes in their mentors, but above all else, they can take comfort in the fact that their simple act of presence can provide stability and growth in the life of their mentees.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this research provided an overview of the mentee perspective on mentorship in a university setting, hearing the thoughts of the mentors would offer additional, helpful insight. Plenty of current literature addresses best methods of mentorship from the perspective of seasoned mentors, but interviewing the mentors of the participants of this study would give a more complete examination. Comparing the two sets of interviews would show in similarities and differences in defining qualities of mentorship of college-aged men.

All participants said their relationship with their mentors made them feel well prepared for life after college. They universally believed that the benefits they received from mentorship would prove long lasting. Whether as a longitudinal study with the same participants or with a group of other men, future research should include interviewing students five years out of college. With the mentees removed from their college mentor for a number of years, the research could show the lasting impact of mentorship. The participants could have a more developed perspective on what proved beneficial from the relationship with their college mentor, and the deeply formative benefits of mentorship would emerge from the results.

The participants of this study also believed clear differences existed between having a male or female mentor. However, they struggled to articulate specifics behind these differences aside from feeling more relatable and comfortable with male mentors.

Despite the difficulty in providing clear distinctions between men and women in mentorship, participants' responses created a detailed overview of the perceived benefits of male mentorship. Therefore, using the same research protocol with female students who have female mentors would provide an interesting comparison study. Comparing the results of these two studies would more clearly define differences in approach and benefits of male and female mentorship.

Limitations

One limitation to this study came with the broad definition of mentorship. The researcher did not provide participants with a definition to work from, and therefore participants defined mentorship quite differently from one another, often rendering the comparison of responses difficult. The students also had a wide variety of mentors: teaching faculty, student development professionals, pastors, and counselors. These different professions would certainly approach mentorship differently. Although the research sought to narrow the definition, each participant spoke about mentorship in a different way.

The quantity of participants brought another possible limitation to this study. Interviewing ten participants may not provide an exhaustive definition of mentorship for male college students. A lack of diversity also existed amongst the participants. No minority students participated in the research.

The study may also involve bias from the participants. Students volunteered to participate, and they willing interviewed because of their positive and formative experience with mentorship. The participants probably had a much better experience with mentorship than the average college student.

Bias also exists within the researcher. As with any qualitative study, data cannot remain completely objective. The researcher has personal life experience and perspectives on mentorship that cannot stay completely apart from data interpretation.

Conclusion

College affords a deeply formative time for students, and mentorship provides an outlet for men and women to explore their identity and seek answers to big questions. Mentors have a significant opportunity to impact the lives of their mentees. Recognition of the deep value of mentorship is important for universities seeking holistic student development. This recognition should lead towards making space and time for faculty members to engage in mentorship and providing professional development opportunities for furthering mentoring skills. Tyson's words articulated the lasting, positive benefits of having a mentor during college:

> The impact he has made on me is eternal—there is no doubt in my mind. I know as I look ten or fifteen years down the road, I think that I'll look back and realize that they have shaped my direction of life after [college]. Long-term impact after I'm no longer a part of [my mentors'] lives.

The nature of mentoring male college students means that the relationship can typically exist for up to four years. Despite the short-term length of the relationship, the benefits students receive last for the rest of their lives.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

How did you get connected with your mentor?

- [If respondent sought out mentor] What qualities did they have that made you want to seek them out?

How do you define a mentor?

What are some qualities that all mentors should have?

Have you changed or grown through mentorship? If so, in what ways?

Has mentorship been effective at preparing you for the future? If so, in what ways?

Has mentorship been effective at helping you navigate day-to-day life? If so, how?

Do you interact with you mentor outside of formal meetings times?

- [if yes] how do those informal interactions impact the effectiveness of the mentorship?
- [if no] do you think that informal interactions would have an impact on the effectiveness of the mentorship?

What responsibilities (if any) do you have as the mentee to get the most out of the relationship with your mentor?

Have you ever had a female mentor?

- [If yes] How was the relationship different?
- [If no] Would you ever intentionally seek out a female mentor? Why or why not?

Has mentorship affected you spiritually? If so, how?

Do you regularly discuss your emotions with your mentor?

- [if yes] What has been the benefits of discussing your emotions?

Has mentorship had a positive impact on your life? Why or why not? What have been the most significant benefits?