Perceived Character Development in a Mentoring Relationship from the Voices of Students and Their Student Affairs Mentors

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PERCEIVED CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP
FROM THE VOICES OF STUDENTS AND THEIR STUDENT AFFAIRS MENTORS

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ABSTRACT
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Dissertation Supervised by James E. Henderson, Ed.D., Professor of Educational Leadership and Director, Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program for Educational Leaders, Duquesne University School of Education

This qualitative study examined the perceived effects of a mentoring relationship between a student and a student affairs professional on the student’s character development from the perspective of both the student and the student affairs professional. The purpose of this study was to add to the body of literature and to inform the field of student affairs regarding this phenomenon. A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology best suited the epistemological philosophy chosen to understand the perceptions of the participants regarding the role of the mentoring relationship on character development.

A literature review was conducted from the fields of student affairs, higher education, character education, moral development and qualitative research to enlighten
the study. In the fall 2006 semester, the researcher interviewed 5 student affairs professionals and their corresponding student protégés for a total sample of 10 participants. Data was collected from tape-recorded conversations using questions to encourage discussion in an effort to have personal life stories shared with the researcher.

After all participants were interviewed, the researcher interpreted and analyzed the data. The current study indicated that student affairs professionals serving as informal mentors can enhance the student’s character development. The data also showed that focusing on character development in colleges and universities is an effective use of the student affairs professional’s time and institutional resources. One implication from the data illuminated that the sharing of personal information from the student affairs professional aids in the development of the student’s character development. Another implication discovered from the data is for student affairs professionals to be aware of the numerous opportunities to make an impact on the character development of students in the college and university setting and to make an effort to deliberately seek out opportunities to form mentoring relationships.
DEDICATION

To my best friend who has supported, pushed, and held me up during this entire journey, my wife, Jennifer and to the lights of our lives, Amanda, Alexa and Jacob.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One has only to read the daily newspaper or watch the nightly news to be exposed to the problems that face young people today and predict the impact of such problems on the future of our country. Examples of headlines include, “Professors turn to software to detect Web-based plagiarism” (Stryker 2007, p.1), “UC Berkeley / Stolen Nobel returned / Suspect is student who police say acted on impulse” (Lee 2007, p. B3) and “March Protests Cross-Burning at the Claremont Colleges; Four students stole another's artwork and set it afire in front of a dorm in January. Officials don't consider it a hate crime.” (Buchanan 2004, p. B6). Other problems include but are not limited to crime, violence, disenfranchised youth, substance abuse, academic dishonesty, an increase of school dropout rates, failing grades and the spread of HIV (Benson, Gailbraith and Espeland, 1998). According to Benson, Gailbraith and Espeland (1998),"We feel powerless to help because nothing- no program, initiative, strategy, or organization- seems to be working long, hard enough, or for enough…” (p.138) young people.

For the purposes of this study, character is defined as:

…an individual’s set of psychological characteristics that affect that person’s ability and inclination to function morally. Simply put, character is comprised of those characteristics of a person that lead him or her to do the right thing or to not do the right thing.

A review of recent history demonstrates examples of individuals lacking character. Examples include a U.S. President differentiating the meaning of words to rationalize dishonesty, recent events of illegal accounting practices in corporate America,
and politicians being convicted of taking bribes and kickbacks. Seymour Sarason (1997) discusses this societal phenomenon as follows:

There are times in a society when a myriad of social phenomena indicate that a particular human need is so seriously frustrated, with consequences sufficiently widespread and ominous, as to force us to give it special emphasis. We are living in such times. (p.214)

Kuh and Umbach (2004) further state “These enduring, prickly events have left an ugly mark on the American psyche and are unpleasant reminders of what can happen when the bedrock of individual and corporate values and ethical systems are left unattended and atrophy” (p.38).

Based on the literature reviewed, one of the most pressing human needs, which requires our emphasis in higher education today, is character development. The United States Congress (1998 Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965 -- SEC863, the Congress of the United States of America) asserts the need for character education on college and university campuses due to this crisis of morals defined earlier. This moral crisis is supported by Congress’ (1998) recognition that the future of our country depends on the youth of today, the majority of American citizens support the teaching “…of core moral and civic values,” (para. 5) and the fact that developing character in students has been part of the mission of higher education in American history (Congress, 1998). Congress (1998) asserts “…character development should be of primary concern on college campuses. In addition, the point is made that this needs to be a joint effort among parents, faculty and staff” (para. 9). President George W. Bush announced National
Character Counts Week in 2003 and stated, “...many of our society’s most cherished values...depend in practice on individual character” (Bush, 2003).

Astin and Antonio (2000) concluded, "While students in previous decades showed concern for social and humanitarian issues, students in recent years seem to be increasingly concerned with their own careers and financial security" (p.4). Kuh and Umbach (2004) report recommendations from their study that, “...institutions should intentionally create opportunities for students inside and outside the classroom to integrate their experiences in a manner that nurtures character development” (p.51).

As a result of this decline in social and humanitarian issues, “Colleges and universities may be the last chance educators have to develop character before students enter the professional workforce” (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999, p.43). Jeffery Aper addressed the 1996 Conference on Values in Higher Education and stated that our students need preparation from institutions of higher education in areas of knowledge, compassion, civic responsibility and a “...moral compass based on a higher conception of community if there is to be hope that we might achieve those highest aims of self-fulfillment, social justice, political liberty and equity, and economic systems that serve the needs of people” (Aper, 1996). Astin and Antonio (2004) state, “The college curriculum, the faculty, and the peer group can all influence character and values during the college years” (p.58). McClellan (1999) supports this claim stating:

For more than a hundred years, moral philosophy had put the finishing touch on the education of all college students and had set the tone for the whole curriculum; in the late nineteenth century, it largely disappeared,
leaving students without a capstone course and college without a formal way to complete the process of moral education. (p.63)

One way student character development can be influenced in the university setting is by faculty and staff serving as role models and mentors. Students have reported an increase on developmental tasks and improved perceptions of the university setting as a result of a mentor relationship with faculty (Cosgrove, 1986). Another study has shown an increase in GPAs and a lower dropout rate for students in mentoring relationships with faculty (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). As will be discussed in more depth, the literature on faculty mentoring reports positive outcomes for students and faculty mentors. Since the research on faculty mentoring shows a positive effect on students and other data has been reported regarding the numerous opportunities for student affairs professionals to interact with students (ACPA/NASPA Conference Draft, 1997, p. 3), it is reasonable to assume that mentoring relationships develop between student affairs professionals and the students they serve. However, these mentoring relationships have not been studied and no data exists to illuminate any particular effect on character education.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceived effect a mentoring relationship has on students’ character development. For the purposes of this study, students will be defined as traditional students from the age of 18-22. Another purpose is to add to the body of literature and increase understanding of character development in the college years. The researcher will demonstrate in Chapter 2 that there is little research in the literature focusing on character development in higher education, specifically in student affairs. This study will add to the emerging research aimed to illuminate the issue
of how, if at all, mentoring by a student affairs professional impacts character
development of college students.

Much of the research that has taken place involving character education has not
provided information helpful to the practitioner (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999). Leming
(1995) asserts, “We have been too content to spend our energies on debating the larger
questions surrounding character education, and too little effort has been spent by the
research community developing a practical research base that can inform practice” (p.5).
The purpose of this study is to add to the body of literature to understand the role of
mentoring in the development of character in college and university students by
examining the role of the student affairs professional as a mentor. It will also provide the
practitioner with helpful information to guide their actions in a deliberate manner as they
serve students in their day-to-day professional life on a college campus.

Schweingruber (1998), shares that one result of trying to keep values separate
from education is that many students see professionals as valueless. Without a value
framework, students enter the professional world unprepared to face the numerous
experiences and choices through a lens of personal and civic responsibility
(Schweingruber, 1985). When professionals expose their personal values, the
professional is not subjecting personal values on students, but rather demonstrating a
personal value system.

Due to a failure of faculty and staff to discuss values on campuses, students were
left without examples to reshape their value frameworks (McClellan, 1999). Bok (1990)
states “…professors concentrated more and more on conveying knowledge and imparting
skills, leaving students to fashion their own beliefs and commitments amid the multiple
distractions of campus life” (p.70). McClellan (1999) asserts that, “Lacking forums in which to test their values, students failed to acquire the capacity to judge ethical systems and developed instead a growing sense of moral relativism” (p.100).

Schaps and Williams (1999) identify several reasons why some educators are hesitant to engage in character education. One reason asserts that schools should not be focusing on moral issues, as it is a personal issue best left to one’s family or faith community. Additionally, there are so many students with different personal views that schools cannot teach all views. Also, not all educators possess the qualities or competence needed to address morality with students. Still another issue discussed addresses the concern of bringing religion to the forefront of our public education system. Finally, some educators worry that by focusing on character education, valuable time needed for academic subjects will be lost (Schapps & Williams, 1999).

Education does not take place in a vacuum. The concerns presented cannot change the fact that schools “unavoidably and inevitably influence student character" (Schaps & Williams, 1999, p.vii). John Howard (1976), one of Rockford College’s long standing presidents and the executive vice chairman of President Eisenhower’s Committee on Government Contracts from 1956 to 1957, concludes that we must “…reestablish character education and citizenship education as prominent objectives along with the transmission of knowledge and skills” (p.5). As evidenced from recent events, Howard’s proclamation still holds true today.

Since it is unavoidable that schools influence students’ character development, it is important to define what is meant by character. According to Schwartz (2000), “A ‘person of character’ is someone whose conduct we admire and respect. The term has
come to exemplify strength, conviction, and principled behavior—such as truthfulness and fairness” (p. 68). Character development is not about pushing the values of others, teaching the “politically correct” views of the majority or pushing specific, religious beliefs on students. Character Education is concerned with shared values, such as respect, honesty, justice and fairness and helping students gain introspection in order to develop and rely on their own “moral compass” (Schwartz, 2000; Weeks, 1993; Williams, 2000).

Wynne (1986) asserts:

We can assume that renewed attention to character development will be good for pupils, their families, educators, and the nation. For, in the end, the welfare and the very existence of our society does not so much depend on the IQ’s of its inhabitants, as on their character. (p.31)

One way character development can be addressed on campuses of higher education is by creating opportunities for formal and informal mentoring relationships. In a recent poll conducted by www.CollegeValues.org (nd), 53.95% polled answered role models and mentors matter most in the college students’ ethical development. While there is limited data involving faculty as mentors and the benefits for students, research on the student affairs professional’s impact on student character development is nonexistent as evidenced from searching numerous library databases, such as EBSCOHOST, ERIC, and ProQuest and researching bibliographies of research cited in this study. Search terms utilized included character education, moral education, character development, college, university, student affairs, values, students, mentors and combinations of these terms.
The importance of conducting this study can be explained by the fact that the student affairs professionals’ impact of student character development is not addressed in the literature review, “…little research has been done to help us understand the role college actually plays in character development” (Astin & Antonio, 2004, p.56). Student affairs professionals are aware that relationships develop between students and professionals and it is important to research the effects of these relationships on students’ character development to add to the emerging literature focusing on the role of the student affairs professional as discussed in depth in the next chapter. While some of these relationships develop from roles as supervisors for placement assignments, others form as a result of advisor relationships and from programs and workshops sponsored by student affairs professionals.

Arminio and Hultgren (2002) explain, “As the era of accountability continues, the survival of student affairs programs and services are reliant on ways of demonstrating how our work enhances the mission of our institutions” (p. 458). It is important to study the impact of student affairs professionals on student's character development because of the great exposure students have with student affairs professionals and especially the ongoing relationships that involve many students.

Research Question

The research question guiding this study is: In a mentoring relationship between a student and a student affairs professional, what are the perceived effects of that mentoring relationship on the student’s character development from the perspective of both the student and the student affairs professional?
A qualitative approach will be used to investigate character development that occurs during the mentoring process in the Student Affairs Division of a Master's Colleges and Universities I Carnegie classification state university in Pennsylvania. Arminio and Hultgren (2002) state, “Increasingly, qualitative research informs student affairs practice” (p. 447). Specifically, a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology best suits the epistemological philosophy chosen to understand the perceptions of the participants regarding the role of the mentoring relationship on character development. It is important to understand the perceived impact on students’ character development from both students’ and professionals’ perspective. Hermeneutic phenomenology will enlighten this perspective of the participants’ dialogue with the researcher. Smith (1993) describes how this will be accomplished in the following, “The hermeneutical task was seen as that of putting oneself in the place of the author in the sense that one is able thereby to reconstruct the thinking of the author” (p. 14). Therefore, utilizing hermeneutic phenomenology, the perspective of those interviewed will describe the phenomenon of student affairs professionals’ impact on students’ character development in a mentoring relationship.

Limitations

Limitations to this study include the researcher’s past involvement as the Director of Multicultural Development and Character Education and as a recent member of the Student Affairs Division on this campus. The researcher will be aware of personal values and bias and will make efforts against tainting the participants’ voices utilizing the methods discussed in chapter three regarding triangulation.
According to Arminio and Hultgren (2002), “Openness, disclosure, and self-reflection are characteristics that enhance meaning making and are inherent in goodness criteria” (p.452). It is imperative to bring to light any bias that may exist from the researcher. In an effort to expose my preconceptions through open disclosure and reflection, the researcher will reflect personal lived experience with character education through journaling during data collection. Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006) support this practice stating, “Again, journaling and the introduction and literature review sections of a written report offer an opportunity for this clarification of assumptions” (p. 126).

Student participants will be chosen based on their involvement in a mentoring relationship with a student affairs staff member at a state university and staff will be chosen based on their involvement as a mentor. Involvement in a mentor relationship is self-identified by the participants. Other limitations may be discovered during the course of the study.

Operational Definitions

The following terms are operational for this study:

1) **Character**: “…an individual’s set of psychological characteristics that affect that person’s ability and inclination to function morally. Simply put, character is comprised of those characteristics of a person that lead him or her to do the right thing or to not do the right thing” (Berkowitz, 2004, p.43).

2) **Character Education**: For the purposes of this study, character education will encompass such terms as moral education and values education. Character Education is concerned with shared values, such as respect, honesty, justice
and fairness and helping students introspect in order to develop and rely on their own “moral compass” (Schwartz, 2000; Weeks, 1993; Williams, 2000).

3) **Epistemology:** “… the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (Crotty, 1998, p.3).

4) **Goodness:** “Goodness requires that elements of the meaning making process are illustrated; epistemological and theoretical foundations are linked to the selected methodology; and that the method of data collection and its analysis are clear, offering new understanding that leads to improved practice” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 446 ).

5) **Hermeneutic Phenomenology:** a qualitative research approach that “…attempts to understand participants' perspectives and views of social realities” (Leedy, 1997, p. 161) by utilizing the art of writing and re-writing to characterize the phenomenon, ensuring a purposeful relationship to the phenomenon through pedagogy and ensuring a balance in the research framework by investigating the parts and the whole (Van Manen, 1990).

6) **Mentoring:** "…refers to a situation in which a more-experienced member of an organization maintains a relationship with a less-experienced, often new member to the organization and provides information, support, and guidance so as to enhance the less-experienced member's chances of success in the organization and beyond. We will refer to the more experienced member of such a relationship as the mentor and the less-experienced individual as the protégé" (Campbell & Campbell, 1997, p. 517).
7) **Methodology:** “… the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (Crotty, 1998, p.3).

8) **Methods:** “… the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data to some research question or hypothesis” (Crotty, 1998, p.3).

9) **Student:** A traditional aged university student age 19-21.

10) **Student Affairs:** A college and university profession concerned with providing services related to all areas of student life including the "comprehensive education of students, including intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual, physical, moral and academic, and students' vocational goals, needs and interests” (ACPA/NASPA Conference, 1997, para.6).

11) **Theoretical Perspective:** “… the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p.3).
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this review is to explore the historical context of character education in the college and university setting. Specifically, the use of mentors in the development of character in the college student will be addressed. Based on a review of the literature as stated in chapter one, there are few studies found that address character education in the college setting and no studies found that address the role student affairs staff contribute to student character development. Leming (1995) states, “An emerging problem regarding the accessibility of research in character education is that so few of the existing studies are ever published” (p. 7).

As a result of the limited research available focusing on character development in higher education, the review of literature will examine the historical context of character development to understand the relationship of focusing on this issue in the university setting. Then it will focus on character development in colleges and universities to explore the current role of developing character in this setting. Next, the literature review will specifically examine the role of the student affairs professional in developing a student’s character. Finally, the chapter examines mentoring and how it impacts student character development in an effort to understand how mentoring relationships with student affairs professionals have an impact on student’s character development.

Character Development

Schools can take steps to address the numerous problems facing our children today (Benson, Gailbraith & Espeland, 1998). Schaeffer (1998) states:
The founders of education in almost every state recognized that, like academic development, moral and social development was essential to a child's education, and required deliberate action devoted to creating environments where adults and children learn to assume responsibility for themselves and each other, build trust and understanding, and act honestly. Today, these efforts are called character education. (p.30)

Currently, character education programs are prevalent in elementary and secondary education. (Berkowitz, 2004; Williams 2000) Informal programs include monthly character themes, good citizen citizenship awards and periodic assemblies. Character education can be observed as “words of the month,” a stand-alone class, part of the curriculum, service learning opportunities, and other specific programs. Rarely, is character education part of a comprehensive school reform (Berkowitz, 2004).

Successful schools that have adopted principles of "character education" do not have isolated programs, but rather provide opportunities to address character development throughout the curriculum (Schaeffer, 1998). Every lesson provides an opportunity to use an example that promotes the student's character. Learning does not stop at the walls of the learning establishment. Local communities become involved with character development through community contacts and role modeling (Schaeffer, 1998). "Like a good family, a school; high in community is well positioned to foster character and citizenship" (Schaps, 1998, p. 7).

Schaeffer (1998) further states:

Effective character education creates a more compassionate society and true sense of community - and it can help improve academic learning as
well. Students who feel they belong want to be in school. Students who see connections between their class work and their life experiences want to learn more. (p.32)

Groups like the Character Education Partnership have set up conferences and committees to assess the effectiveness of school based programs and provide awards to recognize successful models for others to emulate (2004).

It is important to study character education in colleges and universities as higher education may be the last chance educators have to develop character in students before entering the professional workforce (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999). There are numerous examples in recent history of people in leadership roles who made decisions that are not consistent with universal values associated with character development, such as honesty, respect, community, caring and honor. Examples such as the following headlines, “New York Governor Eliot Spitzer Tied to Prostitution Ring” (Rogers, R., NBC Augusta.com 2008, p.1), Stewart Found Guilty of Lying in Sale of Stock” (Hayes & Eaton, 2004, p.A1), and “Executives on Trial: Start of Enron Trial Is Set for January ’06” (Wall Street Journal, 2005, p.1) are just a few examples that reinforce the urgency of making character education a focus in colleges and universities. The examples show people making poor choices that reflect poorly on the individuals’ character development.

In addition, there are numerous examples in colleges and universities that define the importance of exposing students to character education. Examples of academic dishonesty, racially motivated harassment, theft, and increased university judicial cases support the urgency for a character education focus in colleges and universities.

Kohlberg (1987) describes Level I as the pre-conventional level. This level includes, "…most children under 9 years of age, some adolescents, and many adolescent and adult criminals" (p.238). In this level, the individual views rules and social expectations as something that is external from the person. Level II is the conventional level. This level includes "…most adolescents and adults in our society and in other societies” (p.283). The individual at this level conforms to and upholds society's rules and laws just because they are the rules of society. Level III is the post-conventional level. This level includes, "…a minority of adults and is usually attained only after the age of 20" (p. 283). In this level, the individual,"…has differentiated his or her values from the rules and expectations of others and defines these values in terms that may sometimes conflict with those of society" (p.283).

Kohlberg’s theory of moral development supports the argument that focusing on character development in colleges and universities is an effective use of the student affairs professional’s time and institution resources. According to Kohlberg (1987) and his theory of moral development, most traditional college students fall in the
conventional level based on his research and the level of moral development of most adolescents and adults in our society. As discussed later in the chapter, the two professional organizations for student affairs practitioners stated the second principle of the “Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs” (ACPA/NASPA Conference Draft, 1997) is to help “…students build coherent values and ethical standards” (ACPA/NASPA Conference Draft, 1997). Traditional college students at this level are open to the influence of student affairs professionals in their role as authority figures.

During the seventies and eighties much research focused on the effectiveness and specific approaches of character education (Leming, 1995). During this time, teachers discovered that if they utilized Kohlberg’s dilemma discussion approach for at least a semester, the result would usually be small advances in students’ stages of moral reasoning (Leming, 1981).

In the nineties, a decline in applied moral research occurred with regard to Kohlberg’s approach. This occurred as a result of difficulty with implementation by teachers, criticism of Kohlberg’s research that utilized only American, mostly white males as participants, questions regarding moral relativism, and Kohlberg and his colleagues’ refining the definition of their theory of moral development (Leming, 1995). Leming (1995) describes a “paradigm shift” that occurred in the early nineties, specifically, moving from approaches that focus on the individual choosing what is moral to approaches that focus on a basic set of universal core values. It appears “…there are now numerous indications from research that moral conduct is a product of interpersonal influence and not purely of independent individual decision-making” (Emler & Reicher, 1995, p. 267).
Williams and Schaps (1999) found agreement among the major schools of thought about character education in the following dichotomies emphasizing the importance of both perspectives. The first dichotomy involves habit and reasoning. One school of thought focuses on an individual developing moral reasoning, while the opposite school focuses on practicing moral behavior until it becomes a habit.

The second dichotomy involves hard virtues and soft virtues. Hard virtues include self-discipline, courage, loyalty, and perseverance and soft virtues include caring, compassion, kindness, and friendliness. Increasingly, the tendency is to focus on both hard and soft virtues.

The third dichotomy according to Williams and Schaps (1999) involves an individual focus and a focus on one’s environment or community. One perspective states that character is developed in the individual. The other perspective states that character is developed from exposure to the behavioral norms and patterns of one’s surroundings.

According to Williams and Schapps (1999), the current trend is putting an emphasis on commonalities versus differences. Although there may still be some differences or tensions among theorists, for the most part, theorists appear willing to incorporate differences for the benefit of a comprehensive approach (Williams, 2000). The reader can see that theorists value the importance of creating a comprehensive approach of exposing students in elementary and secondary education to character education programs. Since adolescence continues through the early twenties and this is the age of traditional college students, this assumption supports making character education a focus in higher education as part of the student’s developmental maturation. Although, according to Williams (2000), character education may not be included in the
higher education setting as it may be seen as opposing university understanding of academic freedom. Another problem with infusing character education as a focus in higher education is the fact that some professors do not know how to integrate concepts of character in regular courses.

Character Education in Higher Education

In the 1998 Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965 -- SEC863, the Congress of the United States of America asserted that the future of the U.S. and the world depends on our youth. Crime statistics, teen pregnancy rates and drug and alcohol abuse among our youth are signs that the country is facing a moral crisis (P.L. 105-244).

The 1998 Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965 -- SEC863 includes a declaration that “…character development is the long-term process of helping young people to know, care about, and act upon such basic values as trustworthiness, respect for self and others, responsibility, fairness, compassion, and citizenship…” (para. 3). These values are universal, crossing different cultures and religious beliefs. The amendments claims that 90% of U.S. citizens support the teaching of the universal values discussed (P.L. 105-244).

The 1998 Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965 -- SEC863 reiterate that parents have been and will continue to be the main teachers of values and morals and that the family is best suited to this task. However, the drafters of this amendment recognize that partnerships of parents, educators and other community members are important in developing character in our youth as well as providing opportunities for adults to serve as role models (P.L. 105-244).
Furthermore, “…the development of virtue and moral character, those habits of mind, heart, and spirit that help young people to know, desire, and to do what is right, has historically been a primary mission of colleges and universities…” (1998 Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965 -- SEC863, para. 10). University personnel are encouraged to partner with parents to promote the development of character consistently in the homes, communities, schools and places of higher learning. “It is the sense … that Congress should support and encourage character building initiatives in schools across America and urge colleges and universities to affirm that the development of character is one of the primary goals of higher education” (1998 Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965 -- SEC863, para. 12).

Finally, the drafters make the assertion that character development should be of primary concern on college campuses. In addition, the point is made that this needs to be a joint effort among parents, faculty and staff. The assertions discussed in this amendment reinforce the examples facing our nation and institutions of higher education contributing to the “…moral crisis in our society” (1998 Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965 -- SEC863, para. 3). In addition, these assertions assist in clarifying the definition of character development and provide support that basic values such as, “…trustworthiness, respect for self and others, responsibility, fairness, compassion and citizenship…” (1998 Amendments to Higher Education Act of 1965 -- SEC863, para. 3) are universal. The report supports a focus of teaching core values, for example, character education.

Astin and Antonio (2000) assert that educators have seen a change in students’ values over the past 20 years. " While students in previous decades showed concern for
social and humanitarian issues, students in recent years seem to be increasingly concerned with their own careers and financial security” (p.4) The conclusions by Astin and Antonio (2000), included a sample of students attending 167 colleges and universities with longitudinal data provided by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California, Los Angeles. Astin and Antonio (2000) “…identified a group of institutions that were honored by the Templeton Foundation as exemplary institutions in developing character…” (p. 4). The Templeton Foundation publicly honors institutions of higher education that “…engage intentionally in the development of character among college students” (Astin & Antonio 2000, p. 3).

The students in this sample were surveyed in the summer and fall of 1993 by HERI using the Student Information Form (SIF). The instrument is usually administered during orientation programs and provides data describing student characteristics prior to the college experience (Astin & Antonio, 2000).

The sample used for this study included 9,792 students who responded to the previous survey and a survey administered by the HERI, the College Student Survey, four years later in 1997. “This follow-up survey contained measures of student behavior and involvement in college as well as measures of attitudes, goals, opinions, and self-concept that were identical in the SIF in order to assess change over four years of college” (Astin & Antonio, 2000, p. 5).

Astin and Antonio (2000) identified civic responsibility, cultural awareness and sensitivity, volunteerism, importance of raising a family, religious beliefs and convictions, and understanding of others as outcome measures to analyze the data from the longitudinal survey. The authors compared men and women regarding differences
based on these six character outcomes and students who attended Templeton-honored schools to students attending other schools of higher education.

From their research, Astin and Antonio (2004) assert “Character-enhancing colleges, then, appear to be those that take seriously the many opportunities that college has to build character in today’s youth” (p.62). The current study explores an opportunity to build character in college students by examining the potential role of the student affairs professional in developing students’ character. The current study will examine the mentor/protégé relationship that developed from one of the many contacts with students in areas such as housing, residence life, advising, student activities, counseling/health, volunteer services, athletics, etc. Astin and Antonio (2004) state, “…broadening students’ academic, social, and cultural perspectives are among the most important activities that contribute to students’ character development” (p. 61). Astin, Parrott, Korn and Sax (1996) also support this claim by “…revealing a growing individualism among college students and declining interests in politics and civic engagement” (p.3).

Astin and Antonio (2004) further state, “Hence, much of the positive association observed between attending a Templeton school and character development in college is attributable to institutional characteristics” (p. 6). Based on their research, Astin and Antonio’s (2004) findings support the importance of the current study. If “institutional characteristics” are the difference between effective schools and non-effective schools in developing character education, then it is important to conduct research to discern the differences.

Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) claim,"…it is our contention that there is not enough attention paid to character development in this nation’s institutions of higher
learning---either on the part of campus educators or the general public” (p. 17). They assert one reason for this is that many faculty do not like the idea of influencing student character development.

Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) offer the following arguments to such concerns, “First it is unavoidable. Education inevitably affects character, either intentionally or unintentionally. To abstain is merely to abdicate control to chance or other influences” (p. 18). They also address issues affecting our society and institutions of higher education that have stated affecting moral decline, such as, “… alcohol abuse, date rape, academic dishonesty, vandalism, and assault, to name a few” (p.18).

Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) support the basis of the current study focusing on character development in students at colleges and universities stating, “…postsecondary education provides society one of its last large-scale opportunities to shape the character of tomorrow’s leaders” (p.18). While some work is being undertaken at colleges and universities, the major emphasis in this country appears to be on elementary and secondary education. Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) further contend that character education delivered in colleges and universities need to include five basics: "teaching about character, displaying character, demanding character, providing opportunities to practice character, and provide opportunities to reflect upon character” (p. 22). Student affairs professionals have the opportunity to impact student’s character development in each of the “five basics” in their everyday involvement with students in such areas as residence life, judicial affairs, greek life, student activities, student government, and other areas in student affairs.
Collier (1997) explores "In what ways are the senior staff of a university or college likely to influence the values of their students?" (p. 77). It is primarily the department chairs and the Head of the School and his/her senior staff, as well as others who are concerned with the day-to-day work and life of the students. Collier (1997) discusses four specific areas in which senior teams influence the values of their students.

The first area concerns law and governance. It is the responsibility of the senior team to promulgate codes of conduct and ensure understanding by the student body. The second area involves ensuring that the faculty is competent in their role as instructor and providing quality facilities for study and research. "It is also necessary to ensure that the non-academic side of the institution's life is suitably catered for, in the shape of living conditions and social and other activities" (Collier, 1997, p.78). This is the primary focus of student affairs professionals.

The third area of responsibility of the senior staff is the management of innovation. Subtle changes in regard to economic power, revolution in study facilities, changing relationships among a diverse student body and the expansion of a learning community have positive and negative effects on institutions of higher learning (Collier, 1997).

The fourth role for senior team members concerns the impact of personal style. This includes personal contacts, both formal and informal, that make up a large part of their day. Specifically, Collier (1997) is describing how the senior team serves as role models for students in regard to acceptable social interaction.

Collier’s second and fourth roles for senior team members that influence their students support the assumption that the student affairs professional can serve as a role
model and mentor, influencing character development since the primary focus of the student affairs professional involves the living and learning environment and the numerous interactions between students and professionals. This supports the rationale for the current study of the student affairs professional role in their students’ character development.

Kuh and Umbach (2004) focused on the following questions guiding their study, “What experiences during college are related to student self-reports of their character development? Do some institutions and institutional types differentially affect character development?” (p. 39). Data for this study came from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE is an annual survey for college students “…that focuses on the amount of time and energy students devote to educationally purposeful activities” (Kuh & Umbach, 2004, p.39).

The sample used for this study consisted of 49,692 seniors who completed the NSSE survey in 2002 and 2003 from 568 four-year colleges and universities. In this study, Kuh and Umbach (2004) assigned the independent variables as “…various measures of student engagement and perceptions of the campus” (p.40). Character development represented the dependent variable using twelve items from the NSSE survey related to character development (Kuh & Umbach, 2004).

The authors analyzed the data in three stages. “First, we used descriptive statistics to construct a profile of the three dimensions of character development as they are represented on the NSSE survey. Second…we used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to explore student and institutional characteristics” (Kuh & Umbach, 2004, p. 41). Finally the authors used hierarchical linear models “…to explore the relationships between
character development and student engagement in educationally purposeful activities” (Kuh & Umbach, 2004, p. 41).

Kuh and Umbach (2004) reported that “the vast majority of students-about 82 percent- indicate that their college experience contributed substantially…to their ability to work effectively with others. Similarly, about 60 percent think college contributed substantially to their developing a systematic code of ethics” (Kuh & Umbach, 2004, p.44). These findings provide additional support for the current study and the need to research character development in the college setting due to the high percentage of students that attribute college to developing their individual ethics and values.

Kuh and Umbach (2004) state that, “…institutions should intentionally create opportunities for students inside and outside the classroom to integrate their experiences in a manner that nurtures character development” (p.51). This supports examining the relationship between student affair professionals and their student protégés and their perception of what impact this relationship has on the student’s character development. Assessing this impact will help maximize the opportunities to develop character of students in the college setting.

Reetz and Jacobs (1999) surveyed faculty at the University of South Dakota’s department of teacher education to ascertain what values were being taught and what method was being utilized. A review of the literature was conducted to develop the survey questions. Thirty-four out of sixty-four faculty members who were invited to complete the survey returned the survey.

The survey included a list of values and asked faculty members which values they taught their students and how to teach these values to others. They were also asked their
overall beliefs regarding the importance of discussing character education with their students. Most of the faculty surveyed perceived they are providing instruction that is considered character education. The professors surveyed:

…indicated they believed it is important for college professors to address moral and character issues with their students. Nearly all indicated they, as faculty members, should provide students with methods, curriculum and guidance in how to deliver this information to their clients, faculties, or students. (Reetz & Jacobs, 1999, p. 210)

According to the survey, the most frequently stated form of teaching character values was by teacher modeling. Although this study focused on faculty teaching character values to teacher education students, it relates to the current study by providing support to the importance of providing character development to college students. More specifically, support is gained for the current study as there are no existent studies that support or reject the effectiveness of utilizing student affairs professionals as mentors affecting student character development and this study will add to the literature.

Yanikoski (2004), states, “For as long as intelligent people have considered the purposes of higher learning, character development has been a desirable if uneasy companion of intellectual growth” (p.71). Yanikoski (2004) discusses the importance being placed on developing character and ethical values by college and university educators.

In 1993, the Johnson Foundation brought sixteen leaders, including 6 college and university presidents, to discuss what society needs from higher education. These leaders reported that higher education was partly responsible for the lack of society’s focus on
values by not teaching the difference between right and wrong (Yanikoski, 2004). In addition to college and university presidents, “Civic leaders, foundation executives, and corporate CEOs have also called upon the nation’s universities and colleges to do a better job of educating a more civic-minded citizenry and a more ethical workforce” (Yanikoski, 2004, p.13). As a result, institution’s character outcomes make graduates more successful in business.

Yanikoski (2004) discusses additional reasons why college and university presidents and other educational leaders will be interested in research directed at the benefits and impact of student character development on institutions and society. Character development will play a role in institution accreditation. Institutions will be called on to show outcomes data for character development if it is mentioned in their mission statement, goals, and other institutional documentation.

According to Yanikoski (2004), institutions can publicize positive outcome data from character development efforts. More parents and students will look for institutions that can show outcome data as it becomes a more desirable attribute with families, business and politicians. In addition, character outcomes can increase philanthropy as current trends show donors are interested in the impact of gifts.

Character outcomes can impact campus life in numerous ways. For example, institutions “…that focus comprehensively on character development have a better probability of effectively redressing a range of ethical and moral issues that infest student life: academic dishonesty, date rape, alcohol and substance abuse, bigotry and intolerance, theft, sexual harassment, chronic irresponsibility” (Yanikoski, 2004, p. 19). Finally, character outcomes can make a positive impact on society. Yanikoski (2004)
states, “...that citizens who are intellectually alive and morally virtuous have the most to contribute to their community and to the nation” (p. 21). The preceding discussion adds support to the importance of examining all aspects of possible character development on campuses of higher education as in the current study.

Character Education in Student Affairs

While a primary focus of student affairs has been on the student as a whole person since 1937, specific efforts of character education have waned in the recent past (Murray, 2000). Dalton (1985) asserts that in an effort to avoid the perception of pushing a particular set of values, student affairs professionals appear to be value-neutral. Lickona (1993) identified three reasons for renewed interest in character education, "1. The decline of the family, 2. Troubling trends in youth character and 3. A recovery of shared, objectively important ethical values" (p.8).

Whiteley’s (1988, 1985) Sierra Project evaluated the impact of living in a residence hall on character development. Utilizing an experimental group and two control groups, this project evaluated how character developed during the first year of college, as well as the remaining four years. Whiteley found that students who lived in a residence hall with educational programs and 24-hour contact with the program participants, developed further in moral reasoning than their peers. Whiteley recommends combining character education efforts with living and learning communities.

Arthur Chickering developed a theory of identity development that he presented in Education and Identity, (1969). Chickering developed his theory based on research conducted at Goddard College. Over a six-year period, Chickering (1969) targeted students completing their sophomore and senior years. He utilized achievement tests and
personality inventories. He also analyzed diaries kept by selected students and conducted interviews. Chickering and Reisser (1993) revised Chickering’s original theory to address new research findings and include more data among a more diverse student population.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) propose that students develop along seven vectors, "developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity" (p. 236). Developing integrity is key to developing character. Chickering and Reisser (1993) stress the importance of the student affairs professionals role in developing character through "their catalyzing intellectual, cultural, and social experiences, in fostering principled moral reasoning, in helping students define goodness, truth, and quality, and in encouraging them to actualize their highest ideals" (p. 264).

From his perspective as a college dean, Schweingruber (1985) discusses seven ways student affairs professionals can support character development. Schweingruber (1985) encourages professionals to promote an environment based on trust and mutual respect on campus. He states that college staff should be encouraged to share their personal values to ensure students do not see staff as valueless, while being careful not to impose these values on their students.

Schweingruber (1985) advocates for staff to stay away from over legalizing the role of disciplinarian, while enforcing student codes of conduct as this hinders character development. It is important that students should not be sheltered from natural consequences of criminal behavior. Schweingruber (1985) states that students should problem solve issues they encounter and staff should allow this growth opportunity to
occur. Finally, the point is made that staff should make the most out of individual time with students.

Schwiengruber (1985) ends by stating, "If we challenge our students, if we are willing to take risks, if we are willing to take positions on issues, if we are willing to share our values-then [we are] promoting the moral development of our students" (p. 23). Schwiengruber’s seven ways for student affairs professional to support character development adds support for the rationale for the current study.

In March 1997, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) developed "Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs." These two professional organizations for student affairs practitioners stated that good practice in student affairs promotes active learning in students, helps develop a value framework, and sets high expectations, not only for students, but also for student affairs professionals. Good practice in student affairs uses systematic inquiry as a method to increase student and organizational performance, takes a leadership role to help the organization reach it’s goals, creates partnerships and creates communities that are supportive and inclusive. Many of these principles address the role of the student affairs professional as a mentor supporting character development.

The study group developed several drafts that were circulated to NASPA and ACPA, as well as, other student affairs groups for input. Input was gathered at the ACPA/NASPA convention in Chicago in 1997. The feedback was incorporated in the final version of the principles. While it is important to hear the opinions of experts, it is important to conduct this research to further illuminate those opinions.
Active learning includes students sharing their own life experiences, reflecting on both their own and others' perspectives, and applying new learning to their lives. Building values and ethical standards is the core of character development. "Good student affairs practice enriches learning by providing opportunities for students, faculty, staff, and student affairs educators to share, and act on, the values and commitments that define an academic community"(ACPA/NASPA Conference Draft, 1997, p.3).

By setting high expectations for students and student affairs practitioners in the areas of academics, individual and community responsibility, character development is supported. Student affairs professionals that share their skills and knowledge in the areas of student development, learning theories, human development, leadership, communication and programming assist student with character development (ACPA/NASPA Conference Draft, 1997, p. 3).

Good student affairs practice cultivates supportive communities by creating links between and among students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners (ACPA/NASPA Conference Draft, 1997). They further assert, "Student learning is most successful in communities that value diversity, promote and expect social responsibility, recognize accomplishments..." (ACPA/NASPA Conference Draft, 1997, p.4) and feel safe and a sense of belonging. The mentor relationship between a student affairs professional and a student is a valuable tool in creating such links that create safe communities and support character development.

As the director of character-education programs at the John Templeton Foundation, Arthur Schwartz served as project director for the foundation’s guide. Schwartz (2000) discusses three misconceptions regarding character education in
colleges and universities that contribute to questioning its place in the college environment:

Myth #1: A person's character is formed by the time he or she gets to college. Myth # 2: Colleges, and especially faculty members aren't in the business of fostering character. Myth #3: The term 'character' is a code word for a religious or conservative ideology. (p. 68)

Regarding the first myth, the author suggests that we can continue to change and improve character based on his experience working in higher education promoting character education programs. Kohlberg (1987) reinforces that character development takes place during the traditional college years. In response to the second myth, Schwartz (2000) states, "We must remember that nothing is more influential in a young person's life than the moral power of quiet example” (p. 69). This statement also supports mentoring relationships between student affairs professionals and students. Student affairs professionals are in a unique position to serve as mentors developing students’ character development due to the types of contact they have with students. Student affairs professionals work with students in the residence halls, counseling centers, university programs, support services and every part of their college life outside the classroom. Boyer (1994) contends that character development is an essential part of the undergraduate experience and student affairs staff are essential to that process.

The third myth is addressed by reinforcing the idea that character development is not about teaching a set of religious or political values. Character development is about supporting students in the quest for identifying and establishing a personal value system based on universal values. Schwartz (2000) challenges higher education, "to establish
character development as a high institutional priority. Sustained leadership is needed to articulate the expectations of personal and civic responsibility in all dimensions of learning and living on a college campus” (p.70).

Haines (2000) observes that student affairs professionals are encouraged to be role models in the college and university setting. Haines (2000) examines the character of student affairs professionals and the importance of teaching by example stating, “Student development professionals can live this kind of life and have a deep and possibly unknown impact on the people around them in a profound way. In fact, the life they live is making that kind of impact on another” (p. 27). Covey (1989) supports this assertion stating, "The real key to your influence with me is your example, your actual conduct" (p. 238). Student affairs professionals are impacting character development in students everyday by formal and informal means and it is important to add to the body of literature which informs practitioners.

Murray (2000) suggests that some student affairs professionals do not think it is appropriate to develop students’ character as they believe traditional age students are adults “based on the legal status of majority age” (p.5). Murray (2000) also reports that one philosophy of the student affairs profession stands as an obstacle to developing students’ character development. This philosophy is an approach called “challenge by choice” (p.5). This approach permits students to make the choice of when and how much to challenge their beliefs. This approach allows students to avoid character developing experiences and slow down the growth process. The current study will illuminate Murray’s assumption by providing evidence of whether student affairs professionals impact students’ character development.
A recent poll in www.CollegeValues.org asked the question, "What matters most in the ethical development of college students?" (July Newsletter, 2002). Of the 152 responses, 53.95% answered role models and mentors. Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) wrote "Mentors typically are the sounding boards for students' overt presentations of their reflections on themselves and their actions..." (p.22). While mentoring has emerged in several fields over the past decade, its roots can be found as early as Greek mythology (Caruso, 1988).

In some settings, the mentoring process is formalized with mentors being assigned to protégé's. In others, mentoring relationships develop informally with no formal assignment (Campbell & Campbell, 1997). The latter is the type of relationship this study will explore as it better fits the relationship described between student affairs professionals and students.

While research can be found for faculty-student mentoring programs, which is discussed later, no research was found examining the mentor-protégé relationship with student affairs professionals and students. The fact that no research can be found focusing on student affairs professionals serving as mentors is an important reason this study is needed. It is important to study this type of mentor relationship to provide insight for the student affairs profession ensuring their limited time and resources are used in activities that develop character and make a difference in students’ lives. More importantly, it is imperative to conduct research that provides an empirical basis for utilizing the student affairs profession as mentors developing student character development adding to the body of literature that guides future research.
To include more research about mentor relationships in the college/university setting, this literature review incorporates research focusing on faculty as mentors. A study conducted by Cosgrove (1986) found freshman participating in a mentoring program experienced a significant increase on developmental tasks and had positive perceptions of the university. Another study found no major benefits for students, but did report benefits to the professor (Merriam, 1983). Other educational research studies have focused on student perceptions of their faculty mentors and the mentoring relationship (Campbell & Campbell, 1997).

Campbell and Campbell (1997) conducted a research study to discover any benefit on academic success of having a faculty mentor. The research was conducted at a large metropolitan university on the west coast of the United States of America. Entering freshman and transfer students from underrepresented populations were asked to participate by a mailing and direct recruitment during summer outreach programs. Faculty were asked to participate by filling out an application. Approximately 10% of the faculty applied to mentor 1-4 students for an academic year.

Campbell and Campbell (1997) examined mentor written logs for 339 students. Three groups of participants were examined. Each protégée was matched with a student who did not participate in the mentoring program, but were comparable in other characteristics and matched by year, gender, ethnicity, and class level. The control students were randomly chosen by computer. Data was collected and “…a series of t-tests was conducted separately on each academic success variable: first semester, second semester, and cumulative GPA, dropout rate, and graduation rate” (p. 733).
Campbell and Campbell (1997) found higher GPA's and a lower dropout rate for mentored students and a positive correlation between the amount of contact between mentors and protégés and GPA. Campbell and Campbell (1997) further discuss perceived needs of faculty mentors:

(1) altruistic desire to help students (beyond the help afforded through assigned teaching and advising), (2) need for evidence of activities demonstrating service to the university (for tenure and promotion decisions), (3) opportunity for enjoyment of the friendship and relationship with students provided by mentoring. (p. 518)

The student protégé enters the mentoring relationship with different perceived needs, according to Campbell and Campbell (1997), which include: “(1) help with scheduling and enrollment decisions, (2) help interpreting degree requirements, (3) career guidance, (4) assistance in coping with academic demands (general study skills, tutoring for specific courses), and (5) help in addressing personal problems and crises” (p. 518).

This is pertinent information to the current study only in regards to recognizing that mentors and protégés enter the process with differing perceived needs. In the current research, it is important to study this phenomenon from the perception of the student and the student affairs professional to explore these perceived needs and the impact on character development in an effort to provide empirical evidence to add to the scholarly body of literature concerning utilizing the student affairs professional as a mentor developing student’s character development.

One negative aspect of the study by Campbell and Campbell (1997) is the finding that students entered the mentoring relationship with the main reason of getting assistance
with academic matters. If the student is only focused on improving academics, the faculty mentors are not able to affect other aspects such as character development. Faculty were frustrated when students prohibited relationships from developing by not participating in anything other than academics. It will be important to add to the body of literature to understand how mentoring relationships with student affairs professionals differ from mentoring relationships with faculty mentors.

Related Hermeneutic Phenomenological Literature

The following literature includes recent studies not directly related to the current study. These studies are discussed to demonstrate the methodology used in the current study as a reliable and valid research design to discern the lived experience of the participants of the phenomenon described in the research question. The focus is to reveal methods established in other scholarly research that is also utilized in the current study.

Adewui (2008) used a hermeneutic phenomenological research method to study, “…a university supervisor’s perception of her role in supervising a student teacher whose first language is not English, and the student teacher’s perception of the role…” (p.250). Adewui (2008) further states that, “The essence of this methodology lies in the researcher’s attempt to describe and interpret personal meanings and focus on understanding those meanings within the context of student teaching observations, rather than on statistical relationships among variables” (p.250). This is related to the current study as the researcher is attempting to conduct the same type of qualitative method.

Participants in this study included one university supervisor and one student teacher and each participant was interviewed twice by the researcher. The researcher transcribed the data from the interviews and presented themes based on the conversations
using direct quotes for clarification. Finally, the researcher stated conclusions and implications for the field of teacher education based on the findings stated from themes illuminated. An example is demonstrated when Adewui (2008) states, “The unintended outcomes of this study have far reaching implications regarding the ethical considerations in the process of observation of student teachers with cultural and linguistic differences” (p. 253). The current study utilizes the same methodology described in Adewui’s (2008) study and follows the same format of making implications and conclusions based on the data from the interviews with participants.

Evans and Hallett (2006) conducted a study of 15 hospice nurses to determine the meaning of comfort care in a region in England. The researchers utilized a purposeful sampling as a strategy to gather rich data from identified participants. The researchers conducted 2 semi-structured interviews with each participant and used a reflective diary to record reflections and interpretations during all aspects of the research study.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researchers. “The interpretation of data was guided by phenomenological and hermeneutic methodology” (Evans & Hallett, 2006, p. 742). As a result of a thematic analysis, 3 themes emerged and were identified as, “Comfort and relief, Peace and ease and Spirituality and meaning” (Evans & Hallett, 2006, p. 745). The researchers also utilized member checking to ensure, “…validation of meaning associated with their perceptions of comfort care” (Evans & Hallett, 2006, p. 745). Evans and Hallett (2006) state, “By adherence to the principles and actions outline, it is hoped that a credible, auditable, authentic and insightful account of the meanings attached to comfort care by hospice nurses is delivered” (p.745).
Finally, the researchers utilized direct quotations from the interviews to present the data. In the discussion section of the study, the researchers related findings back to the literature review and made conclusions based on the themes that emerged from the interview process. The researchers posit, “It cannot be claimed that similar findings would emerge with a different sample” (Evans & Hallett, 2006, p. 749). Evans and Hallett (2006) further explain that, “…it provides valuable insights into the phenomenon, which have elements of transferability to other hospices and palliative care environments” (p. 749). This study is related to the current study as the same methodology is planned to ascertain the perceptions of the participants as it relates to mentoring and character education. The design of the current research study utilizes the same methods of Evans and Hallett’s (2006) study, such as using a purposeful sampling, conducting 2 semi-structured interviews with each participant, utilizing a reflective diary, member checking, using direct quotes to present the data and making implications and conclusions from the identified themes to enlighten the field of student affairs.

Cassidy (2005) conducted a study utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, “To illuminate issues central to general student nurse’s experiences of caring for isolated patients within the hospital environment, which may assist facilitators of learning to prepare students for caring roles” (p.1247). Purposeful sampling was used to identify 8 female participants who met the criteria set forth by the researcher. The researcher utilized unstructured open-ended interviews for each participant, as well as a reflective diary and field notes to garner data. The current study utilizes the same methods to identify participants to gather data.
The interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Data was analyzed to identify themes. Following hermeneutic phenomenological methods, “Immersion in data occurred through listening to tapes, re-reading transcripts and studying field and reflective comments” (Cassidy, 2005, p. 1249). The following quote from Cassidy (2005) establishes validity and reliability for both this study and the current study:

In keeping with beliefs of hermeneutic phenomenology, validation occurred by asking the eight participants to check if interview transcripts, data analysis and interpretation processes accurately reflected their experiences. An ‘audit trail’ was retained to ensure that the research process was open, transparent and justifiable. Anonymous word-for-word excerpts from participants’ narratives are included in the report so that other students may recognize the experiences described. Information on the research setting and sample are included to assist readers to judge transferability of findings to other contexts. (p. 1249)

Analysis of the data identified 4 main themes. The researcher used direct quotes from the participants in presenting the data. Conclusions and implications were established directly from this process, in addition to connecting findings to the related literature. The following example illustrates this assertion:

Nursing patients in source isolation is influenced by the context within which such care is provided. Caring experiences and student nurse–patient relationships are dramatically altered by the uniqueness of imposed physical, psychological, social and emotional barriers. Balancing care to meet individual needs while preventing spread of infection had significant
meaning for students and explicates the challenges of integrating the art
and science of nursing. Application of theory to practice is vital for
personal and professional development of student nurses and needs to be
recognized and nurtured within clinical practice. (p. 1254)

Arminio (2001) conducted a study utilizing hermeneutic phenomenological
methods, “…to explore how White graduate students made meaning of being White…”
(p. 239). The researcher interviewed 6 participants and gave them pseudonyms to protect
their identity. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis of the data.
Themes were identified and in an effort to establish trustworthiness of the themes, the
researcher utilized a form of peer review and member checking. The researcher used
direct quotes from the data to emphasize themes and establish conclusions and
implications for practice. An example is found when Arminio (2001) states, “I will use
conversations with Elizabeth as an example of how liberation therapy can motivate White
people to take positive action as a result of their guilt” (p. 247).

While Arminio (2001) warns, “The methodology used in this study, hermeneutic
phenomenology, is a method of the possible not the general (these participants’
experiences are possible rather than the probable experiences of other White persons)” (p.
250). Arminio (2001) goes on to explain that the sample may not be representative as the
sample was purposeful and convenient, stating:

Yet this study brings insight into the prominent emotion of related guilt for
Whites. Assisting clients and participants to name their guilt, to realign
their expectations of themselves with new behaviors, and to integrate these
new behaviors into the self can move the world to be healthier and more just. (p. 250)

This study is related to the current study as both are grounded in the methodology of hermeneutic phenomenology with the same characteristics of trustworthiness and the stated research methods. This study, along with the other studies cited in this section of the current chapter, add to the support for employing the research methods described in chapter 3 of the current study.

Summary

While there is research that focuses on character education, the student affairs profession and mentoring as individual fields, there is no research found that focuses on the mentoring relationship between a student affairs professional and undergraduates and the impact on student character development. Additional research is needed to understand this phenomenon.

This is a significant problem to study at this time due to problems facing society such as crime, violence, disenfranchised youth, substance abuse, academic dishonesty, an increase of school dropout rates, failing grades and the spread of HIV (Benson, Gailbraith & Espeland, 1998). Kuh and Umbach (2004) report that “…60 percent of college graduates think college contributed substantially to their developing a systematic code of ethics” (p. 44). Based on these findings, it is important to research character development in the college setting due to the high percentage of students that attribute college to developing their individual ethics and values.

Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) support the basis of the current study focusing on character development in students at colleges and universities stating, “…postsecondary
education provides society one of its last large-scale opportunities to shape the character of tomorrow’s leaders” (p.18). In addition, “Civic leaders, foundation executives, and corporate CEOs have also called upon the nation’s universities and colleges to do a better job of educating a more civic-minded citizenry and a more ethical workforce” (Yanikoski, 2004, p.13).

Finally, according to Astin and Antonio (2004), if “institutional characteristics” are the difference between effective schools and non-effective schools in developing character education, then it is important to conduct research to discern the differences. The current study is important to provide empirical support for the role of the student affairs professional as a role model and mentor, which has been stated as a guiding principle of the profession. This study can verify that student affairs professionals should continue supporting this guiding principle by understanding the perceived impact based on student and mentor perceptions of the mentor relationship and contribute to schools efforts to develop students’ character.

In addition, this study will direct future research in an area in need of scholarly analysis due to the numerous opportunities of student affairs professionals to develop students’ character. The results will enlighten the literature guiding the student affairs profession, specifically, the impact of their informal relationships with students and adding to the scholarly understanding of character development in the setting of higher education.
CHAPTER 3
METHOD

A qualitative approach was chosen to guide this research study. Creswell (1994) defines a qualitative study as the “inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complete, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (p.2). Krathwohl (1998) stated:

Qualitative research methods are particularly useful in understanding how individuals understand their world, in showing how individuals' perceptions and intentions in situations determine their behavior, in exploring phenomena to find explanation, and in providing concrete and detailed illustrations of phenomena. (p. 225)

Qualitative research is becoming more common as a research approach to inform the student affairs professional (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2001). As is the case in this study, when “…the literature base is weak, underdeveloped, or missing, a qualitative design can provide a researcher with the freedom/flexibility needed to explore a specific phenomenon so that important variables might be identified” (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 1993, p. 99).

The goal of this study is to understand the perceptions of the mentors and protégés regarding the impact of the relationship on the students' character development, specifically, student affairs professionals serving as mentors to undergraduate students at a university in Pennsylvania. This relationship is the focus of this study. The goal of this
study is to attempt to understand the relationship between the mentors and their protégées and share it with other researchers and practitioners.

Through interviews, the researcher will document the participants’ perception of the relationship and the impact of this relationship on the student’s character development. The researcher will then discuss themes illuminated from the interviews to describe this phenomenon. The researcher will describe the relationship through the art of writing and re-writing. This process will be explained later in this chapter.

A hermeneutic phenomenological research approach will best discern the perceptions of the participants and guide the researcher in an exploration of the role the relationship plays, if any, on character development. Leedy (1997) defines phenomenology "… as a research method that attempts to understand participants' perspectives and views of social realities" (p. 161). By adopting this approach, the researcher must attempt to "… understand how individuals perceive the meaning of the world around them and seek to view it through their eyes -- how people understand their world and their surroundings" (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 235).

In the current study, hermeneutic phenomenology is uniquely suited to perceive the impact a mentoring relationship has on the development of the student’s character development from the perspective of the participant’s perceived reality. Through hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher will attempt to discover the meaning of this relationship as it impacts character development. The researcher has been trained in conducting psychological interviews and therapeutic technique in his psychology masters program. This experience will help the researcher begin the process of understanding the participants’ perceptions as it relates to the current study.
It is important to clarify the specific research process used in this study. This research process consists of the following four elements defined in the operational definitions in chapter one of this study, methods, methodology, theoretical perspective and epistemology (Crotty, 1998, p.3).

Procedures

The target population will include undergraduate university students or recent graduates, age 19-23, and student affairs professionals in a medium-sized, public university in central Pennsylvania. In the fall 2006 semester, the researcher will select 5 student affairs professionals and their corresponding student protégés for a total sample of 10 individuals as described later in this section. Leedy (1997) describes the method of data collection in a phenomenological approach as conducting interviews using a “Purposeful sampling of 5-10 individuals” (p. 166). A purposive sampling will be utilized "...to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples. Participants are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative..." (Leedy, 1997, p.162).

Students will be chosen in a deliberate fashion as a result of a mentoring relationship they have with a member of the Student Affairs Division. The researcher will approach student affairs professionals that advise students, work regularly with interns or student workers and have at least 2 years experience working in the student affairs field. The mentor / protégée relationship must be at least one year old. Participants will be chosen based on the anticipated richness of data based on the criteria described in this section. Participant diversity will be important in the selection process and the researcher
will ensure all students are at least 18 years of age. The researcher will strive for diversity related to gender, race and sexuality in order to gather richer data.

The researcher will meet with prospective student affairs professionals to invite participation and ask if they have at least one relationship with a student perceived as a mentoring relationship. In order to be included in this study, the mentor and protégée must meet or talk at least two times per semester, which will ensure the mentoring relationship is still active. The student must also view the student affairs professional as a mentor. The researcher will meet with the identified students to invite participation and ensure the student perceives that the mentor relationship exists. Information from these meetings will be included in the researcher’s journal to add to the “goodness” of the research process. Consent forms to grant permission to participate in interviews with the researcher will be signed by each participant prior to the initiation of the interview process. Keeping all identifying information separate from the transcribed interview data in a locked area and shredding all identifying data at the completion of the study will ensure confidentiality.

Interviews will be conducted in the fall 2006 semester. All participants will have at least one face-to-face interview with the researcher on or off campus, but follow up interviews may be conducted face to face, by telephone or by email.

Data will be collected from individual dialogues with 5 students and their 5 student affairs mentors at the chosen university and will take place in the 2006 spring semester. “Dialogue is nothing but the mutual stimulation of thought… a kind of artistic creation in the reciprocation of communication” (Gadamer, 1992). Using this dialogue approach will add to the field’s understanding of this topic by allowing students and
professionals to examine relationships developed in an effort to understand the impact on character development. One of Van Manen’s (1990) six research activities describes, “…reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon” (p.27). The researcher will keep a journal during data collection that will serve as additional data.

Data will be collected conducting tape-recorded conversations using questions to encourage discussion with the student affairs professionals and the undergraduate student protégés separately, in an effort to have “personal life stories” shared with this researcher. According to Van Manen (1990):

In hermeneutic phenomenological human science the interview serves very specific purposes: (1) it may be used as a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon, and (2) the interview may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience.

(p. 66)

Both student protégées and mentors will be asked questions based on the research presented in the review of literature to understand the impact of the mentoring relationship on student character development in the first dialogue session using semi-structured interviews. The researcher will conduct the interviews and all interviews will be transcribed (See Appendix A).

In addition to basing the interview questions from the literature review, the researcher consulted Jan Arminio, an expert in the field of hermeneutic phenomenology, regarding the development of the questions to ask the protégées and the mentors.
J. Arminio (personal communication, July 27, 2006) suggested having a set of questions for an initial interview asking broad questions to explore if the topics are brought out by the participant on their own and have another set of questions for the second interview to follow the same format.

In addition, the researcher will probe more deeply during interviews as may be appropriate. J. Arminio (personal communication, July, 27, 2006) advised, “… be careful not to go down a certain path. Be as open as you can… If something intriguing is brought up by one participant in the first interview, it can be brought up to other participants in the second interview.” J. Arminio (personal communication, July, 27, 2006) gave approval that the questions developed are consistent with accepted practices in a phenomenological study.

After all participants have been interviewed twice, the researcher will interpret and analyze the data identifying emerging themes and patterns (Leedy, 1997, p.162). According to Van Manen (1990), this is accomplished by conducting a thematic analysis. Finding the focus or meaning of the experience is important in understanding the theme. A process of simplification is used to formulate a theme. “Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 87). Themes will be coded based on, “the insider’s view in terms of how those studied organize and view themselves” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

In addition to interviews, the researcher will keep a journal during the conversations with the participants. The purpose of this journal writing by the researcher is for, “keeping a record of insights gained, for discerning patterns of the work in
progress, for reflecting on previous reflections, for making the activities of research themselves topics for study, and so forth” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 73).

“To embrace goodness, researchers must provide evidence of trustworthiness” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 457). An audit trail will be utilized to keep track of all data from the conversations with the participants to ensure an accurate record of what was said and who said it. The researcher will record the dialogues with participants. The dialogues will be transcribed so the researcher can make interpretations based on themes uncovered and written in a final report to support the findings (Krathwohl, 1998).

Triangulation will be utilized to strengthen goodness and will include conducting interviews with the student affairs professional mentors and the student protégées, conducting member checking of data to ensure accuracy from participants, comparing reflections from the researcher’s journal to interpretations for compatibility and utilizing a research auditor. Jones, Torres and Arminio (2006) recommend, “Talking through research decisions with a more experienced researcher can help you think thorough ideas and provide different insights” (p.100). These activities will assist in efforts against tainting the participants’ voices from personal values and bias from the researcher.

Methodology

Van Manen (1990) describes the current methodology stating:

… “methodology” refers to the philosophic framework, the fundamental assumptions and characteristics of a human science perspective. It includes the general orientation to life, the view of knowledge, and the sense of what it means to be human which is associated with or implied by a certain research method. (p. 27)
Van Manen (1990) further describes six research activities related to hermeneutic phenomenology and discusses method in an elemental structure. This process involves choosing a phenomenon in which the researcher has a genuine interest and makes a connection to the world, exploring lived experience as opposed to how the experience is conceptualized and using reflection to ascertain central themes which describe the phenomenon. This process further involves utilizing the art of writing and re-writing to characterize the phenomenon, ensuring a purposeful relationship to the phenomenon through pedagogy and ensuring a balance in the research framework by investigating the parts and the whole. This process of writing and re-writing or revising guides the illumination of the lived experience of the participants to ensure their meaning of this phenomenon is uncovered and shared in the results and discussion of this study.

Arminio and Hultgren (2002) explain that, “Using an interpretive perspective, requires that meaning is made through the act of understanding” (p.452). Heidegger states, “…that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation” (p. 61).

Arminio and Hultgren (2002) further describe that:

Phenomenology seeks to understand lived experience phenomena through language that is pretheoretical, without classification or abstraction. It requires that the researcher bring forth previous understandings connected to the phenomenon being studied. This is necessary for researchers to be open to the lived experiences of others. Phenomenology offers intuitive interpretations of text through the process of writing and rewriting.

(pp. 452-453)
Gadamer (1992) contends, “To interpret means precisely to bring one’s own preconceptions into play so that the text’s meaning can really be made to speak for us” (p. 397). Further, “When we are concerned with understanding and interpreting verbal texts, interpretation is the medium of language itself shows what understanding always is: assimilating what is said to the point that it becomes one’s own” (Gadamer, 1992, p. 398).

This study will use the term “goodness” as discussed by Arminio and Hultgren (2002) and defined in the operational definitions in chapter one, to judge qualitative research. “It is our hope that offering goodness as a means to view worthiness of qualitative research and consequently student affairs practice” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 448).

Goodness provides criteria for researchers to ensure qualitative research is undertaken in a scholarly manner. Lincoln and Guba’s study (as cited in Arminio and Hultgren (2002) add to this meaning of goodness, “The concept of goodness allows for the language of situatedness, trustworthiness, and authenticity…” (p. 449). Arminio and Hultgren (2002) further contend that:

The term goodness allows for moving out from under the shadow of empirical-analytical expectations of interpretive and critical work. It is no longer necessary to hide behind the language of reliability and validity.

Rather, qualitative researchers can be more illuminating when offering evidence of goodness. (p.449)

Evidence of goodness is addressed in each subsection of the research process. Goodness is reinforced and provides the connectedness along the research process,
including the methods, methodology, theoretical perspective and epistemology. This study will be judged by the “concept of goodness” to report worthy qualitative research in an effort to enlighten student affairs practitioners by ensuring “…elements of the meaning making process are illustrated; epistemological and theoretical foundations are linked to the selected methodology; and that the method of data collection and its analysis are clear, offering new understanding that leads to improved practice” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002 p. 449).

Theoretical Perspective

Arminio and Hultgren (2002) state, “Hermeneutic phenomenology theory provides a compass for the general direction of how we are to proceed in illuminating goodness. This compass indicates that we are to uncover meanings in ‘text’” (p. 447). Van Manen (1990) explains when utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach, “The purpose …is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something” (p. 87). According to Van Manen (1990), a theme is not found in certain areas of a text. It is found throughout the text. “Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience” (p. 87).

Gadamer (1992) describes, “…understanding is always interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding. In accordance with this insight, interpretive language and concepts were recognized as belonging to the inner structure of understanding” (p. 307). Van Manen (1990) describes:

… a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience – is validated by lived experience and it
validates lived experience. This is sometimes termed the ‘validating circle of inquiry.’ In order to become adept at this validating process one has to learn to insert oneself in the tradition of scholarship in such a way that one can become a participating member of the tradition. (p. 27)

The lived experience of the mentor and protégée in their relationship and the impact of this relationship on the student’s character development is the focus of this research study. It is imperative that the researcher becomes a participant of the study and contributes to the data through rich conversations.

**Epistemology**

“Epistemology and theory provide a context or broad map for the research process” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 451). A constructionist epistemology is employed in this research study. Crotty (1998) describes constructionism as, “…the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p.42).

Crotty (1998) further explains that, “What constructionism claims is that meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Before there were consciousnesses on earth capable of interpreting the world, the world held no meaning at all” (p. 43). Humphrey’s study (as cited in Crotty, 1998, p. 43) explains:

You may object that you cannot imagine a time when nothing existed in any phenomenal form. Were there not volcanoes, and dust-storms and starlight long before there was any life on Earth? Did not the sunrise in the
East and set in the West? Did not water flow downhill, and light travel faster than sound? The answer is that if you had been there, that is indeed the way the phenomena would have appeared to you. But you were not there: no one was. And because no one was there, there was not – at this mindless stage of history – anything that counted as a volcano, or a dust storm, and so on. I am not suggesting that the world had no substance to it whatsoever. We might say, perhaps that it consisted of ‘worldstuff.’ But the properties of this worldstuff had yet to be represented by a mind.

(p. 17)

A constructionist epistemology relates to this study in the process of collecting data. The process of data collection relies on the rich discussions of interactions between the researcher and the research participants. The data will be illuminated through this interaction for further interpretation and analysis. The rich dialogue from the interviews will provide the data that the researcher will analyze in an effort to discover themes based on the perceptions from the participants of their lived experience with the phenomenon.

As discussed throughout this chapter, the goal of this study is to understand the perceptions of mentors and their protégés regarding the impact of this informal relationship on the students’ character development. The participants in this study are student affairs professionals serving as mentors to undergraduate students. By using a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach, the researcher hopes to discern the perceptions of the participants. The approach chosen will guide this exploration and the results will be shared to add to the body of literature to understand the role of mentoring.
in the development of character in college and university students by examining the role of the student affairs professional as a mentor.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The research question guiding this study is: In a mentoring relationship between a student and a student affairs professional, what are the perceived effects of that mentoring relationship on the student’s character development from the perspective of both the student and the student affairs professional?

The goal of this study is to understand the perceptions of the mentors and protégés regarding the impact of the mentoring relationship on the students' character development. The lived experience of the mentor and protégée in their relationship and the impact of this relationship on the student’s character development is the focus of this research study. An additional goal is to share the findings with other researchers and practitioners.

Data was collected conducting tape-recorded conversations using questions to encourage discussion with the student affairs professionals and the undergraduate student protégés separately, in an effort to have “personal life stories” shared with this researcher using semi-structured interviews.

After all participants were interviewed twice, the researcher interpreted and analyzed the data identifying emerging themes and patterns (Leedy, 1997, p.162). Themes were coded based on, “the insider’s view in terms of how those studied organize and view themselves” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995).

In addition to interviews, the researcher kept a journal during the conversations with the participants. “To embrace goodness, researchers must provide evidence of trustworthiness” (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002, p. 457). An audit trail was utilized to keep
track of all data from the conversations with the participants to ensure an accurate record of what was said and who said it. The researcher recorded the dialogues with the participants and the researcher. The dialogues were transcribed and the researcher made interpretations based on themes uncovered and written in the following report to support the findings (Krathwohl, 1998).

Participants

It is important to learn about the participants prior to sharing themes and understandings illuminated from the data. The following will be an introduction of each participant. Participants will be introduced in pairs of mentors and their protégées (See Table 1). Names have been changed by the researcher for each participant to ensure confidentiality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor:</th>
<th>Ann</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Jen</th>
<th>Ben</th>
<th>Joan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protégée:</td>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Gwen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Mentor/ Protégée Pairings

Ann identifies herself as a “Caucasian female” who has worked in field of student affairs for twenty-three years. Ann stated that she earned an undergraduate degree in Social Work and a Master’s degree in Community Agency Counseling.

When asked to describe personal character traits important to her, Ann stated, “…honesty, integrity, confidence, a certain level or a pretty high level of assertiveness, definitely independence, drive to achieve and accomplish, or an internal drive to want to succeed, to want to better yourself.” She also included leadership, but clarified that her definition of leadership included all the traits she already stated.
When asked to describe how these character traits were developed throughout her life, Ann began to discuss going to Catholic school. She discussed that religion and going to a Catholic High School had a huge impact on her. In addition, her parents also had a huge impact on her. Ann stated, “I know in our house that we would talk about being honest, making sure that we did and followed through and were held accountable as kids for what we said that we do.” Ann credits her parents and the mentoring she received at her high school for helping to prepare her for life.

Jill identified herself as a white woman. Jill is the student protégée of Ann. Jill described growing up lower middle class, “On the rural side of suburban, if that’s possible.” Jill’s father worked in construction and her mother “…stayed at home.” Jill was the only student participant who had already graduated from college. Jill graduated with a Psychology degree and a minor in Women’s studies. At the time of the interviews, she was working on a Master’s in Education and Counseling Psychology.

When asked to describe personal character traits important to her, Jill stated, “I think my three strongest core values are self-awareness, continual learning and valuing others. Those are the things that I try to do with everything that I do, particularly in my career-field and even personally too.” Jill shared that her involvement as a high school peer helper assisted in learning about herself and things important to her. No particular people stood out as someone that had an influence on Jill other than her parents.
John identifies himself as a Caucasian man who has worked in the field of student affairs for six years. John earned a Bachelors and Masters in Psychology and is currently working on his dissertation for a Doctorate in Education.

Personal character traits important to John include, “hard working, driven to achieve, whether it be personal or professional, integrity, energetic, caring.” He further shared that these character traits were developed:

Through my interactions with my family through adolescence, peer relationships, relationships with teachers, but also with, I think, a large part with athletics, coaches and teammates and a lot of time those teammates were peers, but I think that the opportunity to participate in sports was important in my development of those characteristics, but ultimately I’ll say family first but then sports and peers and things.

John explained that his family was supportive and provided direction.

I mean they never really told me I had to do things, they just made sure I was aware of the decisions I was making and then they would support those decisions. I think it was a supportive environment, but also one that would make sure that they would tell me if I was getting off track.

John shared that his basketball coach in high school had an impact on his personal character traits. His coach could relate to teenagers, “…but also he understood, like he made sure that we knew his expectations and if we weren’t meeting that he would let us know. He was demanding but he was also caring and generally cared about you…”

Matt describes himself as a twenty-two year old, African American male. He is the student protégée of John. Matt is a senior sociology student from Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania. He lived outside the city. He went to school in the city and describes his community as middle class.

Character traits important to Matt are honesty and an outgoing personality. “I am real big on honesty, trust and if you have a good personality you are fine with me.” Matt describes the following lack of a relationship with his father as an influence on him.

Growing up I wasn’t raised by my father so I didn’t have that male figure to turn to. He would lie about coming to see me and about stuff that would involve me. I would get that last minute phone call that he could not make it. I think for about 10 years of my life I went without seeing him and for awhile I didn’t trust any male figure in my life because I could not trust my dad. That is why I am big on trust.

Matt further shared that growing up in a single family home with five brothers and sisters and three nieces forced him to value everything. His mother worked three jobs to take care of the family. Matt credits learning his values form his mother and basketball coaches. Growing up with not having much in this environment gave him motivation to be the first male in his family to graduate from high school and go to college.

Jen identifies herself as a “…powerful white woman” who has worked in the field of student affairs for ten years. After Jen received her undergraduate degree she earned a Masters in College Student Personnel.

Personal character traits important to Jen are honesty, respect, integrity, and initiative. In addition, Jen described that fair practices, quality and access are important to the work she does in the college setting. When asked how these character traits were developed, Jen reported,
I guess it’s just based on my upbringing and examples that my parents set forth as what it means to be an outstanding citizen, a part of a family. Having my family is the most significant contribution or where I get that from. I’ve learned about what it means to be a professional and a kind person in this world through my profession and through my relationships with friends.

Jen discussed that she was sure that her undergraduate college experience had something to do with her own character development. She could not pinpoint anything specific. She credits her graduate program as it exposed her to many different types of students. Jen shared “…I just kind of believe that you get a lot of that when you growing up and when you miss out on that you really have to search hard if you want to find it.”

Jen also attributes her character development from the discipline provided by her family. In addition, she moved a lot during her childhood. She lived in urban, country and rural settings, which exposed her to many different environments. “Those experiences I think are somewhat unique to a modern day kind of childhood where a lot of people stay in the same place and don’t really have to worry about the challenges of making friends over and over again.”

Sue identifies herself as a white, Caucasian female. She is the student protégée of Jen. She just graduated with a degree in Psychology. She describes her family as middle class from the suburbs of Easton, Pennsylvania.

When Sue was asked to describe personal character traits important to her, she explained, “I guess personal kindness, understanding, willingness to learn, open-minded, the open mindedness because of just the different things I’ve been involved in. That
would be one of the biggest things I can think of right now.” She attributes the diverse group of friends she had in high school as part of developing these character traits. She also shared:

   It was just the kind of people I was around. The people I was around and the way I had been treated by other people and the way people I was around were treated by other people. I didn’t deserve to be treated the way I was when I was younger by my peers.

She discussed being treated poorly by her peers due to a rumor. She shared that she did not, “… do anything but they perceived me as doing something.” Being treated poorly had an effect on her character development.

Ben has worked in the field of student affairs for fourteen years. When asked to describe himself, he shared:

   How do I define myself? Well, I’m going to say I used to define myself as black, but now that I’ve embraced my heritage, I probably will define myself as probably multi-racial, because my grandmother was born and raised in the Philippines. So, if you asked me, I would say Pilipino and black.

Character traits important to Ben are honesty and being trustworthy. “I think being a great communicator, being dedicated, being passionate would be another character trait and I would say someone who has respect for himself or herself, but also has respect for others.”

Ben attributes his character development to growing up with a single mother, a grandmother and five uncles. His uncles pushed him to be “tough.” Due to all the people
at home, he would escape from his situation by throwing himself into school activities. Ben also talked about an advisor in high school who pushed him to be involved and to do the things needed to get into college. This person also gave him a “kick in the butt” when he needed it to stay on track.

Sam is a twenty-two year old communications major who identifies himself as a white male. He is the student protégée of Ben. Ben was raised in a middle class suburban area of Lancaster, PA.

When asked about character traits important to him, Sam replied:

I would say organizational skills, leadership skills; I’m not sure how to phrase strong character. I guess moral integrity, as far as belief structure. It doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you have some kind of structure to your life and you’re not just running around saying whatever. As long as you are accountable for what you say.

Sam also reported that honesty is important to him.

Sam attributes the development of these traits to his parents. His parents were “very liberal” and shared what they believed with Sam. They also told Sam that he did not have to believe what they believed. Sam’s parents further told him that he needed to follow what he believes.

Sam was involved with a South Korean Martial Arts called Chung Do Kwan for twelve years. Sam believes that really had an impact on him. Sam also had a strong interest in reading and he stated, “I think that really helped make me who I am...” Sam also had an opportunity to travel outside the United States. He travelled to 10 different countries before he turned eighteen.
I think that really influenced me to be a non-judgmental person. I was very comfortable switching environments no matter where I was and going with the flow of things and being understanding of others and treating others with respect.

Joan identifies herself as an African American woman who has worked in the field of student affairs for almost thirty years. After she earned her bachelor’s degree, she earned a master’s in College Student Personnel.

Personal character traits important to Joan are honesty, integrity and empowerment. “That is a big piece for me, the honesty, integrity, the genuine love and caring for people.” Joan attributes her family for developing these traits. She was raised by a single mother. She did not meet her father until she was an adult at the age of thirty-six. He died shortly after meeting Joan. She was also raised by her “grand-pop” who she referred to as a surrogate father.

From the time I can remember, those two taught me to be an honest person, a person of integrity, to be a hard working person and instill through their talking and through their demonstrating to me. I saw in my role model, my mom and my grand-pop, who lived by the work ethic, who lived by that ethic of integrity, who empower people and for me they didn’t accept anything less. Mediocrity was just not an option.

Joan discussed that she was taught that to be black was a good thing and her family referred to themselves as “my people.” She also received support from her church and the community. “My whole community, my whole family, yes, they are community
oriented, very much the church, very much the village concept and that whole village was invested in me.” Joan was the first black person in her town to go to college.

Gwen described herself as a twenty year old white woman. She is the student protégée of Joan. She is from a suburb of Philadelphia. She is a junior education student with a minor in reading. She described her family as middle class.

Character traits important to Gwen include, leadership, being opinionated, and “…being my own person and trying not to let other peoples’ opinions of me affect how I live my life.” Gwen attributes most of these traits to her mother, “…she’s just the kind of person who will do what she wants when she wants to do it and doesn’t let anyone else tell her how to live her life.” She describes that she had a trusting relationship with her mother.

Gwen shared that her mother:

Isn’t a hypocrite when it comes to, you know, raising me and my sister the way she was. If she did something, she knows that we might do the same thing. She’s not gonna tell us not to, because if she did, why is it wrong for us to do it kind of thing. …so any traits that I’ve gotten from her, I’ve kind of adapted to myself because I’ve never had a problem with anything.

In an effort to keep the confidentiality of the participants, the current and past positions of the mentors will be discussed in a general listing of positions to showcase the diverse roles served in the college setting. Due to the small size of the student affairs division at the chosen university, participants could be identified by their positions.

Mentor’s have served in the following areas in the field of student affairs: residence life, drugs and alcohol, training, coaching, athletic academic support, student
activities, women’s center, student union, new student orientation, leadership development, multicultural student affairs, minority affairs, career development, and developmental student programs.

Beginnings

Before specific themes regarding the perceived impact of the mentor/protégée relationship on the student’s character development is discussed, the first meetings and progression to a mentor/protégée relationship is discussed for each pair, in order to better understand the mentoring relationship.

Jill first encountered Ann when Jill joined the Peer Educator student organization at the university. Ann was the advisor of that organization and worked with student leaders of the organization who ran the weekly meetings. Jill shared:

… when I decided to run for co-coordinator, that’s when I spent a lot more one-on-one time with her. I guess that’s where the relationship started and I think because I was in that role for three years, it just kind of grew from there and then I proceeded to be in charge of the office and worked a lot more with her in that facet too.

Jill further discusses that as they spent more time together, they shared more about each other’s personal lives, which helped further develop the relationship. Jill further pursued an internship as she wanted to help Ann with her work with students, “as well as learn from her, because she does so much.”

Ann remembers Jill from her first joining the Peer Educator student organization:

I recognized clearly that she had some assertiveness, she had some drive.

I think that she was very genuine and she was searching for a place, a fit.
I believe that she had passion for students and their issues, and I think that’s what attracted me to begin a conversation with her. It was easy for me to encourage her because she already had that passion and drive. So that’s kind of where we started the relationship.

Ann became involved in this mentoring relationship due to the qualities she recognized in Jill such as her potential, genuineness, and a “spark.” Ann talks about it being easy and that she hopes she helped develop Jill’s “spark” to grow.

Matt first met with John when he was referred to John for assistance with academic improvement. Matt was failing two classes and John worked with him on an academic improvement plan which assisted Matt raise both F grades to C grades. Matt discussed how the relationship grew:

It developed further because that following semester, my sophomore year I had just had a daughter and (John) knew that it was hard for me to work a job that required a lot of hours along with school and playing basketball. So he helped me get a job working for him and I would run errands for him. So he gave me a job that helped me take care of my daughter somewhat. That is how it kind of developed more. Once he found out I had a daughter, he made sure I did what I needed to do to take care of her.

Matt continued to share that since he grew up in a single parent home, without a male figure in his life, he reached out to John. “You kind of want to embrace him as though he was your dad, your father. I think that is how it went on.” Matt shared that John was, “… interested in me as a man and as a family man and he was worried about my grades and everything.” John was concerned about Matt beyond how low grades
would affect his basketball career, although basketball, “…kind of through me toward him.” The relationship developed and is, “Like a big brother-type relationship now.”

John recalled the same first meeting. Matt continued to meet with John while he was having academic issues as, “…he saw the benefit of utilizing my office and the services that I can provide.” John discussed that he got to know Matt as a person and his focus was not just trying to help him. John explained:

I think it was a natural progression. He came in for help and then gradually I wanted to make sure that he did well academically, but I think also that when you develop some sort of relationship with a student that there becomes a personal side to it. From my perspective, you know, I just don’t want to treat a student like a number coming in.

Sam first met Ben after Sam got a job with the concert crew in student activities. He would see Ben often coming in and out of the main office. “Ben is a very outgoing, very forward person and the one thing that I noticed immediately is that he likes to test you.”

Sam knew from his interactions that Ben liked to joke with people and that, “…he was very outgoing, that he was extremely opinionated, but opinionated with cause and not without reason and he was kind of the person that I wanted to be.” Ben was a person that Sam could turn to when he had an issue. Sam was also drawn to Ben as a result of the opportunities that were opened up to Sam regarding job opportunities.

Ben also recalled his first encounters with Sam through Sam’s involvement as a member of the concert crew. Ben shared that he:
… noticed this kind of light I guess you could say, in him. You see this student and you see him being a hard-worker. He was very organized, and even meetings that he didn’t have to stay for, he wanted to stay because he wanted to know what went on with the contract. So, we kind of saw this natural talent in him, and so we kind of honed in on that.

This relationship developed when Sam accompanied Ben to a conference. On the way to the conference, Sam became extremely ill and Ben had to contact Sam’s parents and assist with obtaining medical treatment. The following semester, Sam was able to attend a production seminar with Ben and spent two days attending events, meeting Ben’s former students and friends and the relationship began to grow.

This growth occurred as a result of personal sharing that occurred. This relationship started to develop further due to Ben’s philosophy regarding interactions with the students he serves. Ben describes:

But I think it’s important that when you see the students, that you’re not always talking to them about business. That you ask them how they’re day is going, or if things are going okay at home, or if you know they’re in a relationship or if you know if they work off-campus.

One other interesting point made by both Sam and Ben is that Ben started employment at the university the same year that Sam started as a freshman. As a result, the two shared an additional connection.

Gwen discussed that her first involvement with Joan was through her involvement with a student organization. Joan served as the advisor for this organization. Gwen’s friends pushed her to talk with Joan due to Gwen’s passion about the organization and its
activities. The relationship began to grow as Gwen would go to Joan’s office and talk to her more often and, “… we clicked right away…”

Gwen shared that when she would meet with Joan, they would talk about business quickly so they could move on and then, “let’s talk about you.” Gwen would discuss personal issues in addition to issues that occurred in her role as a student leader and Joan would listen and help her see how her own actions and behavior played a part in the issue. Gwen stated:

… we learned more about each other every time we talked so she knows a lot about my past experiences. Some of my relationships here that have started out good and gone sour, and gotten good again. I feel those happened because she’s helped me work through the issues with them.

Gwen shared that she became involved in this relationship for the way she was treated by Joan. Gwen discussed that:

I’d walk in, she’d smile at me and she’d know me by name. She’d give me a hug, she’d start talking about the … family and how I was a part of that family, that organization, that group that meant more than just business.

We all go up there because we have a common bond, of you know, fighting for rights and all that so she would not only talk about business but she would talk to you as a friend and a family member and no matter what happens you could go in there…

Gwen shared that Joan provides, “… a home away from home.”

Joan also remembers meeting Gwen after Gwen joined a student organization. Joan recalls that:
I met (Gwen) a couple of years ago and it feels like I have known her forever. I actually met her through the student organization that she was working with. My first experience was that she was shy. She wasn’t real active and out there but I think we were giving out assignments and she said I’ll do that. She took the initiative, and I probably should have mentioned that is one of my character traits, but she took the initiative to take on a responsibility that a lot of folks were actually shying away from and I thought this girl really has some stuff going on and it was sort of like the mentoring relationship developed out of an informal conversation. She would just stop in and she would talk about where she was going and what she wanted to do and before I knew it the relationship was there, informally.

Joan discussed that the relationship developed beyond academics or the business of the student organization. It was, “…academic, social, personal, vocational and it developed through conversation…” Gwen would ask for Joan’s input and “critique” and accept it. In addition, Gwen would share personal life issues and Joan would share personal life experiences and the relationship grew from there.

Sue met Jen during her freshman year when she joined a student organization. Jen was the advisor of the student organization. Sue became the treasurer of the organization. As a result of accepting the role of treasurer of this organization, Sue started to spend more time with Jen. Jen is also the advisor for an annual stage production on campus. Sue served as an actor the first year it was presented and then became the Director. Again, Sue spent substantial time with Jen as a result of this production. Sue shared that she got
involved in the relationship as she, “…knew that equal rights was something that was important to me and I found a way of getting involved with it,” through Jen’s office.

This relationship grew as a result of some personal problems experienced by Sue. Sue shared some of these problems with a professor who referred her to Jen. At first Sue did not want to talk to Jen about these problems because, “I work too closely with her. I don’t want her to see me that way.” The professor pushed the issue and escorted Sue to Jen’s office.

That first conversation was very much so awkward. I was not very happy about having to have that first conversation. But from that point on she was very understanding and helpful and I needed to talk to somebody about what was going on.

Jen remembers the first contact she had with Sue through the student organization. Jen shared that she really liked Sue, but was surprised that Sue identified Jen as a mentor during the process of this study. “I would never think that she would classify me that way.” Jen reported that she, “… served mostly as an advisor to activities that she was involved in. It wasn’t the type of thing where we would talk about her personal life or her career aspirations or some of the other things I kind of equate in a mentorship kind of way.” Jen stated that their relationship “could be construed that way.” The researcher made a decision to keep both participants in the study as all aspects of the criteria to be included were met.

Jen and Sue were involved during all four years of Sue’s time at the university. When asked why she became involved in this relationship, Jen stated that “…it starts out as a job, to be an advisor…and of course you can’t help but have personal aspects that
lead into the professional or formal side of your job and your relationship.” Jen shared that:

On a personal level, Heather is a really nice person; she’s brilliant, very smart. I guess I know some of her baggage just from the personal relationship that we have and I know that she struggles really hard to get past that and I think probably that’s why she’s found (my office) to be a really safe place for her but I’m also not afraid to confront her on some of those shortcomings that I see where she’s making excuses for how professional she could be.

Mentor Relationships Experienced by the Mentors

Each of the five mentors each described a person in their own life who served as a mentor. They each perceived this relationship had an impact on their life and how they interact with students. Most of these relationships developed in college in some sort of advisory role, while one developed in high school and another as a new professional. The relationships all started out by the mentor providing guidance, help or support.

Jen shared that she was always stopping by her mentor’s office to ask for help understanding her financial aid or student leadership issues.

So, he’s probably the person that I’d probably think back to the most coming into his office and saying that I don’t know about my financial aid and I don’t know if I can still be the president of the club or whatever. I can remember those conversations happening every semester, about financial aid.
John talked about risking his athletic eligibility and his mentor helped him declare his major.

He kind of took me under his wing and it’s funny because I came here and I played sports and I had to declare my major by my junior year and I didn’t have my priorities straight in terms of getting into that major, psychology. So before the fall semester started, I had to get a major in order to be eligible to play in the fall and so one of my teammates said, ‘why don’t you go talk to (mentor’s name) over in the Psych Dept,’ so I went over…

and received the needed academic guidance to declare a major.

Ben discusses that his mentor pushed him in high school as a leader, but also regarding his priorities of completing his coursework. He shared a story that he thought his advisor/teacher would give him a break on his class-work due to his leadership role in a student organization and instead received an f grade. “So it was a quick learning lesson, which even somebody that cares about you…still gives you the kick in the butt when you’re supposed to get.”

As the relationships developed, the mentors allowed the interactions to move beyond what John called “not always professional.” As the mentors spent more time with their protégés, common interests were discovered. John gave the following example, “…he liked to play golf and I liked to play golf and it kind of developed from there and he seemed like a really cool guy.”

Most of these relationships have continued and grown though time and turned into friendships. Ann shares that the relationship with her mentor, “took years to build
because it didn’t start out so good.” However, it turned into a positive relationship over time. In fact, it was not until many years later that Ann perceived that “the mentoring of abilities and skills began.” Ann shared that they, “…went through life circumstances and events, each of us grew in confidence and strength and in various roles. So, we developed a relationship because, for example we were parents.” Jen shared that she attended her mentor’s wedding and her mentor attended her wedding.

Just like Ann, Joan’s mentor relationship did not start out well. The difference is that the relationship never improved. Joan described that the, “… relationship was very possessive. I think the person wanted ownership of my life. Not advise, not facilitate growth, not to guide but to control.” The mentor wanted Joan to dress like her and “carry” herself like the mentor.

Joan learned:

I don’t think that mentoring relationships should be about fitting them into your mode but about helping them to find their mode, what works for them. So when I look at what I would never ever want to be, it teaches me how to be with my mentors. That person honestly has had more of a positive impact on my life out of a negative situation than any other person, because I will always show my protégés that it is about love and it is about caring for them and moving them to the best level…not about manipulative, mind playing, game playing that I had experienced…

Joan was able to turn a negative into a positive by learning how not to interact with student protégés. Joan found another professional who provided support as Joan ended the relationship. This person became a mentor and life-long friend.
Straight Talk

One theme that was illuminated from the interviews with participants was the honesty of the mentors towards the protégées. This theme was shared in four of the five mentor/protégé pairs. This honesty approach was accomplished in a couple of different methods, but all examples support the perception of the mentors’ impact on the students’ character development.

Jen discussed her effort to push Sue further than she was in her character development. Jen described that Sue was not taking full responsibility for her life and as a result it appeared to Jen that Sue was not taking her student leadership role serious. At that point, Jen, “…had some pretty difficult conversations with her about how I felt about her becoming a leader and what I would want out of somebody who was holding a leadership position, the expectations I held with her.” Jen further stated, “I’m also not afraid to confront her on some of those shortcomings that I see where she’s making excuses for how professional she could be.”

Another example of this was shared by Ben and Sam. Ben did not “sugarcoat” issues that needed to be addressed with Sam in his student leadership role or in general. Ben recalled, “When he’s messing up, I’m not going to sugarcoat it. I’m going to say, ‘Sam, you F’d up’.” One specific example involved Sam attempting to handle a major contract with an outside vendor on his own. Sam made a mistake which forced the cancellation of the event. Ben made Sam take ownership of the error. Ben shared:

I think what he was trying to do was take a leadership role and initiative and I’m okay with the decision, but I always tell him, he needs to keep us in the loop and be honest and straightforward so we can support him.
Sam also remembers this aspect of the relationship. Sam shared that:

He will tell you unbiasely what he thinks, whether it is what you want to hear or not. Even though you probably need to hear it, he will not sugar coat it. If you are absolutely upset about something, he will tell you that he thinks it is your fault too. He will help clear up things and make you see it for what it is. He has a very calm personality.

Sam continues to share that sometimes Ben’s straight talk made him irritated and upset. “If he needs to push you a whole lot and piss you off, he’s going to. Cause he evokes a response from you that’s necessary.” Sam further shares:

Like when the whole concert fell apart, he’s like I’m going to tell you this with tough love and I hate to say it, but you screwed up. Big time. You screwed up. You didn’t consult me on this. You didn’t do this. But whatever. Go think about it. Come back to me. If you want to yell, I’ll get into it with you. If not, you know, you need to sit down and start figuring out what you want to do.

Sam reported that Ben would then direct him to figure out what to do next. He was expected to create a plan to deal with the mistake.

Joan also used this same approach. Joan described a situation when Gwen went to Joan for support about an issue she was having as a student leader. It was clear to Joan that Gwen wanted a response of sympathy from Joan affirming she was right and wanted Joan to take her side. Joan allowed Gwen to work through her anger with the organization, which lasted over the summer break.
When Gwen returned to the university, she approached Joan and they talked through it. Joan recalled:

We had to go through a little riff right there and being able to get past all of that was the trust in the relationship and the respect we built up along the way. Relationships are not always smooth, but when you build a strong relationship, because of the foundation that you have built, you can weather the storm and then you go to another level. For me I wanted her to know that I am not your yes woman. I am not here to massage you. I am here to be truthful and honest with you about what I see and what I don’t see.

Gwen recalled the same characteristic of the relationship. She commented that, “…she won’t sugar coat something. If she sees something wrong, she’ll tell you immediately like this is not the way it should be.”

Ann described a situation where Jill was questioning her ability to talk publically about a topic. Ann told Jill and a co-leader, “No, I don’t care if you’re uncomfortable, get up and do it.” Ann continued to share that she pushed Jill to move forward with her leadership development. She went on to tell Jill:

No, you’re going to do it, because that’s what should be done and you will be fine with it. Whatever you need to talk about, we’ll deal with here, but you are going to do it because it’s going to help you.

Ann was pushing Jill beyond her comfort zone in an effort to assist in her growth and development.
Personal Sharing

Another theme illuminated from the interviews with participants was the personal sharing from both the mentor and the protégée. This personal sharing was an integral part of each relationship and built trust. This personal sharing also helped the relationship grow and provided another example of the impact of the mentoring relationship on the student’s character development.

Ann recalled conversations with Jill that centered on personal sharing. Jill shared about her experiences with her family and about her sister’s journey working with people in Africa afflicted with HIV. Ann, “… saw such incredible integrity whenever I spoke to (Jill), anytime she communicated this. I think the values, that whole service and service learning and volunteerism, is ingrained in her. I admire that about her.”

Jill also commented about the personal sharing that occurred in the relationship with her mentor. Referring to Ann, Jill shared, “…we talked a lot more about our personal lives. It wasn’t just centered on what we did with the organization. I got to know a lot more about her kids and what she did in grad-school.” Jill talked about all the time she spent with her mentor working with the student organization, an internship she completed in Ann’s office and also, “…with all kinds of out of school conference-type things and mingled with people, just a lot of one-on-one interaction.”

An interesting effect of the personal sharing is the effect on both the student and the professional. Ann shared a time that Jill had difficulty with a professor. Ann listened and helped her process the issue. Ann noticed that Jill:

… had a great deal of ethics and that’s another thing I would say. It became apparent that that was important to her and it kept me in line. It’s
always, we’re both reciprocating, and it’s a two-way thing. But I think it was just very, very helpful for us to have those kinds of conversations and I think I helped her, to shape her.

John confirms this aspect of personal sharing with Matt:

… in terms of our mentor mentee relationship, I have learned a lot from Matt and hopefully he has learned some from me and that’s what I think ultimately is the benefit of our relationship is that we have learned from each other.

John further explains how the relationship developed from a personal perspective,

“…when you develop some sort of relationship with a student that there becomes a personal side to it. From my perspective, you know I just don’t want to treat a student like a number coming in…”

Matt shared personal life information with John, but benefitted from John’s sharing as well. Matt discussed, “…he’s graduated from school. I remember…whenever I would go to him and talk to him about a situation with my fiancé…” John helped him talk through issues and John would also share from his own life experiences.

Gwen continued with this theme of sharing in the relationship by discussing her interactions with Joan:

… she would apply things to herself too, so she would see the traits in me that she sees in herself, she’ll refer back to something in her past that she has worked through to change to become a better person and will relate it to my situation.
Gwen reported that this helped her with current problems she faced as it made her feel like, “I’m not the only one dealing with this…” Gwen referred to this aspect of the relationship as a “comfortable situation…”

Joan recalled an issue she addressed with Gwen being a “rescuer.” Joan discussed, “… so I am trying to use my experiences to teach her that it is okay for you not to rescue everybody.” Joan routinely shared experiences about herself and what she had learned through life when she thought it would help Gwen’s growth and development. Gwen and Joan spent a lot of time together, “… sharing tears, sharing laughter and they all kind of melt together with us sometimes.”

Ben added to this theme of personal sharing as he further described the conference they attended together:

… but I think for me the time that was spent together, there was not a lot for him to escape to. There was nowhere to run. There was no other student to ignore me about. It was really an opportunity, you know, we talked a lot…, we also talked about him and what his interests were and I think it allowed him to talk a lot about things that interested him. His family was extremely important to him and what his relationship with his mom and his dad was and how their relationship connected into the music industry. It really allowed him, I think for a student to be able to share with a complete stranger, in the grand scheme of it. Yes, this person is my advisor, but I really don’t know him and I don’t have to open up to him. I think that is what came out of it and I think it was a lot of, you know we
found a lot of common threads. We both like music, we both like technology, we both like travel.

Ben went on to discuss how his relationship with Sam began to grow and trust developed. Sam felt so comfortable that he accompanied Ben’s friends without Ben to see one of the acts at the conference. Ben felt, “…that said a lot in a very short span of time about how he thought about me. He clearly did not have to go with my friends.”

Ben addressed the end result of this personal sharing and the development of the mentor/protégée relationship:

… you know the impact you’ve had on a student by the time they graduate because of your relationship with them down the road. Most of the students that I’ve had an extremely close relationship with, I’m still in an integral part of their lives.

Ben shared that he has attended student mentor’s weddings, baby showers, and numerous other personal events.

Impact of the Mentoring Relationship

Ben shared that he has shared the personal character traits that are important to him with Sam. “I’m not sure if it’s directly? Some of it is, and I think it has been indirectly or could have been through experiences, or at least I hope… Yeah, I told him, and I did it non-verbally.” Ann also recalls sharing personal character traits with Jill, “…indirectly, and then after we followed up later on, I’m sure I communicated that you have to be a leader, you have to be able to have dedication and commitment and integrity and…yeah, I’m sure I did that a number of times.”

Ann further shared that Jill:
...is a person of character to begin with. I would like to think I contributed to some of it. Certainly, it wasn’t because of me… But I don’t think I had a huge impact. I think I probably impacted her in a certain way, but she just exudes character and I think had that, from the get-go.

Jill agreed that the mentor relationship impacted her character development.

John also discussed the impact of the mentor relationship on Matt’s character development, “I would hope that it would, drastically no but to some level, yes. I would hope it would, but to what degree I’m not sure.” Matt shared a story when John played against him in a game of one on one basketball, which highlights an example of John impacting his character development.

So I think the hard work is one of the characteristics that I’ve taken on, that he taught me, just from that one day having him play against me. I’ve never had anyone push me that much just to get a basket. I think I scored like two points, and they were the hardest two points I’ve probably ever scored in my life.

During the interviews, respect, integrity, and initiative were the character traits stated by the majority of participants that were developed in the student protégées as a result of the mentor relationship. Ann shares a time that she assisted Jill with a conflict she had with a professor. Ann was giving Jill advice on how to approach a situation which is confrontational. Ann told her, “Well, follow through. Put it out there. Do it respectfully. And again, I hope that she’ll say that she learned from me…” Sam also reported learning respect for people from Ben. While he started to learn this skill from his parents, he also shared:
I think he helped hone those skills and develop that side of me a lot more by doing stuff. Over the summer we all went to this place to have a drink and I drank my drink and he said we are not doing a cheers now because you drank. You wait until the person that buys the round drinks his and blah, blah, blah. It’s like oh okay and now even stuff like that, it impresses people. If I’m at a restaurant and I get my food, I’ll wait until everyone is served before I begin to eat. He taught me how to pay attention to detail…

Joan shared that she has shared personal character traits important to her “…over and over again. In conversations and I hope that I have demonstrated them for her…”

Joan noted:

And you have to be honest and you have to have integrity about that.

Because when you lose that kind of thing, the people don’t know really who you are or where you are or what you think or feel. You have to be true to the game.

Joan also shared the importance of honesty, trust, integrity and “the initiative piece” as important traits that she shared with Gwen that she perceives had an impact on Gwen’s character development.

Jen also discussed the importance of integrity and initiative when she shared:

I think those things hopefully come across in the way that I carry myself in my work and my personal life. I do go to the retreats with the students and I’m in my pajamas just as they’re in their pajamas watching movies and things like that, so I think I pretty much carry myself off that way in
everything that I do in my life, so I would hope that that would come
across with my their daily interactions with me.

Character traits that can be grouped together in a category best described as
leadership traits, was discussed by the majority of participants as traits developed or
enhanced in the student protégées by the mentor relationship. Ann remembers that, “I am
sure I communicated that you have to be a leader…” to Jill. Additional leadership skills
mentioned by Ann that assisted in Jill’s character development included building
“…confidence in herself. Especially, assertiveness and confidence in her confrontation
skills in dealing with people.” When asked how her mentor relationship with Joan
contributed to her character development, Gwen responded that, “Probably one of the
most important ones is how I am a leader.”

When asked how he contributed to Matt’s character development, John noted, “In
terms of contributing to his characteristics, I think that his achievement, hard work,
setting goals, but then also his personal characteristics of caring as a father and having
understanding.” Matt shared a story that demonstrates teaching persistence when John
gave him guidance when he needed health insurance in order to keep playing basketball.
“He told me that somewhere I could get that insurance. He told me, ‘don’t give up. Just
keep working on it.’ Eventually, I got the insurance.”

When Jen was asked how she contributed to Sue’s character development, she
shared:

…she and I both working to continue a connection. By her stopping by
here. By me telling her that my doors always open. It’s another way to let
her know that she doesn’t have to do it all herself. That she can rely on
other people. There’s a lot about being strong women, but you can’t be strong all the time. You have to know when to let your guard down and when to confide in other people when whatever you’re dealing with is so big.

Jen was describing the concept of interdependence. She shared that this is an important concept, even though it can be seen as a weakness. Sue supported Jen’s assertion when she was asked how this mentor relationship impacted her character development, she stated, “She really taught me how to be a stronger woman.”

Summary
An example of how both the mentors and the student protégés perceived the mentoring relationship’s impact on the student’s character development was illuminated best in the words of a few of the participants. Sue talked about her mentor Jen, stating that, “She was very influential on me and who I am now. She helped me keep it together, because there was a lot of times that I kind of lost it and helping me find strength to get up and go and deal with it.”

Jen shared that she would not have identified Sue as a protégée for the purpose of this study if Sue had not come forward and identified Jen to the researcher. Throughout the interviews with Jen and Sue, the data established that not only did a mentor/protégée relationship exist, but both Jen and Sue perceived that the relationship had an impact on Sue’s character development. Jen shared, “Well, I think this definitely is an example of the impact that we don’t always know we have on somebody.” While it was clear to the other mentors that the mentoring relationship had an impact on the student’s character development, it was not always clear to what extent.
Finally, Sam shared, “I saw things in him that I knew this was the person that I wanted to model myself after. I’d see that Ben is a very successful person and he has been successful in all that he has done professionally and also personally as far as I know of him. He has had a tremendous impact on me.”

Every student protégée shared the same overall perception that the mentoring relationship impacted the student’s character development. The interviews showed that it did not matter how the relationship developed. The important shared characteristic from each mentoring pair is that the relationship grew from trust that developed as a result of the personal sharing from both the student protégée and the student affairs mentor. After exploring the development of the mentoring relationship, another important theme that emerged in many of the mentoring relationships was the honest straight talk the mentor felt was needed to share with their student protégée. Finally, character traits such as respect, integrity, initiative and leadership skills were identified as traits the mentors conveyed to their student protégées in the mentoring process which were perceived to have an impact on the student’s character development.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) stated that higher education maybe the last chance educators have to develop character in students before entering the workforce. As previously noted, one is exposed on the nightly news to acts deficient of character development by the people involved. Examples of this social phenomenon can be found in all areas of life. As a result of recognizing that character development is the social phenomenon in need of repair, higher education’s impact on character education was examined in this study to search for this “special emphasis.”

Specifically, the field of student affairs was examined with the goal to understand the informal mentor relationship between student affairs professionals and their student protégées and the impact of this relationship on the student’s character development and share it with other researchers and practitioners. After analyzing the data collected from the interviews with the mentors and the student protégées, the goal of the study was achieved. Themes were identified regarding the perceptions of the Student Affair mentors and their student protégées regarding the impact of this relationship.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was the theoretical perspective that guided this study. Goodness as described in Chapter Three of this study was utilized to ensure the current study was characterized as worthy qualitative research. In an effort to strive toward worthy qualitative research, all participants were given the opportunity to review the data reported in Chapter Four of this study for accuracy. In addition, a Shippensburg University faculty and administrator reviewed the transcripts and the data reported in
Chapter Four to promote goodness by comparing the presentation of the data and the transcripts of the interviews.

Arminio and Hultgren (2002) state, “Hermeneutic phenomenology theory provides a compass for the general direction of how we are to proceed in illuminating goodness. This compass indicates that we are to uncover meanings in ‘text’” (p. 447). Hermeneutic phenomenology provided the “compass” that was used to uncover meaning in the transcripts and establish themes from the interviews with the participants and the researcher. According to Van Manen (1990), “Theme is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand. Theme describes an aspect of the structure of lived experience” (p. 87). The process of data collection chosen relies on the rich discussions of interactions between the researcher and the research participants to further illuminate goodness.

As reported in the review of the literature, “…little research has been done to help us understand the role college actually plays in character development” (Astin & Antonio, 2004, p.56). In addition, no research was found that focused on the impact of the student affairs professional on student’s character development. Again, it is important to study the impact of student affairs professionals on student’s character development because of the great exposure students have with student affairs professionals and especially the ongoing relationships that involve many students.

As stated earlier, colleges and universities may be the last chance available in the educational setting to enhance character development (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999). McClellan (1999) supports the need for colleges and universities to take the lead in developing student’s character development, when he explains that:
For more than a hundred years, moral philosophy had put the finishing touch on the education of all college students and had set the tone for the whole curriculum; in the late nineteenth century, it largely disappeared, leaving students without a capstone course and college without a formal way to complete the process of moral education. (p.63)

The data collected in the current study supports the claim that the college setting can have an impact on student’s character development. In the absence of a capstone course and a formal way to address student’s moral education, the current study indicated that student affairs professionals serving as informal mentors can enhance the student’s character or moral development.

Another important aspect of the current study focused on the sharing of values by professionals with students. As indicated by the review of the literature, a central focus by educational professionals of trying to keep values outside the educational setting had an unintended result of students seeing educational professionals as valueless. As a result of seeing professionals as valueless and no formal capstone course, students left college without a value framework. Without a value framework, students enter the professional world unprepared to face the numerous experiences and choices through a lens of personal and civic responsibility (Schweingruber, 1985). When professionals expose their personal values, the professional is not subjecting personal values on students, but rather demonstrating a personal value system. Personal sharing was a theme that was discussed in the results of the data collection and was found to have an impact on the student’s character development.
Connection to the Literature

Kohlberg’s (1987) theory of moral development as discussed in the review of the literature was supported in the current study. The data showed that focusing on character development in colleges and universities was an effective use of the student affairs professional’s time and institutional resources. In the current study, the student’s character development was impacted by the relationship between the student protégée and the student affairs professional. This is supported according to Kohlberg (1987) and his theory of moral development as most traditional college students fall in the conventional level of moral development as do most adolescents and adults in our society. The individual at this level conforms to and upholds society’s rules and laws just because they are the rules of society. Traditional college students at this level are open to the influence of student affairs professionals in their role as authority figures.

In the current study, all five pairs of mentors-protégées started their relationship with the mentor serving in a role of authority. The relationship between Ann and Jill began as Ann serving as an advisor to Jill in a student organization. Joan served as an advisor to Gwen in Gwen’s leadership role in a student organization as well. Jen also began her relationship with Sue serving as an advisor to a student organization that Sue served in a leadership position.

John and Matt began their relationship when Matt was referred to John for academic support and Ben served as a supervisor for Sam when their relationship began. The authority role of each mentor at the start of the mentor-protégée relationship fits with Kohlberg’s (1987) findings of traditional students in colleges and universities falling in
the conventional label of moral development as each participant acknowledged that the mentoring relationship had an impact on the student’s character development.

The data in the current study supported the claim by Emler and Reicher (1995). It appears “…there are now numerous indications from research that moral conduct is a product of interpersonal influence and not purely of independent individual decision-making” (Emler & Reicher, 1995, p. 267). As reported in the data, all participants discussed the impact of the relationship between the student affairs professional and the student protégée on the character development of the student. This informal relationship was based on the personal sharing between both the mentor and the protégée. The data showed that focusing on character development in colleges and universities was an effective use of the student affairs professional’s time and institutional resources. The results of the study suggested that the personal sharing built trust between the mentor and the protégée. This personal sharing and trust development helped the relationship grow to the point that the relationship impacted the student’s character development.

This personal sharing by the mentors and protégée involved sharing about family, personal lives, issues with classes, etc. It was this personal sharing that laid the foundation for the relationship to grow. As a result, the mentor and protégée felt comfortable addressing issues at a deeper level due to the trust development.

Berkowitz and Fekula (1999) further contend that character education delivered in colleges and universities need to include five basics (see Figure 1): "teaching about character, displaying character, demanding character, providing opportunities to practice character, and provide opportunities to reflect upon character" (p. 22). These five basic elements describe an, “… institution-wide character education initiative aimed at
promoting comprehensive character development in college students. The initiative elements are modular and could be adapted piecemeal” (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999, p.19).

The elements described have been adapted to focus only on the role of the student affairs professional on a college campus, specifically, the role of the student affairs professional serving as an informal mentor. Examples of student affairs professionals impacting character development in the university setting was supported in the current study in all five basic elements discussed by Berkowitz and Fekula (1999).

Figure 1. Based on Berkowitz and Fekula’s (1999) description of five basic elements needed for character education delivery in a college setting.
For example, John spoke to Matt about meeting his responsibilities in the classroom in an effort to meet his responsibilities to his child. This was an example of teaching about character. Joan made honesty a priority in her life. Being honest with all her interactions was an example of displaying character for Gwen. Jen met with Sue to discuss how Sue was not meeting expectations regarding her leadership responsibilities. Gwen also clarified her expectations. This was an example of demanding character. Ben allowed Sam to make mistakes and then challenged him with support to rectify his errors. This was an example of providing opportunities to practice character including areas of honesty, respect and integrity for Sam in his leadership roles. Finally, Ann met with Jen to discuss issues Jen faced in her leadership roles regarding interpersonal skills, respect for other members and personal integrity regarding her actions. This was an example of providing opportunities to reflect on character. These examples are a brief listing of the opportunities student affairs professionals have to impact student’s character development in their everyday involvement with students.

Kuh and Umbach (2004) reported in their study that about 60 percent of students think college contributed substantially to their developing a systematic code of ethics. These findings have been supported in the current study as all of the student protégées stated that the relationship with their student affairs mentors had an impact on their character development.

As a result of their study, Kuh and Umbach (2004) state that, “…institutions should intentionally create opportunities for students inside and outside the classroom to integrate their experiences in a manner that nurtures character development” (p.51). The data from the current study illustrates this recommendation as the relationship of the
student affairs professional and student protégée is an example of such an opportunity for students outside the classroom to engage in an experience that nurtures character development.

Campbell and Campbell (1997) studied the written logs of faculty mentors and addressed the perceived needs of faculty mentors as the:

(1) altruistic desire to help students (beyond the help afforded through assigned teaching and advising), (2) need for evidence of activities demonstrating service to the university (for tenure and promotion decisions), (3) opportunity for enjoyment of the friendship and relationship with students provided by mentoring. (p. 518)

Evidence was gained in the current study supporting student affairs professionals to serve as mentors with the focus of impacting student’s character development. As was reported by Campbell and Campbell (1997) regarding faculty mentors, the student affairs mentors also reported the perceived need of an altruistic desire to help students and the opportunity for enjoyment of the friendship and relationship with students.

John provides an example of both a desire to help and the enjoyment of the friendship developed when he shares:

… but I think also that when you develop some sort of relationship with a student that there becomes a personal side to it. From my perspective, you know I just don’t want to treat a student like a number coming in. To a certain degree you want to care for them beyond just their problem and who they are… I’m interested in sports, so not only seeing him do well in his studies but seeing him do well in sports, I think has an interest to me
not only with Matt but with a lot of the athletes that come through…seeing Matt in informal environments whether it is walking through the field house, stopping by to say hi and talking to him for a few minutes. Plus Matt is in a unique situation where he has a child and his daughter is probably 2 or 3 now and… Matt has even more responsibility. To see him achieve and get to a certain level and graduate would not only make Matt feel good but it would make myself feel that I had some factor in helping him achieve that and give me satisfaction.

This example shows the importance of the findings of the current study to express the perceived needs of the mentor and protégée and the impact of the relationship on character development in an effort to provide empirical evidence to add to the scholarly body of literature.

The student protégé enters the mentoring relationship with different perceived needs, according to Campbell and Campbell (1997), which include: “(1) help with scheduling and enrollment decisions, (2) help interpreting degree requirements, (3) career guidance, (4) assistance in coping with academic demands (general study skills, tutoring for specific courses), and (5) help in addressing personal problems and crises” (p. 518). In the current study, in addition to acknowledging the relationship’s impact on the student’s character development, the student protégées reported the additional role of the student affairs mentor in assisting with career guidance and in addressing personal problems as in the study by Campbell and Campbell (1997).

Sam provides an example of his mentor, Ben, assisting with career guidance sharing that, “…professionally he has helped me with my resume and my cover letter and
he wants to see his students succeed because he sees that as a part of him and his life…”

In addition, Ben adds support to Sam’s perception when he shared that one example of how he contributed to Sam’s character development is “getting him to get work related experiences.” Sue shares that Jen, “was there for me to talk…and she helped me through a difficult time.” This example connects the current study to the literature review providing support that the student affairs professional impacts student character development.

Development of Mentor/Protégée Relationship

The data showed the formation of the informal mentor-protégée relationship and the growth of the relationship from the first interaction and ending in the bond that developed (See Figure 2). In the current study, this first contact started in some formal role with the professional and the student, such as advisor or supervisor. As a result of a connection that began to develop, both the student and the professional began to share personal information. This personal sharing of information included basic interests in addition to more personal aspects of the lives of both the mentor and the protégée. This appeared to be an integral part of the development of the relationship. Jill shared the following about her mentor Ann that illustrated this aspect:

I think, as I got older in school, like junior and senior year, we talked a lot more about our personal lives. It wasn’t just centered on what we did with the organization. I got to know a lot more about her kids and what she did in grad-school. We talked about programs and I think that I might be thinking about applying to and she helped me figure out should I go into school counseling or should I stick with college students? She just helped
me. She was a really good sounding board to help me reflect on where I wanted to go.

This example exemplifies a key developmental stage of the foundation of the relationship between the mentor and the protégée. Without this personal sharing, the foundation of the relationship lacks the trust needed to move to advanced stages of the relationship.

The next key to the development of the mentor-protégée relationship discovered in the current study was characterized by straight talk from the mentor to the protégée. Based on the development of the relationship to this point, the mentor was able to be very honest and point out specific issues without “sugarcoating” it. This straight talk was mentioned in 4 of the 5 mentor relationships. Joan supports this aspect when she shared

![Mentor-Protégée Relationship Development Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 2. Mentor-Protégée Relationship Development**
a story about letting Gwen work through an issue and then having an honest discussion with her expressing, “... I wanted her to know that I am not your yes woman. I am not here to massage you. I am here to be truthful and honest with you about what I see and what I don’t see.”

After the mentor and protégée worked through these aspects of the relationship was when the participants perceived an impact on the student’s character development. As a result of achieving all steps discussed, all participants mentioned a bond that developed allowing the relationship to continue beyond the scope of the university setting. Ben validates this last aspect when he shared:

…you know the impact you’ve had on a student by the time they graduate because of your relationship with them down the road. Most of the students that I’ve had an extremely close relationship with, I’m still in an integral part of their lives. I’ve been to their weddings, their baby showers and everything else you could possibly imagine, and their families know who I am. I think that is important, because I don’t want a student to think that you’re superficial and you’re just doing it because it’s your job as opposed to something you care about and that you enjoy doing.

This example illustrates this final stage of the mentor-protégée relationship development in the current study. As a result of advancing through these stages of development, this lasting bond, as demonstrated in the previous example, was achieved in all the mentoring relationships in the current study. This finding adds to the limited body of research focusing on student affairs professionals serving as informal mentors.
Implications for Practice

Looking at higher education as the last chance to make an impact on character development (Berkowitz & Fekula, 1999), the current data supports making character development of students a focus for colleges and universities. This study focused on student affairs professionals serving as informal mentors to their student protégés and the impact on the student’s character development. One implication for student affairs professionals is to be aware of the numerous opportunities to make an impact on the character development of students in the college and university setting and to make an effort to deliberately seek out opportunities to form mentoring relationships.

This study illuminates the process of developing an informal mentor relationship and how this relationship can impact the student’s character development. The current study enlightens the student affairs professional regarding the process of developing this relationship. The study emphasizes the importance of personal sharing in this process. This personal sharing is conducted by both the mentor and the protégée. This sharing includes information about families, personal lives, and all aspects of the college experience. The sharing of personal information aids in the development of the student’s character development as a high level of trust is established. This trust is a key component for the mentoring relationship to grow to the level needed to impact the student’s character development.

Another point illustrated in the current study involves the professional being honest with the student when the student makes a mistake or makes a poor choice. The study discusses the importance of this straight talk and the impact on the student’s character development. The implication for the field of student affairs is for professionals
to understand this process of straight talk and how to support the student after calling the student out for choices made. The student protégées and the professional mentors in the current study all stated the importance of this process and how it impacted the student’s character development. It is also important to note this will be effective only after trust has been developed in the relationship.

Another implication for the practice of student affairs is for more experienced members of the field to continue to share their experiences with new professionals in the field serving as informal mentors for student protégées to ensure the continuation of this phenomenon. This can be done when serving as intern supervisors to new graduate students and with new professionals to the field.

Future Research Recommendations

Due to the lack of literature focused on student affairs professionals serving as informal mentors to the students they serve and the impact of such relationships as was evidenced in the review of the literature and as a result of the current study shedding light on the phenomenon, there is a need for additional research. The first area of additional research should include longitudinal studies of informal mentor relationships with student affairs professionals and their student protégées to ascertain the long term affect on the student’s character development and the bond that develops in the university setting between the mentor and the protégée.

Another area of future research includes examining the effect of the mentor relationship on the student’s academic performance in college. Including, but not limited to grade point average, retention rates, persistence efforts, and graduation rates. In addition, the perception of the student feeling a connection to the higher education setting
should be measured as a result of the mentor relationship. Another area of future research should study the impact of the mentor relationship on the future role of the student protégé as a mentor and what impact the first relationship has on the future mentor relationship.

Finally, additional research in a higher educational setting, with a larger sample of participants and a diverse demographic criteria utilizing a multi-method in-depth study focusing on the impact of the relationship on the student’s character development. In addition to the qualitative methods needed in such a study, quantitative methods should be utilized to focus on the generalizability of the study to other institution types.
REFERENCES


INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Student Protégée Version

First Interview

1.  a. Please describe personal character traits important to you.
   
   b. Please describe how these character traits were developed before and since attending college

2.  Provide an in depth description of how your values were developed prior to attending college.

4.  a. What was your first experience with your mentor?
   
   b. How did your relationship develop?
   
   c. Why did you become involved in this relationship?

Second Interview

1. Please describe your current and past relationship with your mentor.

2. Do you perceive that your mentor relationship impacted your character development?

3. Provide three or more examples of how your mentor relationship contributed to your character development.

4. Why did you agree to participate in this study?

5. Please describe how you perceive my role as the researcher.

6. Have any issues influenced our dialogue session?
Mentor Version

First Interview

1. a. Please describe personal character traits important to you throughout your life.
   
b. Please describe how these character traits were developed throughout your life.

2. a. Please describe your first experience with your student protégée.
   
b. How did your relationship develop?
   
c. Why did you become involved in this relationship?

3. Please describe your current and past relationship with your student protégée.

4. Have you shared the personal character traits important to you that you shared earlier with your student protégé?

Second Interview

1. Do you perceive that your mentor relationship impacted the character development of your student protégé?

2. Provide three or more examples of how you contributed to your student’s character development.

3. Why did you agree to participate in this study?

4. Please describe how you perceive my role as the researcher.

5. Have any issues influenced our dialogue session?
SAMPLE LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

Date

Address

Dear

My dissertation study seeks to investigate what, if any, impact a mentor relationship with a student affairs professional and a student has on the student’s character development.

I need your help to complete this study.

I am looking for 5 student affairs professionals who have an informal mentor relationship with an undergraduate student. The relationship needs to be at least one year old and they must meet or talk at least a couple of times per semester, which will ensure the mentoring relationship is still active. The student must also view the student affairs professional as a mentor.

If you think you meet the above requirements or know a co-worker who does, please contact me at 717-477-1164 or email gsocho@ship.edu.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Gregory S. Ochoa
IDPEL at Shippensburg
SAMPLE CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY - PARTICIPANT

TITLE: Perceived Character Development in a Mentoring Relationship from the Voices of Students and their Student Affairs Mentors

INVESTIGATOR: Gregory Ochoa
8461 Oxford Circle
Waynesboro, PA 17268
Phone: 717-477-1614
Home: 717-765-8681
Email: gsocho@ship.edu

ADVISOR: Dr. James Henderson
Duquesne University
Phone: 412-396-4038

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ed. D. degree in educational leadership at Duquesne University. All funding is the responsibility of the investigator.

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate what, if any, impact a mentor relationship with a student affairs professional and a student has on the student’s character development. You will participate in two semi-structured interview(s) with the principle investigator lasting approximately one hour each. The second interview will occur between 4-6 weeks after the first interview. The interview(s) will be audio taped and transcribed for analysis.

This is the only request that will be made of you.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no known risks related to your participation in this study. However, sensitive issues may arise and will be kept confidential. The anticipated benefit is the opportunity
to contribute to the knowledge of student character development.

COMPENSATION: You will not be compensated for your participation. However, participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: No individual identification will be made in the data analysis and review. All written materials, audiotapes, working transcripts, and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher’s home. When tapes are transcribed, all personal identifiers of you as well as anyone you talk about will be deleted. Your response(s) may be reported anonymously in interview summaries. All identifying materials will be destroyed at the completion of the research.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Gregory Ochoa, Principal Investigator, Dr. James Henderson, Advisor at the contact information stated above or Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326).

Participant’s signature _____________________________ Date ________________

Researcher’s signature _____________________________ Date ________________