Mentor as Scaffold: A Mixed-Methods Exploration of Feminist-Informed Mentoring in the Undergraduate Setting

Elizabeth Bennett

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MENTOR AS SCAFFOLD: A MIXED-METHODS EXPLORATION OF
FEMINIST-INFORMED MENTORING IN THE UNDERGRADUATE SETTING

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By
Elizabeth Anne Bennett

August 2019
MENTOR AS SCAFFOLD: A MIXED-METHODS EXPLORATION OF
FEMINIST-INFORMED MENTORING IN THE UNDERGRADUATE SETTING

By

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Dissertation supervised by Dr. Lori E. Koelsch

There has been little consensus around the definition or meaning of mentoring as
a phenomenon. As highlighted first by Jacobi (1991) and more recently by Crisp and
Cruz (2009), the relatively small mentoring literature is plagued by a poor understanding
of mentoring itself. Additionally, there are few guiding recommendations for the
development of formal mentoring programs, particularly those informed by feminist
pedagogy and theory, at the undergraduate level. To begin to address these gaps in the
mentoring literature, I conducted a mixed-methods study with a convergent parallel
design (Creswell & Clark, 2007) and qualitative emphasis. Eight participants completed
individual, semi-structured interviews and a brief survey assessing two constructs that I
hypothesize might overlap with and inform the mentoring phenomenon: servant
leadership (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008) and emotional intelligence
I approached data collection and analysis with a concurrent interest in exploring mentoring alongside theoretical notions of scaffolding and servant leadership.

Following thematic analysis of interviews and descriptive incorporation of survey data, 8 themes emerged: the importance of the relationship; support and care; mentee growth and professional development; investment of the mentor; mentoring from a feminist perspective; contrast to traditional mentoring; mentoring versus teaching/advising; and the mentor’s passion or identity as a mentor. I posit a rethinking of the seemingly disparate theoretical constructs of mentor as scaffold and mentor as servant leader. I offer a definition of mentoring: that mentoring is a dyadic relationship in which the mentor is further along in her development; the mentor offers her experience, provides support, and is present to mentee growth. Importantly, I argue that high-quality mentoring and feminist mentoring are one and the same. Synthesis of findings suggests the following guidelines for engaging in feminist-informed mentorship: (1) taking a relational approach, (2) incorporating notions of scaffolding and servant mentorship, (3) considering the importance of emotional intelligence, and (4) focusing on authentic narrative-writing and self-discovery. Future work will focus on implementing and evaluating these guidelines in a population of faculty-undergraduate mentoring dyads, as well as a larger-sample examination of servant leadership and emotional intelligence among faculty mentors.

Keywords: mentoring, academia, undergraduates, feminism
DEDICATION

To Elijah, Lucas, Beatrice, and Elodie, with immense love and gratitude.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract iv
Dedication vi
Acknowledgments vii

Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 Definitional Confusion and the Phenomenon in Question 3

Chapter 2 Mentoring in Academia 5
  2.1 Mentoring Undergraduates 5
  2.2 Benefits and Drawbacks of Mentoring, Across Settings 7
  2.3 Mentoring Women 11

Chapter 3 The Role of a Feminist Perspective 15
  3.1 Transgressive Mentoring? 16

Chapter 4 Conceptualizations of Mentoring 19
  4.1 Mentor as Servant Leader 19
  4.2 Mentor as Scaffold 21

Method

Chapter 5 Methodology 23
  5.1 Approaches to Research 23
  5.2 Using Mixed Methods 24
  5.3 Convergent Parallel Design 27
  5.4 Instruments 29
  5.5 Reflexive Process 33

Chapter 6 Data Collection and Participants 35
  6.1 Participant Selection, Recruitment, and Demographic Information 35
  6.2 Data Collection 37
  6.3 Introduction to Participants 39
  6.4 Summary Thoughts 50

Chapter 7 Thematic Analysis 52
  7.1 Introduction 52
  7.2 Step-by-Step Process 54
  7.3 Summary Thoughts Regarding Thematic Analysis 57
  7.4 (Qualitatively) Incorporating Survey Data 59

Results

Chapter 8 Presentation of Findings 61
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1 Introduction to Themes</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2 The Importance of the Relationship</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3 Support and Care</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4 Mentee Growth and Professional Development</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5 Investment of the Mentor</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.6 Mentoring from a Feminist Perspective</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.7 Contrast to “Traditional” Mentoring</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.8 Mentoring Versus Teaching, Advising</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.9 Mentor’s Passion, Identity as a Mentor</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.10 Incorporating the Numerical Data</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 9 Researcher/Researched: A Brief Reflexive Analysis</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1 Initial Thoughts</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2 Reflection on the Interviews</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3 Connection with Participants</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion and Implications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 10 Reflecting on the Project</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1 Introduction</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 Mentoring/Teaching?</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 Servant Mentor-as-Scaffold</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 11 Suggested Principles for Feminist-Informed Mentorship</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1 Introduction</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2 Taking a Relational Approach</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3 The Role of Scaffolding and Servant Mentorship</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4 Importance of Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.5 Authentic Narrative-Writing, Self-Discovery</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 12 In Conclusion</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1 Defining Quality Mentoring</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.2 Limitations of the Present Study</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.3 Suggestions for Future Research</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.4 Closing Reflection</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A (Survey)</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B (Recruitment flyers)</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C (Semi-structured interview guide)</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D (Consent form)</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is marriage? *Marriage is having a witness to your life. And mentorship is a little bit of that, too. It’s having someone who is attentive to your life in, you know, really focused and special ways, special in the sense of ‘I’m here for you.’*

– Alice

**Introduction**

Like many who come to research mentoring, I am both a protégé and a mentor who has witnessed the tangible and sometimes difficult-to-articulate benefits of mentoring in my professional and personal development. In my current role as a doctoral student, I enjoy a mentoring relationship with my academic mentor, a tenured faculty member who shares my passion for teaching and mentoring, and from whom I have learned a great deal about numerous practical, academic, and political aspects of academia and research. Our shared feminist orientation guides much of our work together and deeply informs the ways in which we each approach mentoring, teaching, and learning. I also mentor a small but enthusiastic lab of undergraduate students who regularly challenge me, encourage me to further develop my own thinking, and breathe life into the often repetitive and exhausting life of the graduate student. Mentoring my students has served as the central catalyst for this dissertation research.

In this dissertation I seek to accomplish a few tasks. First, I will draw attention to substantive definitional issues in the mentoring literature before turning to mentoring within the higher education literature. I then explore how mentoring is differentially experienced by women, as well as a way in which we might think about mentoring as transgressive. I explicate the distinct differences and benefits of a feminist-informed approach to mentoring before touching on two possible conceptualizations of mentoring. I then describe my methodological approach in detail, present data, and engage in a
reflection on the project. I conclude the dissertation by proposing suggested guidelines for feminist-informed mentoring, particularly in the context of faculty-undergraduate dyads.
Chapter 1: Definitional Confusion and the Phenomenon in Question

It seems safe to note, from experience and observation, that many intellectual advancements are borne of fruitful mentoring relationships. For example, Josef Breuer famously mentored Sigmund Freud, whose career promulgated psychoanalysis. Neils Bohr's early career mentorship of Linus Pauling undeniably contributed to Pauling’s Nobel Prize in chemistry. Carol Gilligan’s critique of her mentor, Lawrence Kohlberg, resulted in her uniquely feminist perspective on moral development. In fact, one could argue that the success of the entire doctoral enterprise is built on the shoulders of the academic mentoring model. And yet we understand very little about what makes mentoring so meaningful (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Gibson, 2004). Certainly, in a logistical and practical sense, mentoring works because it connects protégés with people who are wiser, who have practical knowledge to share, and who can coach the protégé on the ins and outs of success in a particular field (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). But there is something more to it, and despite decades of research on mentoring in business and the academy, researchers are still not sure what that thing is (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). What is particularly interesting here is that it is difficult to envision other constructs that are heavily researched in psychology, management, and related fields in which such poor phenomenological understanding is at work. Many mentoring researchers seem satisfied simply to define the construct of mentoring with, well, “mentoring.” That is, we know it when we see it.

In her review of the mentoring literature, Jacobi (1991) highlighted this lack of definitional agreement among researchers, and she presented a variety of definitions from management and industrial-organizational psychology literatures, as well as higher
education, to illustrate the confusion. She also emphasized the ways in which we tend to approach our thinking about mentoring, which are largely in terms of the mentor-impacting-protégé relationship (as opposed to protégé-impacting-mentor or a reciprocal relationship). In fact, definitions of mentoring within industrial-organizational and management psychology utilize this model almost exclusively, tending to think about mentoring from the perspective of and orientation towards the mentor.

In a more recent review, Crisp and Cruz (2009) return to Jacobi’s (1991) observations, noting that in the two decades since her seminal article was published, not much has changed in terms of addressing her concerns, chiefly in the realm of defining the construct well. They refer to the mentoring literature, particularly within higher education, as “largely atheoretical” (p. 526) and disappointing in its dearth of rigorous quantitative or mixed-methods studies. There are also relatively few meta-analyses on mentoring, likely due to the difficulty of collecting and comparing studies that have defined the construct differently. To summarize, it seems awfully difficult to meaningfully investigate something we do not understand well enough to define across research endeavors. Given this significant and problematic gap in our understanding of and ability to best explicate what mentoring is, a phenomenological exploration naturally arises as the next step in furthering and deepening our understanding of the mentoring phenomenon (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). I will continue first with a review of the current state of affairs in the mentoring literature before returning to the importance of phenomenology in seeking to address this gap.
Chapter 2: Mentoring in Academia

Corporate organizations have been quicker than virtually any other working or training environment to catch on to the potential benefits of formalized mentoring programs. Mentoring enjoys a more robust position as a topic of inquiry within organizational and management literatures, and over the past few decades, the implementation of formalized programs has proliferated. By contrast, while mentoring relationships have served as the backbone of the academic enterprise since the beginning of the university system (e.g., Plato and Aristotle), they are rarely formalized to the extent of organizational mentoring programs. The “mentor model,” in which graduate students are paired to a faculty member who is largely responsible for the training and research development of the protégé, is a widely-used system in doctoral training programs across a variety of subjects, and it has been particularly efficacious in the sciences. Yet, the implementation of actual mentoring within this model varies hugely from mentor to mentor, department to department, and university to university. Interestingly, a meta-analysis by Eby and colleagues (2008) suggests that academic mentoring may be more effective than formalized workplace mentoring programs, which seems all the more incentive to more thoroughly investigate what makes mentoring work in the academic setting.

2.1 Mentoring Undergraduates. To take this further, we turn to mentoring the undergraduate population. In my own academic experience, it seems that undergraduate mentoring in many university departments is even less formalized than at the graduate level. I posit two possible reasons for this disparity in training models. First, because training at the undergraduate level is often considered more generalized, as opposed to
the specialist nature of graduate study, it may be difficult to accurately pair a student with a mentor in their desired career or research area. In addition, paring students with career-specific mentors may be difficult in liberal arts environments, in which students are encouraged to cultivate intellectual curiosity broadly before narrowing focus. Second, and more troubling to consider, is that undergraduate students simply have less to offer in terms of intellectual input and research productivity to make mentoring worth the expenditure of faculty mentoring time and resources. I have seen this unfortunate attitude in my own interactions with academic departments in both psychology and business, and it has been most prominent in more prolific research institutions. It is reasonable to assert that few academics or professionals, however, would ever even make it to graduate school, much less establish a career, without personalized attention from at least one mentor during their undergraduate education – the “leap of faith” to invest time and resources has to come first, it seems.

Additionally, a core component of successful mentoring has been identified as a focus on the professional goals of the mentee (Crosby, 1999). Unfortunately, this aspect of mentoring may feel a bit contentious, particularly in academic departments in which mentoring is considered a gratuitous service activity without the same benefits as a productive research agenda or ambitious teaching load (Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011). I am interested in exploring whether an element of focus on the mentee’s professional development feels important and/or essential to undergraduate mentors and mentees, or whether this is an aspect of mentoring that fits within a traditional corporate environment alone.
2.2 Benefits and Drawbacks in Mentoring, Across Settings

Researchers into the phenomenon of mentoring are largely and uncritically pro-mentoring, with few highlighting the potential drawbacks for mentor and protégé (Halatin & Knotts, 1982; Levinson et al., 1978; Ragins, 1997). This makes logical sense; many of us who choose to research mentoring relationships are drawn to the topic because of beneficial mentoring relationships in which we have been members (I highlighted my own experience with this in the Introduction of this dissertation). It is worth noting that, despite being unable to pin down a satisfying definition of mentoring as a construct, researchers are nonetheless able to research and conceptualize benefits associated with interactions that look like mentoring to us. In fact, there are documented benefits to mentoring across a variety of contexts, including academia and corporate organizations (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008). Levinson et al. (1978) note that mentoring relationships are what allow young adults to successfully enter into the work force by enabling both an entry into the adult world of working as well as the formation of a new and separate identity as work self. Kram’s (1985, 1988) formative works on organizational mentoring have seen the proliferation of empirical research into mentoring relationships at work. Generally speaking, mentoring relationships are tremendously beneficial for protégés, who experience positive behavioral (Blinn-Pike, 2007), attitudinal (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2003), and career (Underhill, 2006) outcomes due to positive mentoring relationships. Protégés also are likely to experience relational benefits (Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Marchese, 2006) and enhanced motivation (Joo, Yu, & Atwater, 2016).

Organizationally, the benefits of mentoring include career advancement,
meaningful connections, introductions to the unspoken aspects of workplace culture, and having a supporter in the upper echelons (Allen et al., 2004; Levinson et al., 1978). Within academia, Hill and colleagues (1989) suggest that senior professors play a key role in the success of junior faculty, serving as both teachers and gatekeepers. Alexander (1992) notes that senior faculty mentors guide junior protégés through “that infamous rite of passage known as Tenure and Promotion” (p. 55). Mentoring is also an essential part of the socialization process of entering a university department as a new professor (Schrodt, Cawyer, & Sanders, 2003), particularly if one is not white or male.

Mentoring in the academy means protégés are more likely to secure tenure (Schrodt et al., 2003) and feel a greater sense of ownership and agency within their department and university (Miller, 2014; Schrodt et al., 2003). For mentored women in particular, a mentoring relationship is more likely to result in increased grant funding success and higher levels of promotion (Gardiner, Tiggemann, Kearns, & Marshall, 2007). Mentoring also shifts the protégé’s perceptions of herself. Mentored academic women, for example, are more likely to view themselves positively as academics (Gardiner et al., 2007).

It is important to note that both the mentor and protégé benefit significantly through the mentoring relationship (Schrodt et al., 2003). I have primarily focused on benefits to the protégé; we will briefly turn to benefits for the mentor before exploring mentoring in the context of gender more specifically. Mentors benefit from the mentoring relationship in myriad, though often less obvious or concrete, ways. Successful mentors gain psychological support and internal satisfaction in helping a protégé develop professionally (Ragins & Scandura, 1999). In some cases, mentors also
gain respect from colleagues for their mentoring endeavors, particularly in organizations
in which the protégé develops meaningful talent for the organization. Unfortunately, in
academia, successful mentors are less likely to obtain tangible benefits for mentoring,
given the role of mentoring and teaching in the academic hierarchy of “worthwhile
endeavors” (Misra et al., 2011). Quality mentoring takes time, and time devoted to
mentoring and developing younger students and faculty is time away from pursuits that
garner money and prestige for one’s university or department.

It is easier to consider benefits to the organization or university within the
traditional mentoring structure because the traditional structure is rooted in authority and
ownership. While there are, as I have already articulated, significant issues in defining
the mentoring construct, what researchers do seem to agree on is that mentoring is a
largely top-down function. Mentoring exists to serve the needs of the organization or
university through developing and addressing the needs of the protégé. This is
accomplished through an acceptance – and even reverence – for the mentor’s wisdom,
mirroring a common (and unfortunate) academic model for teaching, in which knowledge
resides in the teacher, who is an expert dispersing that elusive knowledge to students
(Palmer, 2010). Under this model, mentors are the change-makers, the sowers of
learning and progress in eager tabula rasa protégés. Mentoring that is approached
reciprocally, however, with an open understanding that the mentor seeks to grow and
learn from the relationship, has the potential to be even more fruitful for both mentor and
protégé (Fassinger, 1997). This is likely to be of particular importance in mentoring
relationships involving historically marginalized groups, including mentors/mentees who
are women and members of racial or ethnic minority groups. I will return to the
hierarchical nature of mentoring below.

And still, despite the myriad benefits of mentoring, we cannot ignore the substantive issues inherent in mentoring relationships, especially for women and minorities. Mentoring can occur across shifts in power between the mentor and mentee, which can result in negative feelings and jealousy as roles are redefined (Kram, 1983). Mentoring may be taken up better when it is a choice as opposed to a formal structure imposed on participants (Wanberg et al., 2006), and non-mentored individuals may feel jealous towards mentored individuals (Carruthers, 1993). Women and minorities may benefit from mentoring in fields that are primarily dominated by White men, but this likely means that the available mentors to enable success in these fields would be White men (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). While cross-gender and cross-race mentoring relationships may be beneficial to the mentee, literature suggests that mentees prefer mentorship with a similar mentor (Mitchell, Eby, & Ragins, 2015), though it is difficult for these mentees to find appropriate mentors given the dearth of similar others in leadership positions (Carruthers, 1993; Lark & Croteau, 1998). In addition, the implicit pressure to serve as a mentor for mentees of one’s underrepresented group may put unfair strain on the mentor. For example, a mentor of a racial minority group may be the desired mentor for many potential mentees of the same racial minority in a given department. In addition, this mentor might be one of few members of her racial minority on the faculty, thus putting undue constraints on her time if she attempts to mentor many interested students.

Cross-gender relationships in particular pose unique challenges. Female mentees with male mentors are more likely to be viewed as tokens by colleagues (Carruthers,
1993), and female mentees are less likely to be included in informal mentoring activities (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Male mentors may view female mentees as taking their careers less seriously, and thus mentor them differently than male mentees (Chandler, 1996). Cross-gender mentoring relationships are also more likely to result in romantic and sexual innuendo (Burke & McKeen, 1997). Women mentees in cross-gender mentoring relationships are often implicated as “falling short of being fully accepted in the masculine social order” (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013, p. 4). Given these challenges, particularly for women and minority mentees, it is important to consider ways in which mentoring uniquely addresses these groups. Thus, I will briefly explore mentoring, women, and the role of a feminist orientation.

2.3 Mentoring Women

Mentoring has been effectively utilized to increase the protégé’s chances of promotion in both business and academic settings (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). In fact, a catalyst for establishing a formal mentoring program is often an organizational desire to see underrepresented groups, including women, promoted to higher levels of leadership (Gardiner et al., 2007; Noe, 1988; Tillman, 2001). Can mentoring overcome the “chilly climate” that often keeps women out of higher academic ranks (Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Sandler & Hall, 1986)? Does mentoring successfully engage the issues often cited for women failing to break through the glass ceiling in business and academia? Literature suggests that yes, formal mentoring relationships play a key role in enabling women to perform competitively and be recognized for their work (Allen, Lentz, & Day, 2006; Hansman, 1998; Hill & Bahniuk, 1998; Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992).

Traditional mentoring relationships that result in these productive outputs are
rooted in hierarchical and patriarchal structures that are designed to be emotionally detached and focused solely on professional advancement of both protégé and mentor. A worthwhile question is whether the professional aspects of a traditional mentoring relationship are what define the experience as mentoring for the protégé, or whether there are other elements of what we recognize as mentoring that make the relationship impactful. Likewise, I question whether mentoring relationships that are less hierarchical or less focused on traditional attainment of measurable success are experienced as mentoring in the same way that the much more widely studied version of mentoring is.

As I have noted previously in this proposal, significant deduction is not required to note that the traditional mentoring relationship, with the mentor in a role of increased authority relative to the protégé, is necessarily rooted in a structure of power. Within the mentoring literature, there is “nowhere any real critique of ideology, the political economy or prevailing social constructs surrounding mentoring and education” (Gulam & Zulfiqar, 1998, p. 41). Though this quote is nearly 20 years old, it is worth noting that it is still representative of the state of affairs within the mentoring literature.

Critiques of and alternatives to the formal mentoring model are relatively rare, and while this is not a formal review of the literature, I will highlight a few of these studies here. In a qualitative study investigating peer mentoring relationships as an alternative to the traditional hierarchical structure of mentoring, Kram and Isabella (1985) argue the importance of cultivating peer relationships. While this study was not conducted from an explicitly feminist approach, the authors’ interest in mitigating authority structures and emphasizing the power of peer connections and support is relevant here.
In their piece on feminist co-mentoring, Reger and McGuire (2003) describe a similar relationship to the peer relationships of Kram and Isabella’s (1985) research, emphasizing the importance of peer relationships between women. While Reger and McGuire’s (2003) work raises interesting questions about the importance of peer relationships for women’s success in academia, their real-life peer mentoring relationship, which anchored their article, seemed to rely heavily on a relative lack of competition, due to their disparate research foci, as well as strengths in their existing formal mentoring relationships. Although this is inspiration for those used to the often fraught nature of academic friendships, it lacks the substance needed to substantively propose this as a model for mentoring more generally. To note, their peer mentoring relationship was strikingly similar to the peer relationships described by Kram and Isabella in an organizational context nearly two decades earlier.

Research on mentoring that moves away from a hierarchical model and towards a relationship model is still sorely needed. Fassinger (1997) proposed a model of feminist mentoring that has also been taken up in the modality of multicultural feminist mentoring, with a particular focus on cultural issues within communal or non-hierarchical mentoring. Her work sought to address a variety of issues in the traditional mentoring structure, many of which I have already covered here. Women often desire to be mentored by women; female mentors serve as models for integrating work and family life (Schweibert, Deck, Bradshaw, Scott, & Harper, 1999). Female mentors are also important in traditionally male-dominated fields, which can be alienating for the junior female employee or faculty member. A mentoring relationship rooted in the reciprocal interaction between female mentor and female mentee is often preferred (Lark &
When Fassinger’s (1997) feminist model of mentoring emerged in the research literature nearly 20 years ago, it was the most progressive and broadly-applicable model of feminist mentoring to date, and it is still the central example of a feminist orientation in mentoring. She puts substantive focus on the benefits of mentoring for both mentor and mentee, and she emphasizes the importance of a relational orientation in mentoring, which has been lacking in the broader literature, in which the focus of mentoring is largely on career advancement. Within Fassinger’s framework, the mentor acknowledges her power in the relationship, and works to make that power as fruitful and empowering as possible for the mentee. Through this, the hope is that the relationship will not serve to perpetuate structural power dynamics.

A question that arises from this literature is: If explicitly feminist mentoring is important, and at some necessary level it entails a degree of reciprocality, can it be effectively employed as a modality of mentoring in university settings? Few studies have investigated this (e.g., Benishek, Bieschke, Park, & Slattery, 2004), and due to the previously discussed definitional issues regarding mentoring as a psychological construct, I am not surprised at the dearth of studies exploring and applying mentoring in non-traditional ways. I do think that it is important to conceptualize feminist mentoring in university settings, and that a redefining of work like Fassinger’s is imperative for further development of mentoring models that serve women and students.
Chapter 3: The Role of a Feminist Perspective

This dissertation is not solely about the mentoring relationship as it might exist outside of a theoretical influence or framework; my interest in the potential impact of a feminist orientation\(^1\) on the part of the mentor is a vital component of the way I am currently conceptualizing effective – and meaningful – mentoring relationships. Feminist theory puts a key focus on collaboration, equanimity, and authenticity, among other components (Fassinger, 1997; hooks, 1994), which I also conceptualize as important components to effective mentoring. It is worth noting, however, that traditional models of mentoring rely heavily on constructs that simply do not fit comfortably in a feminist framework (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011). Across 18 studies published from 1988-1996, Crosby (1999) identified two key components of a traditional mentoring relationship: (1) a power differential between two people in a professional setting, in which it is clear who is “in charge” and (2) the relationship focuses on the professional aspirations and goals of the mentee. Other researchers have more recently echoed these findings (e.g., Curtin, Malley, & Stewart, 2016; Jackevicius et al., 2014; Kashiwagi, Varkey, & Cook, 2013). For those of us in an academic setting, the former likely sounds accurate – after all, we know who the professor is and who the student is, if relying on nothing other than the person who sets the time for meetings, decides the agenda, and assigns work. But the latter component, as I have described previously, may be less present in the average faculty-undergraduate mentoring relationship for reasons systemic, financial, and otherwise embedded in rigorous expectations for faculty output.

Within the traditional corporate mentoring literature, little has been added to this

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\(^{1}\) Importantly, a feminist perspective can inform mentoring regardless of the gender identity of the players in the mentoring relationship (i.e., men can be intentional about a feminist orientation in their mentoring).
basic skeleton, at least as far as a core essence of mentoring is concerned. And the top-
down nature of mentoring, which I have already touched upon, has been critiqued as
paternalistic and hierarchical, with a necessary focus on the mentor’s worldview – who,
both in corporations and in academic settings, is often a White male (Colley, 2000).

Feminist researchers have called attention to the inherent patriarchal structure of
traditional mentoring relationships as problematic, proposing the importance of
multicultural (Benishek, 2004; Fassinger, 1997) and collaborative (Reger & McGuire,
2003) approaches, calling attention to the role of modeling and authenticity within a
feminist mentoring frame (Humble, Solomon, Allen, Blaisure, & Johnson, 2006).

Researchers have also emphasized the importance of a feminist research agenda within a
feminist orientation to mentoring (e.g., a commitment to gender equality; Humble et a.,
2006). Yet, including a feminist orientation as an explicit focus in an undergraduate
mentoring program has yet to be documented in the literature. I intend to address this
gap purposively through this dissertation project.

3.1 Transgressive Mentoring?

Thinkers have long called attention to the inherently patriarchal structure of
academia (McDowell, 1990), and within the structure of traditional mentoring, which
relies on hierarchy, a mentor is less a teacher as an editor, an influencer (Colley, 2002,
2003). As I have touched upon already, it is often acknowledged that the knowledge and
advice transmitted in this relationship goes one way: top down. In moving towards a
view of student mentees as potential participants in horizontal, reciprocal mentoring
relationships with faculty, I argue that faculty must undermine patriarchal assumptions
necessary for a hierarchical mentoring model to maintain its pride of place in academic systems.

As Audre Lorde (1984) reminds us, we cannot expect to dismantle the master’s house with the master’s tools: undermining the patriarchal structure of the academic enterprise – particular in mentoring – requires that we come at the issue with a different, perhaps foreign, solution. I propose that this solution is feminist-informed, or transgressive, mentoring via connection. Authentic, mutually respectful, I-Thou relating (Buber, 1923/1996) enables a potential dismantling of a vertical academic mentoring structure to enable students and faculty to engage in more fluid, reciprocal ways. To come into genuine contact with students is to forge “real connection, which is so feared by the patriarchal world” (Lorde, 1984, p. 2). The nature of this undermining, of this transgression through connection is not to simply push the boundaries of what will be considered acceptable within the academy. Instead, connected, authentic relationship between teacher and students, between mentor and mentee, seeks to transform the structure of academia as we recognize it (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Buber, 1947/2003). I believe that mentees – and mentors, for that matter – have “an ontological vocation to be more fully human” (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 55). The radical and transgressive mentor is one who desires to grow towards fuller and mutual humanization alongside her students.

In seeking to explore whether there could be another way to approach mentoring – whether a feminist-informed approach could work – mentor and mentee may come into more genuine connection and dialogue with each other. I argue that a feminist mentor, one who prioritizes reciprocal collaboration, connection, and a critical approach to issues
of culture and power, is well-positioned to transform the engrained structures of traditional mentoring in the academy. In fact, the transgressive, feminist mentor may well enable the protégé student to navigate her own path to empowerment, genuine relatedness, and professional growth.
Chapter 4: Conceptualizations of Mentoring

To begin thinking creatively about feminism and mentorship, I first turn to examples of mentors in the role of empowering supporter. To accomplish this here, I will next briefly propose two conceptualizations of mentoring, the first through an organizational lens and the second through a perspective of feminist activism and pedagogy.

4.1 Organizational: Mentor as Servant Leader. The organizational psychology and management literatures have, for several decades, promulgated the importance of servant leadership for successfully reaching and inspiring employees. I think that this phenomenon of leading through service also applies meaningfully to the mentoring relationship. Greenleaf (1977) introduced the organizational concept of servant leadership four decades ago, and it has only grown in its hold on the research and applied organizational communities. A servant leader seems, at least at the level of semantics, to be a misnomer. How can one be both a servant and a leader? The traditional leadership framework is rooted in a top down, triangle-shaped structure in which we can envision the leader at the top and the followers at the bottom; this mirrors the traditional organizational structures and leadership hierarchies of Western companies. Servant leadership flips this framework: the leader is at the bottom, empowering her followers through service and a servant attitude.

Greenleaf (1977, 2002) pivotally argued that leaders are most effective through service to those down the ranks. They are servant first and are unconsciously motivated by a desire – a need – to serve others. The decision to lead comes later, and it is a conscious one. The archetype of the servant leader runs counter to traditional thinking
around leadership, which dictated that true leaders come to leadership from the beginning, because they are called to or born to lead (Burns, 1978). Servant leadership has captured the heart of the organizational psychology and leadership communities, in part because literature suggests that it is a particularly effective way to lead, and also in part because it is simply inspiring to envision effective leaders who seem to accidentally come to leadership through their love of service.

I argue that effective mentors seem to share a few key aspects of their approach with the prototypical servant leader. Servant leaders are drawn to service first, and leadership follows second. Similarly, I argue that effective mentors put students first, prioritizing one-on-one meetings and personalized feedback despite the mentor’s own taxing schedule. Servant leaders focus on growth and wellbeing of their followers and broader community. An effective mentor is likewise oriented towards the bolstering of the protégé’s sense of self as well as to the health of the department and academic community.

In addition to conceptualizing servant leaders alongside mentors, I will briefly articulate parallels and distinctions between the servant leader/mentor and the transformational leader, which is commonly lauded the most ideal leadership type. The concepts of transformational and servant leadership entered the organizational lexicon at roughly the same time (Greenleaf, 1977; Burns, 1978), and both types of leadership are considered dynamic approaches. In essence, transformational leadership is about building and solidifying commitment to organizational goals and working to empower one’s team to meet these goals. It is not difficult to imagine why this leadership type resonates as impactful and inspiring. Often, it seems, both in corporate organizations and
in the corporation of academia, higher-level leadership upholds the transformational leader as the model for how successful leadership happens, and I want to be clear about why I am posing the servant leader, and not the transformational leader, as the optimal leadership metaphor for the effective mentor.

A central difference between the transformational and servant leader is the leader’s focus. The transformational leader, or teacher, in the case of academia, is focused on the organization (e.g., decisions are driven by what is best for the company, department, or university). The servant leader, on the other hand, is focused on her followers, or student protégés. For those of us who have ever felt supported or defended by a mentor – particularly when the support flies in the face of larger departmental or organizational structures – this distinction is a powerful one.

The model of the transformational leader would likely be better suited for a university administrator, whose priority is the university corporation as a whole. The model of the servant leader, by contrast, is likely a better fit for individual faculty mentors, whose mentorship priority is the individual student or research lab. Whether faculty mentors and their protégés experience the mentorship as servant leadership remains to be seen; questions about components of servant leadership are a key aspect of the interview portion of this dissertation (see Appendix C).

**4.2 Feminist: Mentor as Scaffold.** Through feminist psychologist Lyn Mikel Brown’s work on intergenerational mentoring relationships among women and girls, we have the language of mentor as scaffold. In her book *Powered by Girl*, Brown (2016) highlights the importance of girl-driven feminist activism and issues a call to feminist mentors to provide scaffolding for young girls as they build up their ideas and influence.
Scaffolding is a fairly common notion within the K-12 education literature. Mentors scaffold younger teachers as they engage with new technologies (Slotta, 2004), promote self-regulated learning (Perry, Hutchinson, & Thauberge, 2008), and work to increase collaboration among training cohorts (Bonk, Malikowski, Angeli, & Supplee, 1998). Teachers have also functioned as mentor scaffolds for younger learners as they learn to use mobile devices (Chen, Chang, & Wang, 2008) and engage with new math concepts (Renninger, Ray, Luft, & Newton, 2005). Scaffolding represents both a synonym for “support” in mentoring, but it also enables me to consider, as Brown (2016) does, a poetic image of mentor as one who provides pivotal structural support when needed, and then leaves when the protégé is structurally sound enough to carry out her work without the extra leverage that the mentor provides. I am interested in exploring whether this metaphor resonates with undergraduate faculty mentors and protégés (see Appendix C).

Both the imagery of mentor as servant leader and mentor as scaffold generate powerful potential representations for the role that faculty mentors might serve for their students, especially given considerations of mentoring in the context of empowering underprivileged students (e.g., students from lower SES backgrounds, students who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups). After all, servant leaders desire to have substantive positive impact on the least privileged members of their organizations – and society more broadly – and educators in a scaffolding position also aim to enable those students who might otherwise never locate themselves meaningfully within academic and professional circles.
Chapter 5: Methodology

Before elucidating the proposed methods of this dissertation, I will briefly distinguish between methodology and method. My purpose here is primarily to clarify what I see as an important distinction between theoretical (i.e., methodology) and applied (i.e., methods). Methodology informs decisions at the level of methods (Clough & Nutbrown, 2012). Put another way, methodology is embedded in and determines research design throughout a project, whereas methods are specific tools that researchers use to attempt to pursue research questions. This particular project operates within a qualitative methodology, which stems from its guiding research question: what is the phenomenon of mentoring? Now, because this is the section of the proposal dedicated to method, I will focus on the specific methods I plan to use, as well as the rationale for selecting them. Throughout this section, however, it is important to bear in mind that the overarching methodology for this project is an exploratory, qualitative one. I will next explore mixed methods approaches to research before explicating the specific methods of the present dissertation.

5.1 Approaches to Research. Within the social and behavioral sciences, there has long been a dispute between quantitative and qualitative approaches to research (Tashakkaori & Teddlie, 1998). Researchers have argued fervently on both sides of the debate, attempting to prove that social science should be solely relegated to, or best explored by, one method or the other. On the quantitative side, researchers have argued that reality is objective, and outside the researcher and research situation: ontologically speaking, there is a “truth” to be discovered (Creswell & Clark, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Tashakkaori & Teddlie, 1998). On the qualitative side, researchers fear that to quantify
human experience is to erase essential aspects of the phenomena at hand, and reality is a construct generated by the players in the research situation (Patton, 1990; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Van Manen, 2016). As Howe (1988) seminally argued, these so-called paradigm wars represent both sides, whether implicitly or explicitly aware, buying into what he termed the *incompatibility thesis*, or the notion that qualitative and quantitative epistemologies and their associated methods should not – *cannot* – be utilized together. Worth noting, however, is that this mentality, or reticence to combine methods, is softening as researchers begin to welcome new and creative approaches to mixing research approaches (Benz & Newman, 2008; Feilzer, 2009).

### 5.2 Using Mixed Methods.

The first explicitly mixed-methods research study in psychology was likely Campbell and Fiske’s (1959) study of the validity of psychological traits. In an attempt to triangulate for stronger validity measures, the authors proposed a “multimethod matrix,” which encouraged and examined the use of multiple – or mixed – data collection methods in a study. Their study is also said to be the most cited article in the history of *Psychological Bulletin*; obviously, there is keen interest in mixing methods among the psychological and psychometric communities! Over the following two decades, triangulation as an official method of attempting to correct for weaknesses across differing methods was born (Jick, 1979). Later, researchers began to consider that there might be other beneficial reasons to triangulate methods, including the possibility that one divergent method might actually inform or shape another (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989).

This is of course not to say that mixed-methods approaches are always the appropriate answer, or a magical salve for methodological woes. As Creswell (2007) has
noted, there are several types of research questions for which mixed-methods approaches are an ideal fit. Two of his proposed research question types are a fit for the present study. First, he notes that mixed methods research is a fit when the research question centers on a need to “generalize exploratory findings” (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 9). In this dissertation, I hope to not only further explore the phenomenon of mentoring, but to also extend those findings to potentially impact and inform future mentoring programs. Second, he suggests that mixed-methods research is ideal when there is a need to more fully “understand a research objective through multiple research phases” (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 11). Again, this is a fit for my study because I hope to explore the construct of mentoring via a thorough phenomenological, qualitative analysis alongside and informed by a quantitative survey of mentor and mentee perceptions of emotional intelligence and servant leadership. Then, I plan to utilize findings from these data to inform the development of formal recommendations. It is important to note, however, that as a qualitative researcher, I do focus more substantively on the interview as the central mode of data collection in this dissertation.

An additional reason for my choice of both qualitative interview and quantitative survey methods is that I am interested in how I might be able to think about the phenomenon of mentoring in the context of existing, empirically-derived constructs: namely, emotional intelligence and leadership. As I will discuss below, emotional intelligence is already linked in some ways to mentoring, and I am interested in which aspects of emotional intelligence seem more important for a sample of mentors and mentees. The link between servant leadership and impactful mentoring is largely my speculation, though researchers have demonstrated that servant leaders are invested in
their followers (Conger, 2000) and interpersonally aware (George, 2000), much in the way that a good mentor would be invested in and attuned to her mentees (Cho, Ramanan, & Feldman, 2011).

Although neither of these constructs has been explicitly linked to mentoring relationships between faculty and undergraduate students, there is enough conceptual overlap between the qualities that make someone emotionally intelligent and a servant leader (e.g., see Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000; Van Dierendonck, 2011), and the qualities that make for a high quality mentor, to warrant including this survey as a method of data collection in its own right. For example, empathy is considered a core component of both emotional intelligence and servant leadership (George, 2000; Mayer & Geher, 1996), and empathy has also been implicated as a key factor in quality mentoring (Allen, 2003). Employing these survey measures alongside interviews enables me to pull from survey data in the interview and to analyze interview data and survey data concurrently, such that my interpretation of themes and survey data is informed by both types of data. I also hope to explore interesting methodological questions that stem from my mixed-methods, yet primarily qualitative, approach to the question of mentoring. Could it be potentially fruitful for qualitative researchers to incorporate quantitative survey instruments in a predominantly qualitative project? How could survey data meaningfully inform the researcher’s approach to and content of a relational, semi-structured interview? How might a survey inform thematic analysis, and the organization of data into themes?

Lastly, I plan to develop guidelines, or recommendations for researchers hoping to develop a formalized program of feminist-informed mentorship focused on the
undergraduate population. To conclude this dissertation at the level of themes seems
incomplete, given the attention I have drawn to both (a) definitional and construct
confusion surrounding mentoring and (b) the serious dearth of formalized mentoring
programs, particularly those informed by feminist pedagogy and thought, at the
undergraduate level. In fact, the only existing phenomenology of mentoring (Roberts,
2000) garnered substantive critique (e.g., Crisp & Cruz, 2009) both for falling short of a
thorough and useful phenomenology, as well as providing little by way of practical
application. Thus, I envision the development of formal recommendations to address the
gap I mentioned above, as well as to provide a more practically applicable research
outcome.

5.3 Convergent Parallel Design. Here, I propose that the data collection stage of my
project fits the model of a convergent parallel design, which means that the qualitative
data collection comes alongside the quantitative data collection – thus, the project is
parallel in nature (Creswell & Clark, 2007). The convergent nature of this research
phase stems from my desire to bring these two separate sources of data – qualitative
phenomenology and quantitative assessment – into dialogue to inform recommendations
for a formalized program of undergraduate mentorship. As I have highlighted above, this
project is primarily qualitative, both in methodology and method. In addition to the
central mode of inquiry – a qualitative phenomenology of mentoring – I administer a
quantitative survey of servant leadership and emotional intelligence in an attempt to
better understand the nuances of what might best enable productive and satisfying mentor
and mentee relationships. I conceptualize this survey through the lens of the job selection
and leadership literatures, which have already provided thorough investigation of key
individual differences measures that are most effective in pairing individuals with ideal job fit. In some ways, we can think of being an effective mentor or mentee as a job in and of itself, and like all other jobs, one that some seem to excel at more than others! As described previously in this dissertation, I also see striking theoretical and practical parallels between servant leadership – and the emotional intelligence required to be a strong leader – and the phenomenon of high quality and impactful mentorship.

Now, from a human science perspective, we can safely posit that even a phenomenologically-derived mentoring program could not and should not be considered “one size fits all.” A survey measure of these phenomena may enable me to more impactfully anticipate areas of development for potential mentors and mentees to be most successful in a reciprocal mentoring relationship, and it would also enable the beginnings of dialogue between the qualitative, thematic data and standardized constructs (e.g., servant leadership). For example, are there leadership characteristics that impactful mentors are more likely to display? Are particularly emotionally intelligent mentees more likely to be successful in a mentoring relationship? Later in this dissertation, I utilize data collected through a quantitative measure of emotionality and leadership to inform my interpretation and understanding of the themes that emerge through thematic analysis of interview data. At the level of interpretation, this might look like an item-level analysis of which items a given participant endorsed as “strongly agree” alongside an examination of their thematic data. Given the project’s qualitative focus, however, the thematic data should be considered the central findings; as such, I present thematic data first, followed by an integration of survey data (see Chapter 8).
5.4 Instruments

**Semi-structured interview.** My semi-structured interview questions were both open-ended and focused. I presented the questions with open-ended language to better understand the phenomenon of mentoring without narrowing the participants’ responses. Conversely, I framed the questions in a focused way in an attempt to understand mentoring through specific stories and narratives. For mentors, I asked the following questions, which are also available in Appendix C.

1) Did you have a mentor when you were an undergraduate?
   a. Please tell me more about that relationship.

2) How long have you identified as a mentor?

3) Tell me about a mentee you have worked with recently.

4) Tell me about a time when you felt particularly impactful as a mentor.

5) Tell me about a time when you struggled as a mentor.

6) Why do you mentor students?

7) What is mentoring? (As in, what makes a mentoring relationship a mentoring relationship?)
   a. What aspects of a mentoring relationship do you think are particularly important?
   b. Are there any essential components of mentoring?

8) How does mentoring work?
   a. What do you think makes mentoring effective? What do you think makes it ineffective?

9) Why are you involved in (or why have you been involved in) mentoring?
10) What is your primary goal as a mentor?

11) How do you see yourself in relation to your protégés?
   a. Do you consider yourself to be a scaffold, of sorts, for your protégés?
   b. How do you see leadership fitting into your concept of yourself as a mentor? Do you feel like a leader?

12) Do you identify as a feminist?
   a. Do you “see” your feminism in your mentoring? If so, what does this look like in practice?

For mentees, I asked the following questions, which are also available in Appendix C.

1) Tell me about your mentor.
   a. How did you meet him/her?

2) How do you tend to feel after meeting with your mentor?

3) Tell me about a time when your mentor was particularly impactful.

4) Tell me about a time when you felt understood by your mentor.

5) Tell me about a time when your mentor (current or previous) seemed to “miss the boat” or not understand what you needed from him/her?

6) What is mentoring? (As in, what makes a mentoring relationship a mentoring relationship?)
   a. What aspects of a mentoring relationship do you think are particularly important?
   b. Are there any essential components of mentoring?

7) How does mentoring work?
   a. What do you think makes mentoring effective?
b. Do you think you could obtain the same benefits that you have achieved from being mentored through another means? (e.g., perhaps a peer relationship)

8) Why are you involved in mentoring?

9) What is your primary goal as a protégé?
   a. What are you most hoping to attain from a mentoring relationship?
   c. What types of things do you tend to discuss or work on with your mentor?

10) Do you identify as a feminist?

11) Do you think your mentor is feminist? Tell me more about why you think that.

12) Do you “see” your feminism in your mentoring relationship? If so, what does this look like in practice?

I developed these questions in collaboration with my dissertation advisor, using Josselson’s (2013) approach to relational interviewing as a guide.

Survey. I have oriented the proposed survey to place specific focus on dimensions of leadership and emotionality that intuitively resonate with the ideas of non-hierarchy and reciprocality that seem essential to a feminist orientation to mentoring, while still making use of well-validated and widely-accepted measures across the job selection, satisfaction, and leadership literatures. Thus, the survey is based on Schutte et al.’s (1998) widely-utilized measure of emotional intelligence and Liden, Wayne, Zhao, and Henderson’s (2008) multidimensional assessment of servant leadership. I will briefly discuss the psychometric properties of these scales before transitioning to reflexive process.
**Assessing Emotions Scale** (AES; Schutte et al., 1998). This is a 33-item scale that assesses self-perception of emotional intelligence. Schutte and colleagues based this self-report measure on Salovey and Mayer’s (1990) original model for emotional intelligence. This scale was originally developed to enhance theoretical understanding of the nature of the emotional intelligence construct, as well as determinants and effects of emotional intelligence (Schutte et al., 1998). The AES has been used in a variety of contexts, including research into public service motivation (Levitats & Vigoda-Gadot, 2017), habitual smart phone use (Van Deursen, Bolle, Hegner, & Kommers, 2015) and well-being (Bullar, Schutte, & Malouff, 2013). Endorsement of items is assessed using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* and 5 = *Strongly agree*). A participant’s total score is derived by summing the 33 item responses; a higher total score indicates greater self-reported emotional intelligence. A sample item includes: “Other people find it easy to confide in me.” Schutte et al. (1998) cite an internal reliability Chronbach’s alpha of 0.87 and a test-retest reliability of 0.78. The authors permit free use of the scale for research and clinical purposes.

**Servant Leadership Scale** (SL-28; Liden et al., 2008). This is a 28-item scale that assesses employee perceptions of their manager’s servant leadership qualities. This scale was originally developed to assess servant leadership as a multidimensional construct in an organizational setting. It has been used widely across organizational and management literatures, including research into job performance (Liden, Wayne, Liao, & Meuser, 2015), extra-role behaviors (Panaccio, Henderson, Liden, Wayne, & Cao, 2015) and trust in leader (Chan & Mak, 2014). Endorsement of items is assessed using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* and 7 = *Strongly agree*). A participant’s total score is
derived by summing the 28 item responses; a higher total score indicates greater servant leadership. A sample item includes: “My manager puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.” Liden et al. (2008) cite internal consistency between 0.76 and 0.86 across samples. The authors permit free use of the scale for research purposes.

The items in the servant leadership scale have been altered to reflect the language of mentoring; for example, “leader” is changed to “mentor.” Though the original scale invites employees to assess servant leadership traits of their leaders, I have altered directionality of language so that the scale is also appropriate for the mentor survey. For example, an item in the original version of the scale reads, “My manager has a thorough understanding of our organization and its goals.” In the mentee survey, this item reads, “My mentor has a thorough understanding of our organization and its goals.” In the mentor survey, this item reads, “I have a thorough understanding of my organization and its goals.” Please see the survey in Appendix A.

5.5 Reflexive Process

Alongside development of the interview guide, data collection, and analysis, I maintained a separate log of my feelings, thoughts, and dissonances as they related to and arose from the research process. According to Mauthner and Doucet (2003), reflexivity is a key component of the qualitative research process, particularly when one is situated as a member of the group under investigation. Throughout this project, I have been particularly sensitive to my existing role as both a protégé and a mentor – and am specifically aware of the professional and emotional investment I have in my mentoring efforts. My own mentees mean a great deal to me, as evidenced by the significant sacrifices of time and energy that I put into mentoring. I made an intentional decision not
to discontinue or pause those relationships while working on this dissertation, which opened space for particularly interesting intellectual or emotional conflicts to arise as I collected and analyzed qualitative data while actively mentoring students. I discuss my experiences with this reflexive process in Chapter 10.
Chapter 6: Data Collection and Participants

6.1 Participant Selection, Recruitment, and Demographic Information

After obtaining IRB approval, I conducted hour-long interviews with 9 participants, 4 of whom self-identified as mentors and 5 of whom self-identified as protégés. One of the protégés withdrew from the study towards the end of her interview; thus, only 8 participants appear in this dissertation. Mentors and protégés did not currently need to be in a mentoring relationship to participate, though the recruitment flyer (Appendix B) emphasized that a familiarity with mentoring was essential for participation. Thus, to participate in this study, participants needed to identify as a mentor or a protégé, and to have been engaged in a mentoring relationship within the past 5 years. Protégés needed to be within 5 years of having completed their undergraduate degree. I recruited participants by posting my recruitment flyer in area coffee shops, sharing it on my social media accounts, distributing it via email to local university departments, and asking friends and family to share it with people who might meet the participation requirements. Given this dissertation’s focus on undergraduate mentorship, I had hoped to obtain protégé participants who were current undergraduate students, but I did not have any currently enrolled undergraduates volunteer to participate. All four protégés in this study focused on their experiences with mentorship when they were undergraduates.

Once a participant emailed to volunteer, I clarified that they met participation requirements and shared the consent form via email for their review. I also asked the participant to select a preferred location for the interview. Although I hoped for interviews to take place in person, given the potentially greater likelihood of developing a
stronger alliance, I did not share this desire with participants. I instead emphasized that they select a location most comfortable to them; for three participants in other states, the only feasible option was either video chat or telephone. All of those participants chose to use Skype software for the interview. Upon identifying several participants, I scheduled interviews to be conducted in December 2017 and January 2018.

Nine participants were interviewed, though only 8 appear in this study because one protégé later withdrew. All participants identify as women (I discuss this interesting phenomenon further in Chapter 10) and represent a variety of disciplines, though half are associated with the field of psychology. Four participants are Caucasian, one is African American, one is half-Native American, one is half-Hispanic, and one is Filipino. The following table provides an introduction to their demographics and background information.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Demographics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Mara”</td>
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<td>“Charis”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Tahlia”</td>
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<td>“Keely”</td>
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<td>“Beatrix”</td>
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<td>“Eloise”</td>
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2 All potentially identifying information has been changed throughout this dissertation. Participants are referred to by pseudonyms.

3 Although Charis, Tahlia, Beatrix, Joan, and Alice have been mentors and mentees at different points in their training, Charis and Tahlia were in the mentee role during the interview, and Beatrix, Joan, and Alice were in the mentor role.
6.2 Data Collection

I distributed the consent form (Appendix D) to participants via email, and I obtained a signed and scanned copy before distributing the link to the survey. Most participants completed the quantitative survey prior to the interview, which allowed me to time to scan their results; for some participants, having read through their item-level scores in advance encouraged me to pursue related topics more in depth during the interview. For example, with Mara, a Sales Associate and recent graduate student, I knew that she had endorsed the items related to appraisal of emotions from the AES as “strongly agree.” When she began discussing the contrast in emotionality between her undergraduate and graduate mentors, I chose to follow this line of thinking with more focused questions than I might have otherwise. During the interview, I was able to get a better understanding of these interactions through the constructs of emotional intelligence and empathy, which her graduate mentor lacked. It is possible that I could have arrived at the same point in her interview without having administered the scale, but, as I noted in my reflexivity journal, I likely would not have pursued further probing on the issue of empathy in her mentoring relationships because she initially glossed over the contrast between her two mentors’ styles.

I carefully reviewed the consent form at the beginning of the interview to ensure that the participant felt comfortable and did not have lingering questions or concerns. I also emphasized that the participant had the right to decline questions that she did not
wish to answer, and that she could withdraw from the study at any time. None of my participants had follow-up questions regarding the consent form. Five of the interviews occurred in person. Of those, I conducted one in a music department classroom (Beatrix), one in a university meeting room (Alice), one in a coffee shop (Tahlia), one in a hotel lobby (Keely), and one in my home (Charis). The remaining three interviews (Mara, Eloise, Joan) were conducted via Skype. All interview locations were selected by the participant. All interviews were audio-recorded for transcription.

Although I allowed space to follow interesting threads during the interview, as warranted by the lived experience of each participant, I attempted to adhere as closely to my interview questions (Appendix C) as possible. My attempt to stick to the questions was largely motivated out of a desire to make my eventual thematic analysis more coherent rather than a desire to maintain control or dictate the progression of the interviews; in each interview, I attempted to maintain a non-hierarchical stance (Oakley, 1981) as co-explorer rather than expert data collector. Prior to reviewing the consent form, I exchanged pleasantries with each participant in an effort to build genuine rapport before getting into the interview (this is in contrast to the transactional rapport described by Oakley, 1981). This rapport-building was decidedly easier in person, both for the interviews that took place in public spaces, as well as the interview that took place in my home. I imagine that this is likely because the interviews in public spaces more closely mirrored a “meeting of friends,” as one of my participants noted, and the interview in my home was in a space I felt particularly comfortable. Due to more extended rapport-building, the in-person interviews took longer than the Skype interviews; I noticed that both the participant and I were friendlier and felt more flexible to share extra stories or
jokes while meeting in person. I also had my baby, Elodie, present during the in-person interviews, which may have also contributed to helping my participants (and me!) feel more at ease.

6.3 Introduction to Participants

Although I presented a snapshot of my participants’ demographics and background information in Table 1, I will introduce them more fully here. I think that a more nuanced picture of each participant may help to better illuminate and contextualize the themes to follow in Chapter 8, and it may also help in avoiding the socio-masculine construction of my participants as unidimensional information providers (Oakley, 1981). I want to honor my unique participants by presenting them in a more holistic way. I also attempt to acknowledge, in a very brief way, my experience of being with each participant. I will present all protégés first, followed by mentors.

Protégés

Mara

An African-American feminist activist who works as a Sales and Marketing Associate for a Fortune 100 consumer products company, Mara’s original academic training was in psychology and English. She completed her dual undergraduate degree at a selective liberal arts college for women before pursuing a PhD in an interdisciplinary social sciences department at an R1 university. She left her program upon completing her masters degree; at this time she also pursued her “somewhat drastic” career change to Sales and Marketing.

I interviewed Mara, who lived in the Midwest at the time of the interview, via Skype. She was the first participant who contacted me and she was enthusiastic to be
interviewed. We had some difficulty with our Skype connection at first, yet the rest of interview progressed smoothly. Her large-rimmed glasses and bangs reminded me of a spunky cartoon character; I immediately noticed a poster of the television feminist Leslie Knope on the wall of her home office. We attended the same undergraduate college, but not at the same time. Still, I felt a resonance as she described her experiences, particularly as a student at a women’s college. She contextualized her understanding of mentoring, particularly at the undergraduate level, as having been a student at a women’s college that was openly focused on student empowerment and development of both personal and professional narrative. Her intensely strong feminist identity, rooted in empowerment and growth, was likewise, not surprising.

Mara had enjoyed an emotionally close and academically productive mentoring relationship with her primary undergraduate mentor. This relationship served as a comparison to her relationship with her graduate advisor, whom she called a mentor at the beginning of the interview but later switched to calling an advisor to “more accurately describe the relationship.” Mara’s experience with mentoring was especially moving because of this comparison: she had been so inspired by her undergraduate mentor that she pushed herself to pursue a graduate degree, yet her relationship with her graduate advisor felt so exploitative and cold that she eventually decided to quit her doctoral program upon completing the master’s degree. Mara has now left her field entirely and is pursuing work in Sales and Marketing. Support and empowerment were prominent themes in her interview, and they served to contextualize her understanding of mentoring across these two disparate experiences.
Charis

An eloquent and warm woman, Charis is a PhD candidate in her late 20s whose dual-degree undergraduate training was in the social sciences and humanities. She attended a small liberal arts college in the Southeastern United States, where she enjoyed several close mentoring relationships with faculty. Her primary undergraduate mentor was a male staff member with a graduate degree who worked in Career Services. A thread that ran throughout her interview was the contrast between having received such enthusiastic and supportive mentorship during her undergraduate training, versus the more aloof training she is currently receiving in her graduate studies.

I interviewed Charis in person. She knew I had recently had a baby, and she offered to come to my home for the interview to “keep things easier.” I appreciated her offer and we completed the interview in my living room, next to a large picture window. She arrived for the interview in a comfortable, stretchy dress. She made herself immediately at home, curling up in my large recliner. A petite woman with glasses and a ready smile, Charis put me at ease during the interview with her encouraging responses and supportive presence.

We enjoyed a friendly rapport and were joking and laughing together throughout her interview. I think this was aided by our shared liberal arts backgrounds and passion for mentorship, which enabled us to bond on a personal and professional level quickly. We are also both from the rural American South, which brings with that history its own share of common language, experiences, and perceptions of university education and the importance of faculty investment to see students through to the end of their degree. A first-generation student herself, Charis was especially attuned to the importance, in her
own development, of having a mentor who was both emotionally and professionally invested in her development and success. The importance of the mentoring relationship – particularly the closeness that comes with a mentor really knowing and “getting” a mentee – was also a key theme throughout her interview. I was particularly struck when Charis pulled out her phone to share a series of recent texts she had exchanged with her undergraduate mentor, with whom she had not shared an in-person mentoring relationship in several years! In the text conversation, he enthusiastically offered to read her dissertation proposal and offered her emotional support in the face of difficult committee feedback. I was impressed at the impact he still seems to have in her life, as well as the strength and support she drew from him.

**Tahlia**

Employed as a Finance Associate at a large national bank, Tahlia was also pursuing her MBA at the time of our interview. She is half-Hispanic and attended an Ivy League university during her undergraduate. She majored in Economics, and she identified two primary mentors: an older peer who attended the same undergraduate university and a faculty member who supervised her senior thesis project. Tahlia was recently featured in a “women in business” segment of a local newspaper, and I knew from the article that she was a participant in – and advocate of – a formal mentoring program at her company.

We met in a coffee shop on a blustery winter day, with somewhat treacherous, icy conditions on the roads and sidewalks. I was prepared for her to cancel given the conditions, but she arrived a few minutes before me. I was relieved because her early arrival allowed her to select where she would prefer to sit: an oversized chair in a
comfortable reading nook. I joined her on the adjacent plush sofa. She wore a cozy yet streamlined sweater dress and slacks. Her hair, straight and shoulder length, seemed to match her outfit in its balance of professional yet comfortable, easy. She expressed twice during her interview that she wanted this to be helpful for me and my research.

Tahlia’s peer mentoring relationship was in the context of a Christian student organization, and themes of investment, emotional connection, and careful listening were an important aspect of her approach to peer mentorship. Her Christian identity also grounded her understanding of women’s innate worthiness, giving context to her “no” on the question of feminist identity. An academically and professionally successful woman, Tahlia did not identify her gender as having held her back in life, and thus did not associate herself with the feminist movement. In terms of her faculty mentor, Tahlia had taken a decidedly professional approach to her role as mentee. She was “always conscious of his time” and she was careful to cancel meeting with him unless she had a “packed agenda” of items to discuss. I found this to be especially conscientious for an undergraduate student and felt struck by the role that professionalism played for her in the context of this relationship. She emphasized that he was a “famous scholar” in his field; his professional standing seemed to give extra weight to the stature of the mentoring for her.

**Keely**

Keely is a doctoral student in the social sciences; at the time of the interview, she was halfway through her program and had already completed her master’s degree. I interviewed her in a hotel that we were both, coincidentally, staying in for an academic conference. She completed her undergraduate studies at a mid-size university in her
hometown, where she majored in the social sciences. It was towards the end of her undergraduate training that she took a series of courses with the professor who would become her central mentor; initially she took a course with him because it was required, yet she added on four more over the coming semesters because she enjoyed his critically-engaged teaching style.

We shared a couch, with each of us sitting cross-legged across from each other, leaning into the back cushions. She wore red lipstick and had her brunette hair down around her face in a chic cut. Her striped blouse and white classic Keds reminded me of something a woman in a magazine would wear; she felt Parisian and refined. In her late 20s, Keely came across as self-assured and grounded as we started the interview. She spoke clearly, yet was also unafraid to think out loud and allow me into her internal process as she thought through my questions.

She struggled academically as an undergraduate, and largely credits her faculty mentor, a tenured professor in her department, with “helping [her] see [her] value as a student.” As Keely shared her experiences as an undergraduate who did not fully believe in her own academic abilities, I felt myself moving into a mentor role emotionally. I desired to reassure her, to go back in time to encourage her former, less confident self. I also imagined that it was fulfilling for her mentor to work with a student who had so much potential yet, at the time, was not seeing it for herself. Keely highlighted an especially prominent moment in her relationship with her mentor: a trip to her first academic conference, where she presented a paper she had written with his close guidance and feedback. At the start of the conference, he invited her and a few of his other mentees to share a drink in the hotel lounge. This experience marked a moment of
transition for her. Before, she was a mere student, unsure of her future or her academic ability; after, she was a young professional thinker who had shared a drink with her academic mentor in a conference hotel. The experience of going to her first conference was an anchoring moment for her as she described the thematic content most prominent in her experiences of mentoring: a focus on mentee professional development and the importance of the mentor providing both structural and emotional support.

Mentors

Beatrix

A Filipino immigrant to the United States, Beatrix was employed as an instructor of music at a large state university in the Southeastern United States at the time of the interview. Her position is non-tenure track but stable, and she has been in her department for nearly 15 years. She works in a support role as an accompanist for all music performance majors, and she mentors students in activities related to practice and performance. I was excited to have a faculty member who is primarily responsible for instruction rather than research offer to participate because I was curious about the role faculty-undergraduate mentorship might play outside of research-oriented college departments. As a classically trained musician myself, I felt a special connection to Beatrix; it was enjoyable to speak in a “language” that I no longer get to use often.

I interviewed her in a large choral classroom of the music department at her university. She was early and had brought her own tape recorder. She expressed excitement over “being interviewed for the first time” and asked if it was okay for her to record us. She wore her straight, black hair in a tight, no-nonsense bun at the back of her head, and her dark eyes belied a sense of focus and dedication, yet a playfulness too. She
was dressed all in black, in a flowy top and slacks, and I noticed during the interview that her clothing enabled her to have a free and full range of motion: she leaned forward, curled up her legs in her seat, dramatically waved her arms as she spoke. I imagine this style is as engaging and fun for her mentees as it was for me.

A key theme in her interview was a focus on the professional development of the mentee. This was unsurprising to me, given the intense determination it took for her to reach her own professional success and the clear role her own mentor, a piano teacher, played for her. As a child, Beatrix did not own a piano in her home. For many children, this would mean no piano lessons. For Beatrix, this meant she practiced on a table and then played on real piano (her mentor’s) during piano lessons. This was, for me, an especially evocative and moving aspect of Beatrix’s narrative. During the interview and analysis, I felt repeated waves of awe at the thought of a young child who was so dedicated to her craft and so uplifted by her mentor that she pursued an art form often thought to be reserved for the solidly middle class – despite not having a key tool required for the trade. And then, I imagined Beatrix excitedly coming to her mentor to show what she had practiced and having the opportunity to experience the fruits of her hard work and her mentor’s encouragement as she played the notes on a piano for the first time. The focus and determination that Beatrix’s mentor inspired in her has clearly carried through to Beatrix’s own mentoring style. When recounting students who feel discouraged and doubt their ability, Beatrix said, “I’m gonna push them, I’m gonna keep pushing. There’s no, there’s no, the word “no” does not exist.”

Eloise

An associate professor who has taught at a liberal arts college in the Southeastern
United States for nearly 14 years, Eloise was in her early 40s at the time of the interview. Though she did not identify a mentor of her own when she was a college student, Eloise has engaged in mentoring activities from the time she became a university professor. Interestingly, she did not use the word *mentor* to label her activities until around the time she earned tenure.

She was friendly to communicate with prior to the interview, and I noticed her effusive, engaging style from the moment the interview began. She felt like someone I would want to befriend. I interviewed her via Skype, and she looked comfortable and cozy in a sweater with her long brunette hair framing her face. She appeared to wear no make-up or jewelry and there was a natural earthiness to her that jived with her “no pretenses” style of mentoring students. She gave long rambling answers to my questions, often stopping and restarting as a new thought or idea occurred to her. At the close of her interview, she remarked that our conversation had given her “much to consider” in regards to her mentoring work, and I agreed – her interview had given me much food for thought in my own work as well.

Eloise described feminist content throughout the interview, and I was not surprised when she responded emphatically to my question, “do you identify as feminist?” Feminism, she explained, is “critical to [her] identity as a teacher and scholar and person.” Feminist subthemes of collaboration and empowerment ran throughout her interview, specifically in the various stories she shared about mentees. She does not dictate or overprescribe what students should or should not do, a perspective that she connects to her feminist identity, and she does not mentor students who “just want to be told what to do.” I was aware throughout her interview, as well as during the analysis
stage, that Eloise is someone I would love to have as a colleague: grounded, earthy, flexible, and committed to challenging and encouraging growth.

**Alice**

At the time of the interview, Alice was employed as the director of a training organization housed within a mid-size university in the Northeastern United States. I interviewed her in person, in a bright, airy room situated in her department. She offered me coffee upon my arrival, and her presence simultaneously conveyed professionalism and warmth.

I had to bring my 6-month-old baby to her interview, and we laid out a blanket for Elodie to play on the floor while we talked. Throughout the interview, Alice turned to Elodie to remark on her beautiful smile, her thoughtful eyes, or her tendency to babble for long stretches. While transcribing her interview, I could feel the warmth conveyed in her tone as she talked, both to the baby and to me. I experienced her in a maternal way, and also noticed her taking on a caring attitude toward me and my project, moving into the role of mentor quite seamlessly. Her blue eyes seemed to smile as she asked about my research process and where I hope to pursue a job after my degree is done. She wore a flowy, comfortable outfit and statement jewelry that looked handmade. I imagined after the interview that these (perhaps) handmade pieces spoke to her commitment to human connection and fellowship, care and support.

For Alice, her Christian identity has played a particularly important role, both in her mentoring and in her conceptualization of herself as feminist. She considers herself a mentor in a variety of capacities: to students, to other faculty, to women in her church. She also receives mentorship from other faculty, staff, and women in her church. Alice’s
approach to mentoring values silence, physical togetherness, and care. She regularly prays for her mentees, a practice that I found profoundly moving. In her peer mentoring relationships, with women at her church, she utilizes retreat as a mode for deepening the mentoring relationship. She has gone on numerous silent retreats with both mentors and mentees. She gestured towards her phone often while describing various women she has mentored, as though she was ready to call and pick up a conversation.

**Joan**

I interviewed Joan via Skype because of distance. She expressed repeatedly how much she wished we could talk in person because it would “feel more like a meeting of friends” as opposed to research. At the time of our interview, she had recently earned the rank of Full Professor at her institution, a selective liberal arts college. As someone with racial minority and first-generation identities, her accomplishment felt particularly meaningful – and impressive – to me.

On the morning of our interview, she emailed me 15 minutes prior to our agreed upon time to share that she was excited to participate. I felt relieved to see her email; I was exhausted from the interview process – she was my ninth and final interview. Her enthusiasm reminded me that I, too, am excited about my project and should be feeling excited to talk with her. Like my own quality mentors, she helped me to re-center my energy. Throughout her interview, she offered tidbits of advice, encouraged me in my research, and asked what I would be doing following the completion of my degree. I could not help but notice how easily she fell into the mentor role, and how ready I felt to accept her wisdom and encouragement! A tanned woman with shiny, long hair, Joan’s expressive eyes sparkled, jumping out to me as soon as her face appeared on my
computer screen. During the interview, she had a hearty, full body laugh and a knack for answering questions in a rich, narrative form.

As a first-generation college graduate, she expressed both gratitude for her own mentors as well as an obligation to “pay it forward” to her students. As she noted in our interview, “to be believed in and invested in, it is a great gift.” This theme ran throughout her interview, as she recounted the amount of time and energy she had put into mentoring over the past several years. When I asked her to tell me about a mentee, she immediately shared details about several students who came to mind, and it was clear to me that this took little effort because she had worked with so many. She had difficulty limiting herself to just one mentee, and she sounded like a proud parent as she recounted her various mentees’ successes and aspirations. For Joan, mentoring is about “facilitating growth,” and she attends to her mentees’ emotional, intellectual, and professional selves.

6.4 Summary Thoughts

In this section, I have presented a snapshot of each participant and her interview: her interpersonal style, what she wore, where we met. It is worth remembering that these brief introductions are, of course, presented from my perspective. I have highlighted how each participant made me feel, either in the role of researcher or in a different role (e.g., Joan made me feel like a mentee; Charis made me feel like a friend). I hope that, by preceding the data analysis with a profile of each participant, the reader is invited to remember that these data come from somewhere, and that the data presented later in this dissertation are of and from the participants whose profiles I just shared. In addition, the reader should remember that these data were collected via interactions between each participant and me – each interaction, although semi-structured in some ways, was still a
unique and fluid meeting. In the next section, I present my rationale and process for data analysis before exploring thematic and survey data.
Chapter 7: Thematic Analysis

7.1 Introduction

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. I analyzed interviews following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) recommendations regarding proper thematic analysis in psychological research. Thematic analysis (TA) is a method for identifying and reporting emergent themes within a data set. A widely used method within qualitative research, TA was not rigorously conceptualized or presented until Braun and Clarke’s (2006) article, which has been largely embraced as a methodological guide for approaching TA, particularly within psychological research. In their paper, the authors made clear the importance of “clarity on process and practice of method” (p. 80). Though thematic analysis has been framed as a realist method (Roulston, 2001), Braun and Clarke (2014) have argued that it can actually be broadly applied across essentialist, contextualist, and constructionist paradigms.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p. 82). When determining whether there is a pattern in the data, we must examine prevalence of the theme, both within individual items and across the full data set. While this could be prevalence in terms of numbers (e.g., a theme appears many times in the data set), it could also be in terms of simply whether or not it captures something important in relation to the broader research question. The value of a particular theme is not strictly quantifiable, and there is no right or wrong way to determine prevalence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is also important to emphasize the active role of the researcher in identifying so-called emerging themes; to
say that themes emerge is to imply that they are there whether or not the researcher identifies them (Taylor & Ussher, 2001). “If themes ‘reside’ anywhere, they reside in our heads from our thinking about our data and creating links as we understand them” (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Enzel, 1997, p. 205-6, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest a focus on either a “rich description of the data set” or a “detailed account of one particular aspect” (p. 83). The former is best if my goal as a researcher is to give the reader a broad picture of the main themes in the analysis, while the latter is best if my goal is to analyze a specific area of interest within the data set. Focusing on a rich description of the full data set is a better fit for this investigation because it is “a particularly useful method when you are investigating an under-researched area, or you are working with participants whose views on the topic are not known” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83).

I approached my analysis inductively, with a focus on themes as closely linked to the actual data (Patton, 1990). Though I have my own epistemological assumptions and theoretical understandings, I did my best to code the data without trying to fit it into my preconceptions about what should emerge. I am well aware that this may be particularly difficult, given my pre-existing mentoring relationships and passion for the subject; I relied on my engagement with my reflexivity journal to help me to work through my reactions to data collection and analysis. I will discuss reflexivity later in this dissertation. My interest during analysis was in the themes that were prevalent within the data, and not on fulfilling my own hopes for what the data and themes would or should look like. During analysis, I attempted simply to identify themes as they were explicit within the data so that I stayed as close to the participants’ reported words and
experiences as possible. I will next briefly elucidate the steps I took to engage with the data, following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) steps for rigorous thematic analysis.

7.2 Step-by-Step Process

**Phase I: Familiarize myself with the data.** The first phase of thematic analysis is familiarization with and immersion in the data. I carefully listened to each interview in full before conscientiously transcribing. I took time between transcriptions to meditate on the content of each interview, to think more deeply about sections of the interview that surprised me or challenged my assumptions, and to write in my reflexivity journal. Following transcription of all eight interviews, I slowly read through all of my data before beginning the coding process (Braun & Clarke, 2006); this allowed me to begin to identify patterns and prevalence prior to formally coding. During this phase, I created a list of initial ideas regarding interesting content in the data.

**Phase II: Generate initial codes.** Next, I moved into the second phase, which involved creating initial codes. The codes identify an aspect of the data that seems interesting or relevant, and it is important that they refer to the most basic segment of the raw data that can still be assessed and understood meaningfully (Boyatzis, 1998). With the epistemological goal of keeping this analysis data-driven, I oriented the codes around – and allowed them to be inspired by – what actually existed in the data as opposed to creating codes from previous research and theory. In the spirit of not knowing what could prove valuable in the next phases of analysis, I coded for as many themes as possible, and I took special note of segments that were different than the majority. As I envisioned this process serving the develop of guidelines for others interested in developing programs of feminist-informed undergraduate mentoring, I wanted to
carefully explore and include all accounts, even those that are diverse compared to the larger data set.

**Phase III: Search for themes.** The third phase is focused on finding themes from the list of codes. This stage was a higher-level analysis of the codes, which encouraged careful consideration of the relationships between both codes and themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) encourage making use of visual representations of the codes and themes to aid the researcher in forming these connections and experimenting with where the codes and themes fit best. I followed this suggestion by manually writing codes and themes onto flashcards, which I spread across a large table in my home (I ate dinner on the couch during this time!). I kept the flashcards out for several days, moving through a process of identifying relationships, sorting, taking a break from the data, and returning to see new relationships or solidify my previous understanding. The themes that emerged in this process were termed “candidate themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91).

**Phase IV: Review themes.** Following this period of sorting and recognizing relationships, I reviewed the candidate themes. Two main criteria needed to be met in this stage: data within themes needed to be similar enough to make sense together, while themes needed to be dissimilar enough to make sense as distinct themes. For example, the data coded as “mentee feeling understood” and the data coded as “the notion of ‘fit’” both fit best under the broader theme of “The Importance of the Relationship.” I then needed to compare the Relationship theme to my other candidate themes to ensure that it was distinct. At this point in the process, I condensed several codes that were overlapping.

I moved through this process of refining themes in two stages. First, I reviewed
the coded segments of data within each theme to make sure they cohered to a pattern. Second, I assessed whether the candidate themes made sense in relation to the full data set. I also took a step back to examine the relationships of the candidate themes to the data set as a whole, asking whether my thematic map actually represented what was in the data set. To ascertain this, I reread the entire qualitative data set – all 8 transcripts – while working with the candidate themes. This was both to determine whether my themes captured the content of the data and to recode any data that was missed in the earlier phases. Once I reached a point of theoretical saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006), in which no new themes or codes emerged, I continued into the next stage.

**Phase V: Define and name themes.** The fifth phase of analysis was centered on determining the essence both of each theme and of the themes overall (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To begin this process, I returned to the original data within each theme and formed a “coherent narrative” of what the data said and why it was interesting (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). To construct these narratives, I generated a detailed analysis of each theme, and I considered how these individual narratives fit into the broader narrative of the full data set. At this phase, it was also important to identify sub-themes within the main themes, which would be especially relevant in recognizing hierarchies within the data. This process also helped me to identify areas of overlap between themes. In this stage, I again made use of writing my themes and subthemes onto flashcards to visually represent hierarchies within and overlap across themes.

**Phase VI: Produce report.** In the case of this dissertation, the report’s main purpose will be to inform the development of the recommendations in Chapter 12. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the purpose of the report at the culmination of a thematic
analysis is to “tell the complicated story of your data in a way which convinces the reader of the merit and validity of your analysis” (p. 93). The final analysis has to be succinct and consistent, while also conveying meaningfully the story from the data, and I include interesting segments of the data throughout Chapter 8 to convey the themes more meaningfully, as well as to keep the presentation of themes grounded in the participants’ voices. Following my careful analysis described above, I extracted all thematic data and grouped it in a separate document by theme and participant. This was to enable me to get a better sense for prevalence of themes, which can be difficult when working with a large qualitative data set. I provide numerical data regarding prevalence at the beginning of Chapter 8, to give the reader a quick snapshot of one way to understand hierarchy of the thematic content.

7.3 Summary Thoughts Regarding Thematic Analysis

I waited until I had completed all interviews before beginning data analysis. I engaged with all 8 transcripts together, rather than analyzing mentor and protégé data separately. By engaging with all qualitative data at the same time, I hoped to more thoroughly identify interesting trends and points of dialogue between the mentor and protégé experiences. I also realized that, because several of my participants described experiences as both mentors and protégés, I might have created an artificial dichotomy between the two groups if I had analyzed the mentor transcripts separate from the protégé data.

A potential complication of having some participants who identify as mentor and mentee, depending on the relationship, is that those participants were able to speak to both sides of the dyad in a way that other participants were not. As I noted above, I tried
to offset this potential confound by analyzing all interviews together. However, I do wonder if (and how) those participants’ experiences in mentoring have been shaped by having been both mentor and mentee. For example, it is notable that three of my four mentor participants have identified as both mentor and mentee. In particular, Joan and Beatriz talked about their primary mentors as formative influences on their development. Alice highlighted her ongoing and fluid roles and mentor and mentee, depending on the relationship. She spoke to the importance of intergenerational mentoring, as well as “always having that person ten years ahead of you, and also being ten years ahead for someone else.”

One striking difference between the mentor and mentee interviews is the role of job security (i.e., tenure). Eloise and Joan highlighted the role of tenure in their journey to thinking about themselves as mentors. Eloise did not use the word mentoring to describe her work until she had achieved tenure; she noted that “tenure gives you a sense of security all of a sudden.” Likewise, Joan said that she did not fully come into her own as a mentor until she had tenure: “I felt like I really had something to say, something to offer after I reached that new level in my career.” When I asked Alice how long she had been a mentor, she differentiated between the work she did prior to earning her Director role, which signified professional growth and increased job security for her.

In contrast, mentees highlighted that they felt more comfortable approaching younger, early career mentors who had not yet obtained tenure. There were a few reasons for this: (1) mentees thought that untenured faculty were more approachable, (2) mentees perceived untenured faculty to be more like to include mentees as co-researchers and co-authors, and (3) mentees believed that untenured faculty were harder working
because they had not yet obtained job security. As Mara put it, “I felt more confident that I would get a lot of research experience with my mentor than with other faculty because she was still trying to earn tenure.” Interestingly, Joan noted that she felt her mentees had a more impactful experience with her after she had obtained tenure because she had increased flexibility to do service work instead of publishing as aggressively. The issue of job security in the context of mentoring was a surprising juxtaposition that I likely would not have noticed if I had not analyzed mentor and mentee interviews alongside each other.

7.4 Qualitatively Incorporating Survey Data

Alongside the hour-long interview, I administered a concurrent survey assessing emotional intelligence and servant leadership. With 8 participants, I did not intend to analyze survey data in a traditional quantitative sense; rather, I considered participants’ total scores on each scale, in addition to an item-level analysis. My hope in employing this somewhat unusual method for engaging with survey data was twofold. First, I wanted to make use of extant measures of two phenomena, emotional intelligence and servant leadership, that could meaningfully inform my understanding of mentoring. Second, I hoped to provide a model for other researchers interested in engaging with quantitative measures under the broader umbrella of a qualitative methodology. Psychometrically robust surveys can still be of use to the qualitative researcher, despite appearing perhaps incongruent with a qualitative approach.

My process for incorporating survey data was intentional, involving the following steps: (1) completing thematic analysis of all interviews, (2) calculating participants’ total scores for both surveys, (3) rereading each participant’s themes alongside their item-level
survey data, (4) making note of interesting overlap, (5) considering how the survey data might inform or augment the thematic data, and (6) considering incongruencies between the thematic and survey data. I will provide a brief example of what these steps looked like in practice, with participant Joan, a full professor of Psychology who identified as an active mentor at the time of the interview.

First, I completed thematic analysis of Joan’s interview. Hers was the last interview that I analyzed, so upon completing her analysis, I pulled themes into a master document. In this document, I grouped themes together so I could easily shift between them. I then calculated Joan’s total scores for servant leadership (128) and emotional intelligence (159). I was immediately struck by her servant leadership score, which was quite high, considering that she told a rather lengthy story indicating that she does not experience herself as a leader. Before considering this discrepancy more rigorously, I returned to her transcript to reread her themes alongside the items from both surveys. I manually took note of overlap, as well as interesting or confusing aspects of the two sources of data, on a sheet of paper. I completed this process for each of my 7 other participants before pulling out my flashcards to manually write interesting and/or confusing points of intersection or divergence within each participant’s data. Then, I laid out all participants’ flashcards together, at which point overlap and striking similarities became quickly apparent. I present an incorporation of the quantitative data in Chapter 8, following a discussion of the qualitative data.
Chapter 8: Presentation of Findings

8.1 Introduction to Themes

I will expand on each of these themes and subthemes in this chapter, but to provide an overview, I begin with my full list of themes and subthemes. Themes are presented in descending order of prevalence; the parenthetical number following each theme indicates how often it appeared across all interviews.

The Importance of the Relationship [109]
- Mentee feeling understood
- Addressing issues outside of academics/career
- Mentor really knowing the mentee
- Relationship shifting over time
- The notion of “fit”

Support and Care [71]
- Mentor believing in mentee
- Mentor style opens space for connection
- Accessibility

Mentee Growth and Professional Development [69]
- “Person I am today”
- Mentor shares wisdom and life experience
- Mentor develops short and long-term goals
- Mentee sees own potential

Investment of the Mentor [55]
- Investment of time
- Mentor providing material support

Mentoring from a Feminist Perspective [38]
- Collaborative orientation
- Empowerment and narrative

Contrast to “Traditional” Mentoring [26]
- Mentor misses the boat or doesn’t understand

Mentoring versus Teaching, Advising [15]

Mentor’s Passion, Identity as a Mentor [11]

Throughout this chapter, I incorporate excerpts from each interview to illustrate themes and subthemes. I focus on particularly evocative or interesting vignettes and experiences to convey the essence of a given theme, and I present at least one quote for each subtheme so that my exploration of the thematic content stays embedded,
phenomenologically, in the data itself. I also attempt to represent all participants at least a few times in this chapter, although due to the unique nature of their narratives, some participants’ voices appear more than others. For a full listing of all instances of themes across the interviews, please see Appendix E, which presents data grouped by theme. In this section, each theme begins with an introduction to the theme. I then contextualize each subtheme in participant data.

8.2 The Importance of the Relationship

*I think mentoring is much more about the relationship between mentor and mentee being a vehicle in a way, a vehicle for growth and development. So the emotional support, the connection, the strength of the relationship – particularly the mentor really facilitating that happening – is just so important.*

– Mara

Across all interviews, the importance of the relationship between mentor and mentee emerged as the single most salient theme. Participants discussed the mentor/mentee relationship in response to nearly all of my questions, and it is the one main theme that overlaps with all of the other themes at multiple points (please see Appendix E to see this overlap across themes). I was surprised that the relationship between mentor and mentee emerged as its own theme because it seems like such a taken-for-granted aspect of mentoring: *of course* the relationship matters. And yet, the relationship emerging as the most substantive theme across all interviews speaks to a potentially valuable parallel between mentoring and other relationally oriented work, like psychotherapy.

In the therapy relationship, for example, the relational bond, or alliance, between therapist and client is often considered the single most important component in predicting whether therapy will work (Bedics, Atkins, Harned, & Linehan, 2015; Wampold, 2015).
I was reminded of the facilitating role of the alliance in therapy when Tahlia reminisced on the transformative nature of her mentoring relationship:

> A lot of it was self-discovery. Some of it I realized deeper, she helped me realize deeper issues, so I feel like I ended up crying a lot over the course, cause college is a lot of discovery and figuring out what baggage are you bringing, what strengths do you have, what is shaping your view on this topic and what triggered that, what’s underlying, why did that create such a reaction, so she really helped me go much deeper than I think I’d realized.

Tahlia and her mentor were able to capitalize on their strong alliance to go deeper in excavating the “baggage” that she brought to college.

Beatrix reflected on the role of the relationship in doing mentoring when she noted that the mentor has to balance professionalism and closeness. Being a mentor “is many things, being a mentor is like, cause it, also you have to be like, be their friend, you know?” And as Joan noted when thinking about what makes mentoring work: “mentoring is really being present and open to connection.”

**Mentee feeling understood.** For my participants, the mentor/mentee relationship was greatly enhanced by the mentee’s experience of feeling understood or *seen* by the mentor. This component of the thematic data aligns well with organizational psychology’s conceptual understanding of emotional intelligence, which involves “the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions” (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). When asked what makes for great mentoring, Tahlia enthusiastically described that a truly great mentor is
a good reader of people, like at various points I’ve had mentors be a little harsher with me and just call me out and say “I don’t think you’re doing this well” and if they say that at the wrong moment, it might be harder to take, so I think timing and knowing when can be helpful, because it can solve a lot of issues, to up your game, but what you need at this moment, so being able to get the timing right.

Mara also highlighted the role of emotional intelligence when she shared her perspective on the importance of an emotional connection in the mentoring relationship: “That is totally where the emotional intelligence comes in. I think a great mentor is really an emotionally aware, in-tune person.” Mara’s assertion that a great mentor is emotionally intelligent was a sentiment echoed across participants.

In a moving contrast, she juxtaposed a mentoring relationship in which there was no connection. When she moved to her PhD program following undergrad, she anticipated a close and fruitful mentoring relationship, much like the one she had enjoyed with her undergraduate faculty mentor. Instead, her graduate mentor (whom she later clarified should be called an advisor), never really got to know her. Her graduate advisor’s inability – or disinterest – in really getting to know Mara was a key factor in her decision to leave the program:

There was no real relationship, no connection. I never, um, I like when I think about how understood I felt with [my original mentor]. And it was like I would try to emphasize that I was, uh, like my focus was much more applied, and I felt like I was a much more applied person, and she would just try to, like she would translate that in her head into me just being lazy about my research…So yeah, I think that that relationship with her, how she constantly seemed to just not get it, I
mean that was a huge factor in me leaving the program but it was also just a huge factor in my career change. Like I think the way that all went down with her, um, you know it really just put a crappy taste in my mouth. Mara’s story is a particularly poignant reminder of the potential impact of a disinterested mentor, as well as the importance of the mentee feeling seen and understood. While my participants largely discussed positive interactions with mentors, Mara’s experience is an example of the far-reaching negative impact that a mentor can have.

**Addressing issues outside of academics/career.** Another prominent subtheme involved addressing issues outside of “traditional” academic mentoring topics. Both mentors and mentees emphasized a turning point in a professor-student interaction: the first conversation about a non-academic or non-career topic. None of my participants was involved in a formal faculty-undergraduate mentoring program, and thus this turning point was significant in symbolizing the move to a mentoring relationship. Interestingly, when I asked about mentor impactfulness, several of the examples that participants provided had to do with the mentor pulling the mentee through a tough time with a personal issue.

For example, Eloise recognized such a turning point with one of her advisees, who had been assigned to her in his first week of college. She remembers when their relationship shifted from advising about course selection to mentorship: “the way that I knew that we had a mentorship relationship was that he would come and hover outside my door and like make chit chat.” She described him hovering in the doorway of her office, not yet sure enough to come in and talk, but more comfortable than he had been as an advisee, when their meetings were scheduled, with a predetermined start and end.
Over time, she “coaxed him in” by welcoming his uncertainties, his desire to have a closer relationship with her. Over the years their relationship developed further as he grew comfortable coming all the way into her office, learning that the mentoring relationship was a space to which he could bring himself, as he was, inclusive of and beyond his identity as student.

We were in a mentoring relationship because um, it’s well beyond academia. Right, like, well, the last time he was in my office, umm, he doesn’t have a driver’s license and he’s gonna need one for graduate school and so we were looking up how to get a driver’s license. Like, you know, just things like that that he, you know, he’s, so just dealing with his anxieties is, is the nature of our relationship.

Certainly, helping a student figure out how to procure his driver’s license is not within the normal expectations for a faculty member. Yet there is a simplicity and an honesty to this moment between Eloise and her mentee that is striking to consider. Of course, her willingness to mentor him on issues far beyond academics speaks to her generosity of time and energy, but I think it also highlights the role of the mentor – at least potentially – as a transitional parent. This mentee could have asked a variety of people for help with such a mundane task: his residence life director, his boss at work, a counselor in career services, a sibling, a parent. And yet he asked his academic mentor.

Similarly, Joan described a time when she served her mentee in a capacity beyond her job description. When I asked Joan about a time she had felt particularly impactful as a mentor, she started rambling about an “awful break-up” her mentee went through. She abruptly paused and looked a little startled before asking, “Does this have to uh be about
career stuff or can it be more, like personal?” I responded by reiterating my question in an encouraging tone, “I would love to hear about any time you feel you have been impactful.”

Ok, yeah so she was going through this awful, terrible break-up. The woman she had been with was I think, I had thought at the time she was like just very emotionally manipulative. And I still wonder if she had contributed to Lindsay’s sense of doubting her ability. But like this partner cheated on her and left, but they had been sharing an apartment, sharing a car, everything, and Lindsay was trying to study for the GRE and prepare herself for, you know, for all that comes with uh graduate applications.

In that moment, I felt a desire to reassure her that her story was interesting and relevant while I simultaneously thought about the numerous conversations I have had with my own mentors and mentees about personal topics. For me, too, talking in a more personal way with a mentor is how I feel more confident, as a mentee, that this is a true mentoring relationship – a relationship that is strong enough to welcome both of us as people.

Mentor really knowing the mentee. At first glance, this subtheme sounds similar to the mentee feeling understood subtheme. What distinguishes the two is that the mentoring really knowing the mentee speaks to a closeness in the relationship – and an attentiveness on the part of the mentor – that enables the mentor to both know the mentee intimately and provide counsel based on that knowledge. Often, for my participants, this counsel came in the form of the mentor providing explicit advice or calling the mentee out on not being true to him/herself. Regardless of the form this counsel came in, it had meaningful implications for the mentee’s decisions and next steps.
When Charis explained how her mentor has impacted her, she contextualized his impact in his close and intimate knowledge of her person.

We had such a long relationship that he knows me very well. And so, like, he really knows like how to motivate me, he knows the questions to ask, umm, and yeah, so I guess that, the really knowing me part is what leads to the support.

Like, I feel like I go to him a lot of times because I know he knows me so well. He has some insight into me and probably what’s best for me.

Eloise shared a particularly moving story about her experience mentoring a young man who was struggling with picking a career track. He grew up with alcoholic parents and was in a caretaker role for a younger sibling. In his mentoring meetings with Eloise, he talked passionately about wanting to help people and had expressed interest in pursuing graduate study in counseling psychology. Yet, in the midst of his senior year, she discovered he was still waffling between a variety of careers that did not seem to fit his interests. Relying on the strength of their relationship and her intimate knowledge of his abilities and desires, Eloise confronted her mentee:

I said, “So, of all the things that you have said, the one that you actually speak the most passionately about is counseling psychology, so I’m curious why it is that you feel the need to explore all these other options that, when you press yourself, you’re not really interested in”…and he said, “I’m afraid that I won’t be good at it because I won’t be able to help people because of all the things that I’ve been through,” so there are two things that are obviously like, obviously mistaken, like one – he’s probably gonna be a great counseling psychologist precisely because
he’s had experiences that will help him relate, umm, and two – there is no purity of motive when you’re growing.

This moving vignette illustrates the depth of Eloise’s ability to see her mentee as he is, and then, motivated by care and support, bring him face-to-face with his own goals and desires.

Keely had a similarly poignant experience with her mentor, David. As a student who was not particularly serious about her studies in her first two years of college, she was initially an Elementary Education major before she took several psychology courses with David. In these courses, she started to develop a real interest in a variety of psychological issues, engaging topics from social psychology to developmental psychology. In her final two courses with David, which she took concurrently, he encouraged her to write one major paper to bring both classes together, and he later worked with her tirelessly to prepare the paper for her first conference. When he first suggested she present at a professional conference, she balked: “Not me! Never!” Yet, the experience of developing her paper and presenting it before an audience of PhDs and licensed clinicians made her feel like she was in her element. She saw a future for herself as a psychologist – a future she had not previously recognized or anticipated. As she reflected, “I feel like he saw me as an academic and professional before I did.”

**Relationship shifting over time.** For some mentors and mentees, the relationship shifts over time in a way that is important for understanding the mentoring phenomenon. For a few of my participants, their professor-student relationships ended, or at least waned substantially, when they graduated. For these participants’ mentoring
relationships, however, graduation simply marked a transition in the relationship as it morphed over time.

In describing her relationship with her mentor, Charis contemplated the ways in which both she and their relationship have changed and matured. As an undergraduate, she took a more deferential role; although he encouraged her to contribute, she felt unable to correct him if he said something with which she disagreed. She noted, “but I think that’s a change in our relationship now where I would be able to say well, look, actually I see it this way…but definitely in college I would just kind of swallow it.” In addition to developing a more robust sense of her own voice in relation to her mentor, she is now beginning to think about herself as a future colleague alongside their mentoring relationship.

I mean I really think if I were to move back to College Town and work I would become part of Mitchell’s friend group, see for New Year’s I went to a party with one of my best friends from college who is part of one of that friend group and Mitchell was there with his wife and his child, a bunch of other people who worked at my college, older adults, but I think I would just become a part of that group and I think we would just become colleagues and friends, but I think I’d still, but I think Mitchell is someone I’ll always seek feedback from, so I think there will always be that kind of mentoring relationship.

Charis has the sense that she would want to be in a professional relationship – and friendship – with Mitchell, and also insinuates that Mitchell would be able to handle viewing her in a new capacity. Alongside this anticipated transition, Charis still notes that there will always be an element of their relationship that feels like mentoring.
For Keely and her mentor, the transition has been even more marked. She initially took 5 classes with him when she was an undergraduate: he was Professor and she was Student. Then, he mentored her heavily in preparation for her first few professional conferences, as well as in the process of her applying to graduate school twice. Now, she describes their relationship as moving from mentorship to collegial as she approaches the latter portion of her PhD. He is serving as a reader on her dissertation committee and they are planning research projects to pursue alongside each other when she returns home, doctorate in hand. In addition, she highlighted an interesting and recent turn in their relationship, in which she has now written a formal recommendation for him. She shared: “And I feel like when I did that it was a strange thing, it was almost like I was finally able to give back to him in some way.”

An interesting aspect of Keely’s account is that, while she describes her relationship with David turning into a collegial relationship, and thus in her mind, not a mentoring relationship, she still noted several times that she could anticipate turning to David for assistance with her teaching or with thinking through new ideas. While, yes, these are activities in which similarly-ranked colleagues would engage, these are also activities that my participants (Keely included) identified as key components of mentoring (see the Investment and Support themes for more detail).

The notion of “fit.” In explaining how she moves from advisor to mentor with students, Eloise confessed that “it’s just something that, it feels like something that just happens. Cause, just dispositionally there’s a fit or the student is open to that kind of relation- or wants that kind of relationship, like deeper relationship.” Charis also shared a similar, although more light-hearted perspective on her mentoring relationship with
Michell: “And you know like bonding over small things like we’re both huge Star Wars nerds…just sharing those little personal things and just slowly through maintaining that relationship, it’s grown into much more of a personal relationship.”

For Alice, the notion of fit within mentorship is connected to her strong Christian faith, in that she often brings her faith, relational orientation, and contemplative style to her mentoring. In reflecting on various mentoring relationships, she shared that she has connected more meaningfully with mentees who share the same orientation and priorities. When a potential mentee approaches her to request mentorship, Alice is clear in her response: “happy to be your mentor but it will be about doing less instead of more!” Alice’s faith encourages her to engage more contemplatively, often through prayer and quiet reflection, and it was easy for me to imagine mentee styles that would not mesh well with her peacefulness. In addition, she highlighted that she is able to connect best with a mentee who shares her Christian faith, because that is the lens through which she works and engages with the world.

8.3 Support and Care

When I asked my participants the interview question, “What is mentoring?” nearly all of them responded by naming support as a crucial component. As Mara noted, “I think probably at the core it is to provide support. Whether that is structural, like with more material things, or…more emotional…it is really about providing support.” When thinking about her mentoring work, Eloise acknowledged that she has a reputation among the undergraduates in her department for being especially supportive. A professor with a “warm charismatic style,” she recognizes that her approach to engaging with students makes them feel comfortable. Though she sounded somewhat ambivalent describing the
way that students likely think about her – as a supportive and caring professor first, and an intellectual second – the tone of her mentoring was apparent to me even in our interview. She was receptive and encouraging of my questions and responses, and I could sense that she wanted me to feel encouraged in my research.

As Joan shared, really effective mentoring is about support; it is the “giving a damn factor...being thrilled by their successes...feeling with them and supporting them through the highs and lows.” She beautifully asserted that, although mentoring often looks more procedural and mundane on the outside, it is “emotional work.”

But yeah, great mentoring is an investment of the heart. Which, you know, like it’s funny because to say that great mentoring is investing your heart in your work when so much of it like, uh, like topically looks so mundane – reviewing personal statements, IRB submissions, helping a mentee think through a hypothesis. It doesn’t sound like heart work really, you know. But it is.

Her emotional investment in her mentees was obvious during the interview. She grew tearful recounting a mentee who worked through difficult adverse circumstances as an undergraduate to pursue her dreams of a graduate education. She became animated as she told brief stories of several recent mentees, their interests and work. Like several of my other participants, mentoring for Joan is a mode of providing and conveying support and care.

Mentor believing in mentee. During Keely’s senior year, she was invited to an awards ceremony where she was surprised to discover she had won a departmental award; she later discovered that her mentor had nominated her. She described being “absolutely shocked,” while also feeling supported and bolstered by his belief in her
intellect. She had struggled to be successful in college initially, and to reach the end of her undergraduate education with a departmental award in hand was recognition of her hard work and academic development. It also simply felt good, and reassuring, for her to know that a major award nomination came from her mentor, whose professional opinion meant, and still means, so much to her.

Charis was effusive in describing her mentor’s relentless belief in her. As a first-generation college student, she did not have the same guidance and modeling that other students can rely on parents to provide. She struggled with feeling “worthy” of academic accolades because she so deeply questioned her intellect; in particular, she had tied up her worth in her standardized test scores, which were average, despite her hard work and high grades in classes. She shared a story about her mentor’s belief in her ability:

So, like in your junior year at College, you can apply for another full ride that’s all based on merit, and so like, once I got that, you know, Mitchell was helping with the application, my other mentors were too, and it’s like once I got that, it just all kind of came together for me. But it was really nice to see, it’s like oh “they’ve been right all along,” like, I am qualified. And I can do these things.

Her mentor had his greatest impact on her “just in terms of believing in [her]…from the very beginning.”

In a complement to Charis’s account, Eloise described that an element of mentoring that makes it work for mentees is “support in terms of affirmation, like that recognizing, being able to reflect back to them what they have expressed, so they feel known and seen.” She emphasized that affirming a mentee’s intellect – or more importantly, their inherent worth as a person – is “a very important form of support
because it helps build their confidence, that they’re the author…that they can make this for themselves, so in that kind of support, just interpersonal, relational, emotional support I think is really important.”

Alongside Eloise, Joan emphasized the importance of affirming the mentee when she told a moving story about one of her former mentees who was struggling in an abusive romantic relationship. She shared that “there is just such an important human element to the mentoring work. Saying ‘I support you, I believe in you’ is so important.” In a pivotal moment with a different mentee, during which the mentee was struggling profoundly given difficult circumstances outside of academics, Joan identified her role as a mentor as being “the cheerleader and the therapist, like, to really rally her and uh, remind her of the potential I see.”

In preparing students for performances and future professional activities, Beatriz is intentional about affirming her belief in her mentees while also providing guidance to help them perform better. She reenacted how she might respond to an anxious or self-doubting mentee:

When you listen to other people, they say that they’re nervous, it’s like “don’t listen to them” – that’s a different person. Just remind yourself of all those things that, you know, why you play, why you’re playing your instrument, why you picked it, and just remember not everyone can play the instrument well. There is a firmness to her reassurance, yet she also maintains a supportive tone that is reminiscent of a motivational speaker. When analyzing this section of Beatriz’s interview, I appreciated that alongside expressing her belief in her mentee, she was also reconnecting the mentee to his original motivation for playing music. Particularly for
mentor-mentee dyads in which the mentor and mentee share the same craft, the mentor can play an important role in keeping the mentee’s motivation and passion alive.

**Mentor’s style opens space for connection.** Mara described the way in which her mentor opened space for relational connection both physically and emotionally. When Mara struggled with a challenging break-up, she came to her mentor to talk and seek support.

And she just dropped everything and turned away from her computer and invited me to sit and she had this chair right next to her desk, like, she had an L-shaped desk and she sat in the crook of the L and she had, like, uh, like a chair for students or whoever. She had a chair for people at the top of the L and her computer and work was in the crook. She invited me to sit down and I just, ah [long exhale]. I just collapsed. And she turned her chair away from the crook of the L and away from her work and I know she was, seriously Elizabeth, I know she was just like insanely busy at that time. And I didn’t feel then and really, um, really truly I don’t feel now like, as I reflect on that moment, I don’t feel like I was burdening her. Not even like she was trying to make me feel like I wasn’t a burden.

I found this vignette particularly evocative given the detail Mara was able to readily provide; I felt like we were both transported to her mentor’s office as she spoke. I was impressed and moved by how quickly she recounted the structural details of the space; it is apparent that Mara was in this office often. I was also struck by Mara’s assertion that her mentor was not even trying to make her feel like she was welcome, and not a burden on the mentor’s time.
Beatriz reminds her mentees that, given the unique nature of her faculty role as an accompanist, she does not assign grades. Thus, students should “actually be freer” when they are working with her. When a mentee comes to her wanting to talk about something personal, Beatriz is intentional about making space while still keeping her mentee focused on the task at hand. I appreciated her practice of setting her alarm to allow time at the end of a meeting or rehearsal to talk about whatever is on the mentee’s mind. She laughed as she shared that, often, when the alarm goes off, the mentee has become so engrossed in their work together that they feel ok to keep working without stopping to have a more personal conversation. What is important to Beatriz, however, is that her mentees see and feel the openness she is creating for them to talk, should they desire or need to.

Alice relies on her contemplative orientation to inform connection with mentees. She is passionate about the role of retreat in opening space for mentee and mentor to connect, as well as in encouraging reflection and supportive togetherness.

A particular practice that I’ve done with various people…I’ll go on a day long retreat with them, and so…there you give very personal attention, but quiet attention, you know? Presence. But not necessarily language, and so, so those have been good moments, sometimes drawing…or praying or reading a text or listening to music or walking in the woods or doing yoga or whatever, you know? So, those kinds of moments I think are really important.

Alice’s description of these retreats challenged me to rethink and reimagine what connection can look like for mentor and mentee. Physically being present to another person opens space for a new, different kind of closeness and relational support than is
fostered through the much more familiar modality of mentor-mentee interaction (i.e., structured meetings that are oriented around speech).

**Mentor accessibility.** Having a mentor who is accessible seems to be important in experiencing the mentor as supportive, which in turn serves to strengthen the relationship. Tahlia noted that in her formal mentoring relationship at work, she is paired with a woman who is a senior executive. Although managers a few levels higher than Tahlia struggle to get on this executive’s schedule, Tahlia enjoys a regular monthly meeting. Mara noted that she always felt like she could schedule time with her mentor. Sometimes her mentor would invite a meeting, whereas other times, Mara would initiate by sending an email. Although their meetings were regular throughout their mentoring relationship, Mara remembered that, during the Fall of her senior year when she was in the throes of applying to PhD programs, she was in her mentor’s office 2-3 times each week. Importantly, as mentioned previously, her mentor never made Mara feel like a burden on her time.

Charis’s mentor, Mitchell, was readily accessible to her when she was an undergraduate, and he maintains his accessibility now via regular text and email, as well as occasional video conferencing. At the time of our interview, Charis had recently received important feedback on her thesis proposal. As she described the ways in which Mitchell continues to provide support for her, she pulled out her phone to read segments of a texting conversation they had shared during the previous evening! I was struck by his level of accessibility, especially considering that Charis graduated several years ago.

Like Charis’s mentor, Beatriz continues to make herself accessible to students even after they graduate. She maintains Facebook.com relationships with many of her
mentees, as well as an active support calendar of their post-graduation professional activities. Students feel comfortable to reach out and invite her to events; often, she and her husband (another faculty in her department) spend their evening and weekends commuting to former mentees’ recitals and band concerts. “If they’re student teaching and they tell me ‘Ms. S, I have a concert can you come?’ I say, ‘well yeah I’ll come! If I’m available, I’ll go! Yeah. I’ll go.’ Cause they want support.”

Keely provided a mentee perspective on the mentor choosing to be a present and supportive face in the crowd. She commented that an embodied way for a mentor to convey support is to be there, “showing up to things that students do. Be that supportive face in the audience to turn to and look to.” Her mentor served in this capacity at her first conference, when he came to support her as she spoke on a panel. His was a supportive face that she relied on for the strength to get through such an anxiety-provoking experience. Now, if she needs resources or has questions, she feels comfortable to “always send him a message.”

For Alice, accessibility looks less typical, or at least less related to professional development. Again, in this theme, her relational orientation informs her work. She described the importance of her own mentors being accessible to her:

I don’t need you to be present like touching me side by side every minute of the day, but I do need you to be a text away. Cause my style is when something happens in my life that’s really hard, there are three people I text immediately.

You know? And I need you to answer! And they do!

Alice mirrors this accessibility in her own style of mentoring. She values being responsive to and open with her mentees, whether on retreat, at work, or via electronic
communication.

8.4 Mentee Growth and Professional Development

This theme was, like the Relationship and Support themes, pervasive throughout interviews. I was unsurprised to see that a focus on the mentee’s professional growth was so pivotal given that the mentee’s development from student/novice to professional/colleague was the origin story of the mentoring literature. Levinson et al.’s (1978) seminal work on men’s transitions from early to middle adulthood focused on mentoring as a tool for helping men transition from young adult to contributing professional. The mentor shows the mentee the ropes, teaches him how to be a professional, and provides guidance on the anthropology of their shared profession and office culture.

Likewise, for my participants, a key component of what defines mentoring is a focus on the mentee’s development into a professional. The mentee relies on the mentor’s knowledge and wisdom to learn the ropes, and the mentor models behavior so that the mentee can learn what it is like to be a professional in her field. Much like in therapy, when the therapist must often demonstrate belief in the client long before he starts to believe in himself, my participants emphasized the importance of the mentor taking the mentee seriously and helping to develop the mentee’s professional identity, thus facilitating the mentee seeing her own potential as a professional. As Tahlia remarked, “mentoring is helping others navigate decisions, find their way, their path, and self-discovery.”

“Person I am today.” My mentee participants expressed immense and moving gratitude for the role that their mentors have played in their development. Across all four
mentee interviews, I had the sense that mentees were intensely aware that without their mentors, they would be at very different places in their professional – and even personal – growth. When considering the role that all of her undergraduate mentors have played in her life, Charis remarked, “but I think those are what really made me in a large way, into the person I am today and where I’m in a PhD program being able to accomplish what I want to, through those mentoring relationships.”

Keely shared an amusing story in which she recounted a time her mentor, David, challenged her to think and work differently. It was apparent throughout her interview that David’s mentoring style, focused on mentee empowerment and growth, was initially frustrating for her. He forced students to speak in class and he was relentless in his focus on cultivating critical thinkers. His provocative style was difficult for her to adjust to, yet, it is now a style for which she credits her academic success. Towards the end of her undergraduate training, David assigned the class to “write the story they tell themselves about themselves:”

I’m the type of person who likes structure and being told what to do at times. And I remember like getting so frustrated, and I know this is kind of going off, but like he assigned us like this assignment, like write the story you tell yourself about yourself. And I remember just like being so irritated, because I know, I kept writing it as a very typical narrative…This needed to be more creative! And I kept expressing this irritation with him and he wouldn’t tell me anything and I was like “ahh!” but I did it and was able to reflect on it. And so yeah I think he really helped to carve out a space for me to find myself, as a professional, as an academic, as a person. Literally would not be here without him, like at all. 100%.
Though she was challenged at the time, Keely now recognizes his style of mentoring as one that formed her into the person and professional she is becoming.

**Mentor shares wisdom and life experience.** All four mentees in my study expressed gratitude for their mentors having shared both personal and professional wisdom. For Tahlia in particular, a key component of mentorship is the mentor sharing their own hard-earned insights. She wants to hear about her mentor’s insights on paths they’ve taken, and you know, upon reflection whether or not they think those were good paths, what the pros of that were, what the cons were, providing entrance into what they see other people do that are in similar situations to what you’re describing, and their take on again, if that was a good thing or bad, how did it end up going for them? So just giving you more life experience than you had yourself, so that in many ways you can avoid some of the pitfalls.

Her perspective echoes components of early mentoring studies that emphasized the role of the mentor as a guide in helping the mentee navigate the adult, professional world (Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978).

Likewise, when contemplating essential components of a mentoring relationship, Keely posited that she thinks “there should be a pairing with a professor who knows something about the subject that the student is interested in, and really helping them to carve out a future uh whatever that future looks like.” In her relationship with mentor David, his expertise as a tenured professor in her field proved invaluable in preparing her for graduate school and professional life. For example, he knew when a paper of hers would be appropriate for a conference, he knew how to edit it to improve, he knew how to coach her on preparing a conference talk. He knew available graduate programs well.
enough to know that, given her specific interests in a less-common specialty area of psychology, he should recommend a select few to her.

From a mentor perspective, Beatriz relied on her wisdom from decades of practicing and performing music to help her mentees. She recounted that she often requires her mentees to do a dry run of all of their music – including the pieces that she is not directly accompanying – to assess whether they have stamina for the full performance. This is a piece of mentoring wisdom she is only able to provide through having seen performances where this kind of preparation was not taken!

In a more intimate exchange with a mentee, Eloise shared her own story. The student was torn regarding how to choose a professional path, and she opened up with him about why she became a psychologist and professor. She shared, “Why I had chosen to be a teacher is actually…it’s a mixed bag, like it’s not entirely…positive experiences in my life…so I told him – I did tell him that story…in the context of saying everybody chooses something that’s of themselves.” In this interaction, she relied on her life experience to connect with and influence her mentee; she also appropriately shared enough detail about her own life to meaningfully inform and contextualize his very personal struggle with career choices.

**Mentee sees own potential.** In my own mentoring work, there is an incredibly special, even magical, transition when the mentee begins to recognize her own potential as a future professional. The mentee participants in this study called to mind their own experiences of transitioning from a student with no sense of professional potential to developing a sense of professional identity. Mara remembered back to her undergraduate years: “I had no real career plans. I thought maybe I would use my undergrad to get a
teaching certificate later on, or maybe be some sort of milieu therapist or something like, something like that.” Later in the interview, she recounted that her mentor “was the one who told me I could pursue a PhD in Psychology.” Through her relationship with her mentor, Mara transitioned from having a loosely-defined understanding of her own capabilities to confidently beginning a competitive doctoral program.

Keely had a similar experience. She described not knowing what the professional world was like; she certainly did not conceive of herself as someone who had the intellectual prowess to successfully pursue graduate school.

I didn’t want to be a professor – I didn’t know what that meant. I think I was at that point probably applying to education programs to be a teacher and like really had no intention of pursing academia, pursuing a PhD – that was not even on my radar.

Later she reflected on the experience of having attended a professional conference, where she won a prestigious award for her conference paper. This experience marked a transition in her seeing her own professional potential.

“I was like, oh, I didn’t realize the value of like myself as a student and like that I could go further than like just getting a Bachelor of Education until I did the conference and I was like, ok this is like, real.”

**Mentor develops short and long-term goals.** Goal-setting theory is a popular topic in higher education literature, and I was curious as to whether goal-setting would emerge thematically in this project. Effective goal-setting has been linked to increased student motivation (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016), improved task performance (Sitzmann & Bell, 2017), and helping at-risk students overcome obstacles (Sorrentino, 2007).
addition, goal-setting is often highlighted as a key element of formal mentoring programs across a variety of populations, including fourth-grade public school students (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClennan, 2002), college students at risk of flunking (Sorrentino, 2007), adolescent English as a Second Language students (Shih & Reynolds, 2017), and undergraduate Business majors (Cron, Slocum, VandeWalle, & Fu, 2005).

Goal-setting was not as prevalent across the data as I had expected, which I only realized upon engaging in the coding and sorting process of the thematic analysis. The mentor setting both short and long-term goals was, however, a key theme in both Keely’s and Beatriz’s narratives. Keely had planned to pursue a job as an elementary teacher upon her completion of her undergraduate degree, yet her mentor saw a different long-term goal for her. She reminisced, “and like professionally I remember him, I want to say he started, like, planting the seeds for graduate school.” He also invited her to attend and present at a national conference, and he set goals for her to attend two other conferences during the interim between undergraduate and graduate school.

One of the central components of Beatrix’s mentoring work is her commitment to thinking about both short and long-term goals for her mentees. She has recognized that undergraduate students may not always be able to plan and anticipate the way that she, as a veteran musician, can.

Cause sometimes you know the student, they don’t see…if they’re doing a recital, they don’t think of the long, long range planning, so it’s like short, and I say “short is like, it won’t grow,” the music won’t grow, sometimes, so I just tell the students well “why don’t we start this semester…let’s start now.
Unsurprisingly, “investment” was a popular word across all interviews. Mara noted that, despite her mentor getting stretched in many directions, “her priority is always her students and her relationships with them.” Tahlia remembered that her mentor “intentionally reached out” to her, much more than a regular professor or advisor. For Charis, a mentor’s “selfless investment” is a crucial part of what makes mentoring work. Her undergraduate mentors were really involved in her life; she described their investment as an “immersive experience.”

Beatriz reflected on her own mentor, her piano teacher, whose investment was profoundly influential in Beatriz’s later success as a professional musician. Beatriz’s family did not have a piano, nor did they have readily available transportation to shuttle her to and from her lessons. Beatriz would stay late at the music school, after having a lesson with her mentor, and then her mentor would drive her home. Beatriz also shared that her mentor gave her extra, uncompensated lessons – often two, instead of one, per week.

**Investment of time.** All four mentees described meeting with their undergraduate mentors at least once per month – but often closer to once per week – while they were undergraduates. While Tahlia’s mentoring relationship centered primarily on her senior thesis, for which the mentor likely received a small amount of recognition, the mentoring activities conducted by Mara, Charis, and Keely’s mentors were likely “for free,” so to speak. I felt moved considering the cumulative hours these mentors contributed to their mentees – hours that could have been put to career-development work for themselves. My participants’ accounts also encouraged me to
reflect on my own undergraduate mentor’s commitment of time, as well as the time I
invest in my mentees now. In my mentoring work, I have devoted hundreds of hours of
uncompensated and unrecognized time that, until engaging in these interviews, I had
honestly given very little thought. I did not view the time I give my mentees in sacrificial
terms; that investment of time is simply what is necessary, at least in my mind, to engage
in quality mentoring. Charis expressed a similar sentiment in her response to the
question “what is mentoring?” She described that it is “someone who will sit with you,
someone who will read every cover letter you’ve ever written, and give you that
feedback, just somebody who’s willing to take the time to invest that deeply into helping
you become a better person.”

Mara received regular mentoring from her undergraduate mentor for three years
of her undergraduate education. When she first had her mentor as a professor in a
Psychology course, she recounts knowing that her mentor “was more than just a normal
professor” when Mara observed her willingly staying after class to have “extra
conversations” with students. She is still in touch with her mentor and solicits her for
advice on personal and professional matters. When reflecting on her own undergraduate
mentor, Joan attributed the success of their mentoring relationship to his “plain and
simple investment of time.” Her mentor wrote recommendation letters for her when she
applied to doctoral programs, and he spent hours workshopping her curriculum vitae and
personal statements. She did not fully recognize the amount of time he devoted to her
development until she started investing similar time in her own mentees: “as an
undergrad, you know, like I had honestly like no idea how much a commitment that was
for him. As a faculty member now, it’s like whoa, that is a lot of time from him.”
Alice invests similar time into professional development, though a more substantive and striking time commitment has come in her willingness to cultivate the mentoring relationship through immersive retreats. On such a retreat, she gives her mentee 24-36 hours of uninterrupted, quality time for bonding, development, silence, and attention to the mentee’s emotional and spiritual needs. Having benefitted from being on the receiving end of such a practice, Alice is committed to giving her mentees this experience when possible.

**Mentor providing material support.** In my participants’ experiences, a substantial aspect of mentoring has been the provision of material support. This support includes editing documents, providing professional development feedback, and helping in the process of applying to graduate school or a job. This theme mirrors the kind of professional development support highlighted in qualitative mentoring studies (e.g., Hawkey, 1998), though my participants spoke about mentor engagement in an especially devoted way. For example, Charis’s undergraduate mentor has read and provided feedback on “literally every cover letter” she has ever written. In regards the paper she took to her first conference, Keely’s mentor “read and reread and revised” her work; in addition to providing feedback on the psychological content of her paper, he also “tediously corrected [her] grammar.” Keely expressed appreciation for his willingness to show her what an academic paper should look like, both in terms of content and style.

Mara’s undergraduate mentor provided similar support (e.g., reading and editing documents, providing feedback on her CV), as well as facilitating an internship connection that was “pretty transformative…in a career sense.”
When asked “what is mentoring?” Keely highlighted the material support a mentor provides.

And that can look like providing resources for graduate school, it can be helping direct students to conferences. And I don’t think it has to be an intense, like what my mentor was able to do for me and like editing my paper every week for 8 weeks! But I think like allowing, showing students opportunities, helping them to create an abstract, helping them check over their work, providing material support…it’s taking the initiative to tell students about things out there.

This notion of taking initiative was important in the way that this material support was provided. For Keely, as well as other participants, her mentor was the one to approach her with feedback, edits, and guidance as opposed to her asking. Although one could argue it is important for the student to have the initiative to request feedback, I think mentor initiative is important for two potential reasons: (1) some undergraduates may not have the confidence to request such material support, and (2) an even larger number of students simply would not realize they need it. In my mentoring role, I have reviewed numerous CVs and personal statements that were given to me with the preface of “this is ready to go” only for me to provide fairly extensive – and needed – revisions!

In response to the same question (“what is mentoring?”), Joan stated simply, “[Mentoring] is investment.” She elaborated by including specific activities that demonstrate investment, namely “material support. Reviewing documents, editing things, giving feedback.” For Tahlia, the only mentee in this study who did not pursue graduate study directly after undergraduate, she highlighted that one of her mentors facilitated her getting her current job, where she has been ever since.
Reliability. Three participants explicitly noted the importance of the mentor being reliable. I decided to include this as a subtheme because it was implied in all of the interviews (e.g., reading and editing every cover letter a mentee has written implies a reliable mentor). Though my participants emphasized the reliability on the part of the mentor, I argue that mentee reliability would also be imperative for the relationship to be successful over time. As a mentee, Tahlia emphasized the overlap between reliability and commitment in conveying a mentor’s investment in the relationship. She also suggested that a mentor who cancels often sends the message that mentorship is “just a chore,” which “defeats a lot of the point; the point is so that you have someone who you can turn to…who cares about you.” It is interesting that, for Tahlia, the notion of reliability overlaps with care.

As a mentor, Beatriz takes meetings with her mentees extremely seriously. She has a reputation in her department for being especially professional in terms of respecting others’ time, and she is devoted to being reliable in meeting with her students. She shared an example of a meeting with her department chair in which she abruptly ended the meeting to be on time for her mentee.

I know like how my schedule is, everything is timed. [We] had a meeting again, former department chair, and I had my alarm, I had two minutes to get to my office cause I have to play for [my mentee]. So I heard that alarm then, it’s like “anything else you need to talk to me about cause I have to go” – that’s what I told the department chair, it’s like “but we’re done right?” I just walked away, if you have nothing else to say right, it’s like “no, I can’t be late for my student.”
When listening to her story, I could not help but imagine how it would feel, as Beatriz’s mentee, to know that she will always be on time, and that she takes our meetings this seriously. I imagine that, in addition to feeling valued and respected, her habit of scheduling rigorously might also serve as an example of professional development (i.e., encouraging mentees to similarly approach their scheduling and timeliness).

Alice spoke about reliability in terms of spiritual and physical presence. She regularly thinks about and prays for her mentees, a practice that I found surprising yet moving. Although her mentees likely do not realize she is consistently and reliably present to them in this way, her practice of “intercessory prayer” likely influences the ways in which she is reliable and present to them via other modalities.

8.6 Mentoring from a Feminist Perspective

So, the primary goal for me of mentorship is, is facilitating their ability to create their story, to craft their narrative in a way that’s functional for them.

– Eloise

In the analysis stage of this project, as I worked to group codes into themes, I realized that there was a substantial portion of data that related to a theme I chose to label *Mentoring from a Feminist Perspective*. In some cases, the participant chose the word feminist to describe her mentoring activities; at times, a participant described an activity or an aim that fit under the frameworks for feminist mentoring conceptualized by Fassinger (1997), feminist peer mentoring proposed by Reger and McGuire (2003), or the components of feminist mentoring described by Humble et al. (2006). I also considered the language of an engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994) and women’s narrative (Belenkey, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) as possible models for thinking about feminist mentoring. In the situations in which a participant described an activity, phenomenon, or
aim that aligned with these extant frameworks for thinking about feminist mentoring, I grouped those coded segments of data under the *Feminist Perspective* Theme. In addition, two of my participants explicitly did not identify as feminist at the time of the interview, yet I still grouped small segments of their data under this theme. I think it is important to consider the ways in which a mentor or mentee could still engage with principles of a feminist-informed mentoring approach without themselves identifying as feminist.

For example, Tahlia responded with a firm “no” when asked if she identified as feminist. Yet, she spoke about her efforts to engage in transparent and reciprocal mentoring, referencing her desire for a mentoring relationship to be a “two-way street.” She also shared that, when she is in the mentor role, she desires for her mentees to see some of her struggles, too. In reference to her role as mentee, she shared a moving experience she had with her mentor. As a minority undergraduate student at an Ivy League university, Tahlia struggled with financial stresses from her childhood and could not seem to break free from them. Through deeply personal conversations with her mentor, she was able to identify that these stressors were still impacting her, “set appropriate boundaries, and choose to act differently.” It was a vulnerable and emotional experience to work to find her voice and rework her personal narrative in this way; this experience was also pivotal in helping her to be successful in college. As she shared her story of reconfiguring her narrative in terms of childhood stress versus who she was becoming as a college woman, I was reminded of Belenky and colleagues’ (1986) silent women and subjective knowers. Silent women rely on external authority and blind obedience to make sense of the world; subjective knowers are primarily intuitive, with a
focus on finding answers and truth from within. Put another way, silent women arrive at truth from looking to authorities outside themselves, whereas subjective knowers arrive at truth from looking inside. Through work with her mentor, Tahlia transitioned from a silent adolescent in the face of her family’s financial struggle to a subjective knower through the process of accessing and beginning to listen to her inner voice. Thus, one of the most transformative experiences she shared with me was rooted in a rewriting of personal narrative.

My other participant who did not identify as feminist (Beatriz) also shared aspects of her approach to mentoring that could be conceptualized as feminist-informed, particularly when considered alongside Brown’s (2016) feminist model of mentor as scaffold. In particular, Beatriz’s mentoring activities are largely focused on empowering the mentee, on engaging with the mentee reciprocally, and challenging the mentee’s preconceived notions about what she can accomplish. She especially looks forward to mentoring relationships in which she plays music with a mentee; instead of viewing the music she prefers as the standard, she is excited to learn the new music that the mentee selects. In situations like this, she has positioned herself horizontally, rather than hierarchically, in relation to the student.

My other participants all used language of feminism comfortably and explicitly, and for several participants, feminism has been key to the growth they have enjoyed as mentees and/or mentors. Within interview data, participants focused on the areas of collaboration/non-hierarchy, empowerment, trust, and narrative.

**Collaborative orientation.** The idea that mentorship should be a relationship is embedded throughout these interview data. For Charis, one of the most enjoyable aspects
of her mentoring relationship with Mitchell was its collaborative nature. She did not experience a “power dynamic,” and she expressed appreciation that he always made her feel valued. In a related sense, he made it clear that he wanted to hear her perspective—and he actually worked to incorporate her thoughts and opinions into the conversation.

Mara shared that her undergraduate mentor often solicited feedback from her as to how the relationship felt. As a student, Mara recalls that she likely would not have offered unsolicited thoughts, and it initially took her off guard when her mentor seemed to genuinely want her thoughts and opinions. She also remembered that her mentor referred to “working with” students, which was meaningful to Mara because it implied an important degree of reciprocality in the relationships. Intentional language like that “really elevated the students” in a way that called into question taken-for-granted hierarchies.

Eloise contextualized her mentoring in her broader feminist identity, which anchored much of her work with students and mentees.

So, I uh, yes, I very strongly, firmly, identify as a feminist, and it’s critical to my identity as a teacher and scholar and person…what I am trying to do in my mentor relationships, I do think, uh, connects and flows strongly from my feminism umm…to not use the power that’s inherent in a mentor student relationship…a lot of the deconstructing that I do comes from a place of feminism and maybe it’s broader than feminism cause it’s just all power structures in general, but umm, so much of the deconstruction that I do with students, umm, does relate to norms and scripts and stories that uphold, that uphold power structures.
For her, a crucial component of mentoring is that she does not want to work within the power structure inherent in hierarchical mentoring; she explicitly desires to be a partner to her mentees. I was especially attuned to her desire for partnership when she shared stories about specific mentees, and how she approached working through issues with them. With a student who was trying to discern a career path, she avoided telling him what to do, and instead engaged him in an ongoing dialogue about what he might be interested in. After months of discussing options, she made the move from a solely non-hierarchical approach to a focus on empowerment when she challenged him to pursue what he really wants to do.

**Empowerment and narrative.** Like collaboration, empowerment is a theme that was present throughout my participant’s stories in a variety of ways; I conceptualize it as a part of a feminist perspective on mentoring because of the way that seeking to empower the mentee situates the mentee, rather than the mentor, as the primary agent of change. The mentee becomes the primary actor – the narrator of her own story.

Mara experienced her undergraduate mentor’s focus on empowerment in that her mentor consistently challenged her to be a “better version” of herself. Her mentor held a high bar for Mara, yet still clearly conveyed care and support. Situated in that mentoring relationship, Mara considered empowerment to be related to emotional support and development of personal narrative.

Empowerment could have more to do with the mentee discovering something new about herself or finding her voice. I know with my mentor, that was really, um, like that was the first time someone really listened to me, and in her listening to me and really taking me seriously, I was able to find my own voice as a student –
and now I still, um, you know like even in my work now, I am so aware of the parts of me professionally that were strengthened via that mentoring.

This brief excerpt is a poignant reminder of the longer-term impact that empowering mentorship can have. In sharp contrast, Mara left her doctoral program due to her disempowering interactions with her graduate advisor, in which Mara’s career goals and preferences were routinely undermined.

For Eloise, the work of empowering her mentees centers on helping them to create the “story that they’re spinning for themselves.” In her process of focusing on mentees creating their own narratives, she attempts to bracket her preconceived notions and hear things from the mentee’s standpoint. She relies primarily on deconstruction of cultural scripts in helping her mentees to access their inner voices and create their own narratives.

The mentorship relationship helps students who are struggling trying to use the scripts available to them and that don’t fit them, and so deconstructing what they think they ought to be thinking or doing and then helping them figure out a different way to tell that story.

Again, here, I was reminded of Belenky and colleagues’ (1986) ways of knowing. In a sense, Eloise is working to facilitate her mentee developing from a receptive, subjective, or procedural knower to a constructed knower. A constructed knower speaks and understands her world from an integrated perspective – as opposed to speaking from a purely subjective place or a detached, rational perspective.

In contrast to her approach, Eloise noted that a mentoring relationship where she was “calling the shots would…feel kind of icky…That’s not really mentoring at that
point. You’re creating and you’re using somebody else to create something…that’s not mentoring.” Eloise’s clarity in her goals as a mentor enable her to speak with confidence when she labels a relationship that is transactional, or even abusive, as not mentoring.

For other participants, trust played a crucial role in mentee empowerment. For example, in describing her work with her mentor, Keely emphasized the importance of trust, freedom, and empowerment alongside guidance. Her mentor was certainly invested in her growth, especially in terms of the material support he provided, yet he also valued giving her “a lot of freedom and space to discover” on her own. Similar to Eloise’s approach, Keely’s mentor did not tell her what to think; instead, he cultivated an environment in which she learned to navigate her own path. When considering how much she grew as a woman and as a professional in the context of the mentoring relationship, she noted that it was “a very empowering relationship” for her. In addition, Keely highlighted the reciprocal nature of trust when she asserted that “it has to go both ways. The student has to trust that the mentor fully supports them and…the mentor has to trust their mentee in a lot of ways that they are going to do the work and value the mentor-mentee relationship.” She drew attention to something interesting here: while other participants emphasized the leap of faith inherent in a mentee trusting her mentor, Keely had not lost sight of the trust that a mentor puts in her mentee to recognize and value the support and investment the mentor provides.

In congruence with her focus on the mentee creating her own story, Eloise maintains a non-authoritarian style in her mentoring. She trusts that mentees can “figure out for themselves what’s best for them.” Of course, some students desire more direction. When Eloise encounters a student, whether through advisement or in one of
her classes, who wants to be directed by a mentor, she is clear in the boundaries of her role: “you have to do that, like I’m not doing that!”

**8.7 Contrast to “Traditional” Mentoring**

As I worked with the interview data during the analysis stage of this project, I sensed that some participants were using their concept of what mentoring normally looks like (I will call this “traditional” mentoring) to distinguish their own mentoring experiences. For my mentees, this comparison was a way of emphasizing something their mentor did particularly well; for mentors, it was a way of saying “this is why I do things the way I do.” Much like Charles Dickens’s Ghost of Christmas Past, the specter of traditional mentoring appeared throughout interviews as a reminder of what not to do, and of how negative the outcome can be when a mentor is too formal, too focused on themselves, too afraid to connect, or too arrogant to celebrate a mentee’s unique interests and talents.

Charis shared a story about her work with one undergraduate mentor with whom she is no longer in communication. As an undergraduate, Charis had double majored in the social sciences and humanities, and her humanities mentor ceased communication once she decided she did not desire to pursue a PhD in his field. Charis noted that they had enjoyed a “great relationship” until she prioritized her own career goals. When she decided she was not going to replicate his career, “he had no use for [her] anymore.” Charis also commented on the mentor model, which is a typical structure for doctoral-level mentoring. Comparing it to her work with undergraduate mentor, Mitchell, she asserted that the mentor model is “not real mentoring, like you’re just doing someone else’s bitch work, you’re not really growing from the experience.” While this
comparison is not necessarily true for all mentor model dyads, examples of transactional mentoring relationships – specifically within the doctoral level, or mentor model, structure – were present in several participant’s narratives (Charis, Mara, Joan).

When Tahlia worked with one of her faculty mentors, she was keenly sensitive to the constraints on and value of her mentor’s time. While he was a helpful mentor for her, he was not as influential as her peer mentor, with whom she shared a much more comfortable and reciprocal relationship. When thinking about her desire to maintain professionalism with her faculty mentor, she expressed wanting to avoid wasting his time; for example, if they had a scheduled monthly meeting and she did not have much on her agenda, she would reschedule. Her voice was resolute as she confirmed, “I only went to him if I had a very packed agenda of things to discuss.” Certainly, Tahlia’s desire to take seriously her mentor’s time is not a bad thing, yet given the importance of accessibility (Support) for my participants, it seems worth noting that other participants – Tahlia included – highlighted meaningful mentoring relationships in which the mentee did not feel like she was a constraint on the mentor’s time. Perhaps there is something important about the mentor establishing a structure for meetings that intermingles regularity, flexibility, and accessibility alongside professionalism. I also wonder how Beatriz’s mentees experience her impressive, almost overwhelming focus on timeliness (e.g., setting alarms to give her exactly enough time to be on time for a mentoring session). While it might feel flattering to have a mentor who is so punctual, it could also feel stressful or distancing.

Joan also introduced an interesting experience tying in issues of professionalism and so-called traditional mentoring, though for her, gender issues were at the fore. Her
own doctoral mentor had been “harsh and mean” and made Joan feel “scared to be a
person.”

And she I think, you know, she really scared me in terms of connection, in terms
of just being human. She made me feel like it was a feminine thing that would
like keep me from getting tenure if people saw me as a person instead of as uh,
like as “the professor.” What is funny now is how I really can’t honestly, like I
couldn’t imagine being a professor, being a mentor, without being a human being
and really opening up to connection. The relationship between people is just, like
it is so foundational to making the mentoring work. But, as I was saying, back in
the beginning I was scared of that and just made it like, it was so, so…what is the
word. Perfunctory. So perfunctory. Not human. I didn’t allow that relationship,
uh, like a genuine connection to happen. And I think I missed connecting, I think I
missed mentoring because of that.

The notion that women need to suppress their femininity, including feminine modes of
relating, in order to succeed in the workplace is well-supported in organizational and
management literatures (e.g., Leskinen, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2015; von Hippel,
Sekaquaptewa, & McFarlane, 2015). And yet, I cannot help but wonder how Joan’s early
mentees experienced her; would they express appreciation for the “perfunctory” nature of
her interactions with them? Would they recount that, even though she felt a little cold,
she was really focused on their career success? Or would they sound more like Joan
when she remembers her own relationship with her graduate mentor? Despite Joan’s
obvious career success (i.e., having just reached the rank of full professor), she does not
reflect positively on the emotionally distant nature of her early mentoring interactions. As Joan shared, “I would rather be mentored by me now than me then.”

I asked each of my participants to describe what they think mentoring is, and then I followed that question by asking whether any of the components they listed were essential. Put another way, if a participant said that “commitment” is part of mentoring, I would then ask if “commitment” is an essential component of mentoring, or if they could imagine mentoring happening without commitment. In her own way, each participant engaged with this line of thinking by referencing detached, outcome-focused mentoring (i.e., several referred to this style of mentoring as traditional mentoring). For example, when asked if she could imagine a mentoring relationship without the components she had listed, Charis compared invested mentoring to a relationship that is “machine-like.”

I could conceive of mentoring relationships happening where there isn’t that deep commitment or level of investment, but I just don’t, for me personally that wouldn’t really be mentoring. It’s more like, what’s the word I’m thinking of, more machine-like, more assembly line, kind of, get in, get out. There’s not a lot of growth happening.

**Mentor misses the boat or doesn’t understand.** The notion that a good mentor “gets it” is not particularly new; a mentor attentively engaging with and understanding her mentee has been suggested to be an important component of successful mentoring (Rowley, 1999). When the mentor fails to get it, however, the gap in understanding is often blamed on the mentee for not conveying her perspective clearly enough. In fact, in a recent qualitative study examining mentorship in medical training, the authors suggested that a key mark of poor mentoring was poor communication (Straus, Johnson,


Marquez, & Feldman, 2013). While my participants did not directly speak to communication as a central issue, they did explore what happens when the mentor misses the boat or does not seem to understand the mentee’s goals or desires. Importantly, my participants’ stories implied a mentor who was simply not listening, as opposed to a mentee who was not communicating clearly.

When considering her graduate mentor in comparison to her undergraduate mentor, Mara appeared pained to juxtapose their two styles. She described her graduate mentor’s approach to mentorship as a “caricature of mentoring” that was really only focused on whether Mara was professionally successful in a way that benefitted the mentor (i.e., publication).

She was just really only focused on me publishing…she never heard me when I was trying to tell her what my actual goals and passions were, um. She um, she didn’t seem to get that I was not her, for starters, which was a huge, just such a tremendous misunderstanding I guess, between us. I think she thought I was a mini version of her, the ideal protégé, who was going to publish like crazy and try to get an R1 job and she just totally missed who I actually was.

In a similar experience, Charis reflected on how alienating it can feel to have her dissertation chair and research mentor miss the boat, especially when it is about something as important as professional identity. They had been working together on Charis’s dissertation project for several months, and throughout, Charis had not hidden her focus on applied work over research. This is not to say that Charis struck me as a someone trying to do shoddy research work to hurry up and be a practicing clinician.
Rather, applied work is obviously what has captured her heart. Her research mentor, however, seems to have missed this important aspect of Charis’s identity.

It makes me think of even now my relationship with my current advisor, I mean, I don’t know what went wrong, there was a miscommunication somewhere…he was like “oh you want to be a clinician…That’s your primary interest?!”. …the fact that he didn’t know that clinical work is my primary passion felt really disheartening and upsetting to me.

When analyzing Charis’s interview data, I realized how important the mentor-mentee relationship was to her; various relationship-oriented subthemes (e.g., being understood, her mentor really knowing her, the notion of fit) pervaded her data. If the nature of the relationship itself is as important in mentoring as is for my participants, it is worth considering how to cultivate an attentiveness in the mentor so that painful oversights like this could be avoided.

In reflecting on her relationship with her graduate mentor, Joan shared that her mentor’s desire to force Joan to pursue a similar path – even though that was not what Joan wanted for herself, was a key factor that influences how Joan mentors now. When Joan decided to apply for jobs at selective liberal arts colleges instead of R1 universities, her graduate mentor “basically cut [her] off.” Joan’s decision to follow her own dreams meant breaking with her mentor’s plan for her, and her mentor was apparently unable to hold Joan’s mentee status alongside Joan wanting to do something different with her career. Joan looked downcast as she confessed that she and her mentor “haven’t communicated in years and she was my dissertation chair.” I noticed in analyzing Joan’s interview data just how much her own graduate mentor taught her about what not to do;
Joan’s development as a mentor seems profoundly influenced by having had such a hurtful, negative experience.

But I, like, I separated myself, I went in a different direction from what would make her look the best, and it was like all that time she had put into me was a waste. I can’t imagine making it, you know, having the mentoring be about me like that. Like, ok you want to go and be a bartender even though I have put all this time into mentoring you academically and professionally – shouldn’t I be excited that my mentee is finding her path and not feel jaded and like angry that she isn’t doing what I did?

8.8 Mentoring Versus Teaching, Advising

An unexpected yet compelling theme was a comparison or juxtaposition of mentoring and other similar activities, namely teaching and advising. Some participants seemed to trace their development as mentors (or their mentor’s development as a mentor) on a continuum from teaching or advising to mentoring. In this conceptualization, it was as though mentoring is a highly invested version of academic advising, or a highly individualized version of teaching. Participants seemed to share the idea that an invested mentor was invested as a teacher or advisor, but that the inverse is not necessarily the case; for example, an invested teacher may not have taken the leap to be a mentor, too. Keely expressed her mentor’s transition from teaching to mentoring in the language of investment. When he became her mentor, he was “invested in a different way.” As her teacher, he had been invested in helping her to cultivate a sense of curiosity and a capacity for critical thinking. As her mentor his investment shifted to a focus on her professional success. His focus on her succeeding professionally again mirrors the
role of mentoring in facilitating professional success that first laid the groundwork for the mentoring literature (Levinson et al., 1978). In some ways, Keely’s perspective is echoed by Cohen’s (2012) distinction: teachers possess greater knowledge than their classrooms, whereas mentors possess greater perspective.

Some participants distinguished mentoring from teaching and advising as though they are different activities entirely; this finding aligns in some ways with academic advising literature, which conceptualizes academic advising as practice combining curriculum, pedagogy, and learning outcomes (NACADA, 2015). Other literature, however, supports the notion that advisors and mentors do overlap (Barnes & Austin, 2009; Schultz, Colton, & Colton, 2001; Titus & Ballou, 2013). Mara, for example, distinguished between mentoring and teaching when she asserted that “mentoring without being emotionally in tune with your mentee is just advising. Or even perhaps teaching – like I think I could conceive of someone who is a great teacher without really being emotionally connected to their students.” This statement surprised me, because I identify emotional investment as an important variable in both my mentoring and teaching activities (I explore this further in Chapter 10). She had difficulty understanding how someone could be a great mentor without prioritizing the mentor-mentee relationship. Similar to Keely, Mara thinks about teaching with a focus on the teacher facilitating learning, whereas mentoring is “much more about the relationship between mentor and mentee being a vehicle in a way, a vehicle for growth and development. So the emotional support, the connection, the strength of the relationship” is key.

Beatriz spoke extensively about how she viewed the difference between mentoring and teaching. For her, a teacher is in charge of content, whereas a mentor is in
charge of support and facilitating growth. For Beatriz, it seems, the roles of teacher and mentor do not overlap. Conversely, for Eloise, mentoring and teaching are on parallel, connected tracks. Growth in one area aligns with growth in the other. When I asked Eloise if her growth as a mentor has been visible in her teaching, she reflected on her growth in both areas. As she has developed as a mentor, with a focus on cultivating self-exploration and the space for the mentee to articulate her own narrative, her teaching has changed profoundly. Whereas, in the beginning of her career, she relied heavily on quantitative measures of student understanding, she now takes a much more fluid approach to assessment. She no longer gives tests, and she takes a credit/no credit approach to grading, with a heavy participation component. She recently had to revisit her teaching philosophies from earlier in her career, and it felt like seeing “somebody that you used to be really close to and that you just hadn’t seen in 20 years…I’m completely different in my approach in teaching now than I was…I do think it kind of tracks with my comfort with mentorship.” I found my participants’ use of teaching and advising to contextualize and compare against their understanding of mentoring particularly interesting; I return to discuss these experiences further in Chapter 10.

8.9 Mentor’s Passion, Identity as a Mentor

The low prevalence of this theme, at least explicitly, was quite surprising. Upon further reflection, however, I think that this theme is likely similar to the Relationship theme, in that it overlaps heavily with and is implicit in many of the other themes and subthemes. For example, a serious investment of time or devotion to empowering mentees may be largely motivated by a mentor’s passion for mentoring or conversely, an inability to turn away from an opportunity to mentor. Mara posited the latter option when
she described the time she came to her mentor’s office in tears following a relationship break-up. Musing aloud that she was impressed her mentor did not make her feel like a burden, despite the mentor going for promotion to Full Professor at the time, Mara wondered if “she would have been more burdened to know that I was upset and she turned me away.” Similarly, Joan shared that she was unsure if she could not mentor at this point in her career.

[MENTORING IS] like a calling. It’s a vocation for me, I think. I just can’t imagine not like, uh if I try to think about not mentoring, about just engaging with a student and only teaching them or only being in the professor role but not um…not engaging with them, connecting with them as a mentor. Not getting to facilitate that growth and not getting to, uh see them flourish, I think, you know, I feel it would start to all not feel worth it.

Joan grew visibly excited as she spoke these words. She leaned into the camera on her computer and I was almost certain I could see her eyes sparkling. Given her background as a first-generation college graduate who has built an impressive career – earning Full Professor at a selective liberal arts college – her assertion that, without mentoring, her work might not feel worth it felt heavy.

Charis noted that, during her undergraduate years, professors were generally more interested in mentoring: “that just seemed to be part of what they did and not just like as a job, but as something they wanted to do. They were really passionate about it.” For some mentors (e.g., Joan and Eloise), mentoring seems to be a matter of identity. When rereading these sections of interviews, I was reminded of Palmer’s (2010) assertion that “we teach who we are” (p. 2). When describing her mentor’s identity as a mentor, Mara
smiled. “She just brightened when she had the opportunity to connect – like you, uh, could almost see her put her mentor hat on.” One of Tahlia’s undergraduate mentors had a real gift for the mentoring interaction. That mentor “had a heart for hearing people’s stories, helping them think for themselves, and mostly asking questions.” Tahlia shared that the work seemed to be fulfilling and enriching for her mentor.

When I asked why she mentors, especially given how much time it takes away from other professional activities, Eloise leveled with me.

I, well, it feels like on the one hand that I couldn’t do otherwise, I mean, much like my manner it is just the way that I am. This, this is the way that I am. Uhh, so I, I’ve always been the mentor. Umm, even if it was a less mature form, or more informal forms like this is, this is just, this is who I am…Mentorship is a very natural role for me.

Her frank perspective, that being a mentor is just who she is, felt striking to me. It encouraged me interrogate my own professional priorities in a more nuanced way – why had I chosen to ask about why she mentors when it takes up so much time? I could not imagine asking why she does research when it takes up so much time, or why she prepares such thorough lectures when that takes up so much time. Nonetheless, these narratives about mentor identity and passion suggest what has been posited only occasionally in the mentoring literature: mentors may benefit substantively from mentoring.
8.10 Incorporating the Numerical Data

Before conducting this study, my rationale for using a mixed methods design was that I might learn something new, or augment my thematic findings, through the incorporation of a brief quantitative survey; in a way, the survey serves as a mode of methodological triangulation. This section should thus be considered as an augment to the thematic data. I approached the incorporation of these numerical data through the lens of a qualitative researcher. Rather than separately calculating statistical results from the survey, these data inform my thinking on the interviews, as well as in developing my formal recommendations (Chapter 12). In this section, I will briefly discuss interesting descriptive findings from the two survey measures, the Assessing Emotions Scale (AES) and the Liden Servant Leadership Scale, in the context of the thematic data.

**Emotional intelligence.** Two participants, Tahlia and Mara, explicitly talked about emotional intelligence in their interviews. I knew prior to the interview that they had each scored a high overall score on the AES (scores ranged from 133 – 161; Tahlia = 154; Mara = 158), and so it was unsurprising when the language of emotional intelligence entered the interview. When considering what makes a mentor have positive impact, Tahlia noted that “listening, that empathy” is crucial. I later asked “what is mentoring?” and she posited another aspect of emotional intelligence:

Being a good reader of people, like at various points I’ve had mentors be a little harsher with me and just call me out and say “I don’t think you’re doing this well” and they say that at the wrong moment, it might be harder to take, so I think timing and knowing when can be helpful, because it can solve a lot of issues, to up your game...being able to get the timing right.
Popular business psychology texts often distill emotional intelligence to the phrase “reader of people,” and, when rereading this section of her transcript, I was reminded that Tahlia was my only participant with business education. She highlighted the importance of the timing in a mentor gauging when to encourage, when to push, and when to take a step back – a crucial element of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995).

Conversely, Mara and Charis implied what can happen when the mentor is low in emotional intelligence. Mara’s graduate advisor “never heard [her]” when she was trying to convey her goals and passions, and she “constantly seemed to just not get it” in the context of their emotional relationship. Mara noted that this lack of emotional intelligence was a key factor in the dissolving of their relationship and her eventual decision to leave her PhD program. In a similar way, Charis described her frustration with her doctoral research mentor.

He’s been helping me develop this project and I know he really believes in it and he believes in me and he sees what I can do and that’s great, but there also seems to be a lack of understanding of how tired I am and also other stresses like being a single person in a Ph.D. program, there are certain circumstances that I would like recognized that I feel like he’s not fully attuned to… I would like to be seen as a more full person.

Charis believes that she is presenting aspects of herself to her doctoral mentor that he is missing because he is not attuned to her language and her emotional presentation. Even listening to the recording of our interview, I could hear the emotional intensity and frustration in Charis’s voice when she described this experience.

Interestingly, there were a few AES items that all 8 participants scored similarly.
On the item *When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them*, all of the participants in this study rated 5, or *strongly agree*.

Similarly, on the item *When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail*, all participants scored either a 1 (*strongly disagree*) or a 2 (*disagree*). These are interesting data to consider because they imply persistence or resilience; in the AES, these items are supposed to assess one’s ability to utilize emotion to solve problems (Schutte, Malouff, & Bhullar, 2009). Although the language of resilience did not come up explicitly in my interviews, it was implied in stories like Tahlia’s when she described her struggles with her family’s financial stresses. Keely’s story also implied resilience when she described having applied to the same doctoral program twice. Although she was not accepted on the first try, she decided to improve her application to try again. She went to her mentor, designed an independent thesis project *after* having graduated college, and took her research to conferences with his mentorship. Both Joan and Charis were first-generation college graduates, a status that is often linked to resilience. These findings led me to consider the relationship between mentoring and resilience. Although mentoring has been linked to career resilience (Arora & Rangnekar, 2014), little research has considered the relationship in the opposite direction: perhaps resilient people are more likely to participate in mentoring? This may be especially true in situations in which a mentee has to seek out mentoring on her own.

On the item *When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself*, all 4 mentors rated this item as 5, or *strongly agree*. I found this to be a striking outcome. In their own ways, each mentor highlighted particularly compelling or exciting moments of mentee
successes, and they seemed genuinely excited to share – even though the success was technically not directly theirs (a mentee gets accepted to graduate school, for example). A moment in Joan’s interview comes to mind, during which she recounted a difficult season for one of her mentees. The student had suffered a difficult break-up while she was in the midst of pursuing graduate school applications. Joan firmly refocused her mentee, reminding her of her goals, and the mentee found the strength to complete the arduous application and interview process, despite feeling like her life was in shambles. Joan recalled that “she got it together, too! You know. She took the GRE and we did her applications and, well now, she is getting that PhD.” As she shared this story, she was energized, both in the tone of her speech and in an embodied way. She leaned forward, spoke dramatically through her hand gestures, and appeared tearful, obviously still moved by this experience years later. Perhaps this ability to experience in vivo another’s success, or to be able to feel alongside a mentee during a difficult situation, is an important characteristic of a quality mentor?

Lastly, there were two additional items on which the homogeneity of participant scores was striking. On the items I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others and I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others, all participants scored themselves as strongly agree. These were two items that did not come up in the interviews, although it may be worth noting that all of my participants made a positive impression on me – they were all on time to the interview, dressed well, engaged in a fluid and supportive manner, and seemed to understand social etiquette of verbal interactions (e.g., how to begin and end a conversation, pausing to give me a chance to respond). A question arises from these observations: are mentors and mentees more
likely to be socially aware and invested in making a good impression? Or is the more salient issue that my participants were all women? Research suggests that women are better able to read emotional situations (Pohl, Bender, & Lachmann, 2005) and that social savvy matters more for women’s success than for men’s, likely because women are taken less seriously as intellectual contributors (Belenky et al., 1986; Biggs, Hawley, & Biernat, 2018; Fox, 2001). Eloise spoke to the frustrating, gendered conflation of social ability and intelligence when she mused:

I’ve had this conversation with students when we talk about gender dynamics before, like I’ve had uh, students who’ve come to me with the, you know, they’re struggling in a class or you know, whatever, in somebody else’s class, and they’ll say something like but oh “he’s so smart I don’t know I can’t, I feel really uncomfortable approaching him” and I’m thinking, what am I? Chopped liver? Cause apparently, like, you know, apparently. And so, this conflation of unapproachability with intellectual rigor is, I just use that as a pretty common example with students when we’re talking about gender, gender norms, umm, devaluing of women’s competence, umm, because it’s not that, and my uh, one of my punch lines to that is, you know, like being unapproachable just might be a sign that you’re socially unskilled. That’s not, that has nothing to do with your intellect.

Servant leadership. Participant scores on servant leadership were high overall, ranging between 133 – 138 for mentees (140 is the highest possible score) and 118 – 128 for mentors (135 is the highest possible score). This scale can be understood in 7 dimensions: emotional healing, creating value for the community, conceptual skills,
empowering, helping mentees grow and succeed, putting mentees first, and behaving ethically. Considered alongside the thematic data, the most relevant dimensions appear to be (1) empowering, (2) helping mentees grow and succeed, and (3) putting mentees first. I will briefly discuss my participants’ responses in the context of each of these dimensions.

Recent research proposes that servant leaders promote employee engagement through a phenomenon called job crafting, in which employees are empowered to proactively make their jobs more interesting (Yang, Ming, Ma, & Huo, 2017). Taken in the context of mentoring, this phenomenon might be useful to consider alongside the Mentee Growth and Professional Development theme and the Feminist Perspective: Empowerment subtheme. In a compelling story about her mentor’s empowering approach to mentee professional development, Keely spoke to the ways in which her mentor encouraged her to craft her own plan for research. He gave her “freedom and space” to explore things on her own, and he encouraged her to be creative in designing a project she found interesting. Keely credits this experience of job (or research) crafting with her freshly-discovered love of unique research methods in the social sciences.

Mentors were mixed in their endorsement of the item I encourage my mentees to handle important decisions on their own, with two mentors (Eloise, Beatriz) rating this item strongly agree and 2 mentors rating this item disagree (Alice, Joan). I hypothesize that this interesting difference might tie into the way that the mentor perceives empowerment versus support. For example, Eloise took a very hands-off approach to encouraging her mentees’ development: “it’s my job for me to listen…not for me to tell them what to do.” Alice and Joan, on the other hand, may have interpreted this item
through a supportive lens, in which case they might weight supporting mentees in making decisions as more important than empowering mentees to make decisions alone.

The second dimension, helping mentees grow and succeed, aligns with the *Mentee Growth and Professional Development* theme. Interestingly, mentors did not all rate the items *I make career and/or intellectual development a top priority with my mentees* and *I am interested in making sure that my mentees achieve their career goals* as *strongly agree*, which I was expecting based on the content of interviews. Eloise was the only mentor to rate the *intellectual development* item as *strongly agree*. No mentors rated the latter item (*mentee achieving career goals*) as *strongly agree*. In contrast, all 4 mentees rated both of these items as *strongly agree* when speaking about their mentors: *My mentor makes my career and/or intellectual development a top priority* and *My mentor is interested in making sure that I achieve my career goals*. This was the most striking discrepancy across both scales.

Given the prevalence of the *Mentee Growth and Professional Development* theme, I had expected *strongly agree* ratings on both items across all 8 participants. Apparently, mentees definitively experience their mentors as focused on their career development. I wonder if my mentor participants rated these items differently compared to mentees because of the relative weight that they seem to give to the more “holistic” aspects of mentoring. For example, supporting spiritual growth is essential for Alice’s work. Although supporting career and intellectual development is a component of her work, she may not conceptualize it as a main component. In contrast, intellectual development and feminist narrative-writing seem to go hand-in-hand for Eloise, which might give context for her comparatively discrepant rating on the *intellectual*
development item.

The third dimension, putting mentees first, informs the Support and Investment themes. All 4 mentors endorsed the item *I often care more about my mentees’ success than my own* as strongly agree. My mentor participants did not explicitly talk about this in their interviews, and I appreciated having this piece of data to inform their rich stories of empowering mentees to push for their own success and/or growth. In addition, all mentees endorsed their version of the same item (*My mentor often cares more about my success than her own*) as either agree or strongly agree. I think it is helpful to think about this item alongside mentees’ thematic data regarding the contrast to “traditional” mentors. For example, Charis and Mara both drew striking comparisons between their undergraduate mentors and their graduate mentors using servant language. Similarly, Mara evocatively drew contrast between a selfless mentor and a selfish mentor in the following exchange. She begins by speaking about her undergraduate mentor:

M: Well, she actually cares so much about her students. She gets, um, she gets stretched in so many directions all the time and yet, you know, her priority is always her students and her relationships with them. She is super, super driven about, like, about her own career and her own work, but she is not a professor who sacrifices her students at, like, you know. The altar of tenure or conference bragging or whatever. [laughing]

E: [laughing] I like that phrase! “The altar of tenure.”

M: Yeah! I mean, seriously. You know. I mean, you know I told you that I left my grad program, it was supposed to be a PhD like yours, and um. I left it because I just didn’t have anything with my advisor, with my mentor. She DID totally
sacrifice me and our relationship at, at the altar of tenure. And I lost sight of why I even…applied to the program to begin with. Her disinterest, her showing like zero interest in me, in my development. Like, that is so fucking demoralizing and you just start to wonder.

The repercussions of her graduate mentor’s style were severe, and it is evident from Mara’s language that she felt unsure of her goals and ability in response to her mentor’s lack of support and investment. In a similar moment, Charis defined mentoring as “selfless investment,” which was the style of her mentor, Mitchell. She immediately contrasted his selflessness with another mentor she had when she noted that the other mentor “definitely wasn’t selfless; it was like he was motivated for his own gain.”

A final note regarding the servant leadership data is that, overall, mentees rated their mentors higher on servant leadership than mentors rated themselves. Of course, my participants are not in dyads, and one could argue that if my mentee’s mentors were to take the survey, the scores would align more closely. However, I think something more interesting might be at play. Perhaps, much like in the organizational literature’s conceptualization of servant leadership, a servant mentor is reluctant to embrace accolades and to consider themselves as leaders of others. Mentees, who are on the receiving end of the servant mentor’s activities, do not have the same qualms about praising their mentors’ efforts, and may be more likely to provide a closer-to-accurate appraisal. In addition, I wonder whether the scale’s language relating to community service felt less relevant for my mentor participants. For example, my mentors rated community-service items like I emphasize the importance of giving back to the community and I am always interested in helping people in our community closer as
neutral items (*neither agree nor disagree*), while the mentee participants rated this as *agree* and *strongly agree*. Possibly they lump their mentor’s service to the university community in with service to mentees, resulting in a discrepantly higher set of scores.

**Concluding thoughts.** As I described at the beginning of this chapter, the *Importance of the Relationship* theme overlaps with all other themes in this dissertation and could be considered a bedrock for mentoring activities broadly speaking. When considering that theme alongside the quantitative data, the *Relationship* contextualizes the three most salient dimensions of the servant leadership scale. For example, caring about a mentee’s well-being, putting a mentee’s interest ahead of one’s own, and giving mentee’s the responsibility to make important decisions are all items that rest on the security (or not) of the mentor-mentee relationship. In addition, the *Relationship* encompasses and enriches the emotional intelligence items that were homogenously strongly endorsed among my participants. I will return to the importance of the mentoring relationship alongside these two frameworks in Chapter 10, where I attempt to integrate the metaphors of scaffold and servant.
9.1 Initial Thoughts

Throughout the course of this project – from initial conversations with my dissertation chair to now, as I write the final chapters – I have maintained rigorous work with my own mentees. In this time, four mentees in my lab have applied to graduate school, five have submitted papers for conference presentations, and one has gotten engaged to a longtime partner. One mentee broke up with her boyfriend – an end to a relationship that I have spent several hours discussing and working through with her in the context of our mentoring meetings. Another mentee completed an interview for the PhD program I am now close to completing; prepping him for his interview felt like sending my own child or sibling off to an important milestone, and I also felt closer to him knowing that we would share this unique interview experience.

I felt intensely aware, throughout this project, that I was actively engaging in the phenomenon I was seeking to understand better. I felt this especially during the interviews. As a participant told a story about an impactful moment with a mentee or described what she viewed to be the essential components of mentoring, I felt a resonance in my own body when the participant described things that felt familiar. When a participant described something I also do in my work or highlighted a phenomenon that I would also consider to be closely associated with mentoring, I felt what I can only describe as a physical resonance, a sense of recognition. My body relaxed, and I felt more confident asking the next question. In the cases where a participant shared a response that felt new, foreign, uncertain – I felt myself sit up a little straighter, my body seeming to remind me that I am the researcher and this is the interview about the
phenomenon at hand. This response was particularly present in my last interview question, regarding feminism, which I will describe more fully below.

In these moments in which I experienced a distance or a confusion over the response, I had to return to an attempt to bracket my preconceived notions about what mentoring is or what makes it work. Despite having spent substantial time engaging in mentoring and thinking about mentoring, I was not conducting interviews to confirm my own perspective; rather, I hoped to better understand and conceptually define mentoring.

9.2 Reflection on the Interviews

Participants. An obvious and perhaps striking component of this dissertation is that it is a feminist project in which all 8 participants are women-identified. I did not expressly recruit women, nor did I turn down men who expressed interest. Only one man emailed me to express interest in participating. I sent him the consent form for his review, alongside a text description of the study, and did not receive a response from him. Upon reflection, I wonder if that might be connected to the inclusion of the phrase “feminist-informed” in the title of my project. Should I have included a shortened version of my title on the consent form? Should I have mentioned in my email response that people of all gender identities are welcome to participate, and that the only important thing is that they meet my participation criteria?

Another possibility contributing to my all women participants is that perhaps women feel more compelled or moved to talk about their experiences with mentoring because, as indicated in the mentoring literature, mentoring is linked to such strong positive outcomes for women in particular. Perhaps my participants have benefited from mentoring in such meaningful ways that they feel an obligation to “give back?” In
addition, for some of my participants, a same gender mentor was a source of intense inspiration, providing a model for how to be a professional woman. For other participants, however, a cross-gender mentor provided that inspiration; for Joan, her undergraduate mentor’s investment and encouragement was a key part of her success as a first-generation college graduate who went on to complete a PhD. She credits him with her own approach to and investment in mentoring: “He showed me what it is, uh to really do this job well. To be invested above and beyond my own goals and hopes for my career, is to serve my students.” Keely also highlighted a cross-gender mentor, David, who has been essential to her professional growth. I also wonder how the gender of my mentor participants impacted their responses to the thematic data. Are the primary themes – relationship and support – more about mentoring itself, or could they be speaking more to the work of women-identified mentors and mentees?

**Rethinking research questions.** One of my research questions seemed to catch my participants off guard. When I asked “What is mentoring?” each participant seemed thrown in her own way. Keely in particular seemed confused by the question. Her nose wrinkled and she took a moment to think before provided a long-winded, rambling answer. After the interview, I turned off my tape recorder and she breathed a tremendous sigh, exclaiming that she thought the whole interview was a “trick” when I asked that question. She expressed concern that it was supposed to be a cut and dried, easy answer – and yet her experiences with mentoring felt too big to pin down and summarize quickly enough to produce a concise definition. Though the question may have caused Keely (and perhaps others) some anxiety, I chose to phrase it in such an open way in the spirit of taking on a phenomenological, natural attitude to the notion of mentoring. I wonder if
this was actually a confusing question, or if the fact that it muddied the previously clear and well-articulated responses from my participants is perhaps indicative of the issue that originally gave rise to this project: what is mentoring?

In addition, the question I asked at the end of each interview, regarding whether the participant identified as feminist, elicited much stronger responses than I had expected, both in affirmation and in negation. For Mara, Charis, Eloise, and Joan their emphatic “yes!” came as no surprise to me; by that point in the interview, I felt as though I knew each of them well and was anticipating an affirmative response. In fact, for Charis and Joan, I prefaced the question by saying “now, I think I know the answer to this from our conversation, but I’m going to ask anyway.” Upon reflection, I am not pleased with the way I set up the question. What if the answer was no? Would I have been able to hide my own confused and thrown reaction? Would I have alienated the participant? I worry that I implicitly shared my own strong feminist identify in the way I set up the question for those participants, thus perhaps skewing the strength or directionality of their responses.

Beatriz and Tahlia both surprised me with their responses. After an interview in which Beatriz described working to develop and empower her mentees, and during which she shared her own deeply moving story of become a successful classical musician and faculty member despite growing up without the material support to be successful, I was not emotionally or intellectually prepared for such a strong “no” from Beatriz. I found myself confused during her follow-up to her response, because she contextualized her “no” by saying that she believes we should not discriminate on the basis of gender or race: “There should be no difference, male, female, black, white, Asian!” Following the
interview, I wrote in my journal, “I am surprised by her ‘no’ to the question of feminist identity…she described a fundamental feminist concern!”

Alongside Beatrix’s response, I consider Tahlia’s emphatic “no.” I am still reflecting upon my own regret over the way that her interview ended. We enjoyed a strong rapport throughout the first 45 minutes of her interview. I had not previously met her, yet we sat in the coffee shop with an almost immediate rapport like close friends. When she shared that her peer mentor was able to “read” her well and responded to Tahlia’s desire to be hugged by frequently hugging her, I immediately imagined ending our interview by asking if I could hug her in gratitude for her participation. When Tahlia shared her journey from a financially-strapped childhood to her graduation from an Ivy League university, I felt deeply moved and internally cheered her on! Yet, once she explained that she did not identify as a feminist, the energy and camaraderie of the interview quickly died. I felt myself rush through my final questions while she gave emotionally distanced responses. When we stood to leave, the idea of offering to hug her in gratitude for her participation again occurred to me, but I felt too awkward and uncomfortable to linger longer than necessary. She hurried out of the coffee shop before I had the chance to wrap things up smoothly.

9.3 Connection with Participants

During the interviews, I experienced a range of emotions and felt particularly connected to a few participants. This sense of connection occurred primarily during moments of shared experience: when I recognized a shared moment and then contributed information about me to let the participant know, “ah, yes! I know what you mean.” In those moments, I was more fluid in moving, temporarily, away from my interview script.
and more fully entering into the world of the participant.

I also felt keenly aware of wanting to convey appreciation and support for participants, and to ensure they felt understood. I became especially aware of my attempts to connect when I was rereading my transcriptions and noticed sections where I talked a lot – several sentences in an attempt to get it or to confirm my understanding in a way that ensures the participant feels seen. Likewise, when analyzing Tahlia’s transcript, I came back to the pain I felt during her interview, when the rupture occurred. As I did my best to honor her response to the “are you a feminist?” question, I affirmed everything that she said with energy and effusive mmhmms. Listening to this part of her interview, and later analyzing the data, I cringed at how over-the-top my attempt at recovery was; in a way, this gave away how much more invested I was in this question than I had realized. My response also belied my internal desire to befriend her, to avoid making her feel uncomfortable, and to ensure that our different perspectives did not destroy the otherwise strong rapport we had shared over the previous 45 minutes.
Chapter 10: Reflecting on the Project

10.1 Introduction

In reflecting on this dissertation project, one component of my data stands out as particularly surprising to me: the focus that some of my participants placed on the distinction (or not) between mentoring and teaching. This was a component of the thematic data that I had not anticipated, yet it makes sense that participants would call on a phenomenon that I likely know about – teaching – to help explain mentoring, particularly when there is less attention paid to mentoring in our professional training. I would imagine that most graduate students, for example, take a course on teaching, while few take a course on mentoring. Additionally, I want to return to the notion of mentor as scaffold and mentor as servant leader. I think that the thematic data, in conjunction with my participants’ responses on the Assessing Emotions Scale and Liden Servant Leadership Scale, provide interesting grounds for rethinking mentoring in the context of these frameworks. I will first address the issue of mentoring/teaching before considering mentor as scaffold/servant.

10.2 Mentoring/Teaching?

I have conceptualized mentoring and teaching, at least in my own work, as two parts of the same process. I think about them as on a continuum of sorts, and I view my approach to teaching as deeply connected to and influencing my approach to mentoring. For me, both of these acts are deeply connected to my perspective on pedagogy – that it should be oriented towards the transformative and transgressive, and that my role as an educator or as a mentor should be focused on the growth and development of my student/mentee. I am deeply aware that undergraduate students are often in a period of questioning and exploring, of carving out their own place in the world. Developmentally,
students at the traditional undergraduate age are pulling away from embeddedness in a family unit and are trying on different ways to be themselves in the world. My hope is that I am able to encourage my students and mentees in cultivating their own narrative – rethinking as appropriate, rewriting when they feel inspired or courageous enough to do so. Yes, teaching requires a conveying of information, and I think that mentoring in many ways does, too. But I also feel strongly, and have embedded into my own pedagogical approach, that teaching should seek to transform through an engagement with students (hooks, 1994). In my work, mentoring is a more engaged and personal form of my teaching, though the importance of connection and relationship is present in both mediums.

For some of my participants, mentoring seems best understood in contrast to teaching. In a sense, they seemed to be able to define and talk about mentoring better when in contrast to teaching. We can see this at two points in Mara’s interview:

Like I feel like mentoring without being emotionally in tune with your mentee is just advising. Or even perhaps teaching – like I think I could conceive of someone who is a great teacher without really being emotionally connected to their students, but I just can’t conceive of someone being a great mentor without um, like how could you be a great mentor without the relationship being essential? I think about teaching as more relating to the conveying of information, facilitating learning, stuff like that, um. But I think mentoring is much more about the relationship between mentor and mentee being a vehicle in a way, a vehicle for growth and development. So the emotional support, the connection, the
strength of the relationship – particularly the mentor really facilitating that
happening – is just so important.

Keely also addressed a similar comparison, describing her mentor’s focus in mentorship
as fundamentally different from his goals as a teacher. Teachers focus on content,
whereas mentors focus on mentee growth and professional development. As explicated
in the Importance of the Relationship theme, it is possible that for many mentee-mentor
dyads, the closeness that springs from such an intimate relational bond makes mentoring
feel like a different activity altogether. I also wonder about the role of grading, although
it did not come up beyond one comment in Beatriz’s interview. Teachers (usually)
provide grades that are tied to performance, therefore putting more emphasis on content.
Mentors (usually) do not provide grades for performance, and mentees may thus
experience performance-related development as an opportunity for growth instead of an
opportunity for assessment.

Beatriz talked extensively about her role as a mentor alongside the teachers in her
department. I imagine that part of the distinction she drew rested on a more common
structure in music departments, where there is a primary private lesson teacher. Thus in
her case, teaching meant something much more focused than it does when considering
academic teaching more broadly. In a sense, she is a support person, and her mentoring
is more focused on the granular development of a mentee’s abilities. She described her
role in relation to her mentee’s teachers:

    So if I’ve been working with that teacher for many years then I could tell what
she’s gonna say to the student so sometimes I could, I would be able to like help
the student before they get to their lesson to fix things. Or, sometimes just to
remind them cause the teacher would always say “oh, you need more, more full bow” or something. So when we’re working together I just remind them, so basically there’s a teacher and then there’s me, who follows up what the teacher says. And usually that’s what happens, the teacher would say some things and sometimes the student would forget a lot of the details, so when we’re together I would remind those things and then there would be times when the student is not understanding what the teacher is saying, so when it’s the two of us I said “I think I can fix this [laughing]” so we do, you know, I said, and if it’s not working I’ll try another way.

In contrast, Eloise conceptualized her mentoring as “part and parcel” of her teaching. She described the overlap in her approaches to teaching and mentoring:

[Mentoring is] not separate from, umm, it’s not separate from my teaching…in fact, my teaching philosophy has evolved over the years that I think that my teaching is much more like mentorship now and my mentorship is like teaching, so, umm, my goals with teaching have moved farther and farther away from content and…are more closely aligned with promoting self-reflection and personal growth, umm, through, you know, learning the tools of critical thinking and reflection and learning the tools of, some of the tools of psychology, or how to find them, or whatever. Mentorship is a very natural role for me, umm, that in fact it in many ways is just teaching.

Here, it seems that Eloise’s overarching mentoring identity is a connector between mentoring and teaching. Her goals of encouraging students to reflect, to grow, and to
think critically are primary goals in her teaching and in her mentoring, enabling them to feel like two sides of the same coin.

10.3 Servant Mentor-as-Scaffold

In Chapter 4, I proposed two seemingly disparate conceptual frameworks for mentoring. One, the notion of mentor as scaffold, came from work on mentoring with girl activists (Brown, 2016); scaffolding more broadly is also a popular concept in higher education literatures. The other framework, the notion of mentor as servant leader, was my own proposed pairing; I attempted to bring together the organizational framework of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977) with ideas about quality mentorship. In this section, I briefly return to these two frameworks, before suggesting a rethinking of scaffold and servant in the context of mentoring.

**Scaffold.** The *Relationship* and *Support* themes were most substantial across the qualitative data, and they were augmented by high total scores on the AES for all 8 participants. Scaffolding is understood as a form of support, or putting material and emotional structures in place to enable the mentee’s success (Brown, 2016). Throughout the interviews, mentors used the language of structural support. Sometimes that was material support (e.g., reviewing personal statements), emotional support (e.g., being there for a student in crisis), or professional support (e.g., taking a student to a conference). Joan described the nature of this supportive work:

They [her mentees] come to me without that foundation, uh, often I think – both without a professional foundation and then like, also I think without a personal foundation at times. Like they don’t know who they are or what they want to do or even like what they could do in this field. So in many ways I’m here to be like
“let me show you the ropes” but it is within the context of a safe environment to explore and learn and like, to think more deeply about who they are and what they’re capable of.

Here, she beautifully described the mentor-as-scaffold metaphor. I think it is safe to say that all undergraduate mentees lack a professional foundation and appropriate training to varying degrees. Joan viewed herself as providing that foundation and structure through setting up a supportive space for exploring and learning. Of particular interest is that each of my mentee participants called upon an example of support when asked to tell me about a time that their mentor was impactful. Thus, it seems that support is a concrete way in which mentors convey their mentoring, and it is also received as an important and meaningful component of the mentor’s efforts.

**Servant leadership.** Two of my participants, Joan and Beatriz, bristled when I asked about leadership in the context of their mentoring. In their own ways, they were both quick to say that they do not see themselves as leaders, but rather as a supportive structure for their mentees. I wondered if their responses – alongside my other mentors’ thoughts (none of the 4 mentors liked the word *leader* to describe their efforts) – meant that I should discard the notion of servant leadership entirely. Yet, I have found it to be an evocative and compelling image, and I had a difficult time abandoning it too quickly. I think that two issues might be at play in my participants rejection of the word leadership. First, I asked about mentors’ conceptualizations of themselves as leaders. This may have been a useless question, if mentors do not view their work in the language of leadership; now, one could make the argument that mentoring is inherently a form of leading, but that is not the focus of this project. In addition, the word leadership may
have been a turn-off for my participants, who focused on themes of support and relational
closeness during their interviews. The potential connotations of leadership may also be
particularly negative for university faculty, given the sometimes fraught political nature
of faculty-administration relationships within the academy.

Second, all of my mentors were women, and I wonder about the implications of
using a word like leader, which is typically a male-identified concept (Eicher-Catt, 2005)
despite efforts in the business world to encourage more women to pursue leadership
roles. There is an inherent “me” focus to the way that we culturally think about
leadership (Hays & Bladder, 2016; Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010), and that implied
boastfulness could feel unappealing to mentors dedicated to an other-orientation.
Echoing my thoughts in Chapter 10, I also wonder if/how my participants’ gender
impacted the overt focus on relationship, support, and service in this dissertation, or
whether those things are less about women mentors and more about mentoring itself.

**Servant mentor-as-scaffold.** In light of my participants’ reluctance to bring
mentoring and leadership together, I propose an alternate way to think about mentoring
through the frameworks of scaffolding and servant leadership. I have learned through
this project that it need not be a question of which one, but rather both/and. Both of these
metaphors can be useful in helping potential mentors to better understand what the
mentoring role is, particularly when it is grounded in feminist principles of empowerment
and narrative-writing. Scaffolding, through a strong relational bond and attentive
support, seems essential for empowerment and professional development to occur within
a feminist-informed mentoring frame. Service, through the mentor’s self-sacrifice of
time, energy, and investment, also seems essential in facilitating mentee growth. Thus, I
propose a rethinking of the “is it scaffolding or servant leadership?” juxtaposition that I posed in Chapter 4. Instead, I think a useful conceptual framework is *servant mentor-as-scaffold*: an intrinsic orientation to serve and invest in the mentee while providing structural support to facilitate the mentee’s growth, development, and success – however that is defined.
Chapter 11: Suggested Principles for Feminist-Informed Mentorship

11.1 Introduction

In this synthesis chapter, I briefly present four principles for feminist-informed mentorship. These suggested principles have grown out of the two sources of data in this dissertation, with an emphasis on applying these ideas in faculty-undergraduate dyads. Certainly, however, these principles could apply more broadly to mentoring in other academic dyads, organizational mentoring, and community mentorship programs. In an effort to maintain the phenomenological tone of this project, I ground these principles in the emergent themes and descriptive survey data, rather than relying heavily on extant theory.

11.2 Taking a Relational Approach

The most salient and compelling theme in this project speaks to the importance of the relationship in mentoring. Although it may seem obvious, the findings from this dissertation suggest that quality mentoring – particularly feminist-informed mentoring – cannot occur without a strong relational bond between mentor and mentee. Mentors must convey and maintain an investment in getting to know the mentee as a holistic person, and not simply a service requirement or a career development case. Mentors can attempt this in a variety of ways, although one approach could be to intentionally address and incorporate issues outside of academics and career development. This serves to remind both mentor and mentee that they bring histories, perspectives, and intersectional identities to their work, as well as situating the mentoring in a broader context. Both mentors and mentees should be prepared for the relationship to shift and develop over time; in particular, mentors must be ready for the mentee to grow from novice to
professional – even to colleague! – in a shift that can be a difficult adjustment. In sum, for feminist-informed mentoring to occur, both the mentor and mentee must attend to the strength of a relational, mentoring alliance by maintaining attentiveness and openness, and by bringing their authentic selves to the mentorship.

11.3 The Role of Scaffolding and Servant Mentorship

Scaffolding, via support and care, is a useful and compelling metaphor for mentorship – particularly in the faculty-undergraduate dyad, in which the mentee is in a particularly transitional season of her personal and professional life. The mentor-as-scaffold provides needed structural support – material, emotional, intellectual – for her mentees. She removes levels of support as the mentee grows and develops to be more capable, confident, and independent in her thinking and ability. In this process, it is crucial for the mentor to clearly convey her belief in her mentee’s potential, so that her scaffolding feels both empowering and temporary; the mentee will eventually grow to a point where she no longer needs her mentor in the same capacity. Feminist-informed mentor/scaffolds must be intentional about opening space for connection and exploration, whether that is literal space (e.g., mentor’s office) or figural (e.g., engaged listening, empowering and encouraging mentees to think in diverse ways).

A mentor as scaffold is a mentor committed to service to her mentees and to her field (i.e., a servant mentor), and she is committed to developing her mentees through her investment and attentiveness. Mentors can attempt this through regular meetings and encouragement via electronic communication, as well as providing material support (e.g., reviewing mentee’s professional documents, applications, vitae). Mentors can also engage in scaffolding by shepherding students during their initial forays into the
professional world: taking mentees to conferences, helping them submit papers for presentation or publication, and attending important mentee performances or presentations. A servant mentor-as-scaffold is a supportive, caring face in the audience – essential in those first attempts at professional engagement, who then becomes less essential as the mentee gains knowledge, experience, and confidence. Mentors who desire to work in this way take a feminist-informed approach to mentorship through their focus on lifting up minority and first-generation students, connecting them with and educating them in the “tools of the trade” that are difficult to come by without a formal guide. In a powerful feminist-informed move, a servant mentor-as-scaffold flips the traditional structure of mentoring by positioning herself below her mentees; importantly, however, male servant mentors must also take up mentoring in this way, lest it be transmuted into another version of well-worn stereotypes about women faculty who serve their students at the expense of professional growth.

11.4 Importance of Emotional Intelligence

The mentoring relationship and the possibility of servant mentor-as-scaffold both rely heavily on the mentor’s emotional intelligence. Each of the tasks suggested in the principles above all but require one or more competencies that are inherent to emotional intelligence – including the ability to express and regulate one’s emotions, as well as correctly interpret and respond to others’ emotions. A focus on emotional intelligence draws attention to the relational aspects of feminist-informed mentoring, meaningfully calling into question academic mentoring models that assume an emotional connection or social savvy to be moot, or at most, superfluous.

For faculty interested in serving as mentors, an attunement to their own emotional
intelligence abilities is imperative. As Palmer (2010) has passionately reminded us, critically-minded and engaged educators must move from a pedantic focus on technique to an incorporation and attentiveness to emotionality. Courageous and emotionally intelligent mentoring is vulnerable (hooks, 1994), requiring mentors to be open to sharing themselves with mentees. For faculty interested in mentoring whose emotional intelligence muscle is not strong, take heart! While emotional intelligence is hypothesized to be a relatively stable aptitude, many researchers argue that emotional knowledge, or the kind of information that informs emotional intelligence, can be learned (e.g., Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004; Pool & Qualter, 2012). Importantly, adaptive emotional functioning does not benefit the mentor only in mentoring; high emotional intelligence is linked to a variety of positive health and well-being outcomes (Schutte, Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2007).

11.5 Authentic Narrative-Writing, Self-Discovery

The most explicitly feminist of these principles is an emphasis on narrative and self-discovery. Numerous feminist theorists have highlighted the importance of narrative in constructing identity, strengthening feminist advocacy, and empowering systemically disempowered people. A focus on narrative in the context of mentoring enables these important processes, while also facilitating mentee growth and development. Through a focus on constructing her own narrative – “spinning her own story” (Eloise) – a mentee also begins to construct a professional identity. Through a focus on empowerment in mentoring, the mentee feels like she is taken seriously, she develops confidence, and she begins to see her own potential. The possibility for authentic self-discovery arises.

Through a model of mentoring that prioritizes narrative, mentees are encouraged
to challenge their preconceived notions about themselves and their abilities. The story they have been told about themselves is called into question as their own voice is cultivated and given priority (Belenky et al., 1986). Mentors can attentively facilitate this work by showing genuine care, by intentionally calling into question a mentee’s assumptions about her abilities, potential, and place in the university and the broader world. In turn, mentors must remain committed to an ethic of reflexivity, humility, and willingness to continually examine their own self-narrative. Like my participants, mentors who engage in feminist-informed, relational mentoring run the risk of rewriting their own stories about themselves as they learn from and are inspired by mentees. As a mentee articulates the person she is becoming through the process of feminist-informed mentoring, so too does the mentor.
Chapter 12: In Conclusion

12.1 Defining Quality Mentoring

At the beginning of this project, I presented a brief survey of definitional issues in the field of mentoring research. Following Jacobi (1991) and Crisp and Cruz (2009), I used this dissertation to ask what is mentoring? Following Fassinger (1997), I wondered does feminism have something to do with quality mentoring? Now, through my participants’ stories, I attempt to address both of these questions.

Mentoring represents a dyadic relationship in which one member, the mentor, is further along in their professional development. Within an academic mentoring dyad, the mentor should be further along in a specific field that she shares with her mentee, though the mentee need not stay in the shared field for the mentoring to have been impactful. The mentor offers professional and personal experience, provides support to the mentee, and is present to the mentee’s needs and growth. The mentee is responsive, takes seriously the expertise and investment of the mentor, and engages in professional development through the mentoring work.

To augment this definition, I argue that quality mentoring, as addressed in Chapter 12, is inherently relational and feminist-informed. Quality mentoring focuses on the unique and dynamic relationship between mentor and mentee. A quality mentor operates through what I call a servant mentor-as-scaffold framework, in which she serves her mentees through generosity of time and resources, as well as providing necessary and empowering structural support. Quality mentors display emotional intelligence and demonstrate a commitment to emotionally-informed, relational interactions with mentees. In a bold move, at least for the academe, the emotionally intelligent mentor welcomes
emotionality to the mentoring relationship. Through this welcoming and attentiveness, the mentee in a feminist-informed, relational mentoring dyad grows personally as well as professionally. The mentee explores questions beyond “what should I do with my career?” (Tahlia) and moves to questions like “what am I capable of?” (Keely) and “how do I want to live my life?” (Mara).

As such, quality mentoring attends to the centrally important project of authentic narrative-writing and self-discovery, which many argue is an inherently feminist one (e.g., Belenky et al., 1986; Lee, 1997). The quality mentor presents herself to her mentee with honesty, vulnerability, and genuineness. She models authenticity and encourages mentees to find their own voices, spin their own stories, and be fully themselves – all parts of a radically feminist and relational move (Belenky et al., 1986). In addition, the mentor acknowledges the impact of the mentoring relationship on her own development, recognizing the mentee as a unique source of knowledge, experiences, and perspective.

Thus, I argue that to engage in quality mentoring is to engage in feminist-informed, relational mentoring. As I posited in Chapter 12, the following principles are four ways that mentors and mentees can begin to engage in feminist-informed mentoring:

1) Mentors must take a relational approach, attending to the nature of the mentoring dyad above all else. Through this attentiveness, the mentor models the importance of the relationship for the mentee. The mentor must model vulnerability by bringing her authentic self to the mentoring; through this modeling, the mentee may develop the trust to respond in kind.

2) Feminist-informed mentors are scaffolds for their mentees, providing essential structural supports and belief in the mentee’s abilities. These mentors are also
committed to flipping the traditional mentoring narrative of top-down mentoring by adopting the servant mentor model of positioning themselves below mentees as they uplift mentees through their investment in the relationship. Again, it is imperative that men engage in this aspect of feminist-informed mentoring so that it does not inadvertently become another way that women mentors sacrifice through service while men maintain the hierarchy of traditional, leader-follower (or top-down) mentoring.

3) The mentor’s development of and attention to emotional intelligence is central. The mentor’s emotional intelligence and commitment to the emotional dimension of the mentoring work powerfully and importantly undermines the traditional mentoring narrative in which mentee success is the paramount outcome, regardless of emotional connection between mentor and mentee. In addition to strengthening the mentoring relationship, the emotionally-attuned mentor models the importance of engaging with others’ emotions – an important skill for life and work.

4) A focus on authentic narrative writing and self-discovery is paramount to feminist-informed mentoring. Mentors must show care, maintain a commitment to reflexivity, and model authenticity as their mentees explore new ways of thinking and challenge preconceived notions. This component of feminist-informed mentoring is particularly important for working with underserved mentees who might come to the mentoring relationship with particularly engrained beliefs “truths” about themselves and their capabilities.
Mentors who are committed to reexamining mentoring as a relational task would benefit from taking these principles seriously in their own work. Likewise, formal programs of mentorship, particularly among faculty-undergraduate dyads, should consider using these principles as an essential starting point in developing new ways of doing mentoring.

12.2 Limitations of the Present Study

There were a few somewhat obvious limitations to this dissertation project. I will briefly discuss them here. First, my participants were homogenous in terms of gender identity. With all women participants, the data and findings must be taken in the context of women’s experience, broadly speaking. The interview and survey data might have looked quite different with a mix of men and women participants, and I wonder if the richness of thematic content that speaks to relationship and support would be present in the same way. Conversely, however, there may be something about mentorship itself that gave rise to the prevalence of these themes in the data, and gender had less to do with it than I am hypothesizing. I did have a more diverse sample in terms of racial identity, socioeconomic background, and sexual orientation, which was refreshing in a project that hopes to influence mentorship with diverse groups.

Second, I utilized surveys to access participant thoughts on emotional intelligence and servant leadership. For the quantitative researcher, a limitation would be the issue of self-report, and of course my very, very small sample size. For the qualitative researcher, a limitation would be that I utilized validated survey measures instead of incorporating open-ended questions about these phenomena into the interviews in an explicit way. Although I could have incorporated a few open-ended questions about servant leadership and emotional intelligence into my interview guide, I was particularly interested in
approaching mixed methods data collection in a somewhat novel way, by examining survey responses from a small participant pool at the item level, alongside and in communication with interview data.

Third, despite nearing the end of a rigorous PhD program, I am still very much a novice qualitative researcher. Although I did my best in the process of conducting this research, this project was only my second attempt at thematic analysis, and my first attempt at bringing quantitative data into meaningful dialogue with qualitative data. I look forward to developing my skills in qualitative research as I develop in my work with my own professional mentors.

12.3 Suggestions for Future Research

There is much work to be done in pursuing the question of quality mentoring. Although these data and resulting principles provide a rich qualitative basis for thinking about what mentoring is – and more specifically, what feminist-informed mentoring might look like – one qualitative study is simply not enough to effectively respond to the initial calls for better conceptual and operational definitions (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991). Yet, it is a start. The process of conducting this study has encouraged and inspired me to think about new questions related to mentoring and feminism.

In addition, it would be enriching to conduct a similar study with a mixed gender, or even all men, population to pursue the question of “are these data about mentoring or about women’s perspectives on mentoring?” I think the answer, for now, is both. But this is an important avenue for future work. Looking forward, I hope that the Principles for Feminist-Informed Mentoring (Chapter 12) can serve as a springboard for those interested in either (a) developing a formal program of feminist-informed mentoring at
the faculty-undergraduate level, or (b) loosely beginning to incorporate these suggestions in their own mentoring work.

12.4 Closing Reflection

I have spent months eagerly awaiting the opportunity to write closing remarks on my dissertation project, yet now that the time is here, I am unsure of what to say, of how to conclude. When I am uncertain as a researcher, I go back to my data and try to be brief. So to conclude this project, I will return to my participants and their stories. Over the course of this project, I have learned a tremendous amount from my participants. From my mentor participants, I have learned about dedication, support, genuine care, and a relentless devotion to bettering others. From my mentee participants, I have learned about trust, empowerment, and an admirable commitment to growth. It is my hope that the data and findings from this dissertation contribute meaningfully to the psychological literature on mentoring. I also hope that the principles that have grown out of this research can be put to good use, particularly in the development of impactful, feminist-informed undergraduate mentoring programs.
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Appendix A

Survey

Basic demographic questions:

What is your age? _______

What is your gender? Male, female, would rather not answer, other (includes “write-in” option)

What is your race? Caucasian, African American, Latino, Asian, Pacific Islander, other (includes “write-in” option)

What is your sexual orientation? Heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, asexual, other (includes “write-in” option)

What is your highest level of education? Some high school, high school diploma, some college, undergraduate degree, masters degree, doctoral degree (JD, MD, PhD), other (includes “write-in” option)

EQ Items

Assessed using 5-pt Likert scale (1= Strongly Disagree and 5=Strongly agree)

1. I know when to speak about my personal problems to others.
2. When I am faced with obstacles, I remember times I faced similar obstacles and overcame them.
3. I expect that I will do well on most things I try.
4. Other people find it easy to confide in me.
5. I find it hard to understand the non-verbal messages of other people.*
6. Some of the major events of my life have led me to re-evaluate what is important and not important.
7. When my mood changes, I see new possibilities.
8. Emotions are one of the things that make my life worth living.
9. I am aware of my emotions as I experience them.
10. I expect good things to happen.
11. I like to share my emotions with others.
12. When I experience a positive emotion, I know how to make it last.
13. I arrange events others enjoy.
14. I seek out activities that make me happy.
15. I am aware of the non-verbal messages I send to others.
16. I present myself in a way that makes a good impression on others.
17. When I am in a positive mood, solving problems is easy for me.
18. By looking at their facial expressions, I recognize the emotions people are experiencing.
19. I know why my emotions change.
20. When I am in a positive mood, I am able to come up with new ideas.
21. I have control over my emotions.
22. I easily recognize my emotions as I experience them.
23. I motivate myself by imagining a good outcome to tasks I take on.
24. I compliment others when they have done something well.
25. I am aware of the non-verbal messages other people send.
26. When another person tells me about an important event in his or her life, I almost feel as though I have experienced this event myself.
27. When I feel a change in emotions, I tend to come up with new ideas.
28. When I am faced with a challenge, I give up because I believe I will fail.*
29. I know what other people are feeling just by looking at them.
30. I help other people feel better when they are down.
31. I use good moods to help myself keep trying in the face of obstacles.
32. I can tell how people are feeling by listening to the tone of their voice.
33. It is difficult for me to understand why people feel the way they do.*

**Servant Leadership Items: Mentor**
1. I care about my mentees’ personal well-being.
2. I take time to talk with my mentees on a personal level.
3. I can recognize when my mentees are feeling down without having to ask.
4. I emphasize the importance of giving back to the community.
5. I am always interested in helping people in our community.
6. I am involved in community activities.
7. I encourage my mentees to volunteer in the community.
8. I can tell if something is going wrong with one of my mentees.
9. I am able to effectively think through complex problems.
10. I have a thorough understanding of the university and its goals.
11. I can solve work or research problems with new or creative ideas.
12. I give my mentees the responsibility to make important decisions about their education and/or research activities.
13. I encourage my mentees to handle important decisions on their own.
14. I give my mentees the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way they feel is best.
15. When my mentees have to make an important decision regarding their education or research, I do not require that they consult me first.
16. I make career and/or intellectual development a top priority with my mentees.
17. I am interested in making sure that my mentees achieve their career goals.
18. I provide my mentees with work experiences that enable them to develop new skills.
19. I want to know about my mentees’ career goals, and my mentees know that.
20. I often care more about my mentees’ success than my own.
22. I often sacrifice my own interests to meet my mentee’s needs.
23. I do what I can to make my mentee’s “jobs” easier (e.g., research activities, choosing classes).
24. I hold high ethical standards.
25. I am always honest.
26. I would not compromise ethical principles to achieve success.
27. I value honesty more than success.

**Servant Leadership Items: Mentee**
1. I would seek help from my mentor if I had a personal problem.
2. My mentor cares about my personal well-being.
3. My mentor takes time to talk with me on a personal level.
4. My mentor can recognize when I am feeling down without having to ask.
5. My mentor emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community.
6. My mentor is always interested in helping people in our community.
7. My mentor is involved in community activities.
8. My mentor encourages me to volunteer in the community.
9. My mentor can tell if something is going wrong with me.
10. My mentor is able to effectively think through complex problems.
11. My mentor has a thorough understanding of the university and its goals.
12. My mentor can solve work or research problems with new or creative ideas.
13. My mentor gives me the responsibility to make important decisions about my education and/or research activities.
14. My mentor encourages me to handle important decisions on my own.
15. My mentor gives me the freedom to handle difficult situations in the way I feel is best.
16. When I have to make an important decision regarding my education or research, my mentor does not require that I consult him/her first.
17. My mentor makes my career and/or intellectual development a top priority.
18. My mentor is interested in making sure that I achieve my career goals.
19. My mentor provides me with work experiences that enable me to develop new skills.
20. My mentor wants to know about my career goals, and I know that.
21. My mentor often cares more about my success than his/her own.
22. My mentor often puts my best interests ahead of his/her own.
23. My mentor often sacrifices his/her own interests to meet my needs.
24. My mentor does what he/she can to make my “jobs” easier (e.g., research activities, choosing classes).
25. My mentor holds high ethical standards.
26. My mentor is always honest.
27. My mentor would not compromise ethical principles to achieve success.
28. My mentor values honesty more than success.
Appendix B
Recruitment Flyers

For faculty mentors:

Are you a faculty member who identifies as a mentor, either at present or within the past five years? Are you interested in participating in an interview about your impressions and experiences of mentoring?

Participation includes an interview lasting no longer than one hour and a survey lasting approximately 15 minutes. The interview will explore your experiences of mentoring. The survey will collect demographic information and assess your perceptions of mentoring and emotions.

Please contact Elizabeth Bennett at bennette1@duq.edu to learn more about participating in this project!

For undergraduate student mentees:

Are you an undergraduate student who identifies as a mentee (meaning, you have a faculty mentor at your university)? Are you interested in participating in an interview about your impressions and experiences of mentoring?

Participation includes an interview lasting no longer than one hour and a survey lasting approximately 15 minutes. The interview will explore your experiences of mentoring. The survey will collect demographic information and assess your perceptions of mentoring and emotions.

Please contact Elizabeth Bennett at bennette1@duq.edu to learn more about participating in this project!
Appendix C
Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Mentors

Hi _______. Welcome, my name is Elizabeth.

   How are you doing?
   Do you feel ready to begin?

I have a form to review with you. [REVIEW CONSENT FORM]

I would like to start by asking you some background questions.

   - Can you tell me your name and age?
   - What is your current position (e.g., associate professor, lecturer)

Let’s now move into the more in-depth part of the interview. I’m interested in exploring a few aspects of your experiences of mentoring more in depth with you. Does that sound ok?

Let’s start with your journey to mentoring.

   SAMPLE questions:

   - Did you have a mentor when you were an undergraduate?
     o Please tell me more about that relationship.
   - How long have you identified as a mentor?

Let’s move into your thoughts about mentoring in general.

   SAMPLE questions:

   - Tell me about a mentee you have worked with recently.
   - Tell me about a time when you felt particularly impactful as a mentor.
   - Tell me about a time when you struggled as a mentor.
   - Why do you mentor students?

   - What is mentoring?
     o As in, what makes a mentoring relationship a mentoring relationship?
     o What aspects of a mentoring relationship do you think are particularly important?
     o Are there any essential components of mentoring?
   - How does mentoring work?
     o What do you think makes mentoring effective? What do you think makes it ineffective?
- Why are you involved in (or why have you been involved in) mentoring?
- What is your primary goal as a mentor?
- How do you see yourself in relation to your protégés?
  o Do you consider yourself to be a scaffold, of sorts, for your protégés?
  o How do you see leadership fitting into your concept of yourself as a mentor? Do you feel like a leader?

[If appropriate]:

SAMPLE questions:

- Do you identify as a feminist?
  o Do you “see” your feminism in your mentoring? If so, what does this look like in practice?

Is there something important that we haven’t had the chance to talk about yet?

Is there anything that you’d like to tell me before we finish for today?

[WRAPPING UP]

Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate your generosity in sharing your experiences with me.
Semi-Structured Interview Guide for Protégés

Hi ________. Welcome, my name is Elizabeth.

- How are you doing?
- Do you feel ready to begin?

I have a form to review with you. [REVIEW CONSENT FORM]

I would like to start by asking you some background questions.

- Can you tell me your name and age?
- What is your current position (e.g., senior, graduate student, young career professional)
- How long have you had/did you have a mentor while in college?
- If you are not currently mentoring, when was your most recent mentoring relationship?

Let’s now move into the more in-depth part of the interview. I’m interested in exploring a few aspects of your experiences of mentoring more in depth with you. Does that sound ok?

SAMPLE questions:

- Tell me about your mentor.
  o How did you meet him/her?
- How do you tend to feel after meeting with your mentor?
- Tell me about a time when your mentor was particularly impactful.
- Tell me about a time when you felt understood by your mentor.
- Tell me about a time when your mentor (current or previous) seemed to “miss the boat” or not understand what you needed from him/her?

- What is mentoring?
  o As in, what makes a mentoring relationship a mentoring relationship?
  o What aspects of a mentoring relationship do you think are particularly important?
  o Are there any essential components of mentoring?
- How does mentoring work?
  o What do you think makes mentoring effective?
  o Do you think you could obtain the same benefits that you have achieved from being mentored through another means? (e.g., perhaps a peer relationship)

- Why are you involved in mentoring?
- What is your primary goal as a protégé?
  o What are you most hoping to attain from a mentoring relationship?
o What types of things do you tend to discuss or work on with your mentor?

[If appropriate]:

SAMPLE questions:

- Do you identify as a feminist?
- Do you think your mentor is feminist? Tell me more about why you think that.
  o Do you “see” your feminism in your mentoring relationship? If so, what does this look like in practice?

Is there something important that we haven’t had the chance to talk about yet?

Is there anything that you’d like to tell me before we finish for today?

[WRAPPING UP]

Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate your generosity in sharing your experiences with me.
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE:
Mentor as Scaffold: A Mixed-Methods Exploration of Feminist-Informed Mentoring in the Undergraduate Setting

INVESTIGATOR:
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Doctoral Student, Clinical Psychology
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ADVISOR:
Lori Koelsch, PhD
Associate Professor, Clinical Psychology
McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts
205 Rockwell Hall, 600 Forbes Ave
Pittsburgh, PA, 15282

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Duquesne University.

PURPOSE:
You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate the phenomenon of mentoring, with a specific focus on mentoring at the undergraduate level. In order to qualify for participation, you must be either (1) a faculty mentor who is currently in a mentoring relationship or has been in one within the past 5 years or (2) an undergraduate student who is currently in a mentoring relationship with a faculty member.

PARTICIPANT PROCEDURES:
To participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an interview and a survey. The interview will last no longer than one hour and will take place in a location that is convenient to you. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. During the interview, you will be asked questions about mentoring, including question regarding
your own mentoring relationships and your understanding of what mentoring is. You have the option to decline answering any questions that you do not wish to answer. The survey will ask you questions about mentoring and emotions. You will also be asked basic demographic questions (e.g., age, gender). The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You will be able to complete the survey online using a link that will be provided to you prior to the interview, and you will be asked to complete the survey before the interview begins.

These are the only requests that will be made of you.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:**
There are minimal risks associated with participating in this study, but no greater than those encountered in everyday life. You may become upset by recounting a negative interaction with a past mentor or mentee during the interview. A benefit for participation is that your contributions to the study may impact broader understanding of mentoring in psychological and higher education literatures.

**COMPENSATION:**
There is no compensation for participating in this study. Participation in this project will require no monetary cost to you.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**
Your participation in this study and any personal information that you provide will be kept confidential at all times and to every extent possible. Upon agreeing to participate, you will be given a unique identifier code; you will be asked to enter your unique code at the start of the survey. Only the primary researcher will have access to your code. Once transcribed, qualitative and quantitative data will be connected using the your unique identifier code and your actual name will not appear in the stored data files. Your name will never appear on any survey or research instruments. All written and electronic forms and study materials will be kept secure. Transcribed data gathered from this study may be presented at professional conferences and/or published in academic journals. Video and audio recordings will only be shared with the investigator, advisor, and/or transcriber. Data will be stored securely in password-protected files on a password-protected computer belonging to the investigator. Audio recordings will be stored for one year and then destroyed by wiping them from the hard drive of the investigator’s computer. Any written study materials with personal identifying information will be maintained for three years after the completion of the research and then destroyed my wiping them from the hard drive of the investigator’s computer. Transcripts, survey results, and other files related to analysis will be stored securely for three years and then destroyed by wiping them from the hard drive of my computer.

**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 by emailing or calling Elizabeth Bennett and expressing your desire to withdraw. Your data will simply be removed from analysis upon your request to withdraw.

**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 Elizabeth Bennett at 404.333.2682 or Dr. Lori Koelsch at 412.396.1614. Should I have any questions regarding protection of human subject issues, I may contact Dr. David Delmonico, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board, at 412.396.1886.

___________________________________  __________________
Participant’s Signature                Date

___________________________________  __________________
Researcher’s Signature                 Date