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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Adult Development of Positive Personality Traits

Through Character Formation Mentoring

by

Robert Mark Colborn

M.Div., Emmanuel School of Religion

B.Th., Atlanta Christian College

Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

General Psychology: Research and Evaluation

Walden University

May 2016

Abstract

Positive psychologists have published hundreds of empirical studies correlating positive personality traits with improved outcomes in mental health, physical health, academic and career success, resilience, relationships, and personal happiness. But there remains a dearth of research on the emergence and development of positive personality traits. This grounded theory, qualitative research sought to discover whether positive personality traits can be developed in adult mentoring relationships. Sixteen participants responded in structured interviews about the benefits of their mentoring experiences, and in addition to performing coding analysis as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the researcher also compared the answers to Peterson and Seligman's taxonomy of positive traits (2004). Unprompted participant responses overwhelmingly asserted increase of positive traits, as well as five other benefit categories. Improved traits appeared across a wide range of mentee characteristics, and situations, including negative ones, as long as mentors communicated unconditional positive regard and possessed desirable competencies. Social considerations of this research include the possibility that, in combination with therapies to address negative aspects of a client situation, therapists using intentional positive trait development could support recovery, resilience, hope, wisdom, thriving, and all of the benefits positive psychology has correlated to the presence of positive personality traits. Future studies building on this research may include a longitudinal study to understand what situations and character types are most conducive for positive trait development, as well as questions regarding which traits appear in which mentoring situations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In the fifteen or so years since the beginning of the positive psychology movement, the subject of positive personality traits has received ongoing attention because of their demonstrable value for physical and mental health, academic and career success, subjective well being, and quality of life (e.g., Kuncel, Ones, and Sackett, 2010; Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, and Goldberg, 2007). However, an examination of the research performed on positive traits to date demonstrates that little work has been done among positive psychologists to discover the sources of positive personality traits in individuals, or to search out the possibilities of their emergence or development. The positive psychology literature, as will be discussed further in Chapter two, has affirmed that positive traits appear to be due less to heritability than environment (e.g., Park & Peterson, 2006b; Proctor, Maltby, & Linley, 2009; Roberts and Mroczek, 2008; Robins, Fraley, Roberts, and Trzesniewski, 2001; Roberts, Walton, and Viechtbauer, 2006b). Such a conclusion would seem to set the stage for an interest in trait development. However, a review of the Values in Action website (www.viacharacter.org), one of the largest collections of research on positive traits, does not happen to include study on emergence or development of traits. It does include their value in multiple outcomes, techniques for alleviating depression, or increasing success by intentional application of such traits either by direct application, or as subjects for focus or reflection. The chief exception is resilience, which has been considered developmentally (e.g., Reivich and Shatte, 2002). Martin Seligman's positive psychology website at UPA,

positivepsychology.org, presents focuses on cultivating positive life and work environments, happiness, optimism, but not on emergence or development of positive traits, with the occasional exception of resilience.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 reveals relatively few studies in educational psychology, social psychology, or ethnographic study, which may imply trait improvement, but positive traits are not named in these studies either in the research questions or results. Chapter 2 also makes brief reference to ancient traditions in philosophy or religion that assume one's character, a concept which includes ones positive traits, can be improved by direct mentoring, but these traditions that have existed for millennia around the globe have not been studied scientifically with respect to the emergence of positive personality traits.

Blaine Fowers is a modern values ethicist who often expresses, as will be cited later, that positive character, and the majority of its traits, are socialized (Fowers, 2008). But, Fowers speaks theoretically, and his ideas have not yet been the basis of scientific research. The assumption of this study is that the chief factor most likely responsible for the development of positive personality traits when they arise is existence in a person's life of human relationships that directly encourage character formation.

In the trait taxonomy that is fundamental to this project's research questions, Petersen and Seligman (2004) bring interest in environmental influences on trait development when they say, "We instead rely on the new psychology of traits that recognizes individual differences that are stable and general but also shaped by the individual's setting and thus capable of change" (Petersen & Seligman, 2004, p.10). But,

then, in the next breaths they explicitly appear to remove such interest as being properly within the scope of psychology:

> Some of our colleagues who are just as concerned with the good life prefer to look exclusively outside the individual to identify and create the conditions that enable health. They either distrust the notion of character because of its inadvertent political connotations or believe that psychological factors pale in comparison to the impact of situations. We also believe that positive traits need to be placed in context; it is obvious that they do not operate in isolation from the settings, proximal and distal, in which people are to be found. A sophisticated psychology locates psychological characteristics within people and people within their settings broadly construed. Some settings and situations lend themselves to the development and/or display of strengths, whereas other settings and situations preclude them. Settings cannot be allowed to recede into the distant background when we focus on strengths. Enabling conditions as we envision them are often the province of disciplines other than psychology, but we hope for a productive partnership with those other fields in understanding the settings that allow the strengths to develop (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 11).

This statement from Peterson and Seligman bears consideration: .It begins with an assumption that those who look to an individual's environment must be doing so exclusively, and that lack of trust in the individual's internal effects alone must be the result of some political view, or that environment necessarily overshadows all things internal. These are unfortunate assertions, and display differences in the positive and

humanist psychology perspectives which I will discuss in more detail later. For now, let me simply say that the humanist psychology model allows for the individual's psychology to be considered holistically with both internal and external factors in focus. The authors then concede that internal factors develop in interaction with environment, including with the individual's social relationships. Finally, at the same time the authors assert that settings must not be allowed to remain unconsidered in the background, they then assert that consideration of the settings belongs outside of psychology. This also seems unfortunate, that the authors would assume that character, a factor they clearly consider to be within the province of psychology, is somehow considered separately from the very environmental conditions which would cause character to develop. The final words affirm this research's core hypothesis, that social environment supports the development of such traits.

There is ample historical evidence in the domains of philosophy and religion that human beings have for thousands of years attempted to develop positive traits, also known as strengths and virtues, intentionally through various disciplines and mentoring processes. Whether we study Plato's training of his disciples with a philosophy of wisdom and beauty, the preeminent focus of Jesus and the primitive Christian church on discipleship as the development of spiritual character, the assessed and lived out modeling practices of the Sufis, and several other historical strands to be explored in the literature review, it is clear that there has been much human effort, thought and writing given to the development of human character through mentoring. But, positive psychologists have not demonstrated curiosity in research about the possibility of

intentional positive trait development. Behavior and depression problems among children and adolescents have provoked the need for multiple studies on personality development and behavior shaping in public school settings (e.g., Bundick, Yeager, & Damon, 2008; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton, & Caspi, 2006). Psychological advocacy has also produced some work on trait development for disadvantaged women (e.g., Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). However, these projects were not initiated by positive psychologists, but among educational and social psychologists respectively, and positive traits are not mentioned specifically in the research questions or results.

Once we observe from existing research that positive personality traits provide important support for human well-being, and then note that there may exist the possibility of developing such traits intentionally, then it is clear that there is a need for a theory concerning the emergence and development of positive personality traits grounded in data. If positive personality traits can be developed on purpose, even in adults, then they might conceivably be encouraged in counseling and psychology to facilitate better functioning and experience in client situations of all types.

Early leaders in positive psychology dated the sub-discipline as five years old in 2005, indicating that its existence as a discipline roughly coincides with the beginning of the 21st century (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Positive psychology focuses on positive traits, positive institutions, positive emotion, and positive relationships. While traditional psychology is dominated by repairing pathology, positive psychology

promotes cognitive, emotional, and behavioral health. (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology also alters the definition of health. It is no longer enough that pathology is absent: Health refers to a human condition that can be broadly described as excellent and flourishing (Cornum, Matthews, & Seligman, 2011). Another researcher has described positive psychology's effort to support persons in flourishing instead of merely surviving or languishing (Keyes, 2009). But, positive traits, cognitions, emotions, and enabling institutions, all affect how persons can face even the most severe of challenges and threats (Peterson & Park, 2006).

The insight fundamental to the emergence of positive psychology is that psychology's general approach over the last one hundred years has been profoundly incomplete because of its evident obsession with disorder (Sepah, 2011). Mainstream psychology has focused heavily on what goes wrong in human life, traits, and behaviors rather than on what is right or how to make things better. This is evidenced by the ratio of about 93% of all journal articles in the discipline being so directed (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). There have been rare exceptions, such as the awareness of McCrae and John (1992) that the five factor model, a widely used and accepted personality assessment, contains among its factors two which relate to traditional virtue concepts: conscientiousness and agreeableness.

Virtue ethicist Blaine Fowers, argue that without concepts of virtue, psychology produces interpretations of noble behaviors that are nonsensical in their shallowness and narrowness. He says, the great compassion and generosity of Mother Teresa ends up

interpreted at best as "prosocial" behavior, and at worst, self-interest in feeling saintly. Spousal or patriotic loyalty is couched as interest in reward. Even the dramatic courage and sacrifice of first responders, such as the police and firefighters at 9/11, would be described by traditional psychology as a subconscious pursuit of adrenaline, situation mastery, or plain machismo (2005).

In the early 20th century, Freud and others biased the field toward a medical model, the alleviation of disorder. Allport (1937) added that psychology would not treat with enough respect the nobility and dignity of human beings. Bowers asserts that from a research point of view, when volunteers give their efforts and passion to charitable, social, or political efforts, there is no neat demarcation between what is good for the individual and what is good for the group (Fowers, 2005). As evidenced by a hundred years of journal articles and the versions of the diagnostic manual, psychology can describe mental disorders in great detail, as well as bad marriages, dysfunctional families, bad schools and bad communities. But, as echoed by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), researchers lack information about what can be done that is positive in human life.

Later trends decisively split the concept of fact from the concept of moral value in defining social sciences (Nicholson, 1998). Ironically, practicing sciences like psychology well and dispassionately depends on committing to virtues such as honesty, humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness (Fowers, 2005). The humanistic psychology movement of the 1960s attempted to address these issues, but has been characterized in mainstream psychology as failing to develop a solid foundation of supportive empirical

data (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Humanistic psychology has been charged by positivists with leaving a regrettable legacy of strange and alternative popular-level books and theories that lack demonstrable basis (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Humanistic psychologists have considered such criticism off target and undeserved. Bohart & Greening (2001) have argued that humanistic psychology, exemplified in the work of Maslow, Rogers, and others has promoted social responsibility and welfare, while denying endorsement of the extremes of the self-help movement. Nevertheless, Seligman's and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) assertion that psychology has generally missed what can go right with human beings appears correct, given the bias toward dysfunction in the science's extant literature. Fowers asserts: "Our discipline desperately needs conceptual enrichment to account adequately for praiseworthy activity and the characteristics that allow humans to flourish..." (2005, p. 4).

Western medicine's purpose has persisted, in general, to terminate negative issues: repair a bone, cure a fever, eliminate a parasite, kill infection or extract a foreign object. Regarding therapy or policy, traditional psychology often resorts to a "don't do this" prescription, rather than contributing something positive to human well being (Park & Peterson, 2009). The intentional difference in focus for positive psychologists both in research and therapy is on aspects of human life that make it most worth living. While there is no intent to deny problems, stresses, challenges, and disorders in human experience, positive psychologists wish also to include understanding of those things which allow humans to live life well.

As Held asserts, positive psychology is occasionally caricatured as a “don’t worry be happy” enterprise that ignores real problems and dangers in the world (Held, 2001). Positive psychologists are actually not encouraged to assume everything is beautiful; rather, the good in life is as genuine as the bad (Peterson & Park, 2003). Positive psychologists challenge that balanced psychology would ultimately acknowledge, study, and integrate the good with the bad (Lazarus, 2003). Psychology's decades-long, negative focus has produced undeniable strides in understanding, remedying, and sometimes preventing problems (Nathan & Gorman, 2002; Peterson & Park, 2006). But, Seligman (2002) opined that psychology has been half done and appears to assume that survival is the best we can do. Positive psychology argues that therapy should do more than move clients from a negative state to zero, which seems to be the goal of therapy. Instead, interventions should help persons to move to a fulfilling life, say to +2, +5 or better (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Human excellence is as authentic as disorder and disease, and, for that reason deserves equal focus not only from psychologists but from all mental health providers (Peterson & Park, 2003).

What makes life worth living? Stated most simply, findings indicate that other people matter. Groups of people are where humans work, play, live, and love. Groups, and persons' behaviors in groups, should be a key research focus for practitioners interested in wellbeing and overall health (Peterson, Park, & Sweeney, 2008). Modern positive psychology echoes the 1986 Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion that calls for an increased interest in public health for promotion of wellbeing instead of exclusively disease prevention. Similarly, positive psychology attempts to turn our attention to

optimal functioning and positive emotions. Positive psychology raises the bar for health beyond the elimination of the negative: Developing positive individual and social resources can help people to thrive, and by implication, their communities and organizations (Kobau, Seligman, Peterson, Diener, Zack, Chapman, & Thompson, 2011).

Positive psychologists, school counselors, and other mental health practitioners, with an interest in promoting human potential, begin with different assumptions and ask different questions than those who assume a disease model (Park & Peterson, 2008). There is also a greater emphasis on prevention than remediation (Park & Peterson, 2006b). Positive psychologists argue that research continues to draw significant correlations between psychological well-being and physical health. For example, in one positive psychology study on coronary heart disease (CHD), well-being was defined in three overlapping but distinct categories to discover which elements supported resilience. Those factors that are eudaimonic have to do with a sense of purpose, optimism, and adaptive functioning. Hedonic factors relate to positive feelings and satisfaction in both cognitive and affective evaluations. Social well-being factors involve social contribution and integration, and assess quality of social functioning. The findings in this CHD study were robust, with every standard deviation of improvement in well-being correlated with a 10% diminishment in CHD incidence. These findings were not mitigated by other attending factors, such as comorbid ill health or health-impacting behaviors (e.g., smoking) (Park & Peterson, 2006b). Such findings decisively challenge caricatures of positive psychology, and indicate that well-being provides resilience against both stress and disease (Boehm, Peterson, Kivimaki, & Kubzansky, 2011).

Another example of the important effects of positive personality emerged when research showed that stressful events have a reduced probability for a negative impact on happy people (Suldo & Huebner, 2004); effects that do appear are more short-lived (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000; Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003). Theoretical roots for these effects can be seen as far back as Albert Ellis's explanatory style, referring to how persons describe both positive and negative experiences: Pessimists tend to attribute the causes of negative experiences to factors that are pervasive, uncontrollable, and permanent (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). Pessimism also appears more in depressed persons than nondepressed persons, and correspondingly, people with pessimistic approaches have a greater risk for depression than those with optimistic approaches (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1992; Seligman et al., 1984). Conversely, optimists tend to attribute the causes of their negative experiences to factors that are specific, changeable, and, temporary. Optimism is not perfect: While optimistic explanations buffer against depression, if the explanations are inaccurate, they can interfere with solving issues (Reivich, Seligman & McBride, 2011).

Positive emotions, such as joy, contentment, and interest, have been shown to reduce autonomic arousal, induce a sense of safety, and support individuals in engaging their social and physical environments while exploring new people, objects, or situations (Kobau et al., 2011). In other studies, individuals quickly prompted for positive emotions such as contentment and joy immediately following a stressful situation, demonstrated faster cardiovascular recovery (e.g., reduced blood pressure, heart rate, and peripheral vasoconstriction) than did control groups (Kobau, et al., 2011).

Huta & Hawley (2010), demonstrated that psychological vulnerabilities and character strengths are not opposite ends of the same continuum; they are present independently of each other. Positive therapists have shown that clients can bring assets and strengths to bear to resolve their issues. So, it should be a standard task of counseling to identify client psychological resources and increase their use. Such an emphasis would also likely increase rapport and client confidence, factors that contribute to counseling success (Park & Peterson, 2008). Using the same scientific approaches that have advanced knowledge of disorders, positive psychology researchers are adding to our information about well-being and mental health. Positive psychologists ask the question whether it is possible to use psychology not only to reduce mental illness, but to support persons in becoming lastingly happier (Park & Peterson, 2009). To that end, positive psychologists tend to study most enabling institutions, positive personality traits, and positive emotions (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

Positive psychologists have identified positive human personality traits that appear to be universally recognized among human beings (Park, 2005). To do so, it was necessary to create a standard by which a positive trait could be tested for it to meet operational conceptualization. Researchers identified the following conditions: The trait must have true opposites, must be exemplified in persons who are either paragons of the trait or lacking in it, must be found ubiquitously across cultures, and the trait must be morally valued for itself, not as a means to an end. In a large research project, these authors then grouped personality traits which met these requirements under component ideas which are larger umbrella virtues such as wisdom and transcendence (Seligman,

Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Informed by Nansook Park's research, Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman (2004) published a taxonomy of positive personality traits (see Appendix c) that met these requirements, traits now described as universally recognized among human beings.

What is significant about these positive traits is that research has demonstrated strong correlations between the measurable presence of these traits in a person, and positive therapeutic and life outcomes. Such outcomes include the buffering of stress and trauma, mitigation or prevention of disorders, providing developmental factors for leadership, the ability to value diversity, achievement, and the crucial ability to delay gratification. Positive traits also correlate with a reduction in the incidence of alcohol or substance abuse, smoking, depression, violence, and suicidal ideation (Park, 2004a). They are shown to be indicators and perhaps causes of healthy development, long life, and positive thriving (Colby & Damon, 1992; Park, 2004a; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1997). The potential for thriving appears to be increasingly important; the World Health Organization (WHO) now lists depression as the number one cause of disability globally, and the fourth leading cause of death (WHO, 2008).

Evidence has been accumulating over the last ten years that certain strengths of character, such as self-control, hope, social intelligence, kindness, and perspective appear to buffer the negative effects of trauma and stress, preventing or mitigating disorders in adults and in youths (Park, 2004a). In youth, such strengths have been found to contribute to thriving. They correlate with success in school, tolerance, leadership, altruism, kindness, the valuing of diversity, and the capacity for delaying gratification (Scales,

Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). In addition, in youth the presence of positive traits is associated with reduced substance misuse, alcohol abuse, smoking, violence, teenage pregnancy, depression, and suicidal ideation (see Park, 2004a for a review).

Background

Positive personality traits contribute significantly to a broad range of positive life outcomes that are desirable and useful focuses for therapy. In recent years, character education for youth has been emphasized in public schools social institutions, and families have accepted as main goals the promotion and development of positive character among children and youth (Park & Peterson, 2006). Further, with regard to adults, the World Health Organization (WHO),

Nansook Park (2004), a leading researcher in positive psychology and frequent Seligman co-researcher, noted that while educators, theologians, and philosophers seriously considered the cultivation of positive character traits, psychology has remained largely uninterested in the issue. Finally, some psychological researchers have begun to call for consideration of character, identified as a label for society's shared moral frameworks, and which includes persistent qualities which offer both constraint and motivation in the direction of personal and societal good (Wright & Lauer, 2013). As a parallel issue, character education programs currently lack strong theoretical base to select which traits to attempt to teach, the means of that teaching, and data on whether such programs are effective. Park recommended that there needs to be a theoretical framework for character development that makes use of insights from development research to design such programs. Park notes that parents and family environments

obviously contribute heavily to the development of character traits in children, even though there is considerable difference even in very young children in terms of positive traits. Park noted both the immediate effect of pro-social video segments on children which model sharing, cooperation, and other positive behaviors. Park also noted the key role of parents and friends in prosocial development (Park, 2004). These findings among children add credibility to the idea that persons may grow in, or perhaps even develop, positive traits based on human interaction.

Character formation is used here as an umbrella term for personality development related to such issues as development of a sense of adult responsibility, capacity to practice values and morals meaningful to the person, and specifically the demonstration of positive personality traits as those cataloged by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Fowers has noted that it is virtually impossible to prosper in human society without the capacity to perceive whether others are responsive, fair, reliable, honest, or generous. Such judgments guide us in determining day by day how often and in what ways to interact with others (2005). It may be speculated for that reason that people may be highly motivated to seek positive traits. But, not every approach to encouraging positive traits provides strong positive results. In particular, there are evident problems achieving positive reliable positive development using relationships that are formal, highly structured, in which personal warmth is not essential, such as the daily, enforced group, verbal repetition of the Army's various codes of conduct (see Williams, 2010).

Substantive research indicates that unavailability of social support correlates with many habitual negative human behaviors, i.e., the opposite of positive personality traits.

Exclusion, the loss of social support, tends toward frequent and broad manifestation of negative behaviors. Aggression, reduction of cooperation and pro-social action, impaired logical reasoning, time-perception distortions, foolish risk taking, and unhealthy choices have all been strongly associated with the experience of exclusion (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005). Selfishness and self-defeating behaviors, which stand at opposite ends of the behavior spectrum from positive traits, are both exacerbated by exclusion (Baumeister, et al., 2005). Logically, to say that A leads to B does not require not-A to lead to not-B. Research evidence that lacking supportive relationships often leads to negative character suggests that the presence of supportive relationships may mitigate negative character (Baumeister, et al., 2005). Fowers raises the idea that it is possible there are activities and goals that become possible only when shared with others (2005).

Emotions are not mediators between exclusion and negative personality effects. Excluded persons may manifest similar emotional patterns to other persons, but the behavioral connections to exclusion remain. The internal mediators between exclusion and negative behaviors remain unclear. However, recent research suggests that not conscious cognition, but the more subconscious executive function of self regulation may be the mediator: Exclusion has been shown directly to impair self-regulation (Baumeister, et al., 2005). If the present research is correct, that positive personality traits are encouraged by warm, personal character mentoring, then it may be possible that such an opposite of exclusion supports the mentee's self-regulation, which could then lead to the consistent manifestation of multiple positive personality traits.

There is a negative potential to consider should the current hypotheses be supported. When it is considered that warm, character formation relationships, which may be singularly effective in encouraging societal principles such as the value of persons, meaningful life, and noble aspirations, that when such relationships for any array of reasons sharply decline in a culture, that those aspects of human culture will also decline. For at least ten years, contemporary deterioration in existence of communities losses of values, diminishment of the value of character, have been made evident in the emergence of jeremiads regarding the present times (Joas, 2004). Social psychology theorists, as far back as Erich Fromm, predict exploding social problems of our own time from half a century ago (e.g., Fromm, 1956). A society which by its pace discourages the development of warm, personal relationships, and lacks common social values but encourages material orientation, provokes pessimistic questions as to what shortfalls of skill, development, or mental health relate to isolation from developmental, positive, personal relationships (see Fromm, 1964, 1956, 1944, 1935, etc.).

Statement of the Problem

Positive psychology is currently in need of a theory, grounded in data, for the development and origin of positive personality traits. A review of extant positive psychology trait literature reveals that virtually no theoretical basis has been offered from within positive psychology for the emergence of such traits whether in childhood, in adolescents, or in adults. There are types of studies from other domains of psychology that may well imply positive trait development: educational studies (e.g., Gute, Gute, Nakamura, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007), gender advocacy studies (e.g., Pryce, Silverthorn,

Sanchez, & DuBois, 2010), and studies on related categories such as resilience (e.g., Roberts and DelVecchio, 2000). But, because of the particular focuses of these studies, positive traits are not in focus either as questions or results. Therefore, within positive psychology, there is also a lack of identified means to support the therapeutic development of positive personality traits in adults. Related issues like the motivations, mentoring, or triggers for the development of those traits are missing. Applications to stimulate the emergence of those traits themselves are missing (e.g., Park, 2003). Positive psychology literature shows that positive psychology tends to view its subjects from an individualistic perspective, what Foddy and Kashima (2002) refer to as an individualistic bias within psychology in general, while ignoring the natural role played by interpersonal relationships in the possible development of such traits (Fowers, 2005). If interpersonal relationships are a primary cause for the emergence and development of positive personality traits, a behaviorist, individualist perspective in positive psychology may not only obscure the reason positive traits develop, but may even obscure the question itself.

There exist extensive historical traditions of character formation mentoring which may indicate that positive trait development is possible through personal mentoring. The positive psychology movement literature has not considered these historical movements in their relationship to positive traits or as historical efforts to develop them intentionally. The Greek peripatetic tradition of Socrates and Plato, the rabbinic and primitive Christian use of discipleship, the peripatetic school of Confucius, and various sects of Buddhist, Jainist, and Hindu practice, all offer in commonly available teachings and histories their perceptions that character forming relationships can be entered into intentionally and

meaningfully by adults. Most of these groups continue institutionally in modern times, apparently peripheral to the interests of science.

Clearly, were a therapist able to encourage the development of positive traits directly, the client would gain very significant benefits in his or her therapy. To this point, as the literature review demonstrates, virtually no work has been done on the intentional development of positive personality traits outside of focused educational efforts with pre-adolescents and adolescents, some gender-focused women's studies seeking to alleviate chronically stressful situations, and rare ethnographic studies. Even in those categories, the positive personality traits themselves are not clearly identified as outcome components but instead are concealed as sub-components of improvement in social and academic behaviors in the educational studies, or resilience in the women's studies. The studies mentioned are not positive psychology studies; they are rather educational studies seeking better outcomes for children, or studies for women, or ethnographic data which is not generalizable. In summary, it remains true that psychological literature in general shows as yet no particularized interest in the intentional development of positive personality traits in adults, a category of clients heavily treated in mental health practice. The literature shows neither a path nor understanding of the potential for intentional development.

Positive psychology has contributed important insight to the process of successful therapy. But, a important contribution to mental health may yet emerge from positive psychology emerge in understanding character formation. The demonstrated alterability of personality traits, now acknowledged by the most resistant of trait theorists, supports

the possibility that therapists could support types of mentoring which could improve a client's opportunities for success, happiness in marriage, and resilience. Positive therapy can progress further not just to remediate client problems, but to move toward a life experience characterized by wellness, meaning and noble aspirations.

Before turning to purpose, it makes sense to define character as used in this research. Character will be used as a collective expression for the positive personality traits presented by Seligman and Peterson in their taxonomy (2004). This definition is similar to a definition offered by one mentoring researcher as "...the sum total of dispositions a person has in terms of his or her judgment, purpose, feeling, and action" (Mobley, 91).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover what benefits participants derived from voluntary, nonromantic, nonfamily, adult relationships intended for positive personality development or otherwise possessing a strong character formation aspect. I predicted that such relationships may be most frequently situated in certain community situations with shared values, such as churches, recovery groups, veterans support groups, lodges, and so on, but context is not considered a controlling factor at the onset. Since the taxonomy developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004) describes positive personality traits theorized as universal among humans, this study compared the reported benefits of positive personality development mentoring to the traits in the taxonomy, while categorizing the presence of any benefits reported which stand clearly outside the taxonomy. To these ends, the purposes of the study are five-fold:

1. To identify the categories of personal benefits experienced by persons who have participated in voluntary, adult, personality mentoring relationships.
2. To discover the characteristics of the mentoring relationships reported as most important by participants.
3. To report the participants' assessment of the personal value of such personality mentoring.
4. To compare the reported positive personal benefits to the taxonomy of positive personality traits created by Peterson and Seligman (2004).
5. To identify the situation in which the character mentoring occurred.

It is hoped that this categorical research may offer a foundation on which later researches in positive psychology may be built. It is hoped that eventually psychology may be able to ascertain what categories of benefits are most likely be developed under which conditions, and to discover which factors increase or diminish the appearance of benefits or deficits from personality mentoring.

Significance of the Study

This study provides greater understanding of positive personality traits, including a basis for their emergence and development. Further, the discovery of a basis for intentional efforts to develop positive personality traits can support development of new programmatic or therapeutic approaches for mental health. There can also emerge suggestions for training such efforts in contexts like volunteerism, coaching, mentoring or other venues for character formation of therapy clients. It is possible that eventually study in this line may contribute to the development of models of therapy additional to

individual and group therapies. For example, if it is possible to develop subject matter experts in a particular area of mentoring, they might be an important adjunct to therapy. Further, if particular traits can be affected by character formation relationships, perhaps it is possible for character formation relationships to be supported by programming or instruction which can specifically target related deficits. It is also possible that, because of the interest of this research, that therapeutic benefits of extant social mentoring practices may be identified, such as the personality mentoring which may occur in positive religious, recovery, fraternity and other community institutions. Drawing on Erich Fromm's observation of the erosion of humanity and individual value in Western societies as far back as the 1950s (1956) due to isolation and hypercommercialism, this study may contribute data relevant to ameliorating modern experiences of isolation and effects which can create crisis for individuals and society as a whole.

Nature of the Study

This study used qualitative grounded theory research depending on structured interviews to discover the positive personality development experienced by participants who experienced a voluntary, adult, character formation relationship. Participants were drawn from the Walden University student pool and regionally local non-profit organizations. In structured interview, participants explained in their own terms benefits which they identified as resulting from their personality mentoring experiences. They also explained their valuation of the importance of that development in their lives. Participants also provided their perceptions on the aspects of personality mentoring which contributed most significantly to their positive outcomes. Finally, I also tracked

correlations between participant reports and the Peterson and Seligman taxonomy of positive human traits (2004).

Research Questions and Propositions

The study included the following research questions.

1. What categories of positive personality development do participants in adult, voluntary, character formation relationships attribute to those relationships? This question will catalog the positive personality changes ascribed to intentional character formation relationships.

Null Proposition 1: Participants in character formation relationships will conclude that there were no permanent personality improvements derived from those relationships. Alternative Proposition 1: Participants in intentional, adult character formation relationships tend to ascribe specific categories of positive personality development to those relationships.

2. Do participants identify particular aspects of their personality mentoring relationships as being particularly important to their positive outcomes?

Null Proposition 2: Participants will not identify any particular aspects of their personality mentoring relationships as particularly important in relationship to outcomes.

Alternative Proposition 2: Participants will ascribe positive personality outcomes simply to the existence of their character formation relationships and will assert that particular factors in those relationships were especially important in the development of positive personality.

3. Will participants consider that their participation in a voluntary, adult, character formation relationship was of significant personal value to them?

Null Proposition 3: Participants will consider that their experience in the personality formation relationship was of no special importance to them in their life or development.

Alternative Proposition 3: There will be differences in importance ascribed to the personality formation relationship due to factors such as the length of time in which the relationship was practiced, the intimacy of the relationship, or problematic terminations of the relationship.

4. Did the mentoring experiences of the participants coincide in time with other significant life events, relationships, or organizational involvements?

Null Proposition 4: Participant mentoring experiences happened in relative isolation, that is, they were not accompanied time-wise by other significant life events, relationships, or organizational involvements at the same time.

Alternative Proposition 4: Participants will vary in the simultaneity of their personal mentoring experiences with other significant life events, relationships, or organizational involvements: Some participants will express that their mentoring experiences did coincide with such events and a significant proportion of other participants will affirm that they did not.

5. Do the categories of positive personality benefits ascribed by participants to their character formation relationships correspond with any positive personality traits cataloged in the taxonomy of traits described by Peterson and Seligman (2004)?

Null Proposition 5: Positive personality benefits experienced by participants in their character formation relationships will not correspond to traits cataloged in the taxonomy by Peterson and Seligman (2004).

Alternative Proposition 5: Participants having experienced character formation relationships will describe benefits of their personality mentoring which correspond to traits cataloged in the taxonomy by Peterson and Seligman (2004).

Theoretical Framework

Fundamental to the theory of this research is the taxonomy of *Character Strengths and Virtues* by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Peterson and Seligman present what they assert as a comprehensive catalog of universal, positive human traits. They express their hope that their taxonomy may someday take its place as a companion volume to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals* that expose what goes wrong with the human mind or psyche (2004). In company with Dahlsgaard, Peterson and Seligman explained that they were encouraged in their search for universal human strengths by the convergence of virtue categories across diverse human locations and traditions, including China, with Taoism and Confucianism, southern Asia, with Buddhism and Hinduism, and the West, including Greek philosophy, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The six virtues identified as convergent across these traditions were courage, humanity, justice, wisdom, temperance, and transcendence (Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman, 2005). A frequent co-researcher, Nansook Park, led a massive study involving over 117,000 adults drawn from 54 nations and all fifty United States. In this study, the United States was seen as convergent with the other nations in that the same positive traits were discovered. But,

results for the USA did differ in which strengths were most commonly endorsed, such as honesty, judgment, fairness, and kindness, and which strengths were least often endorsed; such as self-regulation, modesty, and prudence (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006). To develop their taxonomy, Peterson and Seligman established criteria for how character strengths would be included, such as being morally valued, contributing to personal fulfillment, that they do not diminish other persons, that there exist undesirable opposites, that they are both distinctive and trait-like, that there exist persons who are paragons of those traits, and others who are prodigies, etc. (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). Because of its great number of participants and the diversity of nationalities represented, their work provides a reliable beginning point for the existence and nature of specific, universal positive human traits, as well as offering a finite listing of them.

In addition to Peterson and Seligman's taxonomy of virtues, the literature review contains a handful of prior psychiatry and psychology theorists and practitioners who helped define the potential for this research. Fundamental to this current project is the understanding that interpersonal relationships are significant to any person's personality development, and the nature of a person's relationship with another individual can encourage positive personality development, as well as personality modification of other kinds, including pathological. Practitioners who have contributed significantly to these theoretical bases include such as Harry Stack Sullivan, who identified the overwhelming value of warm relationships in therapy, and Carl Rogers, who lifted up the significance of human potential and dialog for positive change. Their relevant contributions, as well as other iconic contributors to these theoretical concepts, are noted in the literature review.

It is admitted that, although the work of Peterson and Seligman is derived through such thorough research, their taxonomy is not without its detractors. It has been challenged that even though their work focuses in the context of character, the authors have insufficiently considered the concept of character in its historic relatedness to what is good or virtuous in non-hedonistic terms (Fowers, 2008). Further, they may have neglected developing a sufficient broad concept of virtue (Fowers, 2005). The authors have been critiqued also that their work only addresses character as being a piecemeal collection of traits, rather than a uniformity (Fowers, 2008). Finally, Peterson and Seligman have been critiqued that while they consider their work a companion volume to the DSM-IV*tr* (2004), the taxonomy cannot be applied similarly. For example, while some measure of a person's positive character traits might show distinctive strength in a dozen out of the two dozen categories, a therapist would be considered incompetent if he or she were to list such a spread of disorders across diagnostic Axes One and Two (Fowers, 2008). Further, Fowers would argue that virtuous character in normal life is not even understood piecemeal, but as a harmoniously integrated and overall habit of life (2005). It should be credited that Seligman and Petersen themselves noted the need for a later effort to create theory which would make collective sense of the individual positive traits in their taxonomy (2004). Before departing the affirmation that Peterson and Seligman are fundamental to this study’s presentation of results, it should be admitted that theirs may not be the only approach possible. Widely different cultures for mentoring and values exist other than those in the West. For example, it is likely that differences in value systems would influence what is considered appropriate in mentoring systems of

any kind, including child rearing. When one considers the Confucian values which underlie Taiwanese parenting, for example, with its emphases on shame, filial piety, strictness in discipline (Miller, Wiley, Fung, and Liang, 1997), one can imagine that mentoring based on Confucian values would likely look very different than what is valued in the West. Still, it remains significant that even in cultures with very different patterns for encouraging character formation, those traits described by Peterson and Seligman are demonstrated as universal across human cultures.

Further, there are also those who dispute the existence, utility, or validity of any universal system of human personality traits (e.g., Piekkola, 2011). In studies prior to Nansook Park's landmark research, critique was directed at the non-universality of trait study in terms of culture or time period: For example, terms like couch potato or gamer do not make sense prior to common use of electricity (Piekkola).

However, using Peterson's and Seligman's taxonomy (2004) based on Park's results offers an opportunity to transcend cultural limitations when researching positive traits, and because of the varieties of lifestyles represented, many time-sensitive categories as well. Further, critique has been directed to the omission of unique individual traits (Piekkola) which would seem to diminish distinctness in persons. Could it be that there are individual virtues which exist apart from generalizable phenomena? Whether such exist, it could still be argued that value remains in generalizable findings on the existence and the intentional development of traits. It appears to me that there is enough variety among Peterson's and Seligman's twenty-four universal positive personality traits, and as many negative traits which can discovered through other

psychological instruments (e.g., NEO-PI-R, etc.), in combination with various measures of achievement, to describe a person well and meaningfully, if not completely.

Another challenge to Peterson and Seligman is the troublesome distinction between personality traits and states (e.g., Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). In general, traits as a concept are usually considered to be more stable than states, with intelligence being exemplary of one of the most difficult to alter. The Big Five assessment categories (e.g., neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness) are considered nearly as stable and difficult to change (Luthans, et al.). On the other hand, states are considered to be more malleable, with positive moods, pleasure, and happiness being examples. Luthans, et al., still acknowledge that there is a continuum of stability among such factors. When these authors consider courage, wisdom, hope, etc., they note these factors' somewhat state-like qualities (Luthans, et al.). But, Peterson and Seligman identify these factors not as states, but as standing among the twenty-four positive traits, strengths, or virtues in the taxonomy (2004). Also, troublesome for the current research is that when Luthans, et al., consider how to categorize such items, they consider specifically whether the factors may be developable or not, with the orientation that if the factor can be significantly developed, it should be considered more state-like than trait-like. In contrast, Peterson and Seligman expressly state that the traits they are discussing can be affected by situation (2004). In the final analysis, Luthans and company are clearly aware that there is a lack of clarity in exactly how to categorize such factors. However, the core interest in this project is the question whether generally stable personality characteristics, such as wisdom, resilience, courage, zest, kindness, and

persistence can nevertheless be enhanced through intentional personal effort in the context of a character mentor. If this turns out to be true, then the debate as to the role of stability in distinction of traits will gain new fuel.

Finally, positive psychology itself as a discipline has been challenged. First, the interests of humanistic psychology and positive psychology have been seen by both disciplines as historically related to the other. Humanistic psychologists have asserted the foundation humanistic psychology provided as a forerunner to positive psychology (e.g., Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Positive psychologists acknowledge humanistic psychology as one of its primary foundations but have also cast broadly expressed aspersions against humanistic psychology that will be treated in more detail in the literature review. For now, let it be noted that researchers such as Joseph and Murphy (2013) have attempted to return to discussions which identify bridges between modern positive psychology and leading humanistic contributions such as the client-centered therapy of Carl Rogers. However, the difficulty of resolving this tension has been so marked that at least one researcher has suggested that the different disciplines pursue their interests independently with awareness that the two approaches differ fundamentally in their perspective on human nature and the purpose of psychology itself (Waterman, 2013).

Assumptions

This project will assume that participants who are interviewed are capable of supplying meaningful information related to personality benefits gained from their voluntary, character mentoring relationships. There is an assumption then that the adults interviewed will be aware of important factors which affect their values, priorities, and

moral judgment. While it is clear that human awareness can be misguided by various *a prioris*, mental health issues, or other situations, for the purpose of establishing categories of benefit from adult character mentoring I will assume that participant perception is meaningful and accurate enough to be treated as reality. When dealing with qualitative data, it is acceptable that a researcher will not challenge the perceptions of the participants, although the researcher may raise considerations in discussing results (Creswell, 2007). There is also no attempt to assess the unconscious learnings of the participants although it is assumed that each participant will have undergone some changes or learnings which are not necessarily conscious.

Another assumption I made in this research is that there may be social environments in which the discovery of persons who have experienced adult character formation relationships is more likely because the practice of such mentoring is closely related to the values and purposes of those environments. I speculated that nonprofit environments with identified purposes connected to positive personal attitudes and behaviors, identifiable social values or morals, or institutions with admirable purposes such as support of the military or recovery, may be already committed to positive personality development. Churches, other religious institutions, help organizations, addiction recovery groups, and volunteer help organizations such as those for returning war veterans may all be likely sources of mentored persons. Such organizations may even have purpose statements or institutional missions which mention aspirational personal goals corresponding to certain positive personality traits, etc.

Scope

The participants were approached with the assumption that many persons have experienced some personal mentoring. This research is not at this time interested in vulnerable populations: Children, inmates, patients, disadvantaged adults, etc., although it is possible that some may be involved without the knowledge of the researcher. The overall focus of the project is identify categories of benefit derived in personal mentoring by adults in the social mainstream and in nonprofit organizations. The categories of benefit associated with character mentoring experiences will be assessed using structured interviews. Participants will be selected only from adults who identify themselves as having at some time in their personal histories experienced personal mentoring. These experiences may vary significantly in duration.

Limitations

Persons who participated in the study were drawn from the Walden University student participant pool and nonprofit organizations located in central Maryland. The university student participants likely ranged from mid-above average intelligence on up, but the researcher did not assess intelligence of participants. Otherwise, the participant pool participants were expected to represent a broadly mainstream population because of the size of Walden University and its diverse student body.

The nonprofit participants were not assessed in intelligence either, and represented a broad spectrum of educational backgrounds from high school graduates to PhDs. The participants were diverse in ethnicity, gender, age and background. Demographics were tracked by general demographic questions in the interview process.

The central Maryland region is common to all nonprofit participants. The region characterized as heavily urban, being part of the megalopolis ranging from Baltimore, Annapolis, Washington DC, and large towns in northern Virginia. This region is proximal to military, national government and homeland security institutions, particular regional educational institutions such as Johns Hopkins, the Naval Academy, and the University of Maryland. Central Maryland also has been assessed with a higher than normal propensity for introversion since, statistically, Maryland is currently identified among the most introverted states in the nation (Simon, 2008). Maryland is also a region of the country with a cost of living higher than the national average, and this socio-economic aspect could contribute culturally to recognition of some personal traits as more positive than others.

A third limitation is that this research has avoided using participants drawn from the various vulnerable populations. For that reason, variations in results which may correspond to membership in those populations will not be represented. It is our hope that in later research it will prove possible to develop positive traits purposefully in such vulnerable populations to ameliorate the challenges of such vulnerability and offer resilience for the challenges present there. One can only imagine at this time the potential benefits of positive trait development among children, incarcerated persons, pregnant women in duress, persons in advanced care or hospice, or coming home from war.

A fourth limitation in this research is using the positive trait taxonomy by Peterson and Seligman (2004) to identify positive traits as they appeared in participant interviews. Still, even if at some later time the reliability and validity of the Peterson and

Seligman (2004) taxonomy were later called into question, that still the primary interest of this research would have been demonstrated: The development of positive personality benefits from intentional, voluntary relationship.

Delimitations

Even though this research did not seek out vulnerable adults, it also did not proceed with exclusive interest in adults who are not categorized as vulnerable. It is possible that some participants could incidentally belong to a vulnerable population, such as pregnant or under mental health treatment. Further, the mentoring relationships of interest were not familial, compulsory, romantic, or sexual in nature. Also, while it is certain that adult relationships experienced as character formation relationships can produce negative experiences and outcomes, such negative personal histories are not germane to this research, and would have only been briefly noted. None occurred that I know of from the interviews. Later research will find a ready and important subject to discover under which circumstances negative results occur from relationships entered into with positive expectations.

Definition of Terms

In this research, I am using the following terms according to the definitions I'm presenting here.

Character: An umbrella concept referring to the present overall distribution of positive personality traits in a person. The term character in common parlance is represents either the collection of a person's positive or negative personality traits, but as defined by Fowers (2005), character refers to the overall presence of virtues in a person.

Character Formation: The development of a person's positive characteristics over time, whether by personal practice of related disciplines, training by a social institution, mentoring by other individuals, or any other process or situation.

Discipleship: A model of education in which the medium of education is personal relationship, the teacher himself or herself is the content of the education, and the goal is imitation of the teacher's attitudes and behaviors. Discipleship is mentioned here as a concept significant because of its close conceptual proximity to relationally-supported character development. Discipleship is exemplified in ancient models of peripatetic instruction employed by historic personalities such as Socrates of Athens, Jesus of Nazareth, Confucius, and many others. Historically speaking, discipleship has also appeared in some sects of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism, and in modern times, by other meta-religious groups like the Sufis. In discipleship, the learners, or followers, attempt to receive not only cognitive elements of instruction from the teacher, but to imitate aspirational aspects of the teacher him or herself. The existence of discipleship as a ubiquitous human practice across diverse cultures and millennia is itself evidence that persons have sought instruction for purpose of character formation in the context of voluntary relationships (Colborn, 1990).

Mentoring: A surprisingly difficult concept to define, as demonstrated by over a dozen differently vectored efforts in mentoring literature. For this project, mentoring is a unique, asymmetrical relationship between two persons purposed as a learning partnership broadly classified either as psychosocial and / or emotional, instrumental, or

career-related, in which the primary goal is the protege's development and growth (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010).

Personality Trait or Trait: Characterized by Peterson and Seligman in their taxonomy as "...individual differences that are stable and general, but also shaped by the individual's setting and thus capable of change" (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p10).

Virtue: In this project, a virtue is synonymous with a positive personality trait. Fowers defines the term in this way, "Having virtue means having a cognitive understanding of the character strength and a spontaneous motivation to act in accordance with it" (2005, p. 4). Also, "...a virtue is the form of excellence that allows an individual to pursue worthwhile ends in everyday activities" (Fowers, 2005, p27).

Warm: A personal relationship characterized by positive personal regard and personal or mutual supportiveness.

Summary

Positivist psychologists in recent years have begun to demonstrate that, globally, humans subscribe to the concept of virtues, that is, positive personality traits, and that some virtues, modesty and honesty, have global recognition and regard (Park, 2005). Many studies describe the impact of typical social relationships (e.g. familial) on various health outcomes, often focusing on the contribution of wholesome relationships to positive outcomes (e.g., Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007). Fowers, a virtue ethicist, expresses that virtues "...are learned through guidance and feedback" (2005, p29). Further, history supplies us anecdotal evidence of personality mentors (e.g., Socrates, Confucius, Jesus) who created opportunities for voluntary personal relationships with the intent to enhance

their learners' personality development described in those contexts in terms of virtue. What is the relationship between these elements; That is, what positive personality traits might participants experience from participation in modern, voluntary, intentional, development-oriented relationships?

If psychology has tended to lack focus on the development of human well being, it has also lacked attention to the character traits that contribute to it. Positive psychology researchers have over more than a decade demonstrated the significant contributions of positive personality traits to factors such as resilience and positive life outcomes across both mental and medical health domains. But, while positive psychology researchers have identified and shown the extensive benefits of positive personality traits, they have tended to ignore the factors which contribute to the development of them. Such traits have been treated to-date as if they arose almost by spontaneous generation, as either simply existing or not existing in each studied case. As of the writing of this project, the positive psychology literature includes virtually no information regarding the development of positive traits in adults or other age categories. As mentioned earlier, studies which have been done with respect to preadolescents, adolescents and underprivileged women have discovered ways to ameliorate particular issues in educational or social contexts respectively. It may be that this knowledge gap regarding the development of positive personality is a result of western psychology's tendency to focus on individuals to the near exclusion of communities, and the impacts of personal relationships, and to be interested almost exclusively in genetic causes. There are some exceptions. As the review of the literature will demonstrate, the field of education has

done studies on children in school settings, both preadolescents and adolescents, to discover whether personality characteristics related to better life and academic outcomes can be enhanced. Some gender studies interested in advancing conditions for women have also focused on personal development. There also exist rare ethnographic studies which note the results of mentoring in particular cultures. But, in general, the possibility that adults can develop positive traits on purpose appears not to be in view despite that positive traits make dramatic differences in client or participant outcomes.

So, the knowledge gap this research addresses has to do with the development of positive personality traits in adults by personal mentoring. While the educational and gender studies mentioned above relate to this research, the following issues are clear at this time. First, while research on personal mentoring efforts to-date have been focused on improvement of particular behaviors, personal outcomes, and increasing resilience, they have not been specific in their focus on positive personality traits *per se* although it is reasonable that those traits are likely enhanced behind other favorable results. Second, with the exception of the few women's studies and rare cultural studies, there has been little to no focus on trait development in adults. The possibilities for positive social change based on a grounded theory of intentional positive trait development are significant. First, as important as positive personality traits have been shown to be, the intentional cultivation of those traits clearly has the possibility of enhancing outcomes in therapy beyond the strengths interviewing currently common in therapeutic practice. Prior to the possibility of intentional trait development, a positive psychology counselor would encourage a client to draw on personal strengths already owned. Now, a client may

be able to pursue development of particular traits specific and needful for their situation. Second, is it possible that a new medium of therapy may emerge, in addition to or in companion with individual and group therapies? For example, what if a therapist could encourage a client to work with a particular coach or organization in activities which enhance particular traits as a component of therapy? Such coaching may have the possibility of multiplying the resources a client can eventually call on. Third, it is hoped that this grounded theory will add significantly to the science of positive trait study, providing greater understanding regarding the environmental contributors to extant positive traits. Beyond these possibilities, there are likely change events not clearly visible to us, yet, that could emerge from later research in this line. For example, could the old gap between humanist and positive psychology grow a new bridge when it becomes apparent that intentional use of interpersonal mentoring can help develop one of positive psychology's focuses: positive traits? Might positive psychology become then more holistic in considering the client's environment, especially social, and thereby find closer kinship with humanist psychology? What sort of educational or mentoring initiatives might be possible now that is scientifically indicated that there is a direct connection between personal mentoring and positive trait development? Might boards of education or social service agencies find value in employing coaches to facilitate client development in traits critical to those domains? Is it possible that with further study that we will grow to understand umbrella concepts, like resilience, in terms of their components, which then could be developed specifically and intentionally through particular mentoring approaches? Human society has learned how to develop its athletes,

soldiers, and intellectuals through specific and rigorous training. What if it were possible that character, at least in part, were amenable to targeted development? Could we grow more honest politicians and less greedy CEOs? What potentials are there for felons? Or, will further research define the limits of the potential for positive trait mentoring.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Chapter two provides an overview of academic literature related to this dissertation. The first section details the research strategies for this literature review. The second section of the literature review introduces the historical and theoretical basis for a hypothesis concerning positive personality development resulting from interpersonal relationships. The third section outlines the project's interest in positive traits, introducing broad research where positive psychologists have demonstrated that positive traits contribute positively and significantly across many human outcomes in mental health, medical health, business, and quality of life. The third section demonstrates that positive personality traits can be changed over time, providing the possibility of development. Finally, the fourth section of the review explores the literature related to mentoring as it pertains to personality influences. In this context, the US military's employment of personality mentoring, although highly formal and structured, is highlighted as an example of a current serious societal need and a major organizational effort to generate meaningful support for its members through this very means. Ethics and techniques of personality mentoring are also reviewed in the last section of the review.

Literature Review Research Strategy

In this literature review, I sought to offer a survey of literature that exists at the intersection of mentoring literature and positive psychology research that focuses on development of character, especially, positive personality traits. However, that is precisely the research gap this dissertation explores.

While positive psychology has generated a huge literature in little more than a decade, this literature review attempted to identify the positive psychology literature that pertains to developmental aspects of character or positive personality traits. To offer context for the significance of the study, articles are displayed that highlight the positive outcomes related to positive personality traits.

The mentoring literature pertinent to this project was that which sought to discover aspects of mentoring which focused on the personality development of a mentee. Applicable literature included a mentoring or other interpersonal context related to character development. In a literature as large as that on mentoring, the distinction provided focus. For example, I excluded Bundick, Andrews, and Damon on youth purpose (2007) since it examined a trait indicated in positive psychology, but did not indicate any interpersonal developmental etiology or factors. However, Bundick, Yeager, and Damon on adolescent thriving (2008) included interpersonal contexts for thriving, and therefore the research related to this study's interest in the potential for personal interaction to support positive trait development.

Some iconic figures in psychology have reflected on the likely contribution of interpersonal relationships to aspirational aspects of personality development. Those earlier perceptions, not having yet coalesced into firm conclusions on developmental strategies for positive character, contribute concepts and findings related to this project’s theory development. Moreover, to give credit where it is due, they are some of the giants on whose shoulders we stand

It should also be noted at least briefly that there exist extensive non-academic materials related to traditions of character development from the peripatetic Stoic and Epicurean teachers in the classical periods of Rome and Greece, as well as the disciple making practices of the ancient Jews, the primitive and later Christian churches, the Confucian schools, some sects of Buddhism, and more. In recent centuries have emerged the legacies of the Sufis and the devotees of the Gurdjieff theories of the nineteenth century on personal integration and development. Clearly, humans have attempted to teach better character for a very long time. This brief catalog is not intended to be exhaustive, but simply provides reminders that the concern of this research has been considered extensively in the past, though not by psychology. To be fair, historically, positive development has not been the only result of these efforts. It must be admitted that history is replete with examples of ignoble characters emerging in such communities, especially where the personality development strategies became rigid, authoritarian, or even draconian. But, that does not diminish the extraordinary and positive human outcomes of so many persons in ages past. Such historical traditions cannot properly be the focus of this work since so little work has been done on the role of interpersonal relationships in character formation of adults that even the possible categories of benefit have not yet been defined. At this time, since there is no psychology as such to compare with such pre- or extra- scientific traditions, the contributions of these social phenomena will not be addressed by this project; but, we are aware of their existence, and considerate it reasonable that they suggest the potential for intentional, mentored development of

positive character. Simply put, the historical existence of such human efforts highlight the possibility that positive traits can be taught.

Considering these theological and philosophical histories would likely be more interesting to humanistic than positive psychologists. For example, Waterman has specifically noted the differences in philosophical orientation between the two fields. It has been humanistic psychology with its phenomenological and existential orientations that has found reason to quote multiple theological figures (e.g., Buber, Tillich, etc.) and existential thinkers (e.g., Heidigger, Kierkegaard, etc.). Positive psychologists have historically been much more likely to quote philosophers like Aristotle, Democritus, Bertrand Russell, and contemporary eudaimonists (2013). Perhaps this difference in philosophical foundations has subtly but actually delayed positive psychology in considering intentional development of positive personality traits, with such character development perhaps being more interesting to the roots of humanists. One indication that this may be so is specific work by recent researchers in considering benefits and problems in building bridges between positive psychology's interest in positive traits, virtues, to the spiritual or religious values of clients for whom orientation to such positive traits as forgiveness, compassion, hope and gratitude is a sacred and meaningful effort (Rye, Wade, Fleri, & Kidwell, 2013).

For research in the modern academic literature, I performed the review with Walden University Library’s EBSCO host for databases, initially using PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, PsycExtra, and SocINDEX. Since related insights occasionally surfaced in psychiatry, nursing, recovery, and other medical contexts, MEDLINE was also

included to identify support from the medical journals for the literature of this domain. As research progressed, and as business studies were suggested which related to mentoring, Business Source Complete was also included. The keyword search terms used across these database indices included: *positive person, positive trait, person trait, character, personal, formation, and mentor*. Since the primary interest of this research is in voluntary character mentoring relationships typified as warm and supportive, searches were also done in the indices using friend. In the process of discovery, it became clear that authors who surfaced with character formation and personal mentoring interests frequently published multiple studies, contributed terminology, and indicated primary sources. I performed searches using the names of scholars who are prominent in research on positive personality traits, such as M. Seligman, N. Park, C. Peterson, B. W. Roberts, R. W. Robins, and their colleagues. Further, the reference lists of those writers naturally highlighted many other studies and authors. Prior Walden Dissertations and those applicable from other universities were also considered. It became clear in literature review that the extent of the literature on mentoring that has developed in the last few decades, and the burgeoning positive psychology literature, demanded selectivity. The review did not attempt to consider further related emphases from the domains of anthropology, historiography, or religious and ascetic community rules.

When surveying the literature, a thoughtful reviewer may ask whether the current study might also be an aspect of moral psychology or moral education, domains receiving increasing academic interest and skepticism (e.g., Hogan, 2005). The subject of mentored development of character could also interest virtue ethicists in the field of psychology

(e.g., Fowers, 2008). The project's key question is whether positive personality traits can be mentored. This question intuitively shares interest with moral psychology, standing closely to that field's questions as to why societies choose some behaviors as moral. It seems intuitive that working to understand character and to build character are two sides of the same coin (Hogan, 2005; Lapsley and Power, 2005). But, practically speaking, it might not be true considering how little attention has been extended from positive psychology as to where and how positive traits are developed: Positive psychology has not focused as much effort on building character as proving the value of it.

Historical Perspective on Character Formation

Overview

Prior to the 1980s, psychology considered personality so highly stable as to be nearly immutable, with most aspects of personality thought to be established in most persons by the ages of five or six. Psychologists and psychiatrists coming after Freud, Jung, and Adler only cautiously pushed consideration of development into later childhood and adolescence. The possibility of personality development after those stages was not considered impossible, but the possibility that human relationships were a key factor in development was absent from their reflections.

For example, in 1964, Worchel and Byrne served as editors of the text *Personality Change*, featuring chapters written by Leon Festinger, Edward J. Murray, and Neal Miller. At the time of that publication, theories of personality change considered anxiety the preeminent change factor, and one that dominated much of the writing of the period. By 1964, anxiety had emerged as a research factor in other issues besides pain or

survival, which had earlier been the universal causes assumed by behaviorists. Anxiety was seen by Freud, H. S. Sullivan, and Carl Rogers also to result from internal conflict when life experiences contradicted learnings from a person's early years in his or her family of origin (Gendlin, 1964). Thus, later personality developments were considered somewhat traumatic adaptations occurring when an individual finally succeeded in pushing through personality defenses, alternatively called resistance, defensiveness, or security operation. But, the nearly exclusive means of intentional personality change in these writings is psychoanalysis, and the specific approach of therapy attempts to bring to the client's mind that which has been forgotten or is now unconscious (Gendlin, 1964). The therapist in this model was indispensable and psychotherapy was his or her means of affecting positive change. Personal relationship was specifically considered as a factor in the therapeutic process, but it was only the client's relationship with the therapist him or herself which was in view, along with the classic issues of transference and counter-transference. The personality theorists of that day did not even consider the possibility of non-therapist, natural, or intentional character mentors. Aside from psychotherapy, the possibility of personality change for these earlier generations of personality researchers also included the rarer influence of indoctrination and brainwashing (Holt, 1964), psychopharmacological substances (Zubin & Katz, 1964), and managerial domination of a workforce (Blake & Mouton, 1964). Beyond these, unplanned personality changes were admitted to be possible from such forces as isolation (Haggard, 1964), cultural transfers with attendant moral conflicts (Madsen, 1964), and aging (Kuhlen, 1964).

Mentoring literature has focused primarily on training employees in company culture and processes, nursing, or limited educational environments. The original story of mentoring, the one which gave the process its name, focused on comprehensive personal and character formation. Character formation in the expression of positive traits is the interest of this psychological research. In Greek myth, Mentor was the servant and advisor to Odysseus, who when king, entrusted his son Telemachus to Mentor's tutelage for a period of ten years. The contexts of trust, comprehensive personal knowledge, relationship, and the overall maturation of the young man based on an important personal relationship until he can take his father's place are clearly present (Lowe, 2005). Those very factors are the ones of most interest to this research, and the ones which surfaced in the participant answers.

Major Theorists On Character Development from Relationship

It is possible to identify theoretical roots for the plausibility of positive traits emerging via mentoring relationships in the work of several iconic psychologists. Among those identified here are Alfred Adler, Harry Stack Sullivan, Gordon Allport, Erich Fromm, Heinz Kohut, and Carl Rogers. In the following paragraphs, relevant concepts follow.

Alfred Adler (1870-1937). Departing from Freud's insistence that all human behaviors were driven by ultimately sexual motivations, Alfred Adler sought to view individuals holistically. That holism included not only biological factors, but also family, social, and community influences and impacts. Contrary to what seems automatic in western psychological researchers today, he did not believe that a person could be

properly understood apart from these contexts (Adler, 1992). He eventually concluded that persons resolved their feelings of inferiority by purpose-directed behaviors. He believed we can only think, feel, and grow in connection to the perception of our goals. The concept of lifestyle, Adler's shorthand for beliefs and assumptions, provided for him a unifying theme in human actions and one which affects our choices. But, Adler specifically described social interest as that which motivates a person toward healthy and socially useful ends (Corey, 2005). Interestingly, Adler considered the concept of God to be the best conception for elevating humanity, because there is inherent in the concept an inward motivation toward development, toward self-perfection (Adler, 1992). Adler has clearly expressed in this idea a human drive toward positive traits, whether it is a theist or an atheist who is seeking to grow. The current project attempts to discover whether persons with the desire to pursue self improvement, that is, an intent that Adler called goal orientation, might pursue personal mentoring, a social relationship. Social relationship is fundamental to Adler's perception of individual motives. Clearly, Adler laid a conceptual foundation for the current hypothesis in the connection he drew between purposeful behavior, the motivational drive provided by social relationships, and a positive goal. In this study, we view participant efforts in personality development relationships as goal-directed toward development, and emphasize those which are positively oriented. We will not focus on individual efforts toward self-development, but development that emerges from a voluntary human relationship. Thus, Adler in his impact on early psychology provided a starting point, an adjunct to the perspective established by positive psychology theories.

Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949). Harry Stack Sullivan was a psychiatrist of the psychoanalytic tradition in the first half of the twentieth century. He was a critical bridge figure, along with such as Karen Horney and Erik Erikson, who saw that understanding and healing for an individual depended as much on understanding their interpersonal relationships as their intrapsychic issues (Schultz & Schultz, 2004). Sullivan developed an approach to psychiatry which considered that relational and cultural issues are actually the major contributors to mental illness. He asserted that persons sought satisfaction through personal involvement, and that loneliness was an experience of ultimate loss. It was, in fact, Stack Sullivan who first expressed the idea of the significant other in scientific literature (Sullivan, 1953). While Sullivan's efforts focused almost entirely on issues of negative outcomes in relationship and illness, especially schizophrenia, he also considered the possibility of mature, emotional interactions which he called syntactic communication (Sullivan, 1953). While these ideas from Sullivan are precursors to this project, they are fundamental ancestors. The idea that positive traits emerge more from conducive relationships than as innate developments is directly analogous to Sullivan's effort to externalize psychotherapy from the intrapsychic to the relational. Sullivan's awareness of human motivations to greater satisfaction in relationships offers a basis for understanding the motivation which encourages the emergence of positive traits as an adaptive response. Stack Sullivan was a pioneer in interpreting an individual based on his or her network of relationships and not from an exclusively internal focus.

Gordon Allport (1897-1967). Gordon Allport contributed at least three prominent ideas to a connection between positive personality traits and personal relationships which affect them. First, Allport was one of the very earliest trait psychologists (Huff, 2001). He said that human beings are unique, but they are also, using his term, lawful, meaning that they have individually patterned ways of responding to particular situations (Allport, 1961). While we can see in psychological literature prior to Allport the occasional appearance of trait as a concept, Allport constructed and expressed the concept of trait so as to shape psychology's pervasive interest in them in modern times (Huff, 2001).

Second, Allport conveyed the idea that while psychoanalysts tend to go too deep, by which he means misunderstanding virtually all present-time human phenomena to be a result of deep, historical issues, behaviorists can be too shallow (Allport, 1961). Allport stressed that even if someone's personal tendency originally emerged because of some early need or distortion, that very tendency developed as a survival function could, over time, develop additional functions. He believed that human beings should first be seen in their own present, especially as they were heavily shaped by the sociocultural situations in which they found themselves (Allport, 1961). Allport perceived persons altering or manifesting themselves differently depending on their social contexts and such factors as whether the environment was familiar or unfamiliar. He saw human beings as being both individual in essence but also taking shape according to the social interactions around them (Allport, 1961). Allport's perception provides the possibility of shaping human personality, and thus traits, by personal relationship.

Finally, it must be noted that Allport did provide a concept of a mature person with autonomous, and notably positive, interests. In Allport's view, mature persons did not find fulfillment in egocentric living, which in fact causes life to feel stunted and immature. Rather, the mature live with outwardly expressed ends which are culturally and socially compatible; the attainment of those ends also diminish the importance of the obstacles, setbacks, and pains along the way. Allport's mature person is, therefore, very similar to the positive psychology and virtue ethics portraits of positive character (Allport, 1937).

Erich Fromm (1900-1980). Erich Fromm devoted a significant portion of his writings to human weaknesses, negative persons, and discouraging national trends. But, he also advanced understanding of character formation more generally and positively as well. When he reviewed the work of earlier psychologists, Fromm explained that what William James called human instincts, "...imitation, rivalry, pugnacity, sympathy, hunting, fear, acquisitiveness, kleptomania, constructiveness, play, curiosity, sociability, secretiveness, cleanliness, modesty, love, and jealousy...," are actually "...a strange mixture of universal human qualities and specific socially conditioned character traits..." (1973, p13). The list, with Fromm's re-interpretation of it, adds to understanding character formation for three reasons. First, it included elements which are found or related to the positive personality traits in Peterson and Seligman (2004). Second, Fromm identified James's list as expressing universal human qualities before Park's research (2005) that proved their existence. The positive elements of James's list revisited by From align with Peterson's and Seligman's taxonomy (2004). Third, Fromm saw these

qualities as "...socially conditioned character traits...", a statement implying that such qualities could emerge from human relationships and interactions. Fromm even used the word traits, which positive psychology would adapt forty years later.

Fromm challenged the prevailing psychological hypotheses of his decades that limited intense motivations only to organic needs. Fromm’s understanding explains why persons might intentionally seek out relationships which could further develop desirable aspects of character. Fromm explained that human motivations must be approached holistically, that intense motivations emerge from multiple perceived needs. He asserted that human beings need to survive as whole organisms, and he included aspects of mental existence as well as physical. He reminded his readers that humans have been known to commit suicide because of failures in love, revenge, power or fame, non-organic situations, and not just because of situations which threaten their existence (1973). Fromm’s reasoning may explain why character mentoring exists when he says that human passions result from, "*...man's attempt to make sense out of life and to experience the optimum of intensity and strength he can...*" (italics his, 1973 , p9). Fromm recognized that human development continues beyond the ages of five and six when the person experiences events which are significant enough. He stated that earlier childhood experiences "incline more" (1973, p. 370) but that they are neither predeterminative nor final. When Fromm analyzed some of the villains of his early adulthood, Stalin, Himmler, and Hitler, he analyzed the development of their characters not only by situational influences but relational ones. He posed that their relational issues shaped

their characters, and not just innate factors. Further, he went beyond the ages of five and six in his analyses, treating extensively the influence of their later adolescence (1973).

Heinz Kohut (1913-1981). Heinz Kohut began with but departed from the traditional psychoanalysts, eventually rejecting the Freudian concepts of id, ego, and superego (Flanagan, 1996). He also eventually concluded that Freud himself was much more interested in discovery than in effecting cures. Kohut asserted that Freud's primary interests were not about health but information (Kohut, 1977). Leaving the Freudian camp, Kohut developed his own view of the self, which became influential in psychology. According to Kohut, a person's self can only develop, especially in terms of well-being and worth, through relationships with others (Flanagan, 1996). Kohut believed that mental health issues, which he sometimes referred to as defects in the self, occur because of lack of empathy in the person's relationships, what Kohut classically referred to as self-objects. More telling, Kohut sees critical in a therapist the persistent practices of attention and empathy, specifically at the times, when the therapist is attempting to maintain a neutral position of detachment during therapy. Kohut's insight on the difference between neutral detachment with or without therapeutic warmth is critical. He called it the *sine qua non* of the analytic and therapeutic processes. According to Kohut, the therapist is under obligation to maintain deep focus on the client in his or her own psyche (Kohut, 1977). Kohut here foreshadowed the necessity of a mentor's sincere engagement with a mentee and the functional necessity of supportive warmth for the best outcomes.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987). Among iconic psychologists, perhaps none spoke so clearly on the possibilities for development through interpersonal relationship as Carl Rogers. While it is true that, for Rogers, the therapist was always the agent who supported the positive change and healing of the client, the statements Rogers made were broad, and laid down principles of intentional and long term change due to interpersonal relationship. Rogers affirmed that one person shaped another by supporting the client's internal integrative processes (Rogers, 1989). In sharp contrast with current efforts in personality development that focus on children and adolescents, Rogers virtually always considered personality change with adults. At the time of first printing of *On Becoming a Person* in 1961, Rogers asserted that he had been driven in his pursuit of how to help troubled souls for over twenty-five years (Rogers, 1989). He explained that approaching personality change through a solely intellectual approach fails, and that relationship itself provides the context for positive change. This is a strong encouragement for mentors. Rogers then asserted that the more genuine he himself could be in the therapeutic relationship, the more influential and helpful the therapy was because the genuineness created a kind of reality for the client which is important as a first condition for change (Rogers, 1989). Of course, Rogers was the one who highlighted the value of warm regard as a technique that underscores the unconditional personal worth of the client, the means of expressing acceptance, and therefore the client's means of being safer to discover hidden issues. In our litigious world of ethical repudiation of dual relationships, Rogers sounds revolutionary when he says, "I become a companion to my client" (p34). Rogers specifically warned us away from diagnostic or moral evaluation which he considered

always to be threatening. Rogers spoke specifically to this project's interest in developing positive personality traits when he said,

> It is my hypothesis that in such a relationship the individual will reorganize himself at both the conscious and deeper levels of his personality in such a manner as to cope with life more constructively, more intelligently, and in a more socialized as well as a more satisfying way. (Rogers, 1989, p36).

It is likely in this quotation that expressions like "more constructively," "more intelligently," and "more socialized" are umbrellas comprised of many positive traits discoverable in Peterson's and Seligman's taxonomy. Rogers also repeatedly underscored the informal aspects of a relationship productive in this regard as warm, accepting, and genuine. He further asserted that persons might only experience this kind of relationship for a limited number of hours but could still demonstrate profound changes in personality, including both attitudes and behaviors, and might become both more effective and integrated. The intentionality of the process becomes clear when Rogers asserted that the person becomes more the one he or she wished to be. Rogers included in his descriptions of change aspects of resilience, such as reduction of frustration and more rapid recovery from stress (Rogers, 1989). Rogers described other aspects of the personality change relationship. From behaviorist studies on extinction, such as rats ceasing to press a bar which no longer issues food pellets, he asserted that trustworthiness is important. Trustworthiness he defined as being reliably real. But, he identified evaluative, cognitive, educational methods as being generally ineffective, as with addicts (Rogers). So, Rogers described many specific characteristics and practices of a successful

character mentor in his discussion of effective therapists, and further highlighted the reasons why informal mentoring is so often more effective than formal mentoring. Some current humanist psychologists are attempting specifically to keep Rogers's insights in consideration by positive psychologists (Joseph & Murphy, 2013).

Character

Another challenge which has been levied against positive psychology from theoretical psychology is that positive psychology has failed to consider seriously enough the issues of virtue and uniformity of character (Fowers, 2008). These factors raise the question as to what is good when it comes to human behaviors, a subject prone to contextual relativism and subjectivity so that academic psychology has been hesitant to study it. It has been referred to as one of the most powerful professional taboos in psychology (Fowers, 2008). Nevertheless, it has been challenged that some of the personality traits which are fundamental to positive psychology research could actually be manifested by clever but vicious personalities, thereby raising the question as to whether positive psychology is truly positive. Virtue ethicists also argue that what is considered virtuous in a particular context heavily biases which positive traits are considered most important for character development. But, what is good can actually be discussed academically by selecting criteria from subjective formal, or substantive approaches. These categories refer to judgments of what fosters pleasant experience, unobjectionable generalities like growth or self-actualization, and those which require a particular commitment to worthiness (Fowers, 2008).

In this study, when the term character is employed it is an umbrella concept referring to the overall present distribution of personality traits in a person. In common parlance, to say that someone has character is to say that the person possesses positive personality traits that, taken as an aggregate, inspire respect or positive regard, or correlate to positive and desirable outcomes. Character mentoring is a way to designate personal mentoring which stimulates the development or emergence of positive personality traits. Positive personality has been found to correlate to academic success, well-being, and satisfaction with life (Park, 2009; Park & Peterson, 2008). The usage of character in this research is not unique. In general, personality traits labeled as character strengths are a subset of personality traits which tend to be valued morally in society (Gillham, Adams-Deutsch, Werner, Reivich, Coulter-Heindl, Linkins, & Seligman, 2011).

Character has been targeted for development in educational psychology related to elementary and secondary (Kindergarten–12th grade) children (Damon, 2002). For adult development, we note that the fields of virtue ethics in philosophy, counseling, and moral psychology consider that mentoring is performed in order to develop an adult protégé's character. Mentoring researchers, like Moberg, have identified specific techniques for mentoring that employ mechanisms like inspiration, experience, and reflection (2008). While the possibility of character emergence from personal relationships has been understudied, some current researchers nevertheless appear to assume that personal relationships contribute to their development: "Character strengths are influenced by

family, community, societal, and other contextual factors" (Gillham, Adams-Deutsch, Werner, Reivich, Coulter-Heindl, Linkins, & Seligman, 2011, 31).

In current research, consideration of character sometimes includes motivations, a subject not examined at length in this study. At least one researcher asserts that for character dispositions to be true virtues, or positive personality traits, they must emerge from positive intrinsic moral motivation (Hartman, 2006). The reason for this qualification is that the context of motivation influences how we estimate the positivity of a trait (Moberg, 2008). As human beings, we do not usually lift up as positive the courage of someone who is blood-thirsty or a well-paid mercenary. Moral excellence becomes in this definition the basis for intrinsic moral motivation. This idea has been pressed by some as far as saying that moral considerations must be single-mindedly pursued above all others in making decisions (Moberg, 2008).

Positive Personality Traits

Traits as Concept

Positive psychologists have performed empirical research assessing positive personality traits, have discovered that certain positive traits are universal human concepts, and have demonstrated that such traits have value for therapy and human wellness (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Researchers conceptualize traits as personal characteristics which describe an individual's stable and typical way of acting. Even when we don’t recognize them, positive traits are the reasons that we seek spouses, friends, colleagues, leaders, or representatives who, somewhat independent of mood, are reliably honest, friendly, loyal, generous, and just (Fowers, 2005). Instruments designed to

measure their presence continue to be available. Articles on scoring the instruments continue to be written as the instruments evolve (Diamond, O'Brien-Malone & Woodworth, 2010).

One way to understand positive traits, also conceptualized as virtues, is to see them as integrated psychological systems made up of four related components: motivation, cognition, knowledge, and emotion (cf., Staudinger, Lopez, & Baltes, 1997). In common parlance, if individuals are said to possess the virtue of courage, we would understand them to have expert-level knowledge how and when to be courageous (Moberg, 2008). Positive traits, even if found universally, do not all appear with the same frequencies among human beings. For example, among adults, research in the U.S. has shown humor, love, and gratitude, are most common, but self-regulation, forgiveness, spirituality, and prudence, are least common (Park, 2009).

Given the complexity of human life situations, there are innumerable variations that can influence how an individual may behave, and any person's behaviors show flexibility even in similar situations. But, the trait concept still affirms that, in general, persons tend to behave in some identifiable, stable ways. Beyond general observation, do we have any indications why? Some research has indicated that acting in ways contrary to one's traits demands more effort, and that such effort required increases over time. This extra effort is incurred primarily with non-habitual behaviors. In view of effort costs, what is suggested is that, eventually, a person will return to trait-typical behaviors as contra-trait efforts become fatigued (Gallagher, Fleeson, & Hoyle, 2011). Why is the concept of traits significant to psychology? In addition to what understanding is gained in

pure science terms, there are also significant correlations between a person's traits and many important life outcomes, such as success in work and marriage, and overall health. If we can alter or develop traits, then that can clearly lead to new and meaningful therapeutic support for client issues.

In addition to the fact that traited behavior simply demands less energy than contra-trait behavior, it has been theorized since the 1950s that contra-trait behavior also appears to cause psychological conflict as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). Recent neurological studies have demonstrated that this psychological conflict is measurable by specific patterns of brain activity (Venkatraman, Payne, Bettman, Luce, and Huettel, 2009). So, in general, for persons to exert the self-discipline required to implement contra-trait behaviors demands heavier executive function than traited behaviors, including attention, effort, and conscious thought (Neal, Wood, and Quinn, 2006; Wood, Quinn, and Kashy, 2002). These research data, while not fully comprehending the nature of traits, and certainly not suggesting any particular etiology, at the least demonstrate mechanisms related to their stability in personal behaviors. Finally, for completeness, it should be mentioned that people's capacities to support contra-trait behaviors are not uniform. For example, extraverts report more difficulty with contra-trait behaviors than do introverts. Further, the greater difficulty of contra-trait behaviors applies especially to non-habitual behaviors that are below mean for performance for an individual; habitual or at-mean or greater behaviors are not measurably more difficult even if they are contra-trait (Gallagher, Fleeson, & Hoyle, 2011).

Do Traits Matter?

Introduction. Although personality psychology remains popular, and the domain continues to generate research, what do traits mean in terms of life outcomes? Traditionally, elements of personality have been considered to produce small impacts when compared to such traits as socio-economic status [SES], or cognitive ability on such outcomes as divorce, health, occupational success, and job performance. Similar evaluation has been applied to subjective factors, such as career satisfaction, leadership emergence, and physical longevity (Kuncel, Ones, and Sackett, 2010; Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, and Goldberg, 2007). However, since 2001 with the work of Meyer, et al., personality has been demonstrated to have as profound a correlation as any set of factors within psychology, exceeded only by such issues as that of aging on cognitive processing.

Personality has been shown recently to have as profound an effect on life outcomes such as medical interventions for heart disease or cancer. Subjective and objective personal accomplishments are now seen to be linked by positive traits: For example, well being is supported by use of positive personality traits because of their demonstrated relationship to success in meeting goals, and achieving basic needs such as relationship, competence, and independence (Linley, Nielsen, Gillett, & Biswas-Diener, 2010). Similarly, individuals intentionally applying their character strengths significantly improved their sense of well being, which then correlated with significant improvements in both mental and physical health (Proctor, Maltby, & Linley, 2009).

In business. Within two years of Seligman's and Csikszentmihalyi's groundbreaking article in *American Psychologist* (2002) introducing the discipline of positive psychology, Fred Luthans, a prolific researcher in organizational management, saw in positive psychology a critical element for development of an organization while describing organizational management as an inherently developmental context. This relates to the current study since it is implicit both that adults are the ones being developed and that operations requiring interpersonal communications will accomplish the development. After summarizing the development of academic positive psychology over the previous two years, Luthans declared that it is not enough for an organization simply to redress problems, but must be concerned with Positive Organizational Behavior [POB]. Out of the two-dozen character strengths eventually categorized by Peterson and Seligman (2004), Luthans identified five that he believed critical in an employee of a successful organization, for which he provided the acronym CHOSE: His highlighted traits included confidence or self-efficacy, hope, optimism, subjective well-being, and emotional intelligence (Luthans & Church, 2002).

Persons who get to use their positive traits, their strengths, while at their job demonstrate higher work performance and satisfaction. They score higher in finding meaning in their work, demonstrate better engagement in their employment tasks, and derive greater pleasure from them (Harzer & Ruch, 2012a). Interestingly, persons who were able to apply four or more of their own personality strengths were among those who described their work as a calling (Harzer & Ruch, 2012a; Peterson, Stephens, Park, Lee, & Seligman, 2010). On a related note, the traits Peterson and Seligman categorize under

transcendence, including gratitude, spirituality, humor, and hope, also correlate positively with a sense of calling in work, as well as decreasing turnover cognitions (Gorjian, 2006).

The Peterson and Seligman taxonomy (2004) has been used in particular to ascertain whether strength in the twenty-four positive personality traits related positively to job performance from an employer's point of view. In two studies it has been discovered that the variances explained by these factors run as high as 48%. Strength of character was demonstrated in these studies to correlate positively not only to performance of tasks, but also to important contextual issues of performance such as supporting the organization, facilitation of other individuals, and dedication to the job (Harzer & Ruch, 2012b).

A subset of positive personality traits have also been considered as contributors to business under a higher order construct called psychological capital (PsyCap). This construct approaches the component traits as resources, and those most valued include optimism, resilience, hope and efficacy. Meta-analysis of studies on the PsyCap construct demonstrated that there is a predictable significant relationship with desirable work force attitudes including psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization. Multiple performance measures also correlated significantly, including self assessments, supervisor evaluations, and objective measures. Finally, a significant negative correlation was found between PsyCap and undesirable attitudes such as anxiety and stress, cynicism, and turnover intentions. The correlations were strongest for positions in the service sectors (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011).

Wisdom, a factor which has been growing in research interest in recent years, is one of the taxonomic categories identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004). As already noted, wisdom is one of the taxonomy's umbrella traits with trait categories arranged under it (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). However, Fowers (2005) promotes the idea that wisdom is hierarchically the uppermost of all virtue categories, being itself the capacity to choose the best actions, which traits to apply, and how best to express them. Such choices are nuanced, complex, and have high learning curves. Recent research has demonstrated strong correlations between measurements of wisdom by different wisdom assessment tools with personality traits, like forgiveness, and psychological well-being categories, like life satisfaction (Taylor, Bates, & Webster, 2011). Research targeting wisdom has noted significant positive correlation between employee wisdom and performance on creative tasks. Wisdom was also found to relate to reduced employee stress (Avey, Luthans, Hannah, Sweetman, & Peterson, 2012). Further research has indicated that the presence of specific traits, such as curiosity, hope, persistence, and zest, correlate significantly not only with good health but also with ambition in work behavior. Interventions related to positive personality traits could enhance work outcomes even further (Gander, Proyer, Ruch, & Wyss, 2012).

When it comes to the highest levels of executive leadership, it is interesting that before research on positive traits, while it was demonstrated that moral lapses resulted in poor executive outcomes, the opposite is not true: It had not been demonstrated that virtuous character enhanced executive performance. But, recently, it has been shown that very particular positive traits correlate significantly to positive outcomes for executive

leadership. In research evaluating the various factors of honesty / integrity, social intelligence, bravery, and perspective, it was honesty / integrity that was found to be the trait which explained the greatest variance in executive performance (Sosik, Gentry & Chun, 2012). In summary, positive traits have been clearly shown to affect business outcomes across all levels of employment, but some traits have been shown to matter to different positions more than others.

After considering the emerging understanding of positive psychology's significance for a workplace, not all positive personality traits are equally esteemed, nor needed, in American business, and therefore likely not equally encouraged in development. In the research by Money, Hillenbrand, and Camara, it was shown that while ten of Peterson's and Seligman's categorized traits found expression in the work place, only five were considered a strong match with work demands (e.g., honesty, judgment, perspective, fairness, and zest); appreciation of beauty or excellence was considered the weakest match, with religiousness, love, bravery and modesty the traits next lowest esteemed. The researchers also came to conclusions on how intensely strengths were needed at work for success, with perseverance, love of learning, leadership, curiosity, self-control, and prudence demanded at a higher level than is natural for most persons. On the other hand, thirteen of the strengths were used at a lower level than is normal for persons (Money, Hillenbrand, & da Camara, 2009). One may fairly wonder if such a finding suggests that employees may experience a certain inhumanity in many work experiences.

In mental and social health. The significance of personality can also be seen in the emergence of epidemiological personology, a new discipline which represents the importance of epidemiological, atheoretical approaches to researching and suggesting policy for problematic behaviors, and the strong correlation of such behaviors with personality traits. Good character helps a person resist disordering influences on his or her life, and is central to psychological and social well-being. As character strengths increase, they not only reduce negative outcomes (Botvin, Baker, Dusenbury, Botvin, & Diaz, 1995) but become indicators and apparent causes of healthy development and thriving (Colby & Damon, 1992; Park, 2004a; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1997). Evidence is growing that shows certain positive traits, such as social intelligence, self-control, hope, kindness, and perspective can buffer negative stress and trauma effects, and appear to prevent or mitigate disorders (Park & Peterson, 2006b). The specific positive traits self-efficacy, hope and optimism have been shown to reduce patients' tendencies to catastrophize about pain, even mitigating pain perception (Pulvers & Hood, 2013; Hood, Pulvers, Carrillo, Merchant, & Thomas, 2012). Positive traits have been demonstrated to reduce the impact of vulnerabilities that can lead to anxiety and depression, such as perfectionism and a need for approval (Huta & Hawley, 2010). Most of the Peterson and Seligman character strengths are negatively associated with the psychological issues of avoidant and attachment orientations, but hope mediates both (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2011). Good character is further associated with the reduction of issues such as alcohol and substance abuse, smoking, depression, suicidal ideation, and violence (Park, 2004a). Results show that happiness can change if a person changes how he or she lives (Peterson

& Park, 2006). Clearly personality traits do matter when one considers how to address widespread, socially destructive behaviors. It is, as one researcher asserted, the difference between asking "How can we promote safer sexual practices?" to "How can we reach the aggressive, cold and aloof person who views sex only as a conquest?" (Knueger, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2000, 994). Positive psychology suggests that positive traits may provide resilience to counter various mental health concerns and would be important in dealing with such issues as low self esteem. Poor self esteem in adolescents has been significantly associated with a higher risk of entry into the criminal justice system, poorer economic prospects, and poorer expectations for physical and mental health (Trzesniewski, Donnellan, Moffitt, Robins, Poulton, & Caspi, 2006). Strengths which are other-directed, when controlling for other positive traits, were found in adolescents to predict fewer experiences of depression. While social supports were shown to be influential in mediating positive traits and depression, they do not mediate relationship between positive traits and depression. Strengths related to Peterson and Seligman's transcendence category, including such traits as meaning and love, were predictive of greater satisfaction with life. In summary, for adolescents, positive traits which support connections to person and purposes outside the self predict future well-being. The reverse is also true: Adolescents who demonstrate lower levels of other-centered traits at the beginning of 9th grade predictably report significantly higher depression traits by end of 10th grade (Gillham, Adams-Deutsch, Werner, Reivich, Coulter-Heindl, Linkins, & Seligman, 2011). Recently, some therapists working with geriatric clients have begun promoting the positive traits such as resilience, wisdom and social engagement to support

neuroplasticity, perspectives on successful aging, interventions and prevention (Jeste & Palmer, 2013). Finally, although less than a dozen studies have been formed on the relationship between positive personality traits and addiction, researchers are hopeful that intentional application of positive psychology principles and strengths will offer improved outcomes across a wide range of addictive behaviors (Krentzman, 2013). Clearly, with regard to this study, an approach which directly addresses the possibility of change in personality traits could provide meaningful opportunities for clients. For example, research has now specifically demonstrated that not only is a personality trait like neuroticism related directly to longevity, but even the direction of change in a person's neuroticism is significant. For example, research has shown that neurotic men who were becoming more neurotic over time experienced much higher mortality than men who were not changing with respect to that trait (Mroczek and Spiro, 2007).

In achievement. Character strengths support thriving in youth. They correlate with such desired outcomes as leadership, school success, kindness, and altruism, tolerance, and the ability to delay gratification (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). Distinct and important research by Crede and Kuncel has related specific personality constructs to study habits and attitudes, which are themselves so strongly related to college performance that the authors have called them the third pillar of academic success. The personality constructs indicated include items which are tracked by the NEO family of personality assessments, including neuroticism, openness, and extroversion (2008). Other study has shown significant correlation between personality traits and achievement, and further correlation with a person's quality of sleep, quantity of sleep,

and sleep schedule (Gray and Watson, 2002). The strength of personality on outcomes has also been demonstrated across situations, which were once thought to be more controlling (Roberts, et al.). Some traits, such as the dimension of conscientiousness from Big Five measures, have applicability across the broad range of success in life, work (Le, Donnellan, and Conger, 2006), and health. Other traits correlate to success in particular areas, such as extraversion for managers and agreeableness for customer service occupations. Over all, the two highest predictors of personal success are cognitive ability along with pro-social personality traits (Kuncel, et al.)

One of the most important findings in recent years demonstrates correlation between the capacity for personal resilience and consistency of personality traits. Consistency in personality traits aligns especially with positive traits in resiliency and adjustment (Roberts and DelVecchio, 2000). Some personality traits have been shown to correlate with college performance but there is still a great deal of research to be done on that relationship.

In subjective well-being. All character strengths have been shown to contribute to fulfillment, which can be broadly conceptualized as happiness. But certain positive traits are correlated more robustly with fulfillment and well-being than others (Park & Peterson, 2006). In addition to the obvious likelihood that persons excelling in positive personality traits improve the experiences of those around them, there is emerging evidence that development of positive personality traits co-varies strongly with subjective well-being (SWB). In recent decades, it was argued that happiness as a personality trait was so largely dependent on heredity that trying to be happier was as fruitless as trying to

be taller (Stones, Worobetz and Brink, 2011). However, more recent study shows that SWB is actually only dependent between 40-50% on heredity with the remainder related to an ill-defined collection of factors. But, up to 40% of this collection may be ascribable to intentional activity (Stones, Worobetz and Brink, 2011). Those positive traits which are considered strengths of the heart appear consistently in results on happiness research; mind strengths are not. Converging research has discovered much closer correlations between positive social relationships and happiness than between intelligence and happiness, vocational prestige, or school grades (Park & Peterson, 2006). In short, those traits commonly regarded as strengths of the heart, characteristics that help connect people together, like love and gratitude, demonstrate a much stronger relationship with well-being than those strengths more associated with the head and exercised more individually, such as critical thinking, creativity, and aesthetic appreciation (Park & Peterson, 2008a ; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). Other meaningful findings include that agreeable individuals are more likely to offer volunteer behaviors (Carlo, Okun, Knight, & Guzman, 2005); neurotic individuals do not adapt as well to marriage as non-neurotic individuals (Rodrigues, Hall, & Fincham, 2009), and, that positive personality traits correlate to higher compliance with clinical recommendations (Cohen, Ross, Bagby, Farvolden, and Kennedy, 2004).

In intentional application of strengths. The Values in Action Institute continues to administer a public, on-line assessment, and tracks results from persons who take their Values in Action [VIA] evaluation. The institute publishes findings related to positive psychology traits, and links research related to the intentional practice and reinforcement

of such traits (VIA 2013). In one of many studies with adults, participants used the VIA survey purportedly to identify their top strengths, which strengths they were encouraged to use in new ways. Compared to a control group who did not receive this direction, the participants demonstrated significantly increased happiness and decreased depression after six months. The changes were evident, however, only for those participants who continued to experiment with new ways to use their identified strengths. The researchers concluded that using our strengths in novel ways is an important aspect of achieving a positive experience of life. Expressed therapeutically, practicing one's distinct positive strengths is an effective intervention demonstrably increasing measurable happiness and reducing depression for three to six months (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Since this study, there have been multiple replications of the results based on the simple process of asking the participants to be deliberate about finding new ways to express positive character traits. For example, in another study, participants who used positive traits identified as personal strengths for them in new ways increased their measurable happiness for six months and reduced depression for three months (Mongrain and Anselmo-Matthews, 2012). Overall life satisfaction has also been significantly improved by participants experimenting with new ways to use personal trait strengths (Rust, Diessner, & Reade, 2009). Such intentional use of personal trait strengths has been found to reduce both depression and stress in law students while increasing satisfaction (Peterson and Peterson, 2008). Finally, in a longitudinal study, intentional application of positive personal strengths traits predicted both increased well being and reduced stress, while improving self-esteem, vitality, and positive affect at both three and six-month

follow ups (Wood, Linley, Matlby, Kashdan, & Hurling, 2011). This would appear to indicate that at least some positive personality traits support positive life outcomes through intentional effort.

In partnering. For many persons, securing a successful intimate relationship is one of the most, if not the most, important accomplishment of life. Research from 2002 demonstrated that personality traits affect the quality of intimate relationships that persons have across time, so that if someone tends to have unsatisfying, disagreeable relationships, they will do so persistently because of the stability of their own personality traits. In the words of the researchers, the quality of a relationship depends not only on the characteristics of the person whom you are with, but also the kind of person you yourself are (Robins, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2002).

From yet a different angle, the significance of personality traits can be demonstrated by distinctive relationship to behavior which may be evaluated as positive or negative. For example, religiousness has been demonstrated to correspond significantly with altruism, and to correlate negatively significantly with antisocial behaviors. The mechanisms for these correlations appear to be a mix of genetic, shared environment, and nonshared environment influences, with genetic impacts appearing at about 40% of overall effect (Koenig, McGue, Krueger, and Bouchard, 2007).

Where do Positive Traits Come From?

The question, where do positive traits come from, is directly related to the primary theoretical question behind the current project. The literature considered so far should make it clear that traits are under reconsideration by psychology, having been

originally conceived an entirely individual factor, or at least taking shape so early in development as to be removed from consideration of adults. One category of positive personality trait, creativity, has been investigated in terms of family influences. Categories of influence for creativity indicated such factors as support, stimulation, values and behavior boundaries. Families who provided the best support were designated by their researchers as complex, providing both support, characterized as harmony and help, and stimulation, characterized as both involvement and freedom, the seemingly oppositional influences of integration and differentiation (Gute, Gute, Nakamura, & Csikszentmihályi, 2008). The research attempted the question, is there a pathway to talent? Since creativity is one of the positive personality traits in the Seligman / Peterson taxonomy, findings in this research may be directly applicable to the current study. The family system's ability to provide personal support adds to the tendency to develop creativity. Additionally, sustainment, that is, practice with the skills being learned under the tutelage of established gatekeepers of those skills (e.g., teachers, artists, performers), was essential to progress and creative leaps of the persons in development (Gute, et al., 2008). A mix of demandingness and responsiveness is typical in such relationships. Support must be modified to match the learner's skill and personality. As might be expected, transmission of positive attitudes toward the work is one aspect of transference between the teacher and learner (Gute, et al., 2008). Within the context of study on creativity, previous decades of research on optimal experience have challenged common wisdom that creativity either emerges suddenly and inexplicably, or the corollary fatalistic idea that "you have it or you don't" (Gute, et al., 2008).

But, how do some persons manage to develop positive personality traits in environments which defy logic? One admirable characteristic of humans is that some appear to develop positively despite extremely negative influences. Research on creativity does indicate that ideal environments are not necessary for the development of creativity. Still, there are optimal environments which encourage its development. Csikszentmihalyi's research into creativity continues to indicate that family environments which provide high levels of integration, belonging, strongly supportive environments simultaneous with high levels of differentiation, stimulation of a child's intrinsic interests, these provide important stimulus for a child's later creative achievements (Gute, Gute, Nakamura, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007). Factors noted by the researchers included both integration and differentiation, including several commonalities. Integrative values included: (a) Spending time with family, (b) learning family values and boundaries for behavior, (c) learning how to accept failure, and, (d) support for the children's own aptitudes and interests. Four values related to differentiation included: (a) The ability to cope with difficult circumstances, (b) modeling creative habits, (c) stimulation to new challenges and interests, while, (d) allowing a psychologically and demographically diverse family (Gute, Gute, Nakamura, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2007).

While adult relationships have, in general, not been considered as emergent possibilities for positive traits, some researchers have wondered whether certain environments could lead to positive trait development for some persons. One of Martin Seligman's studies indicated that it appeared that intuition, for example, as an example of

a positive character trait, may be understood as a form of memory recognition and may thereby be amenable to virtual simulations (Seligman & Kahana, 2009).

Can Traits change?

There would be little use for a study on the relationship between positive personality traits and character mentoring if traits were both fundamentally genetic and immutable to change. Whether they are or aren't is significant at many social levels, including policy. For example, if traits are immune to change and a person possesses seriously undesirable traits, and is unable to develop balancing positive traits, then it would be logical for society to choose palliative care and restraining mechanisms for individuals with undesirable traits rather than rehabilitation (Vaidya, Gray, Haig, and Watson, 2002). On the other hand, great stability in personality traits might also have the effect of making therapists more important since individuals would be disinclined to change with time (Costa and MccRae, 1997). Psychologists have also sought to discover whether there is a developmental stage, such as in mature adulthood, when trait stability peaks and traits are unlikely to change. Costa and McCrae, the developers of Big Five assessment, hypothesized from nonempirical longitudinal study that traits were more or less fixed by age 30 (Costa and McCrae, 1997; McCrae and Costa, 1994). That supposition had seemed reasonable since 1890 when William James asserted that personality was essentially fixed, "like plaster", by age thirty (James, 1890). This intrinsic maturation hypothesis remained popular for many decades, arguing that vectors of trait change were endogenous, genetically wired, and predictably related to phases of maturation (Hopwood, Donnellan, Blonigen, Krueger, McGue, Iacono, & Burt, 2011a).

However, in the 1990's multiple studies demonstrated examples of adult trait change such as in women maturing into their 40s and 50s (Helson and Wink, 1992), older adults increasing their Big Five trait of agreeableness in advancing age (Field and Millsap, 1991), or when experiencing advancement into a prestigious job (Roberts, 1997). Research has shown that stability of personality traits is most modest during early adulthood (ages 18-21), and traits are generally considered to be most labile during childhood (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). Significant trait change has been demonstrated in both women and male spouses from preparental to postparental phases of life, with those changes related to differences in career, and with women changing somewhat more overall than the men (Wink and Helson, 1993). In the last decade, McCrae and Costa have admitted that immutability of traits is an exaggeration; they have acknowledged the same degrees of change over lifespan as do more recent studies (Costa and McCrae, 2006). As a further summary of the actual situation with regard to trait mutability, meta-analysis performed in 2000 across 152 studies concluded that personality traits do, in fact, change across the human life span (Roberts and DelVecchio, 2000). There has been found, in general, increasing trait stability in linear progression across a life span, with spikes of increasing trait consistency demonstrable when a child transitions from toddler to kindergarten and first grade (ages 3 to 5.9), during the decades of the twenties (ages 22-29), early middle age (ages 40-49), and late middle age (ages, 50-59). Trait stability actually relaxes again beginning in a person's sixties (Roberts and DelVecchio, 2000). But, significant to this research is that the estimated population correlation for trait consistency across these 152 studies ranges from a low of $p = .35$ to a high of $p = .75$.

This meta-analysis, therefore, offers the possibility in all life-span decades for intentional trait change (Roberts and DelVecchio, 2000). In their brilliant reply to Costa & McCrae, useful for many reflections in this research, Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer summarized trait stability in this way: "... we are willing to state clearly that personality traits change after age 30 and that the environment plays a role in that change" (Roberts, Walton, and Viechtbauer, 2006b, 30). As a broadly established and important finding, this offers a critical understanding for the current research that personality traits are not immutable, and can in fact change in excess of one standard deviation due to environmental factors.

In a frequently quoted meta-analysis addressing ninety-two studies, the same research team of Roberts, Walton and Viechtbauer were able to assert that not only did important personality change take place throughout a human being's life cycle, but that in the various situations and cultural settings which have been examined to-date, there appears a strong correlation between age-predictable personality changes and age-related role changes within society (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006a, b). These findings support the hypothesis of this study that relationships supporting a deliberate journey of positive personal development are potentially influential in emerging positive personality changes. It is congruent that persons seeking to encourage their own personality development might employ willing, supportive relationships to that end.

At this point, it should be admitted that at least one longitudinal study has found correlations between childhood traits as young as the age of three and adult traits demonstrated at the age of twenty-six (Caspi, Harrington, Milne, Amell, Theodore, & Moffitt, 2003). The implication of this research could be significant if it predicted some

level of immutability, or at least profound stability, in some personality traits. In such cases, character mentoring might be less likely to mediate positive effects. In this particular study, children assessed as well-adjusted, reserved, confident, inhibited or under-controlled, offered some predictability to their feelings, thoughts, and behaviors as adults. But, the strength of the correlations were uneven: The inhibited and under-controlled children showed especially dramatic correlations as adults whereas the other three childhood temperaments measured were less so (Caspi, Harrington, Milne, Amell, Theodore, & Moffitt, 2003). However, it should be stressed, as the researchers themselves expressed, there was in this study actually no way to know that these correlations were mediated genetically rather than environmentally (Caspi, Harrington, Milne, Amell, Theodore, & Moffitt, 2003). Very recent longitudinal study on positive personality development during the years from adolescence to early adulthood show extreme-range correlation with whether family encouraged personal growth in the child's ego development (Syed & Seiffge-Krenke, 2013). This finding portends well for the possibility that interpersonal relationships may be intentionally used to encourage positive personality trait development.

Heritability does add some stability to personality traits. A single study has shown with 336 twins of middle-age in Minnesota moderate, genetic, and non-shared environment effects in twenty-one of the twenty-four virtues in the Peterson and Seligman taxonomy, accounting for most, but not all, heritable variance (2004; Steger, Hicks, Kashdan, Krueger, & Bouchard, 2007). But, there is certainly more variance than that accounted for by inheritance. Research has demonstrated that while personality traits

tend to be stable, they do change (e.g., Roberts, and Mroczek, 2008; Roberts, Walton, and Viechtbauer, 2006b; Robins, Fraley, Roberts, and Trzesniewski, 2001). Rather than the older, formal classical models of personality etiology which placed such a high emphasis on heritability, various studies have begun to reveal that personality develops through rich and dynamic systems of gene-environment interaction (Krueger, South, Johnson, and Iacono, 2008).

That there are national differences in the prevalence of character strengths would lead one to believe that environmental and even relational factors, such as seen in culture, may play significant roles in strengths development. For example, in the United States, the most prevalent strengths appear as kindness, honesty, fairness, judgment, and gratitude. The least frequently expressed traits are self-regulation, prudence, and modesty (Park, Peterson and Seligman, 2006). However, in the UK, the most prevalent strengths were identified as fairness, open-mindedness, love of learning, curiosity, and kindness (Linley, et al., 2007). Young adults in Japan demonstrated highest frequencies of humor, love, and kindness, and once again lowest frequencies in self-regulation, modesty, and prudence. However, among the Japanese, differences also appeared according to gender, with women demonstrating greater love and kindness, and men demonstrating more creativity and bravery (Shimai, Otake, Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006).

The origin of resilience, a factor apparently composed of multiple positive personality traits, is an element of increasing, practical social concern. Research has demonstrated that slightly under half of the variance in resilience, about forty-six percent, is genetic. Over half of the variance is due to environmental affects with maternal warmth

being strongly influential (Kim-Cohen, Moffitt, Caspi, & Taylor, 2004). Therefore, there is indication that from the earliest years, a particular interpersonal relationship has been shown to affect the emergence of a positive personality trait in ways that significantly affect development, and then, behavior. Questions may emerge as to whether maternal warmth should be considered differently than other interpersonal developmental influences. If not, perhaps maternal warmth is simply one of the earliest examples of meaningful interpersonal relationship which encourages the development of positive traits. Similarly, the possibility that personal relationships can contribute directly to positive character development has been demonstrated by research which successfully challenged the hypothesis that such traits as conscientiousness, emotional stability and agreeableness emerge simply through genetic factors. Longitudinal studies have now shown that growth in those positive traits correspond with personal investment in such social activities as marriage, building a family, and community involvement. Becoming emotionally involved in one's work also correlates directly with development in conscientiousness (Roberts, 2003).

Several efforts have also been made to correlate the emergence of positive traits with traumatic life events. While this may seem counter-intuitive, and it is well-known that trauma can incite psychopathology (e.g. PTSD), development of psychopathology happens only in a minority of cases (Peterson & Seligman, 2003). Occasionally, other results appear. Some persons insist that traumatic events encouraged them to develop positive traits. For example, and further offering evidence that traits can change, one study of character strengths performed after the World Trade Center attacks on

September 11, 2001, reported that people were experiencing a higher incidence of theological virtues, such as charity, faith, and hope (Peterson & Seligman, 2003; Peterson & Park, 2006). Such changes are difficult to study because of the challenges of measurement in these situations. Self-report is frequently used to research the possibility, but some have challenged that self-report is likely not valid because these participants may be primed by trauma to think of themselves as survivors, and then follow culturally established scripts related to victimization and its aftermaths (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008). Ultimately, current research has ventured tentatively that it is possible, but remains somewhat uncertain, that traumatic events may occasionally stimulate positive development (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008). Other research has demonstrated a small relationship between traumatic experiences and positive growth in some people, indicating that sometimes, persons can develop positive aspects of character from difficult experiences. (Park, 2009; Park & Peterson, 2008). Naturally, given the phenomenological nature of such experiences it is difficult to consider proscriptively what conditions or factors may give rise to such growth, and it would be unethical to traumatize persons intentionally for positive growth. More accessible are the studies on children in deprived socio-economic status (SES) which continue to reveal the great importance of resilience in mitigating the broad range of conditions and negative effects so often correlated with low SES (Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008).

Perhaps, across all the phases of a person's life, interpersonal warmth and modeling of positive behaviors can encourage resilience. Similar study which attempts to

quantify resilience in maltreated children, rather than those exclusively from lower SES situations, has likewise found that resilience is more likely in children whose parents do not practice unusually antisocial behavior. Negatively related is the research that shows that crime-ridden and otherwise troubled communities tend to lower the frequency of resilient children (Jaffee, Caspi, Moffitt, Polo-Tomás, & Taylor, 2007). These findings taken together reasonably suggest the likelihood that a potential for warm, interpersonal relationships can contribute positively to the emergence of positive personality traits. Importantly, personality traits in childhood by the ages of 8-12 have been shown to be significantly predictive of traits in young adulthood, ages 17-23 (Shiner, Mastern, and Tellegen, 2003). But, mean levels of particular traits can change significantly over time, especially in the context of major developmental life phases. For example, a person's work environment has also been shown to correlate to personality development (Le, Donnellan, and Conger, 2006). Recovery work also helps: Trait development indicative of increasing maturity correlates with reduction of personality disorder symptoms (Wright, Pincus, and Lenzenweger, 2011).

Some personality traits, such as religiousness, present a more complex picture related to changeability. For example, nonshared environment, in which personal relationship would certainly be an important component, has been shown in this trait to influence adolescents more than adults. It may be surprising to us that religiousness itself is a personality trait with a strongly heritable aspect which increasingly emerges over lifespan development. Said simply, religiousness demonstrates a stronger genetic impact on adults than on the young, with adult monozygotic twins showing heritability in the

range .35 to .55 depending on the assessment used (Koenig, McGue, Krueger, and Bouchard, 2005).

It bears mentioning that the changeability of some positive personality traits, such as resilience, has already become matters of intense focus and institutional programming. The last ten years of warfare for the United States have demonstrated again the grim reality that combat personnel in warfare can face not only traumatic physical wounding but devastating psychological wounding. The United States Navy Center for Combat and Operational Stress Control (NCCOSC) has announced that developing not only awareness, but programming to develop resilience in deployed troops, is a critically important challenge for supporting better outcomes in those who face combat. So, the United States Navy has indicated that since it is now established that resilience can be learned, we should therefore assume it can also be taught (Hammer, 2009). Such resilience, the Navy has referred to as armor for the mind, analogous to the body and vehicular armors required in modern warfare. The brief article cited here provides two factors in advancing resilience in the field. First, the Navy has asserted that a marine or sailor must grow in ability to manage actively his or her own stress. Second, the junior level leaders over the lower enlisted need to learn to recognize signs of stress and provide support (Hammer, 2009). In summary, and corroborating the current study, the U.S. Navy has asserted that interpersonal support of the progress and implementation of positive personality traits has become an institutionally recognized and essential aspect of facing modern warfare (Hammer, 2009).

Peterson and Seligman's *Character Strength and Virtues* (2004) identifies resilience not primarily by the lessening of negative outcomes, but as a distribution of various positive personality factors which offer surprising, good outcomes during adversity, including such characteristics as hopefulness, persistence, integrity, fairness, creativity, social intelligence, self-regulation and vitality. All of these appear among the positive personality traits in their taxonomy Peterson and Seligman (2004).

In the final analysis, there is a tiered aspect to stability across the different kinds of personality measures. Research conclusions regarding stability of achievement factors have not changed dramatically since Conley's much-referenced work published in 1984. In short, intelligence as a factor is more stable than the strengths cataloged by Peterson and Seligman (2004). Those personality traits then prove to be more stable than attitudes (Conley, 1984). It is outside the scope of this work to differentiate levels of stability between individual personality traits. But, one of the most important and perhaps surprising conclusions to the question of trait change is that in extensive monozygotic and dizygotic twin study, trait changes varied in their correlation to genetics or environment according to which aspects of personality were under consideration. The older intrinsic maturation hypothesis, the idea that personality traits are primarily genetic and highly stable, applies best to the stability and absolute levels of negative emotionality and the ability to regulate negative emotions. The same twin research demonstrated that the life-span hypothesis, the idea that personality traits are most heavily influenced by social and environmental factors, primarily applies to personality traits. Apart from these,

over time, positive emotionality demonstrates less systemic change (Hopwood, Donnellan, Blonigen, Krueger, Mcgue, Iacono, and Burt, 2011a).

Can people tell when their traits have changed?

One question significant to the interviews in this research is whether people self-report accurately changes in their personality. Information and research remains limited on the issue of how well persons can estimate changes in their personality traits although current results are optimistic (Robins, Noftle, Trzesniewski, & Roberts, 2005). One encouraging recent study investigated whether college student estimations of their personality changes correlated well with pre and post-testing using Big-Five personality assessment. The changes being tracked included a wide range of variables related to adjustment and achievement in college life. In this study, participant-perceived personality change correlated significantly with assessed personality change (Robins, Noftle, Trzesniewski, & Roberts, 2005). This is one finding which offers confidence that self-reporting personality changes bear accurate relationship to actual personality changes. However, frequently, when people narrate the changes of their lives, they focus on personal rather than inter-personal issues (Lodi-Smith, Geise, Roberts, and Robins, 2009). College students have self-reported changes over time in both their emotional reactions, adding capacity for positive personality aspects, and changes in meaning making, and how their experiences impacted them. They attributed these developments to intrinsic emotional health, conscientiousness and emotional stability (Lodi-Smith, Geise, Roberts, and Robins, 2009). Further study is needed on understanding why there can be significant differences between perceptions of change in traits over time between self-

report and report from new spouses or personal friends (Watson & Humrichouse, 2006). With respect to spouses, it has been shown that marital satisfaction plays a significant mitigating effect in these perceptions. In general, current research indicates that it remains wise to employ multiple-sources when possible (Watson & Humrichouse). Earlier research confirms the perception that persons, their spouses and close friends can estimate each other's personality traits well. However, the accuracy of these perceptions is higher for Big Five type traits than it is for affectivity traits, in which more similarity tends to be assumed than actually exists. Affectivity, in this research includes positive affective traits like joviality and self-assurance, negative traits like fear and guilt, and other affective traits like serenity, fatigue or shyness. Trait visibility clearly plays a role in this difference in how well we estimate each other's traits (Watson, Hubbard, & Wiese, 2000).

The Negative Side of Positive Psychology

For completeness, it must be mentioned that positive psychology is not without its critics. Interestingly, much of positive psychology's most persistent challenges come from humanistic psychologists. Humanistic and positive psychology appear on the surface to have thematic overlaps and some common theoretical presuppositions (Robbins, 2008). Both domains are interested in healthiness and growth, both within individuals and relationships (Friedman, 2008). They have in common a fundamental interest in happiness (Friedman, 2008). Researchers Linley and Joseph, when comparing the two disciplines, asserted that the two domains were far more similar than different (2004). However, sometimes positive psychologists have failed in the past, according to

humanistic psychologists, to recognize the historical contribution of humanist psychology to positive psychology's foundations and issues (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Humanistic psychologists also dispute Seligman's and Csikszentmihalyi's allegation from 2000 that humanist psychology proceeded without scientific rigor and while failing to engage social problems (Friedman & Robbins, 2012), while making other remarks about humanist psychology which have been considered ungenerous (Robbins, 2008). Some researchers have therefore seen leaders of the positive psychology movement as establishing their domain with unnecessary rancor (Friedman, 2008). Some humanistic psychologists maintain that this is simply another facet of humanistic psychology's marginalization by the mainstream, built on such perceptions as a naive approach to realism, and the supposedly intrinsic superiority of quantitative methods over qualitative (Churchill, 1997).

Direct critiques of positive psychology have pointed out positive psychology's inherently paradoxical stance. While asserting the pursuit of a high standard of logical positivist scientific standards congruent with its preference for quantitative analysis, positive psychology great interest in the value-laden concept of virtues actually conflicts with most reductionist scientific psychological approaches (Friedman, 2008). Some humanistic psychology researchers also assert that positive psychology generally ignores the shadows of human reality instead of taking humanistic psychology's approach in observing humans holistically, identifying both positives and negatives present and how they relate to each other (Friedman & Robbins, 2012).

Some humanistic psychologists challenge that positive psychology tends to view its interests, such as positive traits, in isolation as if they exist without situational context or the greater context of personality or accompanying behavior (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). They further express that such a decontextualized view causes positive psychology's conclusions sometimes to miss crucial data, such as how some positive psychologists advance the hope that happiness is achievable by encouraging persons to practice their virtues singularly and as isolated from their other traits (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Another error in positive psychology, some humanist psychologists assert, is that some virtues are essentially a result of combining other traits; resilience, for example, is actually comprised of elements like commitment, challenge, and control (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Further, humanistic psychologists identify the trait of resilience as a capacity which could be seen as a virtue in some people and as a vice in others. Positive psychology, they charge, see this trait as a virtue regardless of accompanying behaviors, motivations, and information. For example, Adolph Hitler was truly a resilient individual, but his resilience would not be considered a positive thing by many people. On the other hand, US Army training now encourages the development of resilience in the context of other behaviors deemed honorable (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Positive psychology would then be charged of not being careful enough in applying its own rubric. For example, Peterson and Seligman (2004) defined in their taxonomy that a virtue should relate to a good life, should have intrinsic value besides beneficial outcomes, does no harm, cannot easily change into something negative, can be reliably measured, can be distinguished from other virtues, is possessed by esteemed

people and lacking in some others, and is supported by culture. As is obvious in a case study like Hitler, humanistic psychologists would then assert that resilience only meets some of these traits, while failing in others. Further, as a composite trait, resilience is sometimes not always clearly distinguishable from other traits (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Meanwhile, because of an apparent tendency not to consider subjects holistically, positive psychology may even confuse whether traits are malevolent or benevolent (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). Positive psychologists are perhaps most importantly critiqued for their lack of holistic thinking in how they apply their findings. For example, the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program for the Army is attempting, under the guidance of positive psychologists such as Seligman, to train all soldiers in resiliency skills, with over a million already trained. But, in this largest psychology study ever, the CSF program is based on resiliency findings from non-soldier populations, such as middle and high school students (Novotney, 2009). Novotney, who has raised such questions, asks whether a program designed to reduce anxiety and depression in children can reliably provide resilience for soldiers.

Positive psychologists have alleged that humanistic psychology, as a discipline, tended to be performed without empirical bases (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), despite such prominent examples to the contrary as Carl Rogers's receipt of the 1956 APA award for Distinguished Contributions for his conventional, quantitative methods. Maslow's biography is also well known including his expansive history with scientific methods (Friedman, 2008). Humanistic psychologists argue that a holistic approach is required to examine virtues in the context of other traits within a whole personality, as

well as understanding what dark sides there are to apparent positive traits (Friedman & Robbins, 2012). In the context of the above reflections, we find ourselves wondering whether the very reason the literature gap exists related to the emergence and development of positive traits in adults is a result of a positive psychology tendency to view positive traits apart from their contexts, both in terms of how they develop, and what relational activities may support their emergence. We may hope that as the rigid boundaries between humanistic and positive psychology are softening and may continue to soften (Friedman, 2008), that positive psychology may develop a broader appreciation for holistic approaches and conclusions.

Personal Mentoring

Overview

Since positive psychology has discovered that positive personality traits are predictably correlated to resilience and numerous other positive life outcomes, is it possible that personal mentoring to support positive personality traits could contribute to successful therapies, and medical and institutional programs which promote desirable life outcomes? Mentoring has recently been defined as a movement which encourages those personal relationships which "promote positive developmental trajectories" in both mentors and mentees (Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sánchez, 2006, 765-766). The Consumer Guide from the Office of Research Education (OERI 1993) offered the etymology of the word mentoring from its Greek origin, meaning enduring, referring to a sustained modeling relationship between an adult and youth. The guide goes on to identify two types of mentoring, planned, which might also be called formal, and natural,

which might also be called informal. Planned mentoring often occurs in structured programs wherein mentors and mentees are matched through formal procedures. Natural mentoring, which will be explored in greater depth later, appears between friends, or other relationships of a supportive and informal nature, such as teaching, coaching, collegiality, and counseling. Character mentoring is hinted at in research related to adolescent thriving, where it is defined as optimal development specifically with a pro-social orientation (Bundick, Yeager, & Damon, 2008). In research measuring thriving by the factors: A hopeful future, personal character, and current well-being, significant correlation appeared related to such activities as church going, volunteering, and sports and school activities (Bundick, Yeager, & Damon). These activities are commonly known to include high components of interpersonal interaction and informal mentoring. This suggests that such contexts and activities may relate to developing the positive personality traits considered above such as responsibility and concern for others. Fowers argues that humans are not born with an automatic love of virtues. Rather, socialization is essential in developing an individual's capacity to recognize and appreciate virtuous and positive behaviors or activities. Fowers states that virtue ethics see character education as essential in developing positive human potential (2005).

Literature on mentoring has exploded in recent decades. Mentoring has now been explored voluminously in the domains of business, medical, and academic institutions. The idea of mentoring dates back to antiquity, and can be observed in the Old Testament with Moses mentoring Joshua, Naomi mentoring Ruth, and Mordecai mentoring Esther (Colborn, 1990). In the classics we can find mentoring prominent in Homer's *Odyssey*

featured most strongly in mentoring's eponymous character. Literature displays mentoring in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing,* Shelly's *Frankenstein,* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, not to mention comic books. Almost every profession has in its history famous mentor / protégé pairs, whether in entertainment with Tina Turner mentoring Mick Jagger, or the arts with Haydn mentoring Beethoven, in literature with Gertrude Stein as a mentor to Hemingway, or in science with Sigmund Freud mentoring both Carl Jung and Alfred Adler. While it is outside the scope of this dissertation in positive psychology to detail the recent history of contemporary mentoring, there are principles fundamental to mentoring which directly apply and bear mention. First, as to definition, mentoring is a unique relationship entered into by individuals with the intent to convey knowledge, and involves a process of support from the mentor to the mentee or protégé. In addition to this definition, it is observed that the personal relationship may eventually go well or not, e.g., both Jung and Adler ended up on the outs with Freud, and the duration of mentoring varies widely. Perhaps the most interesting aspect is that mentoring is reciprocal, with both individuals affecting the other, but asymmetrically so, with the party deemed more mature in the mentoring area of interest directing and contributing more to the less mature (Eby, Rhodes, and Allen, 2010). At its simplest, institutions, businesses and individuals pursue mentoring to establish personal relationships which will encourage positive developments in protégés, and potentially also in mentors (Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sánchez, 2006). It is outside the scope of this review to attempt detailed analysis or summary of the vast mentoring literature where it does not relate to personality development emphases. However,

whenever mentoring appears in the literature with specifically psychosocial impacts, it bears on the discussion here. Please note that personality impacts are sometimes indicated in such literature in a by-the-way fashion, and as other than the main interest.

Research on professional mentoring often indicates that personal or individual development supported by the practice is an "extra" benefit (e.g., Barnett, Youngstrom, and Smook, 2001). Mentoring research has recognized that even in mentoring not targeting character, the mentor usually becomes a sort of moral exemplar to the mentee. Drawing from moral psychology and philosophy, one mentor researcher proposes that protégés can develop character in the mentoring process when inspiration, reflection, motivation, emotion, knowledge and cognition through experience are systematically integrated (Moberg, 2008). Such finding highlights that it is important that the professional mentor take the mentoring relationship seriously, meaning, beyond the base performance requirements of the training tasks. Valuing the mentee as a person, extending respect and listening, all have been identified as meaningful adjuncts of the professional goals of mentoring. Germane to the current project, warmth in the personal aspect of the relationship, extending some support to the emotional and personal aspects of the mentoring and the employment, contribute to the overall satisfaction of the mentoring (Barnett, et al. , 2001). The process, even in the professional environment, is sometimes described as an "intimate" experience (Barnett, et al. , 2001). Part of that intimacy is the supervisee's experience in being safe to express potentially provocative questions or insights. Expressions to the mentee that he or she is a person of worth and

value, and that the mentor anticipates the mentee's success, are all aspects of perceived success in the mentoring relationship (Barnett, et al. , 2001).

Categories of personal mentoring research

Educational personality mentoring research on children. Review of the literature makes clear that the overwhelming volume of research existing at the current time on intentional character development is in the field of children's education. Problems on public school campuses, and a need for improved educational results and environments, have driven dozens of studies by educational researchers. Because so many of these studies emerge from educational scientists, the results are generally not couched in the language of personality traits and positive psychology. Nevertheless, the results suggest that improvements in positive traits are among the desirable results in the findings. For the purposes of this research, the educational results with children and adolescents confirm that not only is it possible for positive character traits to develop, but that it is possible to do so both intentionally and programmatically. We also see in many of the studies available confirmation that warm relationship between mentors, in these cases between the teachers as mentors, and students as mentees, produces better results.

Positive teacher-student relationships in grade school provide greater resilience for children with aggression issues (Meehan, Hughes, & Cavell, 2003). For example, African-American children have been disproportionately represented in issues of aggression and negative outcomes in both academics and behaviors. Hispanic children experience disproportionate outcomes in premature departure from school, emotional disturbances, and low academic achievement. Both ethnic groups of children have been

found to be supported by increased resilience derived from improved teacher-student relationships (Meehan, et al. , 2003). These findings further encourage the value of continued study on opportunities for personal development for other age groups and situations, including adults.

In a mixed methods case study in East Anglia, England, researchers considered a program featuring multiple components with a socio-cultural focus and found significant positive results. The results showed that a pro-social development program designed from empirical psychological and educational evidence can improve a school's capacity to address cognitive, emotional, and social needs. Improvements were found not only in student behaviors, but also in school climate, and staff morale (White & Warfa, 2011).

In research on youth mentoring, the body of research has demonstrated that when mentoring for hard skills, such as math, the mentoring relationship can be designed more simply, in prescriptive and purposeful ways. But, the skills required for modern life and flourishing are much more complex (Rhodes & Spencer, 2010). Public and institutional concern has caused self-regulation, empathy, and traits associated with character all to become more visibly essential. Children of more affluent homes, it has been shown, have more opportunities to develop such traits which also makes them more competitive in the job market (Rhodes & Spencer, 2010). Much of that has to do with identifiable positive personality focuses: resilience, development of positive traits, and the application of various skills and habits necessary for academic achievement and social success. Mentoring relationships, therefore, not only then hold promise to support mental health and happiness, but can help reduce the impact of socio-economically distinct

development (Rhodes & Spencer, 2010). These public education studies have been referenced in this review to suggest possibilities for adults.

Research comparing Chinese and United States eleventh graders discovered two other important components of mentoring related to achievement and adjustment, positive categories not considered traits. Differences in the use of non-parent, non-peer mentors between Chinese and United States students imply that social context can have an important effect on the development or success of personal mentoring (Chen, Greenberger, Farruggia, Bush, & Dong, 2003). Student participants identified their mentors as surpassing both their parents and their peers in positive qualities. So, it seems likely that persons are more likely to seek out, or at least be more open to, personal mentoring if they perceive that the potential mentor possesses unusually positive characteristics. There may also be present in the mentees a sense that these self-selected personal mentors exceed their parents or peers in the positive categories desired. Going further, there may then be a logical relationship between this phenomenon and specific social contexts in the United States where persons may seek personal mentoring in settings where it more predictably appears, as in churches, recovery groups, or volunteer organizations (Chen, et al. , 2003). These researchers during their study identified at least two categories singled out by the participants: support and significant influence. First, the identification of support as a factor in the Chinese and American study would seem to support the conclusion that warm, friendly, and perhaps informal relationship is most conducive to successful personality mentoring. Second, the identification of these mentors by the mentees as significantly influential (Chen, et al. , 2003) may offer insight

as to how the mentees self-select their mentors: Apparently, there exists some context in which the mentor has positively affected or inspired the mentee, and the mentee has decided he or she would like more of that influence.

Counterpoint: Mentoring children in Taiwan. The techniques and rationale for how to mentor may vary by culture. In review of literature, it is clear that there is some variety in personality mentoring models from culture to culture. For example, one model of mentoring children depends heavily on a consistent use of shame. This is a culturally acceptable approach in Taiwan but unacceptable in the West (Fung & Chen, 2001). How could something we consider intrinsically destructive to personhood result in positive outcomes? A few aspects of Taiwanese shame-mentoring bear notice. First, relationship between the child and the care giver continues and is assumed: There is never the sense that discontinuance of the relationship is a potential result for the child. Second, other persons in the family system, such as siblings, end up sharing accountability both for any mentee behavior considered shameful and for the efforts toward change. Third, there is an assumption that behavior will improve, that there is an anticipation of continued development toward a better future (Fung & Chen, 2001). These aspects of investment in the mentee would appear to be essential for the successful use of something as potentially destructive as shame: Strong commitment to the relationship, a sharing of responsibility in the outcomes, and anticipation that behaviors and outcomes will continue to improve. Despite its differences from Western approaches, the existence of this successful model demonstrates the key value of relationship commitment to mentoring personality.

Gender-focused personality mentoring research on adults. Some women's studies include research relevant to the current project. It is interesting to note that in earlier studies on the functions of women's friendships, some thirty years ago, development of personality was not an area of focus. Functions of women's friendships were dominated by concerns of personal power, defined as ability to influence or control others, status, recognition by others, and intimacy assistance, defined as the help experienced by exchanging secrets (Candy, Troll, & Levy, 1981). While we might assume that development facilitated by the reception of these supports might occur, personality development does not appear in the research. In the 1990s, as studies were exploding on female-specific social issues, the importance of women's relationships emerged, including what supports they offered (e.g., Komproe, Rijken, Ros, & Winnubst, 1997; Warren, 1997). Strongly congruent with our hypotheses is the now accepted finding that the nature and quality of these adult relationships are considerably more meaningful than the structure or quantity of a woman's relationships. It is also a very strongly resonant finding that such meaningful relationships for women encourage the presence of such personality traits as emotional resilience, coping, along with self-disclosure (e.g., Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992). Clear parallels emerge between this brief list of positive traits and the taxonomy of positive traits identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004). (For the taxonomic parallels with resilience see the earlier section discussing the United States Navy's resilience training, Hammer, 2009). Self-disclosure, as tracked in this research, would appear to correspond to the authenticity and honesty components of integrity in Peterson and Seligman. Social intelligence appears to

relate both to the emotional intelligence and personal intelligence traits. Further, and in line with future directions suggested by the current project, relational model therapy and assessment emerging from the research on women's relationships and Wellesley College Stone Center (e.g., Miller & Stiver, 1997; Jordan et al., 1991) has now been used to develop innovative therapies for treating substance abuse (Finklestein, 1996), supporting HIV prevention (Amaro, 1995), and doing both inpatient treatment (Riggs & Bright, 1997) and psychotherapy (Covington, 1998; Nelson 1996). In summary, relational model therapy confirms the value of intentional personal relationships for developing positive traits indicated by needful therapies, and could be applied beyond the gender-defined work of twenty years ago.

Other work on women's mentoring addressed transitions related to moving to college. Loneliness, depression, lack of belonging, and stress in this situation have all been found to be mitigated by mentoring relationships. In fact, and the idea most directly related to the current research, is that authors in this area have already suggested that both school and counseling psychologists are well advised to recommend becoming a mentee in place of normal therapies (Liang, Tracy, Kauh, Taylor, & Williams, 2006). While this mentoring was examined for its ability to reduce stress factors, and to support success academically and socially rather for than the development of positive personal attributes, it may be that positive traits are enhanced in the process of increasing resilience and improving academic and social performance. This study also identified one obstacle in supporting Asian-American students: They are less inclined to pursue mentors for

personal support than for vocational, even though they value such mentoring just as highly as Euro-Americans once they receive it (Liang, et al. , 2006).

As gender-specific research continues, that focused on adolescents is at this time moving in directions that address personal development more broadly. A recent gender-themed study called GirlPOWER for adolescent young women has focused on the connection between mentoring through personal relationship and the relational themes of adolescent female development (Pryce, Silverthorn, Sanchez, & DuBois, 2010). Here is an interest clearly related to the current project: Relational mentoring to support personal development. In the course of this work facilitated through Big Brothers and Big Sisters agencies, mentoring by mature adult females proceeded through scheduled workshops. While many mentors failed to keep their off-schedule, once-per-month appointments with their mentees to promote informality in mentoring, play activities were then included in the scheduled program so that the relational nature of the mentoring might be emphasized. The authors noted that warmth between the mentor and mentee, friendly rapport, facilitated mentoring focused on personal development (Pryce, et al., 2010). The scope of the programming included progressive education directed to support the relational context of the mentoring, training social and academic skills, training in responsibilities and rights, and positive orientation for romantic relationships (Pryce, et al. , 2010). Some classic questions in personality assessment emerge: At what point do education in attitudes and skills, for example, responsibility, with practice become responsibility-related positive personality traits such as those categorized by Peterson and Seligman (2004), including self-regulation, integrity, perseverance, fairness, or

leadership? Therapeutic questions remain, such as the role of warmth in personal relationship to facilitate the personal nature of the mentoring, which remains an emphasis through the entire GirlPOWER program (Pryce, et al., 2010). But, what sort of therapeutic application can safely use that which amounts to friendship?

Natural mentoring research on adults and children. As a significant subcategory for both children's and women's mentoring research, natural mentoring relationships (NMRs) provide developmental relationships which emerge as a matter of course in a person's extended family or immediate social circle, such as a neighborhood or community. Positive role models in these natural contexts can become key for character development. Character mentors who occur naturally in a child's environment become important adults in youths' lives and they model character through their own actions (Bandura, 1977; Sprafkin, Liebert, & Poulos, 1975). Some personal mentoring appears to occur because of extended family relationships or neighborhood proximity. Such relationships provide multiple types of personal support and may be used twice a week or more. Frequently, this occurs in situations where a younger person is related to or living near an older potential mentee. For example, in the 1990s as interest grew in understanding the contexts and issues of African American women, a government sponsored study explored the value of natural mentoring relationships to encourage resiliency in stressful situations and supporting further career development when the women were pregnant (Klaw & Rhodes, 1995). This research concluded that NMRs provided meaningful help to the women in emotional well-being, and both educational and career path development (Klaw & Rhodes, 1995). In the context of the current study,

it is possible that such broad effects may in fact include the enhancement of multiple distinct positive personality traits. Another positive factor encouraged by NMR support was optimism, a trait which has been demonstrated in general to contribute to many positive life outcomes, including business, classroom achievement, sports and physical health (Seligman, 1998). Optimism is also one of the positive traits categorized by Peterson and Seligman (2004).

There are significant findings that culture plays an important role in how mentees select natural mentors. For example, Latino adolescents will often select family members or other persons closely interdependent in their community. This interdependence involves important assumptions, including a willingness from the mentor to sacrifice for the mentee, empathy, and willingness to exchange influence. Also interesting is that Latino adolescents will select different mentors for different issues in their lives, such as homework, relationships, and encouragement related to careers (Sanchez & Reyes, 1999). While research has been too sparse to clarify or predict understandings of the outcomes, studies to-date indicate that high-risk youth with positive NMRs are more likely to complete high school and go to college than those without. Further, those with NMRs have also been found so far to have more positive attitudes toward schooling. Having multiple NMRs correlates inversely to days absent from school, another positive finding (Sanchez, Esparza, & Colón, 2008). It seems likely from these findings that growth of multiple positive personality traits may be implicit in the mentees positively affected.

Research by DuBois and Silverthorn (2005) also demonstrated that outcomes for adolescents with NMR mentors correlate to a wide range of positive and improved

behaviors. These include favorable results in both school and work settings, attendance in college, maintaining a work schedule greater than ten hours per week, and reducing problematic behaviors including gang membership, risk taking and violence. Further, these adolescents also exhibit improved well being, including satisfaction, self-esteem, and behaviors associated with physical health such as birth control and improved physical activity levels. While DuBois and Silverthorn assert that the contribution of NMRs was not sufficient alone, they were demonstrably an important component of supporting at-risk youth.

Some research has focused on the presence of natural mentors who support adolescent children of alcoholics (COA). Research found that natural mentors in this situation tend to be same-sex relatives, and the mentoring relationships which were most effective were those in which the mentors had direct knowledge of the mentee's family. It is important to note also that natural mentors supporting COA may also include friends' parents, neighbors, school personnel, and other social connections. Almost half had daily contact with the mentee, and talking together represented a nearly universal activity in the NMR (Cavell, Meehan, Heffer, & Holladay, 2002). While it is important not to generalize by stereotyping COA as children with uniformly negative parenting, the negative effects of alcoholic parenting are certainly reduced by support from a non-parental adult. Another encouraging factor discovered in this research was that over two-thirds of the mentoring relationships were initiated by the mentors rather than the mentees (Cavell, et al., 2002), further supporting the likelihood that such personality mentoring might be initiated intentionally.

Study of mentoring with youth also cautions us that mentoring will not likely be a silver bullet or a one-size-fits-all process. Some persons are more positively affected by mentoring than are others. For example, mentoring would not be expected to compensate for serious mental health issues. Also, persons that have a history of highly supportive relationships may be affected differently by character mentoring than are persons with neglectful, absent or abusive relationships (Rhodes & Spencer, 2010).

Cultural mentoring. One of the most significant studies for research on adult personality mentoring is also among the most uncommon: cultural study focused on adult development. Lowe described in his ethnographic and advocacy-oriented study the community effort which is involved in preparing Cherokee young males for responsible adulthood. It is, perhaps, somewhat ironic that the target of this Cherokee community formation of an individual's character is self-reliance. But, according to Lowe, the Cherokee community considers itself responsible for helping its young adults achieve this virtue. While the mentee's natural relationships, including grandparents, and parent siblings, play a significant role, Cherokees envision the task of mentoring coming from any of a number of trusted persons within the tribe, not necessarily from the family of origin (Lowe, 2005). Lowe asserts that, as described by some previous studies, mentoring among the Cherokees has become more important because of the negative situations often faced by Cherokee children and young adults. The history of Cherokees, and sadly, their experience with the U.S. government, has often been severely negative, and includes such historical factors as dishonest government treaties, the tragic, forced federal relocation known historically as The Trail of Tears, and the establishment of boarding

schools where Cherokees were forbidden to practice the language, dress, and culture of their heritage. These elements of mistreatment resulted in multiple negative, physical, economic, and psychosocial impacts (Lowe, 2005). Personality mentoring among Cherokee males, supported by responsive policy from educational and government institutions, supports the development of self-reliance in a social context where much of the capacity for self-reliance has been systematically diminished over the decades (Lowe, 2005).

Coaching. Another category of personality development mentoring involves professional development tutors or coaches. As with the majority of the personality development initiatives in the literature, this approach often supports children, but coaching has certainly begun to emerge as a significant movement for adults. Further, the goals appear similar to that which adults seeking personality development mentors express: support in working through past traumas and support in restructuring the personality, creating new perceptions, attitudes and approaches for dealing with life (de Tychey, Lighezzolo-Alnot, Claudon, Garnier, & Demogeot, 2012). Coaching is largely a formal mentoring relationship from the point of view that protégés don't usually have a prior friendship or other personal relationship with the coach, and that the availability of the coaching is based on fee payment. However, as an adult model often focused on issues of personality, it bears mentioning in this context and may support the development of positive personality traits.

Formal and informal mentoring.

Distinguishing between formal and informal mentoring. The distinction between formal and informal mentoring is a consideration in the current study, because formal and informal mentoring tend to produce different results in the primary factors of mentoring relationships: relationship initiation, structure, and outcomes (Eby, Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010). In informal mentoring, one of the two parties in the partnership has likely initiated the mentoring process and, therefore, the parties have exercised greater choice and input as to the nature of the relationship, with numerous resultant impacts on the processes which occur. For example, in informal mentoring, the relationship will often begin with a greater degree of shared values, perceived similarity, and liking, which will then likely generate greater degrees of trust, commitment, and disclosure. In informal mentoring, there is greater personal control over the relationship structure, including when, where, and how often to meet, what are the expressed goals of the mentoring, and how to interact. In numerous studies, because of these benefits, informal mentoring generally is more successful in reaching its goals (Eby, et al., 2010). In formal mentoring situations, the relationship between mentor and mentee may be mandated by a third party and be predefined with boundaries on when, how, how much, and about what content the mentoring relationship will be conducted. Because of the potential for a protégé to lack personal input, and therefore ownership, such mentoring is often impersonal and lacking in spontaneity. In short, while mentoring research regarding adults is sparse, it has been noted that informal mentoring exceeds formal mentoring in its impact on youth (Eby, et al., 2010.). Further, a profile for an optimal mentoring style

relationship has emerged, and includes the following six foundations for interaction: a) support, b) informality, c) mutual respect, d) responsiveness, referring to feedback, e) emotional safety, and f) protégé-centeredness (David, Nakamura, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). These foundations enable protégés to practice five developmental behaviors which have been shown to contribute to desirable mentoring outcomes: a) reflection, b) extrapolation, c) autonomy, d) praxis, and e) synthesis (David, Nakamura, & Csikszentmihalyi, 2008).

Personal or instrumental mentoring. Extant research also distinguished between different categorical focuses of mentoring relationships: the instrumental and the psychosocial. Instrumental mentoring relationships tend to focus on accomplishing goals whereas psychosocial mentoring relationships focus on modification of personal characteristics. Clearly, the current project on development of positive character traits relates best to the latter category. Research remains mixed as to how gender influences whether mentoring relationships will tend to fall into one or the other category (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). In general, it appears that girls pursue emotional intimacy earlier and more intensely than do boys, and girls are more likely to experience positive outcomes for psychosocial issues than do boys, including for depression. However, even though girls are more likely to seek emotional support than are boys, when persons of either gender are under stress, research has discovered no gender-based differences in seeking problem-solving or instrumental support (Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sánchez, 2006). Because research on psycho-social mentoring for adults is

limited, it is not known how robust or persistent these gender distributions are as persons become older.

Friendship mentoring. Findings mentioned prior support a hypothesis that warm interpersonal relationship may be the most effective personal mentoring in positive personality development. During the 1990s, a few researchers were interested in the relationship between friendship and life development (e.g., Hartup & Stevens, 1997). It was noted at that time that research on the personal impacts of friendships was unevenly distributed across lifespan interests, with the majority of interest in friendships targeting children, adolescents and young adults. It was further noted that while adult studies were interested in initial similarity between a person and his or her friends, social support, and attraction, interest in friendship impact on development was almost entirely focused on children (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). In the last few years, however, it has been demonstrated in an unusual application of computers for psychological interventions, that conversing with a friend about one's own personal trait strengths, followed by intentional practice of them, improves cognitive well-being for at least three months (Mitchell, Stanimirovic, Klein, & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). The similarity of this process with a friend to intentional character mentoring is noteworthy.

Older study on preadolescents and adolescents has demonstrated that intimacy in friendship provides significant development impetus in at least two areas, social competence and adjustment (Buhrmester, 1990). These two areas of development likely include multiple positive personality traits as components. Using Peterson and Seligman's

taxonomy, one might hypothesize that social competence may involve such traits as integrity, vitality, love, kindness, social intelligence, and so on.

> Adolescents whose friendships were rated (by both self- and friend reports) as compassionate, disclosing and satisfying reported that they are more competent, more sociable, less hostile, less anxious/depressed, and have higher self-esteem compared to peers involved in less intimate friendships. These findings are consistent with the claim that the processes that create intimacy in adolescent friendships are important determinants of mental health and the growth of competence (Buhrmester, 1990. pp. 1107-1108).

Similarly, the general domain of adjustment may include such positive traits as creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, perspective or wisdom, love of learning, and so on. It also appears significant that Burhmester's research did not seek out young people who developed intimacies for the purpose of development, but for the value of the friendships themselves. It may turn out that positive and meaningful intimacies with friends are a constructive medium for development of positive personality traits with or without the intent to spend time together for the purpose of character formation. That further question remains for later research subsequent to this.

Of critical interest to the current research is the assumption of these earlier researchers that despite variations in frequency, intensity and developmental results of friendships across lifespans, friendships are developmental resources in all periods of life (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). It is now understood that developmental changes alter one's relationships; that direction of affect is clear. For example, the development of relational

coordination is directly related to changes in memory in the toddling years. Puberty, in general, increases intimacy for friends of opposite gender but not of same gender. Persons in old age experiencing reduced mobility and strength cannot offer the same reciprocity in relationships as they did in earlier years (Hartup & Stevens, 1997). Also, early lifespan friendships focus more on shared activities, a more shallow way of evaluating relationships, and later lifespan friendships focus more on deeper aspects of relationships, such as intimacy, support, confidentiality, and trustworthiness (Hartup, & Stevens). The conclusions of this 1997 research may suggest what findings may emerge as studies on mentoring and positive personality traits continue. Hartup and Stevens concluded that friendships appear to remain significant for personal development throughout a lifetime, and friendships are both affective and cognitive resources supporting such factors as well-being and self-esteem. One can easily imagine that such a conclusion implies development of Peterson-Seligman positive traits such as zest, enthusiasm, social intelligence, hope, humor and others (2004). Hartup and Stevens further conclude that friendships also provide support for socialization, specifically the mastering of age-related tasks. It is then easy to imagine further Peterson-Seligman taxonomic categories which would be supported in development, such as wisdom, perseverance, gratitude, kindness, love, citizenship, and so on. Additionally, Hartup and Stevens also affirm a presupposition of the current work, and that is that some friendships, and therefore some mentors of the type we are most interested in for this study, are more helpful to life development than are others. As Hartup and Stevens affirm, intimate and supportive friendships between socially skilled persons are positive

factors for personal development, whereas conflicted relationships between persons with serious issues may be disadvantages (1997). These researchers affirm that positive friendships are like banks on which a person can draw for personal resources when facing various crises, stresses or challenges. Negatively impacting relationships by the same simile can be a frequent drain on a person's resources and may actually diminish the quality of one's developmental outcomes (1999). Yet further differences appear when studying such relationships. Some are more reciprocal or symmetrical than others. So, further study must address such issues as closeness, the presence of any hostility, and supportiveness. How are such relationships affected, say, by a tendency to depression in either the mentor or mentee (1997)? More generally speaking, friendships, and supposedly also those with an interest in character formation, over time develop complexities, what Hartup and Stevens call a "dark side" (1999). How do such elements affect the developmental impact and potential of the relationship?

Literature on parenting can also inform research on character mentoring. Parenting literature is robust on the relationship of styles with character outcomes. One important summary is that the best results for children occur when parents combine a warm and engaged relationship with specific demands or tasks (Rhodes & Spencer, 2010). We might infer then that the optimum relationship for character mentoring is warm and supportive, combined with some directed activities. Even with adults, it would make sense to conclude that tasks offered to the mentee from the mentor may be most successfully engaged when the mentor is also supportive and engaged.

Why mentor?

Psychological researchers Levinson, Carrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978) performed an extensive longitudinal observation on forty men who were blue and white collar industrial workers, including business executives, biologists, academicians, and novelists. Among the researchers' findings was not only that the mentoring relationship is one of the most important developmental relationships an early adult can experience, but that being a mentor often can become one of the most significant relationships a person experiences in middle adulthood (Lowe, 2005). Research in the areas of management and business continue to support the positive impacts of mentoring on job satisfaction and career success (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001; Waters, McCabe, Kiellemp, & Kiellerup, 2002; Hean, 2003). Mentors may initiate a mentoring relationship because a mentee has drawn their interest by their skills, interests, self-esteem, and extroversion. But, generally speaking, mentors and mentees select each other (Liang, Tracy, Kauh, Taylor, & Williams, 2006). Since mentoring is a relationship designed to support a mentee, it might be asked, what does the mentor gets out of it? In an employment situation where the mentoring is a responsibility of the mentor, the motivations appear obvious: The mentor is performing tasks desired by his or her employer(s). But, what about situations where the normal inducements of employment are not the primary factor in motivating mentoring? In decades past, researcher Sharon Barnett pointed out that serving as a mentor may satisfy the innate desire for generativity described by Erikson as a later life development phase. Barnett suggested that three different elements of satisfaction could be identified from an Eriksonian perspective in the mentor's experience

of development, growth, and culmination for the mentee. First, the mentor experiences relinquish of focus upon him or herself to offer a new life for the mentee. Second, Barnett pointed out the mentor finds value in helping the mentee realize his or her dreams, that is, that there is congruence between the results of the mentoring and the mentor's own values. Third, the mentor can conceive of the mentoring as a gateway to the future in that a link is created between the past and the future, and the mentee may go on to greater accomplishments than the mentor could now do, but those accomplishments are representative of the mentor's own desires (Barnett, 1984).

Variety in mentoring results.

The results of mentoring are naturally idiosyncratic: Each member of the mentoring pair contributes unique qualities to the relationship. It makes sense that studies which include recollections of mentoring highlight the highly specific nature of mentoring results, whether the mentoring targets getting off drugs, developing greater academic interest, or success in terminating endless bad romantic relationships (Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sánchez, 2006). Although it is beyond the scope of this particular study, it also would intuitively make sense that certain types of persons will relate better to some mentors than to others, and that issue has begun to be noticed by recent educational researchers (e.g., Williams, 2009). Positive outcomes when mentoring adolescents are predictably associated with the presence of warmth and acceptance, and when positive character traits exist in the mentor (Chen et al., 2003). In cross-cultural examination of personal mentoring with adolescents, influential mentors have been studied in four different key aspects: whether they were perceived to be warm and

accepting, whether they were depressed, whether they imposed sanctions for disapproved behaviors, and whether they possessed problem behaviors themselves. For example, among parents, warmth and acceptance correlated negatively to adolescent depression and negative behaviors in many cultures including the United States. This is reminiscent of Kohut’s and Carl Rogers's comments considered earlier about the nature of the therapeutic relationship contributing significantly to positive outcomes. Also, parental sanctions or negative behaviors correlated to problem behaviors in adolescents (Chen et al.).

Why seek mentoring (Can mentoring affect personality)?

So, why would a person become interested in receiving the kind of character mentoring relationship that is under investigation in the current study? We might assume that an adult may desire better facility in certain personality traits or skills when he or she witnesses them in competent persons. An important factor contributing to the strength of positive results is whether a mentee's motivations are intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is that for which a mentee engages in the activity purely for the sake of the activity itself (Lepper, Green, & Nisbett, 1973). Expressed another way, when individuals are intrinsically motivated, they pursue activities for the interest, value or enjoyment those activities provide (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). When pursuing activities for intrinsic motives, they often perform at high levels (Amabile, 1996; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987). In contrast, extrinsic motivation represents a motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end rather than an end in itself (Abuhamdeh & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Pintrich & Schunk,1996).

Studies in management and business consistently demonstrate positive outcomes from mentorship on career success and job satisfaction (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001; Waters, McCabe, Kiellemp, & Kiellerup, 2002; Hean, 2003). However, a mentee's interest may not all be so conscious. Almost forty years before the emergence of positive psychology as a discipline, one group of child researchers was interested in how small children chose which behaviors to emulate. They discovered that when children were exposed to models of altruistic behaviors, rewarding behaviors, the children tended to choose whether to emulate or not based on the amount of reinforcement which had been previously contributed by their peer group (Hartup and Coates, 1967). It is interesting that the rewardingness of the behavior by itself did not significantly affect interest in imitation. Among small children, peer reinforcement, which is related to social acceptance, was shown to enhance the mentee's selection of behavior imitation. Another dynamic also appeared in the children being studied: Children manifest anxiety when they are placed in relationship with other children. The results of the study eventually suggested a two-sided conclusion related to peer imitation. First, when peers reinforce frequently, incentive is greater for imitating a rewarding model than for a nonrewarding one. Second, when peers do not frequently reinforce, nonrewarding models actually increase stress whereas rewarding models reduce imitation. It was conjectured that without frequent reinforcement, nonrewarding models are actually imitated in a defensive response (Hartup and Coates, 1967). So, it must be considered for the current study that when asking why a mentee would seek out a character mentor, that the mentee

consciously or unconsciously may do so as a response to frequent peer group reinforcement related to the personality traits involved.

Many people value those whom they've seen as mentors in their lives. In common parlance, the term mentor often includes positive regard and even gratitude for the mentor. But, mentoring relationships appear to remain relatively uncommon, although theoretically almost any colleague or acquaintance perceived as being in a position of leadership or authority could become a mentor (Barnett, et al., 2001). A mentor can become an example of identity in the issue being mentored. When leaders don't mentor, it appears commonplace for learners to experience distance from those in authority, like teachers or supervisors, and to have the experience that those in such positions knew little about the learners and revealed virtually nothing about themselves. Sometimes those in authority miss the opportunity relationship provides: There is sometimes a sense that those in authority can weaken that authority by revealing too much about themselves (Barnett, et al., 2001). It is interesting that while successful mentoring conveys an expectation of the mentee' success, mentors can be perceived as having more difficult standards to obtain, and yet the mentees will try. Good mentoring also requires some latitude for the mentee's mistakes (Barnett, et al., 2001).

It is the hypothesis of this research that people can choose to engage warm and supportive relationships with intent to develop desirable personality traits, and that such effort can result in increased positive personality traits. Current research interested in the relationship between socialization and personality development assumes that personality traits develop as a result of direct environmental experiences, including primarily role

contingencies and experiencing the various successes and failures in regular activities (Roberts, O'Donnell, and Robins, 2004). It is also possible, although not a focus of the current research, that persons may begin transformation of personality traits prior to actual experience. For example, extant research on entering a new social role has shown that traits can begin to change in anticipation of the new role (Roberts, O'Donnell, and Robins, 2004). It would make sense, then, that such an anticipatory pattern of changes may be visible when a person intends to engage personal relationship for the purpose of character formation but has not experienced that relationship yet.

How might relationships affect personality development?

The role of relationships in personality development has only very recently been significantly demonstrated. Researchers Neyer and Lehnart have now been able to assert firmly, "First, personality development cannot be fully understood without considering person-environment transactions, and the mechanisms of personality change cannot be studied without considering relationship contexts that accompany change" (2007, 564-565). In the domain of parenting, research has now demonstrated that personality development is attributable somewhat less than 50% to genetic factors, and that the proportion of influence from genetics can be altered by environment. While much research in this area remains to be done, both in terms of replication and asking related questions, it is already clear that negative affectivity and positive affectivity can each be mitigated differently by differing interactions between heritability and environment, especially personal relationships. In the study demonstrating these aspects, parental relationships acted both in enhancing or diminishing either environmental or genetic

effects (Krueger, South, Johnson, and Iacono, 2008). Therefore, warm and informal relationships through which a person might seek character formation are likely to provide nurturing and support. It has been affirmed that social-role experiences contribute significantly to self-concept clarity, in simple terms affirming that positive social-role experiences cause us to feel like we know ourselves better (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2010). It may be surmised that this dynamic may contribute positively to a positive personality trait such as confidence. More recent, similar research has demonstrated that changes in social-role experiences co-vary with related personality traits. For example, higher levels of social engagement among older adults predict higher levels of emotional stability, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. As mentioned earlier, strength in positive personality traits often correlate to physical factors such as longevity and better physical health. In corroboration of that assertion, recent research on older adults confirmed that people who stayed more engaged socially, rather than retreating from social engagement, enjoyed better physical health (Lodi-Smith and Roberts, 2012).

Some researchers and theorists have attempted to suggest the mechanisms by which personality mentoring may be able to encourage the further development of personality traits. One speculation has surfaced in theory of mind (ToM) research focusing on differences between identical twins. ToM attempts to explain a typical developmental discovery in a child's life, and refers to the child's growing awareness that other people's behaviors are affected by mental factors, such as perception of reality, beliefs, and other elements which can be either true or mistaken. Research demonstrated that striking individual mind differences do typically exist in ToM development between

identical twins. Behavioral genetic models in that research directed the researchers to environmental factors, among those affirmed were variations in parental treatment, sibling associations, and importantly, peer influences. Examples of different environments which correlated significantly to differences in ToM development include size of family and culture, whereas relationship-inhibiting factors such as deafness can delay ToM development (Hughes, Happé, Taylor, Jaffee, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2005). Such ToM findings from identical twin studies provide strong encouragement as to the possibility of positive character developed or stimulated from relationship. But, unfortunately, this constitutes yet another research focus dedicated to study on children rather than adults. However, if an adult allegory to ToM could include categories of others-awareness, such as, perhaps, emotional intelligence, then it would seem to follow that relationships could influence development in a person's positive response to others, and therefore, to multiple identified positive personality traits. Virtue ethicists have posited that character develops through a kind of habituation, but not in the classical behavioral sense (Steutel & Spiecker, 2004).

Yet another theoretical point of view as to why personal relationships might support personality developmental can be found in the work of one of Martin Seligman's earlier research colleagues, noted happiness and creativity researcher Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Csikszentmihalyi postulated that persons were likely at their happiest when engaged in tasks that are so completely absorbing that nothing else in that moment seems to matter. This experience of engagement he referred to as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). In later research, many typical personal situations seemed to be ambivalent in

supporting both flow and the desirable end-state of happiness. Naturally occurring relational situations possess some of the required elements for positive personality development but lack others. While studying adolescents, Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi (1996) found that family settings often supported happiness but did poorly in producing the involvement and engagement which are necessities for flow. Time with friends produced greater happiness and a greater sense of personal involvement, but still lacked engagement or focus. Solitude supported focus, but failed to support either happiness or a sense of involvement. School settings produced average involvement, and high focus or concentration, but were generally correlated with unhappiness (Moneta and Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). It comes as no surprise then, that for adolescents, pleasure in school tasks correlated almost entirely with teacher evaluations of student work, rather than intrinsic interest in the subject from the student. Might it be, when warm personal relationships are voluntarily engaged with the intent of character development, that a golden mean may be attainable for many persons, meaning that most if not all Csikszentmihalyi's supportive conditions may be present? It appears reasonable, when reviewing Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow, someone volunteering for character mentoring could enjoy intentional self-development in an engaging relationship, supporting both happiness and involvement, and enjoy strong motivation for intrinsic focus on the task at hand, the concentration on character development? Here may be found logic as to why intentional friendships aimed at character development are such a special opportunity for character formation: Happiness, from positive and warm relating,

involvement, from strong social connection, and focus on an intrinsically meaningful task, may come together as a best practice for character development.

Influence through romantic partners. Research has now advanced evidence that partnering, in the sense of romantic relationship, is one of the strongest influences on personality development in the third decade of life (Lehnart, Neyer, and Eccles, 2010; Neyer and Leynart, 2007). The implications for the current hypothesis are clear: Now that we have learned that personality development is somewhat more environmental than genetic, we have also learned that influence from significant individuals, such as lovers, is a leading force in development of personality.

Development impacts from friendships. Peer relationships appear to affect development in multiple ways. As noted elsewhere, the developmental significance of friendships has been researched to a small degree, but only for children. With respect to children, having friends often is evaluated as a proxy for competence in social skills, and lacking friends for lacking social competence. Possessing friends also lends credence to a client's competence in reality testing (Hartup, 1996). Further, having friends, in an aggregate sense, appears to support positive personality development, whereas not having friends is a risk factor for positive development. But, dyadic relationships also are thought to provide specific positive developmental supports. This psychological idea dates at least to Harry Stack Sullivan who, as long ago as 1953, posited that dyadic friendships are powerful wellsprings for development. Such relationships, according to Sullivan, require children to suspend their natural egoism. Their relationships become contexts which advance egalitarianism, and require the emergence of conflict

management in order to sustain the relationships (Sullivan, 1953). Sullivan's insights add credence to the hypothesis that warm personal relationships could be selected intentionally for the purpose of character improvement. Sullivan's hypotheses have been revisited in more recent studies that attempt to measure developmental influence of adolescents' friends on disruption or involvement in school. Such studies have tended to confirm Sullivan's hypothesis to a significant degree (Berndt & Keefe, 1995).

Developmental research on adolescents revealed over twenty years ago that friends can affect the participants' relationship to school either in terms of positive involvement or negative disruption. Students who reported more disruptive friends tended to report greater disruption in their participation in school over time. Predictably, students whose friendships exhibited more positive traits related to achievement improved in involvement over time (Berndt & Keefe, 1995). These assertions are sometimes fraught with chicken and egg challenges, such as that young people may be selecting friends with qualities similar to their own, and so the results are not different than what would be expected from the participants' own characteristics. But, research has indicated that at the very least friendships exaggerate the effect of participant traits on their disruption or involvement in school. Currently, the exact degree of influence varies based on the types of analysis used. Nevertheless, across most studies concerned with this question, friends effected participants to a statistically significant degree (Berndt and Keefe, 1995).

Hartup noted that childhood friendships vary enormously, depending on such factors as whether the friends one selects tend to get into trouble, whether they are

antisocial, whether the friends are clumsy but good. The nature of the friends themselves will clearly affect the influence they have on a child's development (Hartup, 1996). These friendships also vary qualitatively in what the experience of the friendship tends to create behaviorally. For example, does a particular friendship express itself in antisocial behavior? Does a friendship support constructiveness from a social point of view, in that negotiation is used to solve problems or do resolutions occur based on power assertion from one child over the other. Related to this, is there symmetry in the power dynamics between the members of the relationship? Is the relationship close, in whether the friends spend a lot of time together and across a wide range of activities and interests? Is the friendship one which is secure and comfortable, or one full of conflict and essentially non-supportive (Hartup, 1996)? It would make sense that if someone selected a friendship for supporting his or her own character formation, then the very act of selecting would at least subconsciously involve recognition of these factors. Presumably, if one were to select a friend as a character mentor, then that friend would likely be perceived as socially adept, supportive to the goal of character development, perhaps to pro-relationship traits in general, and be willing to use negotiation and power dynamics at least tolerable to the mentee. The veracity of these assumptions would be good material for future research, but at the present time, it makes sense that selecting a character mentor is not only an issue of opportunity, but is also an evaluative process which includes numerous aspects, including shared interest in the character formation, in the positive traits one wishes to develop, in other persons, and so on. While the mentor may not be passionate about all such issues, it seems reasonable at this time to suppose that

some minimal level of recognition for such issues would be present in the assumptions both of the mentor and the mentee. In summary, then, as Hartup asserts, to ascertain the developmental potential of a relationship, one must consider at least, 1) having such a friend available, 2) the personality traits of the mentor selected, 3) and the qualitative aspects of the mentor / mentee relationship itself.

Current techniques of character mentoring.

Habituation. According to the habituation theory within mentoring, if a mentor repeatedly practices virtuous actions, protégés consider the value of such actions, and, eventually their thinking, motivations, and emotions, support the repetition of the virtuous actions and integrate them into a system. This process has been confirmed in research for protégés who begin with intentions to be virtuous. In one such study, when students set positive goals that reflect their intentions, such as academic achievement or increasing their number of friends, they tend to accomplish them (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). "Habituation is an active, conscious process in which one makes choices explicitly for the purpose of learning to act nobly or basely, developing one's character through these choices and actions" (Fowers, 2005, p48). Successes such as these can mark the beginning of a process of ongoing improvement. Moberg, a researcher who has theorized extensively on the progression of techniques likely to support character mentoring, concluded as his first proposition that protégés can cultivate positive character when they voluntarily and intentionally set goals to develop virtues, or positive traits, that reflect their values, interests, and feelings (Moberg, 2008).

Approach Summaries. Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson suggest a mechanism that may support character mentoring. They asked participants to identify personal strengths using an internet-based measure (e.g., www.authentichappiness.org). The participants were then instructed to apply one of their strengths in a new way each day for a week. Compared to controls, these participants reported significantly greater happiness and significantly less depression across multiple durations: a week, a month, at three months, and at six months after receiving the assignment (2005). It has been suggested that such therapeutic gains may not prove actual character development, but may support desirable reorganization of a mentee's system of personal character, including factors of knowledge, intellect, feelings, and motivation. Mentors could use this exercise to help protégés in identifying positive personality traits, and set intentional goals similarly (Moberg, 2008; Wong, 2006). One pair of character formation theorists, Stoddard and Tamasy, identify ten principles of character mentoring in these subjective terms: living is about giving, perseverance is primary, open a door for formation, promote alignments between work and passion, share loads instead of creating them, practice your personal values, expose your personal character, provide a legacy, and take risks. Richie and Genoni (2003) then offer a structure for mentoring in seven stages: rapport, purpose, current situation, objectives, methods, actions, and assessment (2003; Patchell, 2005).

Tutoring. Moberg offers more extensive detail for the work of mentoring than these above. He asserts that habituation can lead to positive personality development when the protégé acquires elements of declarative knowledge. In this aspect, the mentor has taken the role of tutor. Stated as a principle, Moberg believes that protégés develop

positive character when their mentors tutor them in how to identify and solve practical problems they are likely to face (2008). Mentors can direct protégés to fix a problem, or do a presentation, so the mentees increase their tacit knowledge and procedural competency. Matching assignments to the protégé's intrinsic interests greatly increases their procedural learning (Leonard & Swap, 2005; Moberg, 2008). Tutoring is known to supersede classroom instruction when learning declarative knowledge (Bloom, 1984). The sort of tutoring identified by Moberg has often been called Socratic: The tutor asks his or her mentee a question. If the mentee is unable to respond adequately, the tutor will guide, or scaffold, the mentee until the response is appropriate (Vygotsky, 1978). Complex problems can be deconstructed by the mentor into simpler, component problems. The mentor may demonstrate how to complete one part of a task, offer hints, explain applicable principles, initiate tasks which the mentee can complete, or provide reminders that will offer direction for some aspect of the task. The literature on tutoring indicates that the less didactic and more interactive the communication, the more the student will learn (Chi, Siler, Jeong, Yamauchi, & Hausmann, 2001; Moberg).

Narrative. Mentor tutoring is also facilitated through mentor narratives or story-telling. Tacit knowledge is readily conveyed through narrative, and can illustrate how a workplace is governed, histories of managerial actions, interactions between employees, and other kinds of informal stories (Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001). Stories enhance tacit knowledge because they are engaging, memorable, and strengthen involvement and value sharing with the mentor. They can convey rich contextual detail, and offer both patterns and archetypes for learning (Moberg, 2008).

Reflection. As a balance for the more task-driven techniques, the mentor can support further learning by encouraging continuing processes of reflection. Clearly, this recommendation is usually challenged by time limitations, especially in an organizational environment, and is further diminished by the paucity of attention given to reflection in western mentoring. Time issues can be mitigated somewhat by encouraging mentees to practice reflection even while tasks are being done (Moberg, 2008). One approach might use a type of therapeutic dialog which can be constructed using appreciative inquiry (AI), as the name indicates, an exploratory exploration of experiences related to success and empowerment. Similar to the technique of solution focused behavioral therapy (SFBT), appreciative inquiry essentially identifies the factors, including helpful persons, who were involved when the mentee succeeded or when the mentee's personal situation seemed much better to them (Kobau, Seligman, Peterson, Diener, Zack, Chapman, & Thompson, 2011). Moberg suggests that reflection not be overdone, and offers the guidance that an optimal balance for reflection will review the connections between a mentee's internal states and his or her actions. The first step of reflection suggested by Moberg involves engaging the mentee in considering whether a certain action is consistent with the mentee's internal state or values. With this goal in view, Moberg proposes a series of personal questions which support the mentee in further discoveries:

> Did I do it for the right reason? Was my action the result of the best available knowledge concerning timing, duration, target object, and extent? Did I have a healthy doubt about the outcome? Were my emotions aligned with my action? Effective reflection of this sort constitutes self-assessment about how one is doing

> from a character standpoint. Without such internal feedback-seeking, one may never learn whether one has attained the standing of being virtuous. (Moberg, 2008, 97).

The mentor can use these questions in various ways, including direct asking, giving assignments, arranging for mentees to reflect together, directing mentees to keep diaries for their observations, and recording things learned (Moberg, 2008).

Using unplanned experiences. Finally, in Moberg's arsenal of mentee character development techniques, Moberg recommends that mentors be attentive to any significant events in a mentee's experiences which could be liminal in that they may catalyze transformational personality changes. Experiences of this type may include mystical experiences, changes in lifestyle, educational, and reactions following trauma (2008). Events like these, Moberg suggests, can make mentees open to what Moberg calls inspiration. By his definition, inspiration refers to greater empathy, prudence, kindness, or much greater resilience. However, such events are either impossible or inappropriate for the mentor to create for the mentee. But, if they occur during the mentor's influence, a sensitive mentor may be able to include such experiences for the possibility of mentoring breakthroughs (Moberg).

One almost inevitable situation in character mentoring involves encountering the mentee's ethical blind-spots and biases when learning moral decision making. For example, at the US Air Force Academy, social psychological studies have demonstrated to cadets how specific situations can upset moral decision-making (Samuels & Casebeer, 2005). For example, the cadets review the famous experiment in which hurrying divinity

students bypass a distressed person and fail to offer help. The cadets learn from these studies how they can watch for this tendency in themselves (Darley & Batson, 1973). Moberg states as his third proposition that protégés develop moral character when mentors support their mentees' accumulation of tacit knowledge about the processes and contexts of character-related behaviors (Moberg, 2008).

Intentional Personality Mentoring in the Military

It may be that the most comprehensive current research and programming with personality mentoring on adults is currently being done in the United States military. Of course, military programs are operational in nature, not informal, and are based on hierarchical directives, not friendship and voluntary initiative. Nevertheless, students of positive psychology will note Martin Seligman's name prominently as a co-author in these military studies. Seligman, as noted earlier, has been one of the original pioneers of positive psychology, and is co-author of the Peterson and Seligman taxonomy (2004) which forms one of the theoretical bases for this study. Also, in keeping with this research's interest in character formation through relationship, the key personnel for the designated mentoring roles in the U.S. Army's Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program are NCOs who have daily contact with and responsibility for the soldiers being mentored. They have personal engagement, a critical factor in mentoring noted earlier.

The U.S. military's interest in supporting the development of positive personality traits is not mysterious. Evidence is increasing that positive personality traits are highly correlated with success in challenging military contexts (Cornum, Matthews, & Seligman, 2011). When soldiers are faced with serious physical, cognitive, and emotional

demands, specific positive personality traits of leadership, persistence, courage, honesty, optimism, self-regulation and teamwork repeatedly appear to be crucial mediators of success (Cornum et al., 2011; Matthews, 2008).

The Army's CSF program could conceivably become a model for other very large institutions. It is historically unique in its scope, an effort to support behavioral health in an organization with 1.1 million members. CSF is designed to increase positive performance and psychological strength. Importantly, it is also intended to reduce the frequency of maladaptive responses in the U.S. Army. CSF employs four program aspects: (a) assessing the soldier's social, familial, emotional, and spiritual fitness; (b) requiring soldiers to use learning modules to improve fitness in these personal aspects; (c) specific resilience training; and (d) the training of master resilience trainers (MRT) to develop better resilience and thinking skills in their trainees. CSF attempts to work proactively, developing resilience in all soldiers rather than waiting to treat stress-related, negative outcomes. CSF specifically targets personal growth and resilience to strengthen responses to adversity and trauma, and diminish the incidence of stress-related disorders (Cornum, et al., 2011).

Seligman explained that he helped in the development of a positive education model for preventive training, drawing on the Penn Resilience Program (PRP). Developed at the University of Pennsylvania, the program addressed a subset of resilience factors including optimism, flexibility, empathy, emotional awareness, self-efficacy, self-regulation, problem solving, and strong relationships. The PRP was originally created as school-based training for child and early adolescent students

(Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). Psychologists had been researching resilience since the 1970s, and various studies demonstrated that many aspects of resilience are teachable (e.g., Reivich & Shatte, 2002; Seligman, 1990). The concept of resilience has various definitions, but the one used at PRP refers to a set of processes that supports good outcomes when persons face serious threats (Masten, 2001). Resilience is, therefore, the ability to persist through serious challenges and recover well from adversity. Evidence-based protective factors which have been show to contribute to resilience include faith, sense of meaning, optimism, self-efficacy, empathy, close relationships, flexibility, effective problem solving, impulse control, and spirituality (Masten & Reed, 2002; Reivich, et al., 2002).

Once adapted for Army use, The Penn Resilience Program prepared the military's teachers with instruction in positive psychology and skills supporting resilience. The teachers then designed these elements to integrate into the education of their soldiers. Results have shown reliable outcomes featuring reduced depression and anxiety (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). General Casey explained how this model well fit Army training: The instructors are drill sergeants, and they themselves educate soldiers in positive psychology and resilience. Casey imagined possible civilian social applications for this training. He expressed hope that if resilience training in soldiers could be successfully demonstrated, perhaps soldier families could model new civilian education for young people (Seligman & Fowler, 2011). The Army has taken the position that acting preventively can be far more efficient than responding reactively to huge numbers of soldiers in distress. Historically, this medical intent has occasionally

been demonstrated in the Army. For example, early in the 20th Century, a Colonel William Crawford Gorgas was tasked with reducing malaria outbreak among Canal workers. Aggressive efforts to prevent infection succeeded, reducing cases from 800 per thousand to 16 per thousand (Cornum, et al., 2011). A preventative approach is strongly advocated by positive psychologists. In contrast, it bears mentioning that Richard Carmona, a former Surgeon General of the United States, observed that civilian medicine was perversely incentivized: The United States annually spends $2 trillion on health care, with 75% of the cost treating chronic disease and end-of-life. In contrast, Army medicine attempts to be more rationally directed, with a mission to develop health more than to cure disease, with the view that by supporting health preventively, later disease can be reduced and costs reduced. We could wish for a national culture that would support such a model for civilian medicine (Seligman & Fowler, 2011).

Initial MRT training was conducted at the University of Pennsylvania, and was delivered to over 2,200 senior NCOs (Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011). This training was developed from the Penn Resiliency Program, with the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research adding input along with the United States Military Academy's sports psychology program. Naturally, Penn Resiliency Training was adjusted to employ soldier vocabulary, Army culture, and to address the needs of soldiers (Gillham, Hamilton, Freres, Patton, & Gallop, 2006). By late 2010, MRTs were beginning to be established in various installations to teach Army civilians and family members. One of the goals of the program is that psychological health will eventually become as fundamental an aspect of Army ethos as physical fitness (Cornum, et al., 2011).

The U.S. military could conceivably offer a natural setting for intentional efforts in positive psychology. Only 25% of Americans 17–24 years old can meet the Army's enlistment standards, which include excellent physical condition and health, high school graduation or the equivalent, performing acceptably on standardized tests, and the absence of criminal record. 70% of the Army's personnel are under age forty (Christeson, Taggart, & Messner- Zidell, 2009). Compared to civilians, Army discipline is strict, with soldiers facing difficult training courses, being required to maintain high physical fitness, and a code of conduct more strict than that required in most civilian life. In specific, Army doctrine directly directs soldiers to seven core positive traits, including loyalty, duty, respect, honor, integrity, selfless service, and personal courage (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006). These seven core values correspond to character strengths described by Peterson and Seligman (2004; Cornum, et al. , 2011). The Army context must in our time address approximately 1.64 million men and women who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan, or both, since 2001 (Brenner, Vanderploeg, & Terrio, 2009). Most of these personnel have experienced traumatic incidents, such as having fellow service members killed or seriously wounded, being shot at, seeing and handling corpses, taking a life, and having a colleague killed or seriously wounded. All of these are experiences that are associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other related disorders (Hoge, et al., 2004). Simple math makes clear that for every 10% of these soldiers who develop pathological responses, there will be over 150,000 new cases which must receive appropriate mental health and social care, either through the Department of Veterans

Affairs (VA), the Department of Defense (DoD), or other providers. Many who stay in active duty may be compromised in their effectiveness (Cornum, et al. , 2011).

Reciprocity in mentoring.

Research on mentoring has long noted the place of reciprocity in the relationship between mentor and mentee, a factor now considered fundamental to mentoring. Mutual attraction and the possibility of shared trust are critical to the development of a successful mentoring relationship. However, the degree of reciprocity in a particular mentoring pair will be heavily affected by the developmental maturity of the mentee. For example, it would be unethical to expect a mentee in a younger stage of life development than the mentor to reciprocate in all aspects of relationship to the same degree as the more mature mentor (Shore, Toyokawa, & Anderson, 2008). On the subject of the ethics of mentoring, it is worthwhile to reproduce the authors' conclusion verbatim: "Genuine reciprocity is transparent, consensual, and mutually beneficial. Reciprocity that is disingenuous, coerced, manipulative, or exploitative is neither real nor ethical" (p17-18).

Obstacles to Mentoring

Although research on adult, positive personality formation is thin, it is already clear that there can exist numerous obstacles to any personality mentoring efforts, including lack of social support, interpersonal stress, time pressures, and pernicious incentives (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005). If the mentee is strongly tied to persons lacking in positive moral character, the mentee's own character growth might be limited (Morselli, Tremblay, & McCarthy, 2006). The pace of character-building efforts also will work for or against personality mentoring. Self regulation is

psychologically taxing when attempting to adopt, practice, and establish a new character element. Mentors must therefore remember to balance any performance pressure on the mentee (Moberg, 2008). The presence of neuroticism is another obstacle which bears on the quality of a mentoring relationship since it has been demonstrated to reduce the effect of personal investment in personality development (Lehnart, Neyer, and Eccles, 2010). This is an extremely important finding which may at a later time be a guide as to when character mentoring may or may not be a recommended therapeutic course. Perhaps, what will emerge is that character mentoring will in general be a recommended therapy, but with the caveat that high neuroticism predicts variable and volatile emotional ups and downs in mentor-mentee relationships (Neyer & Leynart, 2007).

For intentional mentoring programming to succeed it must enhance the likelihood that the melding of persons, resources and needs will occur that can lead to character change. Related to this necessity is the probability that factors of gender, ethnicity and culture, and age can affect the probability of success in a mentoring relationship (Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sánchez, 2006). These factors also will not likely have the same effects at all stages of development. For example, the well noted differences in communication and intimacy expressions between girls and boys may well change as both mature. For example, emerging perceptions of needs related to family, religion, employment, activities, or specific contexts, might actually cause persons more different in one stage of life to be more similar in others. But, such differences may not actually turn out to be significant factors, so research on such matters will still prove essential. For example, even though the communication and affect differences between boys and girls

mentioned above are important factors in many studies, mentoring research has discovered that protégé gender is not significant in a program's effectiveness (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).

The Possibility of Negative Character Mentoring

If mentoring for character formation can result in positive personality development, it is logical, that formation mentoring could also be directed toward and result in negative personality development. Childhood peer pressure would appear to be one extremely common experience of negative character mentoring since research on peer pressure has proven that such peer relationships can influence personality development. Researchers in this area have commented that it seems strange that an issue which is so often discussed on a popular level has actually not been well documented (Hartup, 2005). But, research on peer pressure may help frame later investigations into issues of positive character formation: The issues to be addressed in peer pressure are conceptually similar to those in this research. Factors which have been found contributing significantly to outcomes in negative character mentoring may be similar to factors which contribute to positive mentoring. To-date, issues like the characteristics of the mentor, the characteristics of the mentee, the nature of the mentoring relationship, issues related to development, process questions, and constraints related to domain are all important when researching peer pressure (Hartup, 2005). Most factors are not well studied, yet. For example, as of the Hartup 2005 peer pressure research, it was still not well known whether the nature of the relationship, that is whether the mentor and mentee are friends, hostile, or neutral, affects outcomes significantly. One thing that is clear about nature of

relationship is that, at least among children, people choose time with friends over others, and thus a friendship could conceivably allocate more time to developmental influence. As a balancing consideration, aggressive children, in general, have more influence than do non-aggressive children, and such a personality trait may also affect outcomes (Hartup, 2005). As another example of unknown positive development factors, friends reach a higher level of engagement in their interactions than do non-friends (Newcomb & Bagwell, 1995). It would seem sensible that deeper engagement may contribute more influence in the relationship. Quantitative work in positive character mentoring might eventually consider the same factors. In the area of peer pressure, Hart concluded that further research using pre- and post- designs were necessary to determine, 1) the efficacy of relational interaction in terms of influence, and, 2) how long the effects of such interaction lasts. To-date, in the area of peer pressure, such data is correlational and, therefore, cannot substantiate that the behavior change can be created by personal interaction (2005). Such questions and issues will be relevant in the issue of personal relationship for positive character development in research beyond this study.

Traits negatively correlated to relationship.

Is it possible that some personality traits may actually correlate inversely to the presence of interpersonal relationships; that is, is it possible that interpersonal relationships tend to the extinction of certain positive traits? Is it also possible that some positive traits may correlate directly with existence of some negative personality characteristics. To our knowledge, these issues have not been selected broadly for research. But, there is evidence, for example, that a specific positive character trait like

reading achievement can actually correlate with a negative personality factor such as antisocial personality disorder (APD). The correlation between reading achievement and APD has been noted for some time and current research continues to find new incidents of correlation (Trzesniewski, Moffitt, Caspi, Taylor, & Maughan, 2006). Might the reason for this specific factor correlation be as simple as the seemingly obvious connection between an anti-social disorder and the solitary nature of reading? The researchers in the cited study guessed that the relationship may be environmental (Trzesniewski, et al., 2006). However, these questions will not be explored here, but may be noteworthy as items for other, later research. First, not all positive aspects of personality are in view in this research, but those traits specific to character identified in the Peterson and Seligman taxonomy, and whatever traits may surface in the experiment if different categories emerge. Also, neither reading achievement nor other cognitive categories are anticipated among the findings rather than character categories, although they will be indicated if they appear. Also, is it possible that there are positive personality character traits which simply will not develop from interpersonal encouragement or modeling? At this time, we do not know. Such traits would not appear in our results, but since we are not seeking comprehensive results we may not note them.

Ethics of Mentoring

When one considers the personal warmth, experience of intimacy, and emotional support which contributes to mentoring success, personal mentoring requires careful attention to ethical practice. There is clearly the possibility of dual relationships in any mentoring context, formal and professional or not, and such risks must be navigated

appropriately if the mentoring will be considered successful. While it is outside the scope of this project to identify the predictable benefits for mentors and mentees in successful professional or academic mentoring, or the benefits to the institutions which successfully direct mentoring (Barnett, 2008), it would be remiss not to mention the crucial role that personal boundaries must play. Going back to Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995), the boundaries concept functions as a theoretical frame which defines the roles for the process participants. While mentoring may allow somewhat more flexibility than the ethics codes define for purely professional or academic relationships with reference to issues like touch, location, length of meetings, personal space and self-disclosure, the intent of all such mentor actions must be clearly for the mentee's benefit, and must not include inappropriate leverage of dual relationship. Interpretation by other members of the community matters, and leniency in boundaries must be able to withstand scrutiny by others (Doverspike, 1999). For example, hugging a protégé after graduation or promotion is different than sexual contact, and many would view going to a conference with a protégé and introducing him or her as such differently than vacationing with a protégé or spending evenings drinking alcohol together (Barnett, 2008). The ultimate risk is always the possibility of perpetrating sexual intimacies with a mentee, behavior firmly identified in psychology as a mishandling of transference and always harmful (Gottlieb, 1993; Pope, 1990).

There are multiple contexts conducive to ethical problems in mentoring. The most predictably troublesome context for a mentoring relationship is between a male mentor and a female mentee. If the mentor expects sexual compensation for mentoring it would

rightly be considered sexual harassment. Undergraduate mentees with professorial mentors have diminished capacity for consent in a sexual context. Further, whatever benefits may be derived from any mentoring are likely to be negated by the eventually exploitative effects of a sexual context in mentoring. Research has consistently reported this effect from female mentees. Masculine and feminine socializations, such as protective approaches from males and dependent approaches from females, can complicate and confuse the mentoring relationship (Shore, Toyokawa, & Anderson, 2008).

Chapter 3: Research Method

Research Methodology and Design

Chapters 1 and 2 described the context for the current research, positive psychology, and then provided much of what is currently known about positive personality traits including their many benefits, what studies have been performed related to positive trait development, and how they influence or are influenced by interpersonal relationships. Chapters 1 and 2 also included a broad survey of mentoring literature including definitions, techniques, and benefits as pertaining to personality and character development. However, the search of extant literature did not demonstrate significant interest or research regarding the emergence and development of positive personality traits in general, particularly in adults. Current research shows a gap in understanding phenomena related to the development of positive personality traits in adults.

Some studies in the field of education tracked the effect of attempts to strengthen character in children and adolescents to support their educational achievement and addressing behavioral issues. Since character is an umbrella concept composed of multiple positive traits, it seems likely that these studies include the improvement of positive traits although they are not so identified. Some gender advocacy studies have shown interest in developing character in women, along with skills necessary for addressing challenging situations. But, none of these identified the development of positive capacities as a trait category. Overall, it appears that a gap exists related to understanding the possibility and methodolog, for developing positive personality traits in adults. Interventions which assist in developing positive traits may offer resilience and

positive traits to add support across a broad range of personal situations, and the possibility of enhancing positive therapeutic outcomes beyond amelioration of distress.

This chapter on methodology describes the research methods and procedures used for this research. The questions which served as the focus of the research were:

1. What categories of positive personality development do participants in adult character formation relationships attribute to those relationships?
2. Will participants consider that their participation in a voluntary, adult, character formation relationship was of significant personal value to them?
3. Do participants identify particular aspects of their personality mentoring relationships as being particularly important to their positive outcomes?
4. What situational context in the beginning created the opportunity for the mentoring relationship between the mentor and mentee?
5. How were the mentoring sessions arranged by the mentor and the mentee in location, duration, and focus?
6. Were there any other significant life events, relationships, or organizational involvements which occurred during the same time period as the personal mentoring experience?
7. Do the categories of positive personality development ascribed by participants to their character formation relationships correspond with any positive personality traits cataloged in the taxonomy of traits described by Peterson and Seligman (2004)?

Grounded Theory Design

The method of this study was a grounded theory, qualitative research design. As Creswell (2007) explains, qualitative studies proceed by looking at people holistically, attempting to understand their experiences. Fowers (2005) argued that character strengths should be studied because of their intrinsic value, not only because of their existence. He has argued that it is unreasonable to study the compassion of a Mother Theresa, or the self-sacrifice of first responders, or the profound ties within social systems we call loyalty, as vaguely pro-social factors or self serving positives that only appear to be altruistic; rather, they are representative of the greatest human aspirations and relationships. Fowers argues that taking seriously the value of positive traits and ethics, offers an integrative framework for understanding human behaviors that goes beyond typical psychological prejudices toward instrumentalism and individualism. It also corrects the typical psychological dichotomy of behaviors as objective facts, and the morals or values which motivate them as subjective and unscientific (2005). The focus of the current study was to examine the potential of mentoring relationships to develop participant positive traits. As a trait, the focus is also a discovery of how an interpersonal impact is internalized and then expressed in new behaviors, both cognitive and external. These three contexts: relationship, cognitive behavior, and physical behavior, taken together represented a broadly holistic research area. For these reasons, the significant values of character strengths, the potential of an integrative framework, and a research focus on a phenomenon which connects interpersonal impact to cognitive change and then expressive behavior, demanded qualitative study as necessary for its holistic range.

As an additional consideration, one of the several qualitative methods available becomes a necessity when an issue or problem needs exploration at the level that variables and categories must be identified in a new research area. Because so little work had been done in positive psychology on the development of positive traits, qualitative research was essential to discover the categories of the study, and thereby open the door for later quantitative work. A grounded theory approach differs from other qualitative methods in that it moves beyond phenomenological or narrative description to discover or generate a theory. It also can describe perspectives and events of a group's belief or practices. Grounded theory requires collection and comparison of the data gained from narrative until patterns and categories develop. Grounded theory attempts in its analysis to discover the foundation for, and present a theory of, an interaction, process, or action from the experience of the participants (Creswell, 2007). The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection.

Obtaining Consent

Once this project received approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), approval number 02-06-15-0046626, to conduct this study with about twenty participants, the researcher requested potential applicants using Walden's participant pool. Participation was based on the interest of those in the participant pool. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. In the participant pool process, the researcher obtained consent from each participant after describing for them the nature of the study. The researcher explained to participants both the intangible benefits of being mentored and the expected minimal risk of negative experience. As the

process to find participants evolved, additional participants were sought in the Baltimore-Annapolis-Washington D.C. area where the researcher is located. A list of nearby non-profit organizations was submitted to Walden’s IRB, from which, after IRB approval, the researcher sought a Letter of Cooperation (LoC) signed by each institution’s leadership. The reason for selecting non-profit organizations was the researcher’s expectation based on personal experience that mentoring is frequently supported in non-profit institutions. Once the researcher received each individual’s signed informed consent form, and the IRB acknowledged receipt of each LoC, participants from that organization were interviewed using the interview questions.

Data Collection Techniques

Creswell (2007) explained that interviews were the primary method of collecting data in grounded theory research. The data is descriptive on both the process and outcome of the research focus. For the current research, data collection used a structured interview with each participant who affirmed that he or she had at least one mentoring experience from which they could contribute information to the study. The gate question was: "Since you became an adult, have you ever been mentored, guided, or coached by someone who helped you grow personally, or helped you become a better person?" This question was designed to collect a yes or no response. A yes response indicated that the person would be able to contribute information to the project, and a no response indicated that the person believed he or she did not have the experience relevant to the project.

Once a potential participant from the Walden Participant Pool answered yes to the gate question, he or she accessed an online copy of the informed consent form and the

scripted interview, beginning with the introduction to the interviewing process. The introduction explained the process the participant was being asked to complete, including a follow up phone call with the researcher with the intent to thicken the participant's answers. The researcher also recapped the provisions of informed consent including the guarantee of limited confidentiality and reminding the participant that he or she may end the interview at any time. With persons interviewed in person, or otherwise contacted outside the participant pool using the organizations approved by the IRB by LoC, informed consent was obtained directly either by having the participant submit a signed form via email, or physically signing informed consent in person. These consent forms have been kept on-file with the participant answers in accordance with the rules for storing research.

The questions of the interview were designed to be open-ended so that participants were invited to offer detailed descriptions of their experiences of being mentored. These were the questions for the structured interview:

1. What intangible personal benefits have you received from your personal mentoring experience; how do you feel you changed for the better?
2. How important has your mentoring experience has turned out to be in your personal life?
3. In what situation did your personal mentoring experience begin; how did it get started?
4. What aspects of the mentoring relationship do you feel were most important for creating the positive outcomes you experienced?

5. How did you and your mentor set up your mentoring situations in location (i.e., where it happened), duration (i.e., how long each session was), and focus (i.e., what did you work on most)?
6. What other significant events, relationships, or organizational involvements were happening in your life during the time of your personal mentoring experience?

Following the interview questions, each participant was asked to identify their general demographic information, including the decade of their age, their gender, ethnicity and nationality.

As mentioned earlier, participant pool members were asked to arrange a phone call with the researcher for the purpose of thickening their answers; a twenty dollar incentive was offered to offset any inconvenience or reluctance. For participants engaged locally, the recording and feedback either happened face to face or by telephone as arranged through email. No monetary incentive was offered to local participants since it did not appear necessary. The researcher used a recorder for the read-back phase while reading each participant's answers back. To gain further information, the researcher paused his reading where further explanation seemed useful, and the further explanations were also recorded.

Where more specificity was required, occasionally the researcher asked an open-ended non-leading questions like, "In what ways did your mentor's support in managing your moods change your experience of life?" These approaches allowed the researcher increased content detail while avoiding biasing the response. The researcher kept observations and patterns which emerged through the interview processes in MS Excel

files. The notes helped identify researcher expectations or biases and thereby contributed additional perspective to the analyses after the interviews. Data obtained will be stored for at least five years and not more than seven years.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2007) advises that researchers read their transcripts multiple times, and write memos to record initial observations and reflections. The researcher is to then use an open coding system to categorize data contained in the transcripts. No specialized software for analyzing qualitative data was employed for this analysis, although responses were collected and organized for review in MS Excel. These files are kept on a password protected laptop always kept behind at least one locked door. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined the method of analysis to be used for the data collected for this research. These procedures included collecting interview data from sixteen participants, 20-24 were originally sought, in an attempt to saturate various categories pertaining to the theory, including happenings, instances, and events. The researcher reviewed the data and applied multiple types of coding, identifying causal conditions, those things which appear to cause the core phenomenon, strategies, responses to the core phenomenon, intervening conditions, either broad or specific situational influences affecting the strategies, and consequences, the results from using the strategies.

Coding began as open coding, initially placing data into categories. When the researcher was ready to begin interrelating categories and properties, he proceeded to axial coding identifying items which formed the foundation for the emergent theory. The final coding process is called selective, and involved identifying one coding category as

core and relating other categories which appeared related to it. One anticipated aspect of grounded theory analysis is that it is possible for atypical data to appear which does not fit into any shared category, and may therefore not be used in the theory's development. The researcher used to record emerging ideas about the relationships and concepts during the coding process. Elliot and Lazenblatt (2005) explain that grounded theory's memos not only contribute to data analysis, but also provide an important counter for the researcher's own subjectivity.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) define that the final step in coding is a selective one in which the researcher develops propositions from the emerging model which essentially builds a story explaining the relationships between the categories of the model. Glaser and Strauss (1967), who originally defined grounded theory design, developed a systematic process which included collecting data, the coding, memoing, and sorting of that data, and finally documenting the grounded theory. Ultimately, the researcher in this grounded theory method attempted to learn from the participants what were the steps in the process being discovered, what caused it to occur, what was fundamental or central to the process, what strategies were used in the process, and what were the effects. The elements of each interview, including the participants' written answers, and any additional recorded input, were transcribed and collated as a verification and quality control procedure.

It bears mentioning that among the different qualitative research methodologies, some grounded theory theorists recommend that literature review be postponed till data is collected so that it does not control the emergence of the theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

However, in a doctoral program, it is not possible to delay the work of literature review: It is a fundamental step of the dissertation proposal process. Therefore, the memos and other procedures defined by the developers of grounded theory remain important to bracket assumptions, feelings, and beliefs, in order to support the objectivity of the findings which provide grounding. The data drawn from structured interviews supported discovery of concepts, motivations, contexts, and results categories that appear among persons who have experienced being mentees in various character mentoring processes.

Data Verification

Qualitative research uses different techniques to provide quality and trustworthiness for data than does quantitative analysis. Various strategies support the verification and quality of the data as well as to provide confidence that all research procedures were ethical. First, as a dissertation project, this study has benefitted from a stringent review by a faculty dissertation committee and the university's IRB. Second, since in qualitative research the researcher himself became the primary tool of data collection (Creswell, 2007), self-monitoring was a critical validation strategy. Self-monitoring applied to the design phase of the study as well as to its performance. It is for this reason the interview technique was chosen to eliminate leading the participants during the interview, so as not to be influenced by the researcher's personal take on those questions. For example, none of the interview questions actually mentioned the researcher's particular interest in positive personality traits. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explained that the memoing process is an additional strategy for providing validation during data analysis.

Nastasi and Schensul (2005) listed dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability as criteria necessary for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. Credibility was affirmed by the debriefing offered by the dissertation committee and by maintenance of an audit trail for all interview documentation and data. The memos and audit trail support dependability. Gathering thick descriptions as data, including the process of enhancing detail by the reading procedure, improved transferability. The audit trail also ensures the authenticity of the data collected, providing its confirmability.

Data Interpretation

Using the grounded theory method as a guide, data interpretation proceeded from the inductive analytic process described earlier, and alternated irregularly from inductive to deductive (Dey, 1999). Following the models of the grounded theory experts, the researcher attempted to avoid considering an extant theoretical framework while beginning the analysis, but employed the frameworks later to offer any appropriate explanations for comparison to the newly emergent theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The primary research question for this project was considered to be "What kinds of positive personal benefits did you receive from being involved in a personal mentoring experience," and axial coding centered on that area of discovery. Data discovered in responses formed the central or core category. A second core emerged when the data was examined by the questions, Do the categories of benefit obtained include positive personality traits cataloged by Peterson and Seligman in their taxonomy (2004)?

Participants and Sampling

The current project used a grounded theory design to discover a substantive theory from a diverse population. Walden’s Participant Pool ensured a diverse student population base, although the number of pool participants, i.e., was far less than hoped. A university pool's participants might be expected to be above national norms in academic achievement and intelligence, reading abilities, and present or future earning expectations. Local participants were sought from a mix of non-religious and religious non-profit organizations, with religious organizations differing as much as possible in their belief structures and practices. Swanson and Holton (2005) have cautioned that grounded theory results must be treated as exclusive to the population, or group, under investigation, and that changes in environments and participants can change the results. However, using as diverse a demographic as Walden University's students, and central Maryland’s non-profit participants, who come from widely differing ethnic, economic, religious, social and national demographics, the researcher affirms that the results of this grounded theory may be significantly relevant to responses from many broad cross-sections of United States residents. This study was not designed to pursue study of positive trait emergence in protected populations, although it is possible that persons from some protected populations (e.g., pregnant women, mental health clients, etc.) may have been incidentally included. By approaching adults in non-protected settings, there was no necessity to seek parent or guardian consents, nor institutional or agency consents beyond the normal LoC. Creswell (2007) suggested that 15-20 participants should be interviewed as typical limits of grounded theory studies, and should be adequate to gather

enough data to develop the theoretical model. In this study, the researcher used the Walden Participant Pool and also contacted 25 non-profit organizations to obtain participants. A total of 16 participants were effectively interviewed, not counting two who misunderstood the interview questions to refer to being mentors rather than mentees. The final result of 16 participants fell within Creswell's suggestion for grounded theory research (2007).

The study also requested standard demographic data for the purpose of identifying the range of persons interviewed, including gender, general age, ethnicity, and nationality. All participants were concisely debriefed after data collection as they expressed interest. In debriefing, the researcher repeated the study's purpose, asked each participant his or her experience of participating in the interview, and also invited the participants to ask the researcher any questions. Each interview, including writing, took twenty minutes or less. Lengths of conversation after each interview ended varied considerably depending on the interest of each particular participant in discussing the interview experience or the domain of positive psychology and positive traits.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical concerns in this study were not problematic. The nature of the qualitative research was structured interview related to a positive relational experience. Since no negative data were relevant to the study's hypotheses, the questions were benign and not directed toward disturbing emotional situations. There also was no research deceit involved, only the omission that the chief mentoring benefits of interest were any positive personality traits the participant believed were developed in the mentoring. Some

questions related to the research had to do with understanding the content, situational context, and results of a positive experience of the personal mentoring experience. As might be expected in reviewing a positive personal experience, the participants did not express duress around being compromised in values nor embarrassed. The researcher informed the participants of anticipated benefits and problems; the only anticipated concern was minimal working duress in answering the questions. It was explained that participants might benefit from reflecting on and considering their mentoring experience, perhaps gaining a deeper understanding of the experience. It was also be explained that it was possible, however unlikely, that the interviewing process could trigger negative reflections or memories. The possibility of this was assumed to increase if a participant's mentoring experience eventually ended negatively, or was connected to some unpleasant experience. In such cases, participants were told they could conceivably experience small duress related to reflection or memory. No such duress was expressed by any participant. Finally, all participants were reminded that they always had the option not to answer any of the specific questions asked, and could end their participation in the interviews any time they wished. None elected to do so. None of the interviewees were eliminated based on ethical concerns or incompleteness, except the two participants who misunderstood the questions to refer to being mentors rather than mentees.

Interviews were conducted in locations amenable to interviewees, either in private with the expectation of being free from eavesdropping or viewing, or in public venues such as coffee shops with sufficient distance from others to keep the conversation private. Recording equipment remained in the possession of the interviewer during and after each

interview. The recording equipment is now stored behind a locked door in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. All document storage and analysis is on a password protected laptop computer, with a password known only to the researcher, and secured behind a locked door. Identifying information has not been placed on transcripts or reports; participants were listed by a numbering system only. Written responses were performed either by the participants only or researcher transcription by the researcher only.

Summary

This chapter described the purpose and process of grounded theory for the current research. The researcher sought in this study to discover if participants having personal mentoring experiences recount gained in positive personality traits from their mentoring. The researcher developed his research questions after a review of academic literature pertaining both to positive personality traits and personal mentoring. To ensure that participants could contribute to the data sought in the study, each participant responded to a gate question ascertaining whether they had ever experienced the subject of interest, a positive personal mentoring relationship. Those answering yes to the gate question contributed their narrative description as data to the project. The researcher provided each participant an informed consent form, a brief introduction to the study, and the interview questions prior to the interviews. Participants answered the questions in writing and most with additional verbal detail, with the researcher recording and transcribing each verbal segment to add to the written interviews. The researcher then identified core and

additional themes, patterns, and interpret the data. It was found that the different research questions contributed significantly to framing the categories relevant to the research.

Chapter 4 describes and details the results of the research, including both the information gleaned from participant responses and the researcher's analysis. Further, chapter 4 provides conclusions, including patterns and themes related to the experiment, and presents the demographic range of the participants. Chapter 5 considers the social value of what has been learned. Discussion follows with recommendations for directions of study to advance understanding of the development and use of positive psychology traits, especially in therapy, as well as other questions of interest which surfaced during the literature review or interviews.

Chapter 4: Results

This study was conducted to provide a substantive theory on the development of positive personality traits by means of adult personal mentoring. The goal of this dissertation research was to address the gap in the literature by discovering and grounding a theory that demonstrates that positive personality traits, specifically, the canonical list put forward by Peterson and Seligman (2004), and demonstrated universal among human societies by the research of Nansook Park (2005), can be attributed by mentees to mentoring relationships they experienced. This chapter describes the data collection processes, the data tracking system employed, findings, and additional categories and themes. I predict that as this study focus continues across other research efforts, human relationships may be the most frequent and most effective influence on the development of positive traits in most individuals.

The results demonstrate that locations, session or relationships durations, initial participant strengths, and even focuses of mentoring can vary widely and still result in the development of positive personality traits. These results suggest that some aspect of positive human relationship itself is a primary contributor to positive developmental results, and not so much these other factors. Other suggestions include such factors as attributes of the mentor identified by mentees as contributing to the outcomes, positive regard from the mentor toward the mentee, and the mentees' view of the mentor as having attributes from which they desire to learn. Construction of the theory proceeded by using individual interviews to discover what benefits adult participants attributed to their experiences as mentees.

Data Collection

Collection Sources

The approval number assigned by Walden University's IRB for this research project was 02-06-15-0046626. Originally, data collection was to come entirely from Walden's Participant Pool. Only 3 student participants signed up, even with the offer of a $20 payment. In a multi-phase change process, the researcher requested approval from Walden's IRB to seek participants from nonprofit organizations in his area. An original list of 23 organizations was submitted to the IRB, including a variety of nonreligious, nonprofit institutions such as rescue organizations, Toastmasters, and a motorcycle club, with religious institutions including two Buddhist organizations, an Islamic organization, and numerous churches from various Christian denominations. Over time, it became evident that where publicly available contact information did not provide a phone number, securing an organization's cooperation was unproductive. Another unexpected obstacle among some nonprofit organizations was an unwillingness to assert hierarchical leadership. This posed a block to IRB approval.

Subsequently, a short list of additional organizations was submitted to Walden's IRB, increasing the list to 27 organizations, including another township Toastmasters club, a social outreach organization, and two more local churches. This additional selection was more productive.

Interviews were conducted with 18 adults. Three came from the Walden Participant Pool, and 15 came from the researcher's direct contact with non-profit institutions in the researcher's local area, the urban megalopolis of Baltimore, Annapolis,

Washington D.C. and adjacent cities. Out of the 18 participants, 2 of the 3 participant pool members misunderstood the questionnaire and answered the questions as mentors rather than mentees, and so their results were not considered.

Collection Mechanics

All the participants were literate adults, ranging in education level from high school to PhD. All were capable of writing answers to the questionnaire on the project's survey form. The three Walden Participant Pool members typed their answers to the questionnaire. Participant Pool members 1 and 2 submitted their answers through the Participant Pool website, and no further contact was achieved. Participant Pool member 3 submitted her typed answers via email and participated in the read back phone call for the $20 payment. Four of the regional participants typed their responses and three of those submitted them by email. The fourth delivered her typed responses by hand. All others were handwritten. The recorded read-back interviews took place in locations arranged at the convenience of the participant, including coffee shops, church fellowship areas and porches, living rooms, and a multipurpose room in a Buddhist facility. The researcher typed all handwritten responses after the sessions to facilitate printing in formats for analysis. All typed responses were double spaced in their electronic forms to simplify taking notes, making memos, and coding directly on the pages. All read-back participants were digitally recorded, and their recordings transcribed within three days.

Tracking Data

In keeping with grounded theory design as put forward by Corbin and Strauss (2008), the researcher wrote brief memos summarizing reflections and opinions as he

went along, and performed initial interpretations and expectations. Additional memos were typed into an MS Excel spreadsheet file in which respondent answers could be collected together. A sample memo written after reviewing the responses of Participant #8 read:

> For question 1, participant expressed a process of synthesis, the most complex intellectual process: Says that mentoring "taught me how to apply all these experiences into 'one lane'".
>
> For question 2, professional based mentoring can translate into personal attributes and affecting personal lifestyle.
>
> For question 3, this model approaches natural mentoring – reusing a childhood teacher as an adult mentor.
>
> For question 4, her list of results is a mix of traits, skills and perception.

As seen here, the memos for Participant 12 highlight a theme that emerged in this research, that effective academic or professional mentors often have a dual role impact: The mentoring not only affected the mentee's professional life, but also the mentor's personal life.

> Q1. gained confidence, resilience, adaptability.
>
> Q2. boldness – able to ask for help, integration of personal and professional selves. Learn how to mentor – mentor "truly cares" about me = that trait / skill is reproducible.
>
> Q3. started professionally / academically – becomes personal, continues.

Q4. treated as an "equal" (= side by side). Supported her in receiving advice from the mentee – cross exchange was also personal – allowed receipt of personal exchange, a mutuality dynamic of mentor / mentee

Q5. sessions largely informal focused on mentee's research plans (her MCAT) and academic preparations. Some done by email. Blended personal and professional such as balance of professional and family in the future, not current, but anticipated in the future.

For convenience, key coded elements of the interviews were transferred to an MS Excel workbook. Additional memos continued to identify positive trait statements, to identify non-trait benefits of the mentoring, and to standardize the recording of answers to the research questions for the whole group.

Participant Profiles

Participant 1 in the study was a woman in her 50s who identified as Caucasian and considered her nationality American, from the United States. She was contacted in the Walden Participant Pool. This participant misunderstood the questionnaire to be an interview about her experience as a mentor rather than a mentee. The participant could not be reached for the phone call, read back portion of the interview, or reframing of the questions. This participant's results were not considered in the research analysis.

Participant 2 in the study was a woman in her 40s who identified as a Caucasian and referred to her nationality as White. She was contacted in the Walden Participant Pool. This participant was the second participant pool member who misunderstood the questionnaire to be an interview about her experience as a mentor rather than a mentee.

The participant could not be reached for the phone call, read back portion of the interview. This participant's results were not considered in the research analysis.

Participant 3 in the study was a woman in her 50s who identified as a Caucasian Irish-American. She was the third participant contacted in the Walden Participant Pool. Her mentor was a religious leader of some type whose focused on her religious studies and applications. The mentoring also affected her personally. This participant participated in the phone call, read back process and received $20.

Participant 4 in the study was a woman in her 30s identified as an Hispanic-American who identified her nationality as Mexican. She was contacted through a Buddhist organization in the Baltimore area. Participant 4's responses detail mentoring from a psychiatrist consulted for bipolar disorder, a psychologist therapist, and a Buddhist instructor. This participant met the researcher face-to-face, wrote her answers to the questionnaire, and participated in the read-back process.

Participant 5 in the study was a man in his 50s who was a Caucasian who identified his nationality as United States American. He was contacted through a Buddhist organization in the Baltimore area. He was the only participant whose relationship with his mentor was vicarious: This participant read the translated writings of a prolific Buddhist instructor whose native language he cannot speak. This participant expressed in detail the benefits of being mentored through books written by the instructor, a model of mentoring not considered by the researcher before this interview. This participant met face-to-face, hand-wrote his answers to the questionnaire, and participated in the read-back process.

Participant 6 was a man in his 60s who identified his ethnicity as Asian from the United States. He was contacted through a Toastmasters Club in a township near Baltimore. He described his mentoring as coming through the structured practices of Toastmasters, which then evolved into informal relationships with club members. This participant wrote his answers to the questionnaire and submitted them by email. He did not participate in the read-back process since contact could not be reestablished until after analysis of participant responses was completed.

Participant 7 was a woman in her 60s who identified her ethnicity and nationality as Caucasian American. She was contacted through a Toastmasters Club in a township near Baltimore. She described her mentoring as beginning with a job supervisor, who then introduced her to Toastmasters. This participant typed her responses to the questionnaire, but then met the researcher face-to-face, and participated in the read-back process.

Participant 8 was a woman in her 30s who identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and nationality as Irish-Lithuanian American. She was contacted through a Toastmasters Club in a township near Baltimore. Her mentor was a kindergarten teacher and who later became her supervising teacher as the participant was working as a teaching assistant in her academic program in education. This participant wrote her answers to the interview questions and submitted them by email. She did not participate in the read back process because of business in an impending relocation.

Participant 9 was a woman in her 20s who identified her ethnicity as mixed Black and White, and her nationality as American. She was contacted through a mid-sized (over

1000) church in a township near Baltimore. Her mentor was a religious leader, a pastor met serendipitously at a speaking engagement of an African-American activist. This participant met face to face, handwrote her answers to the interview questions, and participated in the read back process.

Participant 10 was a woman in her 20s who identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and her nationality as United States American. She was contacted through a small church in a township near Baltimore. Her mentor was a campus ministry director. This participant met face to face, handwrote her answers to the interview questions, but did not participate in a read back process. However, in casual and unrecorded conversation she expressed elements of her academic process, career, and recent personal life.

Participant 11 was a man in his 20s whose ethnicity was Caucasian and whose nationality was American. He was contacted through a small church in a township near Baltimore. His mentor was a local pastor. This participant met face to face, handwrote his answers to the interview questions, but did not participate in a read back process.

Participant 12 was a woman in her 20s who identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and her nationality as American-Brazilian-Turkish. She was contacted through a Toastmasters Club in a township near Baltimore. Her mentor was an academic and professional supervisor. This participant wrote her answers to the interview questions, submitted them by email, and participated in the read back process by phone call.

Participant 13 was a woman in her 30s who identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and her nationality as American. She was contacted through a Toastmasters Club in a township near Baltimore. Her mentor was an entrepreneur who provided academic

support and personal mentoring. This participant wrote her answers to the interview questions, submitted them by email, but did not participate in the read back process.

Participant 14 was a woman in her 20s who identified her ethnicity as African American and her nationality as American. She was contacted through a small church in a township near Baltimore. Her mentor was a peer who was another member of that church. This participant met face to face, handwrote her answers to the interview questions, and participated in the read back process.

Participant 15 was a man in his 30s who identified his ethnicity as Caucasian and his nationality as American. He was contacted through a small church in a township near Baltimore. His mentor was a pastor of that church. This participant met face to face, wrote her answers to the interview questions, and participated in the read back process.

Participant 16 was a woman in her 30s who identified her ethnicity as Caucasian and his nationality as American. She was contacted through a small church in a township near Baltimore. Her mentor was her father, a natural mentor, now deceased. This participant met face to face, wrote her answers to the interview questions, and participated in the read back process.

Participant 17 was a man in his 40s whose identified his ethnicity was African American and who identified his nationality as American. He was contacted through a small church in a township near Baltimore. His mentor was a peer in a church he formerly attended. This participant met face to face, wrote his answers to the interview questions, and participated in the read back process.

Participant 18 was a woman in her 50s whose ethnicity was Caucasian and who identified her nationality as American. She was contacted through a small church in a township near Baltimore. Her mentor was a Bible study leader at her church. This participant met face to face, wrote her answers to the interview questions, but did not participate in the read back process.

Coding and Results

Grounded theory methods typically concern one discovery, a phenomenon about which the data is analyzed by codes into component themes and categories inherent in the data. This project began with some known categories separated into the six questions of the interview. Based on extensive information presented in the literature review on mentoring, it was already known that each mentoring relationship consists of some manner of relationship from the mentor to the mentee and the reverse, that mentoring is often engaged in for purposes more or less clear to the participants, that benefits from the mentoring are anticipated by the participants, that mentoring takes place in certain situations defined by location and time, that many types of mentoring exist in terms of each mentoring relationship's focus, and finally, that life does not stop for either the mentor or the mentee, but that events, crises, accomplishments, and issues occur more or less predictably while the mentoring proceeds. When positive personality traits appeared among the mentoring benefits cited by the participants, the primary or axial code of this project was applied to that category of result. This primacy of this coding is evident in this project's title, in its priority among the questions, and the theoretical basis of the Seligman and Peterson taxonomy (2004). Coding also labeled other benefits of mentoring

expressed by the participants. Table 1 summarizes the response categories provided by the participants.

Table 1
Responses of Research Participants by Interview Question

Question	Components	Number of Participants	Description
Benefits	Traits	15 (93.7%)	Participants presented these as results from being mentored.
	States	11 (68.8%)	
	Motivations	9 (56.3%)	
	Skills	11 (68.8%)	
	Accomplishments	10 (62.5%)	
	Values	10 (62.5%)	
Importance	Importance	16	from Important to Qualitative Transformation
Mentoring Origin	Origin Types	16	Includes Academic, Professional, Religious, Natural (e.g., parental), Friendship, Multi-role

Table 1

Responses of Research Participants by Interview Question

Mentoring Characteristics	Mentor Character	16	The question, What aspects of the relationship were most important for the outcomes?
	Mentee Responses	15	
	Mentee Character	14	
Mentoring Relationship	Nature	16	or, Objective Relationship
	Role	11 / 4 / 1	or, Subjective Relationship: One Role / Dual / Not Mentioned
Mentoring Situations	Location	16	Formal or Informal
	Duration	16	Appointed or Informal
	Focus	16	Formal, Personal
Concurrent Life Situations	Concurrent Life Situations	16	includes events, stressors, accomplishments, activities

What this table illustrates is the number of participants, out of 16 (i.e., participants 3-18), who contributed data under various coded components of the mentoring relationships and the range of responses. All but one of the participants cited at least one positive personality trait gained or strengthened by their mentoring experience. Somewhat less, but always more than a majority, contributed information about other benefits received. The questions related to the other aspects of the mentoring relationship surfaced information in nearly 100% of the participants. It was found that using information known about mentoring to construct the research questions supported the discovery of component data which describe each coded aspect.

Categories of Benefits of Mentoring

One of the discoveries of this research project was the range of benefits identified by participants. While the chief question of this study had to do with whether or not participants identified positive personality traits among their benefits, it was unknown

what other categories might appear as benefits. Coding for non-trait benefits fell into six types: positive traits, states, motivations, skills, accomplishments and values.

Positive Personality Traits

The first focus of this research was to determine whether the practice of mentoring may result in the emergence or development of positive personality traits. This focus was in response to the data gap in the literature on the etiology or development of positive traits. The results of the interviews in reference to positive traits are illustrated in three tables, the first identifying which traits each participant indicated appeared in reference to the mentoring, the second presenting the list of traits provided by Peterson and Seligman (2004), and the third identifying which participants represented each, if any. Notes will also be provided on the indications: Sometimes participants identified particular traits specifically, either by the category name or by using one of the synonyms identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004). In other cases, the presence of a positive trait is inferred; these inferences are identified to keep the results transparent. Deltas, differences in trait levels before and after mentoring, are not visible in this research, because no quantitative assessments were done: What would assessed levels of the positive traits be before and after mentoring? Later studies may be able to quantify and predict those changes. Tables 2 and 3 present from Seligman's and Peterson's list of positive traits (2004) which participants expressed increased levels in each. In preparing these tables, the researcher re-read the participant responses and transcriptions to identify when traits were explicitly expressed or inferred.

Interpreting Positive Trait Results

Some benefits participants mentioned seem trait-like, but are not taxonomically considered traits by Peterson and Seligman (2004). For example, growing in confidence is clearly a major psychological support, and possessing increased confidence probably contributes heavily to success in multiple settings: business, academics, marriage, leadership, etc. However, confidence is not listed as one of the strengths in the Seligman and Peterson taxonomy, although, intuitively, this result could be related to other identified traits, such as courage, hope, wisdom, etc. For this study, responses indicating increased confidence were presented as the category of bravery based on Seligman's and Peterson's (2004) definition of that trait. Similarly, increased and enduring self-worth was interpreted as perspective, based on the authors' definition of that trait. Improved self-awareness was interpreted as social intelligence since Seligman and Peterson define social intelligence as an amalgam of both personal and emotional intelligence (2004). It should be noted with regard to interpretation that resilience as a factor stands in a class by itself: Although resilience is often seen as trait like, and much positive psychology research treats it as a trait, it was not counted as such in this research. Seligman and Peterson explain that, in research resilience is not a unitary factor, and it further tends to be defined by lack of negative outcomes rather than the presence of positive ones. So, resilience bears only a rough correspondence to the definition of a positive personality trait used in their taxonomy (2004, pp. 77-79).

Table 2 displays the positive traits described by participants as mentoring results.

Table 2
Positive Traits Identified By Each Participant

	Traits Indicated	Traits Inferred	Notes on participant expressions
Participant 3	humility		
		kindness	commitment to "pay the mentoring forward"
		bravery	as confidence
		perspective	self-worth
		bravery	as "navigating a new experience knowing I would not fail"
Participant 4	self-regulation		
	social intelligence		as self-awareness
	vitality		"increased capacity for happiness"
		Love of learning	as "and decided to study further", delta unknown
		Hope	as transition to being able to feel happiness
	Traits Indicated	Traits Inferred	Notes on participant expressions
Participant 5	kindness		as compassion
	perseverance		
		love	as learning the importance of friendships
Participant 6	leadership		
		bravery	as confidence
		perspective	self-worth
Participant 7	perseverance		
	prudence		
		leadership	success in Toastmasters and government position supported by mentoring
Participant 8	vitality		as drive
		bravery	as confidence
	leadership		as professionalism
		love of learning	as becoming capable
		gratitude	unknown delta
Participant 9	spirituality		
	hope		future orientation as intentionality

Table 2
Positive Traits Identified By Each Participant

	love		as care more for other people
		kindness	as love without needing to agree
	open-mindedness		as "without needing to agree"
Participant 10		social intelligence	as learning about herself
		perspective	as learning about herself
	integrity		as in authenticity
	gratitude		unknown delta
	humility		unknown delta
Participant 11	spirituality		
	altruistic love		"more loving, to put others in front of myself"
	loyalty		
	citizenship		as responsibility
		perseverance	"learns how to deal with past issues"
	persistence		as responsibility (compare to synonymous
	perspective		as wisdom
Participant 12	social intelligence		as personal intelligence
	citizenship		as teamwork, as able to contribute
	prudence		
		bravery	as confidence
	leadership		as professionalism
	kindness		altruistic love as passing forward mentoring
	hope		as future orientation
	integrity		authenticity as congruence between personal and professional life
Participant 13	integrity		authenticity as accountability
	gratitude		as "I was one of the lucky, lucky students"
		love of learning	as success in academic mentoring

Table 2
Positive Traits Identified By Each Participant

	Traits Indicated	Traits Inferred	Notes on participant expressions
Participant 14	love		as toward self and others
	social intelligence		emotional intelligence as self-knowledge and social skills
	hope		optimism as a happier person
	compassion		
	kindness		as altruistic love as committed to mentor others
Participant 15	authenticity		as accountability
	spirituality		
	social responsibility		as serving as a loving father and husband
	curiosity		as openness to experience
Participant 16	love		
	spirituality		trusting God as faith
	kindness		as respect for others
	gratitude		
Participant 17	love		
	perspective		as “learned to see shared experiences as similar despite [demographic] differences
	integrity		as “not manipulative”
	curiosity		as openness to experience
		perspective	as don’t have too many superficial conversations
Participant 18	spirituality		
	curiosity		as “desire to learn more”
	open mindedness		as “more accepting of others”
	hope		as “joy and unexpected inner peace”

A few explanations are helpful in referencing this table. First, where the word as appears, as in “as confidence”, refers to exact wording used. When a label appears in the table notes before the as, as in “emotional intelligence as self-knowledge and social skills”, the first expression will be one of the synonyms from Peterson and Seligman (2004), with the

wording after being the words or concepts used by the participant. This approach was taken to increase transparency about data interpretation. As another consideration in interpreting participant responses, where the expression “unknown delta” appears, the researcher is aware that the participant response does not appear to consider what would be the level of the trait in the participant prior to the mentoring. For example, Participant 10’s responses included expressions of both gratitude and humility. These traits fit squarely within the taxonomy of positive traits identified by Peterson and Seligman (2004). However, since this study was not longitudinal nor quantitative, it is unknown at what levels Participant 10 might have been assessed with gratitude and humility prior to the mentoring, and therefore whether there was any significant increase after the mentoring. So, “unknown delta” as a note refers to the lack of information currently possessed about the hypothetical before and after mentoring levels of traits. In these cases, the mentoring appeared to support the development of the traits, but the reported results cannot be considered conclusive developments: They may be or not.

Positive Trait Results by Participant

Table 3 illustrates the primary results of this dissertation research, listing the positive personality traits as listed by Peterson and Seligman (2004), and identifying which ones were named in the participants’ responses. In this way, it is possible to see at a glance which positive traits appeared in the research data, and also which traits remained unnamed by the 16 participants of this research.

Table 3
Positive Traits by Participant Responses

	Positive Traits	Participants Responding
Strengths of Wisdom and Knowledge		
	Creativity (Originality, Ingenuity)	0
	Curiosity (Interest, Novelty Seeking, Openness to experience)	15, 17, 18
	Open Mindedness (Judgment, Critical Thinking)	9, 18
	Love of learning	4, 8, 13
	Perspective (Wisdom)	3, 6, 10, 11, 17
Strengths of Courage		
	Bravery (Valor)	4, 6, 8, 10, 11
	Persistence (Perseverance, Industriousness)	11
	Integrity (Authenticity, Honesty)	10, 12, 13, 17
	Vitality (Zest, Enthusiasm, Vigor, Energy)	4, 8
Strengths of Humanity		
	Love	5, 9, 14, 16, 17
	Kindness (Generosity, Nurturance, Care, Compassion, Altruistic Love, "Niceness")	3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16
	Social Intelligence (Emotional Intelligence, Personal Intelligence)	4, 10, 12, 14
Strengths of Justice		
	Citizenship (Social Responsibility, Loyalty, Teamwork)	11, 12
	Fairness	0
	Leadership	7, 8, 12
Strengths of Temperance		
	Forgiveness and Mercy	0
	Humility and Modesty	3, 10
	Prudence	7, 12
	Self-Regulation (Self-Control)	4

Table 3
Positive Traits by Participant Responses

	Positive Traits	Participants Responding
Strengths of Transcendence		
	Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence (Awe, Wonder, Elevation)	0
	Gratitude	8, 10, 13, 16
	Hope (Optimism, Future-mindedness, Future orientation)	4, 9, 12, 14, 18
	Humor (Playfulness)	0
	Spirituality (Religiousness, Faith, Purpose)	9, 11, 15, 16, 18

Summarizing Positive Trait Results

Summarizing the positive trait results of this study, it seems clear that the first question of this project has been answered: that is, what categories of positive personality benefits do participants in adult, voluntary, character formation relationships attribute to those relationships? Every participant interviewed described non-trait positive benefits from mentoring, including positive states, motivations, skills, accomplishments, and values. But, every participant in the study, with the sole exception of Participant #10 (15 of 16, 93.8%), specifically identified one or more positive personality traits listed by Seligman and Peterson (2004) as a development from mentoring. So, mentoring did indeed support the increased presence of positive personality traits for nearly all mentees. Participant #10 did not mention positive personality traits among the benefits of her mentoring. She wrote in her interview about the breadth of acceptance she experienced from her mentor and the positive changes in her internal mental and emotional states, as well as some new self-regard. From her responses, Participant #10 might be described as

highly self-critical. From casual conversation with the researcher after interview, it became clear that following her mentoring, Participant #10 successfully completed life goals which required determination, including a bachelor's degree, a master's degree in social work, counseling licensure, a two-year dating relationship with engagement, and marriage. Considering these outcomes, it appears highly likely that mentoring supported at least her optimism, productivity, prudence, perseverance, and perception. But, the assessable levels before and after mentoring are unclear, and any statements from her to the effect are absent. Speculations are beyond the stricter guidelines of the research method however reasonable they appear.

A previously mentioned aspect of this study, is that without longitudinal quantitative analysis of participants, it is impossible to determine with certainty whether traits following mentoring had grown from near zero levels as emergence results, or developed from some lesser assessable values to higher as development results. What is demonstrated, however, is that out of the 24 positive personality traits in the Seligman and Peterson taxonomy (2004), 19 of the traits were indicated as results from mentoring by these 16 participants. Out of the 24 traits described in the taxonomy, only 5 were not represented by this group: creativity, fairness, forgiveness and mercy, appreciation of beauty and excellence, and humor. In other research, would changing what groups participants are from change which traits are represented in a group? This is potentially yet another subject for future research. For example, it might be surmised given a group of legal students, advocates, social workers, or others with a strong group orientation to justice or fairness, the strength of fairness might be represented. Artists of various types

might emphasize creativity and appreciation of beauty and excellence. Writers and speakers, given a wide enough sample, might represent humor as a goal.

Non-trait Benefits of Mentoring

One of the distinctive benefits of grounded theory research is its potential for true discovery uncontrolled by the shape of the researcher's hypotheses. In this research it was unknown what non-trait categories of mentoring benefits would be cited by mentees. In this study, five benefit categories emerged as additional coded intangible outcomes from mentoring experiences: states, motivations, skills, accomplishments, and new values.

States

As explained near the end of chapter 1, states are similar in some ways to traits, but are defined as more malleable than traits, more prone to change. Traits as a concept define personal characteristics which are more stable and harder to change (e.g., Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). In this analysis, 11 of the 16 participants mentioned improvements in state-like characteristics. Most frequently mentioned was improvement in a personal sense of self-worth, indicated by 3 participants. Others states mentioned included increased feelings of happiness, a sense of a participant's activities being integrated or harmonized, looking forward to interactions with the mentor, termination of end of romance pain, transformation from feeling vulnerable, feeling no longer alone, and an experience of joy with inner peace.

Motivations

Nine participants reflected gaining new, meaningful motivations as a result of mentoring. These included: 3 participants gaining commitment to provide mentoring to

others, a desire to apply the mentor's teaching to the mentee's personal life, a desire to be a leader, to balance family life with her professional life, to achieve academic success, desiring to grow personally, and desiring to learn more.

Skills

10 of 16 participants related that they learned new skills as a result of their mentor's teaching. Sometimes these skills coincided with corresponding motivations to do something better. The skills included: better internal monitoring for self-regulation of depression, increased capacity for reading, discovering multiple previously hidden skills, the organizational Toastmaster goals of better public speaking and leadership, ability to love without the need for agreement, habits for resilience, ability to be a mentor, skills related to academic success, practicing better personal boundaries, and ability to communicate with others above or below socioeconomic status. In view of the research on mentoring, much academic or employment mentoring appears to be focused on the mentee's acquisition of skills necessary for school or job. This research supports the literature which demonstrates the capacity for effective mentoring to improve skills.

Accomplishments

Some of the participants in this study expressed that their mentoring experiences played pivotal roles in helping them accomplishment important life goals. Participant 4 expressed that she gained control over her depression and bipolar mood phases, necessary for completing her PhD program. Participant 5 was glad to have read many books by significant authors as a result of his mentor's inspiration. Participant 6 identified specific personal growth and maturity from mentoring. Participant 7 attained the highest skill rank

in the Toastmaster's organization, Distinguished Toastmaster. Participant 8 completed her training as a school teacher. Participant 10 felt she cleared away numerous blind spots and was able to grow developmentally. Participant 12 succeeded in passing her MCAT, transitioned from romantic grief to a healthier new relationship, and performed mentoring for someone else. Participant 13 finished college. Participant 15 kept a job which had been at risk. Participant 16 felt he was able to practice deeper relationships. In all, 9 of 16 participants attributed specific accomplishments to the mentoring they received, with 4 of the participants accomplishing new goals in subjective areas of their lives, and the other 5 accomplishing goals recognized objectively by society.

Positive Values

Mentoring has the potential to create new values in some mentees. 9 participants in this research group identified new values as benefits from their mentoring experiences. Some of these values had to do with learning to appreciate elements of life more than before, such as friendships, spirituality, Christian fellowship, relationships, personal depth, and human beings as worthy of love. One participant learned the value of living more intentionally. Another felt her prior values were comprehensively altered to reflect a more mature approach to life. One participant said that he had learned the value of treating other people much better and becoming less narcissistic himself. One participant learned that valuing and supporting the journeys of her students were important aspects of her professionalism. Another came to believe in personal accountability, an aspect in his spiritual community of integrity and self improvement. Finally, one participant began to measure her actions by whether her actions were loving or not.

The Importance of the Mentoring Experience

While the literature review has expressed what the academic literature has revealed about the importance of personality traits, and likewise the importance of mentoring as practiced in recent decades, the research questions of this project also asked what importance the participants assigned to their mentoring experiences. Uniformly, participant responses expressed that their mentoring experiences were important to them. But, the impacts ranged from being an important personal experience to a definitive life experience which made a qualitative and dramatic change in the participants' lives. Three levels of impact were discovered in this group (table 4).

Table 4
Importance of Mentoring Experiences

From Less to More	Totals	Participants
Personally Important	5 (31.3%)	7, 10, 12, 14, 18
Extremely Important / "Invaluable"	2 (12.5%)	8, 11
Profound / Qualitative Difference in Life	9 (56.3%)	3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17

All participants in the study expressed that their mentoring experiences were important to them. As Table 4 indicates, five participants (e.g., 7, 10, 12, 14, 18) indicated that mentoring had been important to them on some significant personal level. The degree of importance in these responses was not otherwise qualified by comparative or superlative language, and may be understated. In a few of these cases, investigating other aspects of those 5 participant responses offers further insight to how important mentoring was for these persons. For example, Participant 7 attached to her mentoring a new lifelong friendship, improvement in job performance, and accomplishing her Distinguished Toastmaster rank. Participant 12 associated her mentoring with numerous challenging

accomplishments, including passing her MCAT, earning her PhD, establishing academic and professional connections, transitioning from romantic pain to a new good relationship, successfully mentoring someone else, and cementing a long term academic mentoring relationship. These correlations illustrate that even at the lowest expressed impact of personal mentoring in this group, participants correlated their mentoring experiences with the accomplishment of significant life events and skills. For the 9 participants who indicated the highest level of impact, their mentoring experiences were defined as transformational, propagating a major qualitative improvement in their experiences of life.

Characteristics of Mentor and Mentee

In the participant responses on what personal characteristics most contributed to mentoring success, comments about the characteristics of the mentors were far more numerous than comments about the mentees. All traits cited about mentees were positives (table 5). But, traits cited by mentees about themselves were a mix of positives and negatives (table 5). Some items, like "Independent / Pushback / Self-motivated", could in some other contexts be thought of as positive personal characteristics, but these participants represented the characteristic as an obstacle to mentoring. Those participants expressing that they pushed back on their mentors indicated gratitude that the mentors had not given up on them despite their tendency to push back from time to time during the mentoring process. Overall, the positive characteristics of the mentor can be understood as both the mentee's inducements to participate in mentoring, and perhaps, what mentor characteristics are most predictive of positive trait results.

Table 5

Mentor and Mentee Characteristics Cited by Mentees

	Characteristics Cited	Participant #
Mentor		
	Accountability (taught to mentee)	13, 17
	Available	3
	Cares / Compassion	3, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 14, 18
	Father figure	13
	Kind	3
	Loving / Loved me	7, 9, 14, 16
	Mutuality / Treats as equal	11, 12
	Noble / Value System	16, 17
	Nonjudgmental / Accepting	3, 10, 11, 17
	Observant / Listened	6, 15
	Pass on mentoring	12, 17, 18
	Patient	3, 8, 10
	Permitted freedom / Differences	8, 9
	Responsive, Gives Feedback	8
	Skilled	5, 8, 11, 13, 18
	Supportive	7
	Trustworthy / Trusted / Evoked confidence	3, 15
	Wants to help	4
	Wants to spend time with me	10
	Wanted mentee's success	6, 12, 13, 15
Mentee	Respected the mentor	3, 15, 16, 17
	Comfortable with mentor	4, 17
	Difficulty interacting	14
	Grateful / Felt lucky	8, 10, 13, 16
	Imitated mentor	12, 14

Table 5

Mentor and Mentee Characteristics Cited by Mentees

Characteristic	Participants
Independent / Pushback / Self-motivated	5, 9, 10
Learning disability	13, 16
Like to talk about self	4
Low self worth	13, 16, 17
Joyful / Glad	8
Loved / valued mentor	16
Ready to change / grow / learn	15, 17, 18
Sought out mentor	5, 8, 9, 10
Spiritually seeking	15, 17
Vulnerable	15

In reviewing the aspects cited as important to mentoring success, there are some which are repeated so often as to stand out. Those having to do with the mentors' care for the mentees were ubiquitous:

1. Caring about the mentee or having compassion on them is mentioned by 8 participants.

2. 4 mentees felt loved by their mentors (2 overlaps with item 1).

3. One participant indicated that his mentor carefully listened to him (# 15).

4. One participant indicated that she felt that her mentor truly wanted to help her (# 4).

5. One participant felt that the mentor treated her as an equal (# 11).

6. One participant expressed that the mentor showed nonjudgmental acceptance of the mentee (# 17).

7. One participant said the mentor allowed the mentee to disagree without responding negatively (# 9).

Eliminating all the overlapping statements, no fewer than 15 of 16 participants cited some aspect of unconditional positive regard as fundamental to the positive effects of the

mentoring. The mentees felt their mentoring was successful because the mentor cared about them, often in a way that required meaningful effort to demonstrate care.

A highly important secondary umbrella of traits has to do with aspects of the mentor that evoked the mentee's respect: These are, again eliminating overlaps, include teaching of accountability (13, 17), the mentor's inherent nobility or high value system (16), the challenge to pass on what one is learning (12, 18), the mentor's competency or knowledge (5, 8, 11), the mentor's capacity to inspire confidence (3, 15), the mentor being worthy of imitation (14), and that the mentee had specifically sought out that mentor (9, 10). Eliminating all overlapping citations, 13 of 16 (81.3%) participants indicated that some aspect of their respect for the mentor contributed significantly to the positive results they experienced from mentoring.

The Nature of the Mentoring Relationship

Participants described two distinct definitions of their mentor relationships. The first was whether the mentoring relationship originated out of a formal or societal role, such as a job or academic supervisor, a religious leader or teacher, or a parent. The second aspect was how the relationship felt to the mentee, the subjective experience of it, whether formal relationships continued to feel formal, or whether they began to feel like a friendship, or like a parent, or otherwise more personal than formal (Table 6).

Table 6

Mentoring Relationships Over Time

Participants	Relationship Origin	Mentoring Foci	Subjective Start	Subjective End
3	Supervisor / Acquaintance	Religion, Life Applications	Formal	Formal
4	Doctor / Therapist / Religious Teacher	Therapy, Religion	Formal	Formal
5	Religious Teacher	Religion, Life, Mentoring	Formal	Formal
6	Toastmaster Club	Public Speaking, Leadership	Toastmaster Club	Friends
7	Job Supervisor	Business / Toastmaster Club	Formal	Friends
8	Education Supervisor	Public Education	Formal	Formal
9	Religious Leader	Religion, Life Applications	Formal	Friends
10	Religious Leader	Religion, Personal Issues	Formal	Formal
11	Religious Leader	Religion, Life Applications Personal Issues	Formal	Formal
12	Academic Supervisor	Academic, Job, Mentoring, Personal	Formal	Formal, Personal
13	Academic Supervisor	Academics, Personal	Formal	Formal, Personal
14	Friends	Religion, Personal	Friends	Friends
15	Religious Leader	Religion, Job, Family, Personal	Formal	Friends
16	Parent	Religion, Personal	Formal, Personal	Formal, Personal
17	Religious Assistant Teacher	Religion, Mentoring Personal	Formal	Formal, Personal
18	Religious Teacher	Religion, Mentorng	Formal	Formal, Personal

Importantly, participants uniformly described the personal impacts of the mentoring they receive, even from formal supervisors in their jobs or academics. In the majority of cases, a relationship which started as the formal instrument of employment or academics, continued subjectively as a formal relationship. In some cases, the mentoring became a subjective hybrid, where some formality remained for societal expectations and propriety, but the relationship also communicated in less formal locations or media such as phone calls, email letters, Facebook, and for long beyond the time required by the relationship's formal purposes. In also a few cases, 5 of 16 in this study, a formal mentoring relationship over time divested itself of formality and became purely personal friendship.

Circumstances of Mentoring: Location, Duration, and Focus

Locations of mentoring varied in participant responses by the formality of the relationship. When mentoring occurred with a strict orientation toward job, academia, therapy, or religion, the locations corresponded: work areas, classrooms, therapeutic offices, and religious offices or fellowship halls. Sometimes, formal mentoring might still occur in outside locations such as in parks or building grounds. As some mentoring relationships relaxed over time, shared trips to events led to car time which expanded both the duration and the range of topics discussed. It should be mentioned that in this group, not all formal mentoring relaxed. For example, Participant 4 considered a psychiatrist, a psychologist, and a Buddhist instructor to be her mentors. All of these remained strictly within the proprietary limits of their ethical codes and mentoring foci. Participant 5 never met his vicarious mentor nor shared an actual conversation, so the relationship did not change. But, in 8 of 16 cases (50%; e.g., 6, 7, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18),

the relationship changed over time. In some of these, formal relationship lasted long enough to outlast the original definition of the mentoring to become friendship (e.g., 6, 7, 9, 15). In others, the relationship became hybridized to include informal media (e.g., phone calls, email letters, Facetime, Facebook) and informal locations (e.g., 12, 13, 17, 18). But, in all cases, even in the relationships that stayed entirely formal, successful mentoring led to significant highly personal changes and impacts.

Participants in this study reported that duration of mentoring sessions in most cases remained within 1 to 2 hour time slots. Even when relationships became less formal, so that mentor and mentee might take meals together, the sessions remained within the social norms for meal length. Only when mentoring relationships became less formal, or the relationship was fully converted to friendship so that mentor and mentee visited each other's homes and families, did durations also become unstructured and increase dramatically in length.

Focuses of mentoring in this research varied widely. Formal mentoring relationships, as might be expected, had formal foci: Academics taught aspects of academic success, supervisors taught aspects of job success, religionists taught religious practice and applications, therapists did therapy, and Toastmasters taught public speaking and club leadership roles. It is interesting that in the responses of Participants 3-9, the participants indicated mentoring consistent with the roles of the mentors. In the responses of Participants 10-18, mentors took freedom to address personal issues of the mentees.

Reflection on Mentoring Location, Duration, and Focus

When reflecting on the data provided by this project's participants, the broad range of positive personality traits was generated across highly disparate mentoring locations, durations, and foci. The importance ascribed to the mentoring by the participants likewise does not appear to be affected by these circumstantial conditions. That is not to say that location, durations, and foci never matter in mentoring. Therapists, academics, and employers must abide by societal and legal norms, or risk severe censure and penalties. Additionally, mentees might have feared and fled a formal mentor who violated his or her ethical standards. But, in the imaginary case that the only things that mattered were positive trait development, benefits, impacts, and relational sense of the mentees, the circumstantial variables appear to be nearly irrelevant.

Conclusions from the Data

Mentoring Supports Development of Positive Personality Traits

There are clear themes which emerge from the research data. First and most important is the discovery that the development of positive personality traits is predictably a result of supportive interpersonal experiences, with mentoring being demonstrated in this research a prominent and effective example. This finding is consistent with the literature review displaying the importance of personal relationship from iconic psychologists and ethicists. It is also consistent with testimonies of ancient religious practitioners and philosophers from over 2000 years ago to the biographies of previously mentioned entertainers of recent decades. It should be noted that because this is not a longitudinal research project, measuring trait levels before and after mentoring, I

cannot affirm with any certainty whether traits emerged from some zero state, or whether they increased from a lesser level to a higher. But, the study's results do confirm that in the perception of nearly all participants, again 15 of 16, noted important development in the positive traits cataloged by Peterson and Seligman (2004). The sole exception to this pattern was participant 10, who while focusing on the significance of her mentoring to self-acceptance, perhaps simply omitted improvements which may be nevertheless evident by her own later significant accomplishments academically, personally, and professionally after mentoring. Given her extremely low view of herself prior to mentoring, her reported accomplishments would seem to indicate some changes in stable capacities and confidence.

Mentor Positive Regard May Be the Key

But, why is mentoring effective for developing positive personality traits? From the contributing characteristics put forward by these participants in their survey responses, most prominent is the mentor's unconditional positive regard for the mentee. In second place the mentors communicated that respect for the mentor drew, or motivated, or provided the situation for seeking self-improvement. Given the expressions previously examined from iconic psychologists on the benefits of human relationships, these findings were predictable. It was Carl Rogers's point of view that positive regard which is unconditional from a therapist to a client may be both the essential and only prerequisite for the mentee's positive change (Rogers, 1989). Coincidently, the migration noted of formal relationships in many cases to less formal ones underscore the perception which Rogers expressed as his method, "I become a companion to my client" (p34).

Nearly every participant (i.e., 15 of 16) expressed some aspect of what they felt subjectively toward the mentor because of the mentor's characteristics.

Mentor Competence Appears Catalytic

But, there is also that factor which caused each mentee to decide on each mentor. The mentor's skill or competence, in formal situations usually indicated by supervisory or seniority rank was the second most prominent contributor of the mentoring relationship. As enumerated previously, 13 of 16 participants (81.3%) indicated that they considered various competency issues of the mentor highly responsible for the positive traits. This seems reasonable: No matter how certain is the mentor's positive regard for the mentee, why would a mentee choose to receive mentoring from someone who is no more skilled in obtaining the outcomes the mentee desires? It is perhaps possible to imagine a mentee receiving mentoring from a disagreeable mentor to learn from his or her modeling a level of skill which the mentee did not possess at the beginning. Future qualitative and quantitative research projects could provide more confirming clarity on the different roles of positive regard and competence.

Are Mentee Starting Characteristics Irrelevant?

While this research did not intend to ask questions about what kind of mentee is most likely to experience a positive mentoring outcome, 14 of 16 participants responded that something about themselves contributed to the positive outcomes of their mentoring experiences. This represents an area of real discovery for this project, but only categorically. For data coded as mentee attributions about themselves, there was no pattern apparent: The results were scattered so that there was about one participant per

mentee characteristic cited. The mentee descriptions of themselves varied even more greatly than did the logistical circumstances of mentoring sessions. Some mentees described themselves as providing obstacles to positive outcomes such as being disagreeable, selfish, grieving, insecure, or diminished in self-worth, learning ability, intelligence, or love for others. Others described themselves contributing to positive outcomes as curious, ready to grow, self-motivated, spiritually ready, or simply liking to talk about themselves. There is a bright possibility here in this data: It would be a dramatically encouraging finding if later research indicates that mentee characteristics can vary widely from moderately negative to positive, and still mentees can receive great therapeutic outcomes from mentoring! It will require quantitative studies of assessed characteristics to address this questions as to what kinds of mentees can be predicted to generate what kinds of outcomes. If the results remain as broad as they are discovered in this project, then mentoring attention (Kohut, 1977) and positive regard (Rogers, 1989) really are nearly universal effective support approaches.

Limitations of these Results

When one examines the benefits cited by participants, it may be tempting to try to use the results as if they derive from a quantitative analysis, such as, if your client seeks to complete an accomplishment, mentoring will provide a 62.5% potential for success. There are at least two mistakes that would be made in applying this study’s data in this way. First, a statistical sample of 16 persons is not a sufficiently broad base to draw such a quantitative conclusion; this study is a strictly qualitative application of grounded theory research. Further, results of such a quantitative study could likely be expected to

vary depending on the difficulty of the accomplishment sought and the demographics of the participants who are attempting to complete it. As important, not all participants were seeking accomplishments at all. Some sought general personal development alone. Some sought aspects of spiritual growth. It stands to reason that if a person engages mentoring specifically for the purpose of accomplishing a thing, then the likelihood of that accomplishment should increase. If an accomplishment is not the goal of the mentoring, then any accomplishment which occurs is incidental no matter how commendable or important. So, the reporting here of response proportions simply indicates qualitatively that, yes, such a benefit (e.g., accomplishment) can predictably arise from the process of mentoring.

The Dual Role Ethical Question

This research has shown that it is not uncommon for a person appointed a mentor in an academic or employment context, over time to be considered a friend, or even a parent figure. In several of this research's participants, mentoring which had as original focuses academic or job accomplishment often progressed to address personal issues, such as accomplishing the balance of achievement with personal life. In short, relationships which started as formal did not remain strictly formal. In the language of the great ethical codes, those mentoring relationships became somewhat dual-role. This is likely the most cautionary aspect of recommending mentoring from a therapeutic context: While all major ethical codes warn psychologists and counselors to eschew dual-role relationships with their clients where there can be a potential for harm, in the contexts of mentoring, some aspect of dual-role relating may be the norm. Given the evidence that

positive personal regard is fundamental in obtaining impactful and positive mentoring outcomes, it makes sense that the relational centers of mentoring migrate or progress inside a mentee. Therefore, the most important social, therapeutic, and ethical concern about recommending mentoring is whether the mentor practices integrity and responsibility around the mentoring relationships, and is not using it for his or her own purposes. Instead, appropriate mentors must consistently act on the client's behalf and with respect for societal norms and ethical protections. Given this perhaps spooky aspect of mentoring, modern therapists might be tempted to throw out the baby with the bath, disregarding the discoveries of this research, neglect recommending mentoring entirely because of its dual role risk. Might a client sue a therapist because he or she recommended some type of mentoring, and then the mentor abused the relationship? On the other hand, the data of this research makes it abundantly clear than mentoring provides direct access to developing the client's positive personality traits, which since 2000 have been proven to offer consistently some of the greatest increases in positive outcomes across a plethora of human situations. Do we dare avoid such potential for strengthening our clients? If Seligman is right, that our clients are looking for positive outcomes and not just the cessation of negative situations and experiences (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), how can the therapeutic solution not include the possibility of intentional development of applicable positive traits?

Chapter 5: Social Value and Future Research Suggestions

Introduction

This qualitative grounded theory research aimed to discover whether positive personality traits emerged or developed in adult mentoring relationships, to discover in the data what factors accompanied positive results, and which of those factors consistently seemed to contribute to positive outcomes. The study found that positive personality traits were listed by all but one participant as a result of their mentoring experiences, and the traits listed included all but five of the twenty-four traits mentioned in the Peterson and Seligman taxonomy (2004). It may well be that in a different or large enough sample of participants, all the taxonomic traits may eventually be represented. It was also an especially meaningful discovery that almost all participants reflected these positive findings whether as mentees they saw themselves as consistently receptive or not in receiving mentoring. But, it was found that all participants expressed that their mentors were unconditionally personally supportive and competent.

The survey questions reflect the research questions which are presented in Appendix A. The interview questionnaire is presented in Appendix B. The participants filled out their questionnaires either by hand or on a computer, and expressed:

1. What benefits they received from their mentoring experience,
2. How important they considered their mentoring to be,
3. What situation began the mentoring,
4. What aspects they considered most important for creating the positive outcomes,

5. How their mentoring sessions were defined in location, duration, and focus, and finally,

6. What important other life events were going on during the same time periods as their mentoring.

Data analysis included memo-writing after each interview by the researcher, and coding of elements within the responses as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Coding was facilitated by the organization of the survey into six different questions as informed by literature review on the nature of mentoring.

It was clear from the literature review on mentoring that mentoring occurs for various reasons, in various locations, and with different identified interests. So, grounded theory codes for this analysis tended to organize themselves under the questions which treated them. Axial coding focusing on the benefits each participant cited, and the analysis of those benefits into categories, with this research's chief interest being identifiable positive personality traits cataloged by Peterson and Seligman (2004).

Interpretation of Findings

Research Questions and Hypotheses

I designed the survey questionnaire to reflect the interests of the research questions, with the one important difference that the first survey question never mentioned traits as a special interest of this project so as to avoid biasing participant answers. This project sought to discover whether participants would spontaneously identify positive personality traits as listed by Peterson and Seligman (2004), especially

since the authors, informed by Nansook Park's (2005) research, claimed that these positive personality traits were indeed universal and ubiquitous.

Question 1

Question 1 of the research questions was a general question that asked what categories of benefits mentees attributed to their mentoring experiences. The meaningfulness of the question was supported by research that demonstrated that participant-perceived personality change correlated significantly with assessed personality change (Robins, Noftle, Trzesniewski, & Roberts, 2005). The work of Robins, et al, affirms that the answers given by the participants regarding their personality changes are likely reasonably accurate. With this support, interpretation of the participant answers consisted of coding the different benefits identified by participants according to types, grouping like types together, and then recognizing the groups as categories of traits, states, motivations, skills, accomplishments and values. The distinction between traits and states is a sometimes debatable one, and has been a source of challenges against positive psychology's definitions (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). Traits are usually considered to be more stable than states. Separating in the results the traits from the states, required using the Peterson and Seligman taxonomy (2004) to identify the positive traits expressed by mentees, and identifying participant factors such as happiness or optimism as among the characteristics which are more mutable.

Question 2

Regarding question 2, participants listed attributes of their mentor, to a lesser degree aspects of themselves, and sometimes their reactions to the mentors. The attributes of the mentors tended to fall into two large categories. First, mentees described their mentors as by their evident care, goals, and concern for the mentees, and second, the mentors superior skills or capacities which the mentees found necessary for various reasons. Table 5 in Chapter 4 indicates the various ways in which mentees described these aspects of their mentors. Regarding themselves, mentees mentioned an extremely wide range of equally positive and negative descriptives. The range of self-descriptions was so broad that no generalizable pattern emerged, suggesting the conclusion that positive personal mentoring can provide benefits to most kinds of mentees, to some degree regardless of their starting characteristics. This finding, if confirmed by further research, represents a true discovery of this research and would be deeply encouraging regarding the broad potential of mentoring to support positive trait emergence and development.

Question 3

Regarding Question 3, all participants reflected that their mentoring experiences were important to them. With no prompting in the question as to how much importance was expected, participant answers tended to fall into three degrees of importance. These were imperfectly grouped as personally important, extremely important, or something which made a transformational, definitive, qualitative improvement in life. These groupings were, in keeping with practicing integrity around participant wording, named

with words participants actually used. However, the imperfectness of these categories is clear when one recognizes that while a participant like Number 12, who simply referred to her mentoring experience as personally important, attributed her mentor's support to her success in passing the MCAT, completing medical school, moving through grief of romantic loss and transitioning to a new partnership, and successfully mentoring someone else.

Question 4

Question 4, what important life events were transpiring for the participants while their mentoring was ongoing, simply reflected a catalog of typical, important life events, including marriages and divorces, college classes and graduation, breakups, military deployment of spouse, studying abroad, taking the MCAT and entering medical school, completing a PhD, dealing with abusive persons, raising children, promotion and job changes, relocation, the death of parents, and retirement. It is not clear whether these results indicate that persons are more volatile to trait change during other significant life events. Such a conclusion would require disciplines typical in quantitative analysis, such as control grouping. Further, it can be expected that given a mentoring relationship which lasts any significant length of time, some important life events will likely co-occur.

Question 5

Question 5, addressing the heart of this grounded theory, asked whether positive traits would be among the benefits mentees ascribe to their mentoring. The data from the surveys were conclusive, with 15 of 16 participants naming or describing 19 of the 24 positive traits classified by Peterson and Seligman (2004). On reflection, it is likely that

the five traits that were omitted from the results may have appeared among different mentoring situations. Interpretation of the positive traits themselves was straightforward, with participants often tending to use the same labels for the traits as Peterson and Seligman (2004), reflecting that the authors did succeed in choosing intuitive names and alternate names. The concepts of confidence and self-awareness were discovered as results in multiple participants. These terms do not appear specifically in Peterson and Seligman (2004), and so interpretation and application of these concepts became necessary. After consideration and review of Seligman and Peterson's definitions, confidence was aligned with bravery and self-awareness as social intelligence. Special consideration was required for resilience which is frequently seen as a positive trait, but Peterson and Seligman's analysis of resilience explained that resilience is not a unitary trait, is primarily defined in terms of resistance to negative factors, and is not amenable to measurement. Therefore, resilience is not categorized by Peterson and Seligman (2004) as a positive personality trait in their *Character Strengths and Virtues*. The traits listed as results by each participant are displayed in Table 2 of Chapter 4.

Factors Affecting Mentoring Benefits

One important aspect remaining unaddressed in this study is how the various conditions that appeared in participant answers, the varieties of mentee characteristics, the differences in each mentoring's stated purpose, and the many differences in locations, durations and foci, affected outcomes for each mentee. The purpose of this project was simply to discover whether positive personality traits might predictably emerge or be developed in supportive human relationships, in this study's case, in mentoring. It will

remain for later studies, most likely quantitative and longitudinal or pseudo-experimental studies, to explore what kinds of mentors will most predictably support development of which positive traits in what kinds of mentees. What this study has done has reaffirmed that mentors, in keeping with the literature on the subject, must practice positive regard toward their mentees, and must possess competencies desirable to the mentees. What this study may also have discovered is that the range of mentees which can be significantly and positively affected is much more variable, even chaotic. Likewise, the external parameters of the mentoring in terms of location, duration of sessions, and perhaps even focus can be widely variable and still cause positive traits to appear. However, question remains as to whether different focuses may promote different traits.

Implications for Social Change

The value of the current research derives directly from the importance of positive traits themselves.

Extending the Research Base

From a research perspective, the demonstration that positive traits can be reliably developed in mentoring and other supportive relationships helps us understand what has remained until now an unanswered question in positive psychology: Where do positive traits come from? Now that we know that positive traits can undergo significant change in all periods of adult life (Roberts and DelVecchio, 2000), and that environment contributes more to a person's final makeup of traits than does genetics (Steger, Hicks, Kashdan, Krueger, & Bouchard, 2007), we now have the beginnings of an answer to what particular aspects of a person's environment contribute directly to the positive traits they

possess. Stated most simply, summary findings indicate that other people matter. Persons' behaviors with other persons should be a key research focus for practitioners interested in well-being and overall health (Peterson, Park, & Sweeney, 2008). We now understand better the personal contributions of mentoring relationships, in particular, and gain further confidence about positive influential human relationships in general.

***Applied science: therapy* and counseling**

But, pure science is not the best purpose for the discovery of a solid connection between mentoring and positive trait development. There now emerges the possibility of a whole new category of therapeutic support, beyond the dichotomy of individual counseling and group therapies. Now, counselors and therapists can prescribe trustworthy mentoring, which can most often be had at nominal cost, to add to the tools and natural strength they have available for their clients. Once a practitioner collects a repertoire of mentoring opportunities for his or her clients, he or she has a direct way to support the development of positive personality traits, character strengths and virtues, in their clients to mitigate negative situations and support client flourishing. Especially if a client has lacked supportive relationships with a concurrent deficit in measurable positive traits which could strengthen them in their life challenges, therapists can recommend appropriate supportive relationships. Trustworthy mentors, can add to client personality strengths with traits that can be measured before and after the intervention. Wise employers could orchestrate mentoring support for their employees with the aim to add to productivity and reduce the sorts of interpersonal trouble at jobs which account for more than a majority of terminations. Wise educative administrators have a better option than

discarding students who are unsuccessful because of diminished past personal supports. Mentoring can provide rescue and success for students who would otherwise fall out of the educational system just as did this study's Participant 13. In short, prescription of supportive relationship with the reliable likelihood of developing positive traits is an approach with as wide a range of applicability as the value of positive traits themselves. Drawing on Erich Fromm's observation of the erosion of humanity and individual value in Western societies as far back as the 1950s (1956) due to isolation and hypercommercialism, this study may contribute data relevant to ameliorating modern experiences of isolation and developmental shortfalls which create crisis for individuals and society as a whole.

Recommendations for Action

When counseling, whether kids in a school environment, employees, or therapeutic clients, a therapist should catalog the relationships in the person's life which are both supportive and trustworthy. There is already an aspect of counseling contributed by positive psychology wherein a person's strengths are reviewed, strengths not only of person but also of relationships and resources. Therapeutic recommendations now can include action steps, interventions, encouraging those relationships which can strengthen and empower the client with greater understanding, development, and/or resistance against negative outcomes. Additionally, if the counselor is aware of new programs which provide personal developmental support, he or she can recommend those as a way to boost the client's innate capacities. Simple suggestions may add to a client's strengths, like participation in one's local Toastmasters Club, well grounded fitness or self-defense

studios, or if clients are of a spiritual bent, nearby wholesome churches or Buddhist meditation centers with mentoring foci. Perhaps the client can identify to the counselor someone they would like to emulate, or they believe could teach them to do life better. Clearly, it would require time and effort to locate local, wholesome, specific mentoring opportunities, and such supports are therefore less simple interventions. Over time, counselors can discover life coaches or non-profit workers found trustworthy, who can provide powerful, new supports for the client's success. In this way, counselors of all kinds will be offering more comprehensive services, and aimed at higher levels of positive outcomes. It should also be apparent that given the problems and limitations of modern managed health care, such interventions could provide support and direction for a client long beyond the counselor's allotted time.

Recommendations for Further Study

The most direct future research implied by this qualitative study is the research discoverable by longitudinal study whether assessed positive personality traits demonstrate statistically significant improvement during and after an intentional personal mentoring program. Given this grounded theory's findings, we may expect improvement. Quantitative study that is longitudinal, measuring traits before and after mentoring intervention, is the most direct way to demonstrate unmistakable emergence or development of positive traits, as well as beginning the process of understanding what conditions lead to the development of which traits. It is natural to ask what traits of the mentor can stimulate which traits in a mentee. We could then ask specific questions such as whether humor or creativity, traits which did not appear among this study's outcomes,

would appear in a community of actors or writers. We could intentionally pursue understanding of what circumstances support the development of rarer but precious traits like mercy and humility. An easier variation from longitudinal experimentation would be pseudo-experimental study comparing assessable traits in the local population as a control with the measurable positive traits in persons who have been participating in groups associated with mentoring, like Toastmasters and other developmental groups which rely heavily on relational input and feedback. These studies will help us to quantify and broaden our understanding of the positive trait contribution of such mentoring communities. Obviously, the theme is ripe with opportunities to measure trait growth from religious community participants, and contrasting those communities which produce strong positive outcomes with those that do not. It would also be revealing to compare measures of extrinsic and intrinsic religious practice with outcomes of positive traits, and see if, as might be expected, intrinsic religious practice contributes much more positively to one's personal growth in character than does extrinsic. While various categories have been measured before, such as differences in racism and neuroticism between extrinsic and intrinsic religious practitioners, never have such measures been done while measuring positive personal traits for that practice's impact on a person.

One of the most intriguing discoveries of this research was the wide range of self-descriptions employed by the participants, as often negative as positive, showing yet no identifiable correlation with their good results. With the demonstrated understanding that positive traits can be present at the same time as psychological vulnerabilities (Huta & Hawley, 2010), every study suggested so far could be redesigned to address persons with

diagnosed psychological challenges like depression, bipolar, or other *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* conditions. For example, do the improved outcomes related to physical health recoveries present as strongly in persons who are diagnosed with moderate or severe mental health conditions? We might hypothesize that persons expressing severe conditions, such as Cluster B personality disorders, reactive attachment disorder (RAD), or a Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), might benefit much less or perhaps not at all from mentoring efforts. Or, we may discover that only mentors equipped with very specific training can provide support for positive trait development with such clients. We may hope that given the right depth, a focus on mentoring might provide higher recovery rates for such conditions than have heretofore been seen.

Although a truly experimental design might be impossible, case study or pseudo-experiment may allow access to the question, are there cases when mentoring succeeds without warm personal regard between mentor and mentee: Can a mentee learn from the mentor's modeling even if the relationship is not supportive otherwise? It can be imagined that sometimes a mentee might be drawn to a particular mentor's special competencies, and learn from him or her even should the mentor not like the mentee. What kinds of personal traits would likely not develop in such a relationship, and which ones could develop despite the lack of care, warmth or support in the relationship? On a related note, what are the possibilities and limitations of vicarious mentoring, such as through reading, as exemplified in Participant 5's experience? Could this be an effective enough approach for mentoring for the general population? If reading is uncommon in a population, might alternative media which includes audio or A/V recorded sessions

provide similar fruit? One easy to imagine benefit of such vicarious mentoring is that it would eliminate altogether the kinds of ethical issues which can arise in dual role practice.

Researcher's Reflections

The roots of this study are evident in my master's work on the primitive Christian practices of discipleship, and the potentials originally envisioned in those practices (Colborn, 1990). Despite the fact that modern churches in the United States have in recent decades turned almost entirely to mass meetings, mass education methods – when they offer education to adults at all – the earliest centuries of the Christian church considered themselves directed by God to highly individualistic personal mentoring for the purposes of wholesome growth, as in the directions of Jesus recorded in the Gospels (e.g., Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 3:14), the canonical apostolic writings (e.g., 1 Thessalonians 1:4-8; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:3-4), and enduring to the earliest monastic communities a few centuries later (Ward, 1984). As a student of primitive Christianity, and a frequent worker in non-profit organizations with spiritual emphases, I have witnessed visibly successful practices of modern discipleship and mentoring methods, while also becoming sadly aware of negative experiments in discipleship found in inculcating and controlling sects. I have seen examples of persons apparently maturing over time when mentoring is practiced wholesomely, and the mentees becoming mentors themselves. Outside of communities, I have simultaneously witnessed the increasingly detached and impersonal, sometimes inhuman, transitions of United States culture in neighborhoods and job sites which was so disturbingly and accurately predicted by Erich

Fromm (e.g., 1956). I also became aware in these experiences that such whole universes of experience were outside the normal purviews of psychology, but were nevertheless related to outcomes which psychologists sought, and of late have become subjects psychology is questing to understand.

On entering doctoral studies in psychology, I was thoroughly grounded in the anti-dual role emphases of the ethics codes overseeing the psychological and counseling professions. In contrast, and because of their aspirations, religious groups of all kinds must practice self-regulation over dual role relationships as a matter of course and on a daily basis. There have been, of course, well known and publicized ethical failures of religious mega-personalities, with religious leaders infamously taking advantage of their members for their own benefits and pleasures. But, despite these terrible failures, given the total populations participating in these activities, those spectacular abuses are proportionally rare. The vast majority of spiritual community relationships naturally practice transitions from leadership, counseling and teacher roles to relationships characterized as friendships, spiritual siblings, role equality, and then back again. The capacity of humans to do this, and the fact that it is so often done well, has convinced me that there has not yet been sufficient pushback on the less human aspects of the ethics codes at their current extremes. American formal institutions may be sometimes throwing out the baby with the bath. Rather than correcting over-zealous pendulum swings because of real abuses, modern practice may force the general population to vote with its feet to get their personal supports and information elsewhere than psychology, especially since it is often priced outside the market of the majority of the population. It has been further

apparent to me that psychology has practiced little interest in the behaviors of the mentoring-interested communities, whether religious or even secular, like Toastmasters. Psychology has usually dismissed the spiritual and subjective realms of human experience from legitimate areas of study or application. One might label this ironic given that psychology's very name is drawn from the Greek for soul (*psuchē*), making the western world's academic study of soul a very un-soulful discipline.

Being fortunate enough to have obtained Dr. Brent Robbins as the lead for my committee, him holding the responsibilities of secretary (2014) and then president (2015) of the Humanist Division of the APA during my dissertation work, I gained from his insight introduction to the rivalry between the Humanist and Positive divisions of psychologists, and the often unbalanced dismissal of valuable humanist psychology contributions by positive psychologists. Having been myself drawn to positive psychology unaware of the tension between these clearly overlapping approaches, I was also unaware of the biases in positive psychology attributable to their behaviorist roots. While difficult to prove, it seems most likely that the strange omission of positive psychology research on emergence or development of positive traits in the very organizations and persons most concerned with them, has everything to do with behaviorist biases against environmental, and especially relational, causes. But, let me be quick to say that these weaknesses in positive psychology have not diminished my enthusiasm and appreciation for the domain or its stars. I remain deeply grateful for positive psychology's strong and effective case for the study of all things positive and noble among humans and human institutions. Their work on positive personality traits

represents perhaps the most solid, influential, and effective counter to psychology's century-old obsession with what goes wrong in human beings. But, it was Dr. Robbins, a leading humanist psychologist, who introduced me to values ethicist Fowers, who has so eloquently connected character formation and impactful personal relationships, and reminded me of humanist psychologist findings that go back to the 1960s about the critical place human relationship has in shaping human character.

Experience with these two issues, the millennia-old practices of human beings in community for character development, and psychology's lack of interest or confidence in what people do in relationship to their souls, led directly to awareness of a likely answer for the research gap: Where do positive traits come from? If there is an answer, it leads immediately and directly to a therapeutic opportunity: What can we do to help stimulate the emergence or development of additional personal resources for our clients who are seeking our support? They may be in our offices first because they wish to understand what's going on inside them and what answers there may be for their suffering. But, and it may take time for them to discover a third presenting issue, I am convinced that Seligman is right to believe that our clients also desire for counseling to help them to become stronger, more wholesome, more effective, more confident, more optimistic, more creative, more well-equipped people (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Ironically, the answer to Seligman's implied question comes from the most non-behaviorist of all sources: The human religious and philosophical mentoring movements and disciplines can provide us with the types of tools most effective in promoting Seligman's and Peterson's character strengths (2004).

Conclusion

This grounded theory research used the responses of 16 mentees to develop and ground a new theory explaining how positive personality traits emerge or are developed in human beings, demonstrating that they emerge or develop in positive mentoring relationships. This discovery confronts the tendency in positive psychology to look at these traits with a strictly individualistic eye, or to continue the bias that relational supports for the development of positive traits are outside the purview of true psychology. As more fully quoted in the background section of chapter 1, Seligman and Peterson asserted, "Enabling conditions as we envision them are often the province of disciplines other than psychology, but we hope for a productive partnership with those other fields in understanding the settings that allow the strengths to develop (Petersen & Seligman, 2004, p. 11). These findings challenge positive psychology's avoidance of cause directly: How can the subject of positive personality traits, which is at the heart of positive psychology, remain devoid of understanding on how these traits emerge or develop, or consign those causes outside the purview of psychology? That is nonsense, a profound *non sequitur*; the thing itself belongs to science but its cause does not! This theory confirms that, indeed, other people significantly matter in our lives (Peterson, Park, & Sweeney, 2008).

Fowers has said that some activities and some goals are only possible in relationship with others (2005). Now we know that some positive traits, if not every single one, may be possible only because of supportive relationships with someone other than the subject. Later research may indicate that where supportive relationships have not

provided trait improvement, incidental modeling of viewable persons has. So, appropriately, this research now indicates numerous directions for new research, such as what traits tend to emerge under which circumstances, and developing quantifiable models to predict and support programs and interventions which can support clients of all kinds in gaining additional trait capacities.

Given the breadth of situations and mentees which the participants indicated which resulted in positive trait development, we can shift from such heavy reliance on disease or labeling models, to prescriptions for unconditional positive support sources for most persons. The theory serves us in providing a new vantage for understanding how persons are helped or hindered by their relational connections, rather than fixing them as innately talented or inherently bad seed, both tending to be handled as without cause or unchangeable.

The theory thereby holds extraordinary promise of new models of therapy which add new models beyond either strictly individualized or group settings, models which empower therapists to become – in addition to service as skilled experts in both negative and positive personal situations and conditions – sources of referral to reliable mentoring resources that clients can use to flourish, and in many cases, are available to clients at nominal cost.

Finally, this study offers promise for constructing a bridge to the great volumes of human experience in long standing philosophical and religious traditions which have tended to remain on the wide, blind side of western psychology. Human beings have for millennia sought the help of specific persons, leaders or communities who can help them

develop into more effective, more wholesome, more integrated persons. Many persons will be amenable to making use of such resources. It is up to counselors to see when their clients can be aided in healing, recovery, or flourishing by taking advantage of local resources and mentoring providers who can enhance their outcomes. Given the current controls and limits imposed by modern managed health care, long term supports that can benefit our clients beyond our ability to care for them may be just what the doctor ordered.

Summary

This chapter proposed a theory of discovery on positive trait development based on the research findings reported in Chapter 4. The theory proposed that positive traits now regarded as universal among human cultures, and described in a taxonomy authored by Peterson and Seligman (2004), actually emerge or progress based on supportive relationships with other human beings. Reminiscent of Carl Rogers's declaration that nonjudgmental positive regard is the *sine qua non* for positive change (1989), this theory reflects the discovery that mentoring relationships which impact personality are a primary influence for positive trait development. Chapter 4 further presented the array of benefits ascribed by mentees to mentoring, which fell into categories of traits, states, motivations, skills, accomplishments, and values. Most of these benefits were mentioned by most participants, with 15 out of 16 mentioning trait items identifiable as positive personality traits listed by Peterson and Seligman (2004). While the discovery of positive personality traits by mentoring relationship were hypothesized, the results of the survey questions on a wide array of mentoring factors were not, including mentoring session locations, foci,

origins, roles, and both mentor and mentee traits. These revealed a wide variety of conditions and participant traits. Whether mentors remained strictly professional or became friends, whether settings were formal or not, whether the foci were self-regulation or skill-related, they produced positive traits and other benefits in their mentees. As surprising, while some mentees were high performing individuals, some were much less so, some even disadvantaged. Some welcomed mentoring direction and others pushed back on it. Despite the range of cases, positive benefits accrued. If future studies confirm the breadth of situations under which mentoring occurs, they will provide further deep confirmation for Carl Roger's deeply held belief and practice, that it is quite simply the presence and support of a supportive and listening party which almost alone, is capable of catalyzing most people inevitably into positive change. While the conclusion that positive mentoring experiences are highly reliable for the development of positive personality traits, and as such are available as a new recommendation for therapy, it may be that discovering that mentoring can succeed in its goals with no consistent condition but unconditional positive regard, may be the greater discovery.

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Appendix A: Research Questions

This study will pose the following research questions, and anticipate that the following propositions may be indicated by the data:

1. What categories of positive personality development do participants in adult, voluntary, character formation relationships attribute to those relationships? This question will catalog the positive personality changes ascribed to intentional character formation relationships.

Null Proposition 1: Participants in character formation relationships will conclude that there were no permanent personality improvements derived from those relationships.

Alternative Proposition 1: Participants in intentional, adult character formation relationships tend to ascribe specific categories of positive personality development to those relationships.

2. Do participants identify particular aspects of their personality mentoring relationships as being particularly important to their positive outcomes?

Null Proposition 2: Participants will not identify any particular aspects of their personality mentoring relationships as particularly important in relationship to outcomes.

Alternative Proposition 2: Participants will ascribe positive personality outcomes simply to the existence of their character formation relationships and will assert that particular factors in those relationships were especially important in the development of positive personality.

3. Will participants consider that their participation in a voluntary, adult, character formation relationship was of significant personal value to them?

Null Proposition 3: Participants will consider that their experience in the personality formation relationship was of no special importance to them in their life or development.

Alternative Proposition 3: There will be differences in importance ascribed to the personality formation relationship due to factors such as the length of time in which the relationship was practiced, the intimacy of the relationship, or problematic terminations of the relationship.

4. Did the mentoring experiences of the participants coincide in time with other significant life events, relationships, or organizational involvements?

Null Proposition 4: Participant mentoring experiences happened in relative isolation, that is, they were not accompanied time-wise by other significant life events, relationships, or organizational involvements at the same time.

Alternative Proposition 4: Participants will vary in the simultaneity of their personal mentoring experiences with other significant life events, relationships, or organizational involvements: Some participants will express that their mentoring experiences did coincide with such events and a significant proportion of other participants will affirm that they did not.

5. Do the categories of positive personality benefits ascribed by participants to their character formation relationships correspond with any positive personality traits cataloged in the taxonomy of traits described by Peterson and Seligman (2004)?

Null Proposition 5: Positive personality benefits experienced by participants in their character formation relationships will not correspond to traits cataloged in the taxonomy by Peterson and Seligman (2004).

Alternative Proposition 5: Participants having experienced character formation relationships will describe benefits of their personality mentoring which correspond to traits cataloged in the taxonomy by Peterson and Seligman (2004).

Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire

Instructions for this Questionnaire:

1. Please do not fill out this questionnaire until you have read and agreed to the Informed Consent form for this dissertation project, available from the researcher.
2. Please write your responses to each question, answering them as completely as possible.
3. During your interview meeting with the researcher, the researcher will read your responses back to you. If the researcher pauses when reading your responses, he is asking for and inviting you to share additional explanation to make your description of your mentoring experience as complete as possible. Please speak any additional information that comes to mind. The interview process will be audio-recorded.

Questions

1. What intangible personal benefits have you received from your personal mentoring experience; how do you feel you changed for the better?

2. How important has your mentoring experience has turned out to be in your personal life?

3. In what situation did your personal mentoring experience begin; how did it get started?

4. What aspects of the mentoring relationship do you feel were most important for creating the positive outcomes you experienced?

5. How did you and your mentor set up your mentoring situations in location (i.e., where it happened), duration (i.e., how long each session was), and focus (i.e., what did you work on most)?

6. What other significant events, relationships, or organizational involvements were happening in your life during the time of your personal mentoring experience?

7. Demographic Information – for reporting purposes only:

   Please mark one sex: Male ( ) Female ( )

   Please mark one age group: 20s ( ) 30s ( ) 40s ( ) 50s ( ) 60s ( ) 70s ( ) 80s ( )

   Please write down your race:

   Please write down your nationality:

Appendix C: Positive Personality Traits

The following are the universal human positive personality traits catalogued by Peterson and Seligman in Character Strengths and Virtues (2004). Seligman and Peterson group the traits under six headings and provide synonyms.

Strengths of Wisdom and Knowledge

Creativity [Originality, Ingenuity]

Curiosity [Interest, Novelty-Seeking, Openness to Experience]

Open Mindedness [Judgment, Critical Thinking]

Love of Learning

Perspective [Wisdom]

Strengths of Courage

Bravery [Valor]

Persistence [Perseverance, Industriousness]

Integrity [Authenticity, Honesty]

Vitality [Zest, Enthusiasm, Vigor, Energy]

Strengths of Humanity

Love

Kindness [Generosity, Nurturance, Care, Compassion, Altruistic Love, "Niceness"]

Social Intelligence [Emotional Intelligence, Personal Intelligence]

Strengths of Justice

Citizenship [Social Responsibility, Loyalty, Teamwork]

Fairness

Leadership

Strengths of Temperance

Forgiveness and Mercy

Humility and Modesty

Prudence

Self-Regulation [Self-Control]

Strengths of Transcendence

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [Awe, Wonder, Elevation]

Gratitude

Hope [Optimism, Future-Mindedness, Future Orientation]

Humor [Playfulness]

Spirituality [Religiousness, Faith, Purpose]