

2020

Youth Overcoming Barriers Through Multiple Adult Mentoring Relationships

Faraji Martin
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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Faraji Martin

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Youth Overcoming Barriers Through Multiple Adult Mentoring Relationships

by

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MA, Saint Ambrose University, 2007

BS, Saint Ambrose University, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human Services

Walden University

March 2020

Abstract

African American youth may face several problems that may hinder their positive growth into adulthood. These individuals may not have adults in their lives who aid in overcoming difficulties that halt positive youth development. Mentoring may provide a young person with an adult or several people that can assist youth with problems and help them find the appropriate solutions to overcome them. Numerous studies have provided research on negative influences on youth development, but authors noted that further research on positive youth development among disadvantaged African American youth is necessary. The current study provides information about informal mentoring and the outcomes described by youth involved in multiple adult mentoring relationships. Opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping youth develop are explored in the research. Vygotsky's social development theory frames the study and guides the research question to address the experiences of young, African American men and women who were mentored in their youth by multiple informal mentors. A case study approach with 8 participants is utilized for this study, with content analysis of data including interviews, contexts, and artifacts to inform the research. Findings from the analysis identify a number of key informal mentoring activities that may contribute to creating a guide for informal mentoring. This study will impact social change by informing community mentoring programs and community leaders about strategies for informal mentoring of young men and women.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge all of my professors for preparing me for academia, brother, Ikenna Martin, mother Susie Holman, as well as all the adults that helped mold me as a person and coaches that gave me an opportunity. Also, I would like to acknowledge my Chair Dr. Barbara Benoliel and committee member Dr. Tina Jaeckle for their motivation and assistance in completing this process. Lastly, I want to acknowledge the late Dwane Henley who influenced me to complete this process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Youth Overcoming Barriers Through Multiple Adult Mentoring Relationships

As a demographic group, African Americans experience higher rates of continuous poverty, own less property, and earn less money over their lifespan than Caucasians, Latinos, Asians, American-Indian, Alaska-Natives, and other racial groups (Travis & Leech, 2014). Due to living in poverty, some African American families live in communities where their children are learning in school environments that fail to prepare them for post-secondary education and life after high school (Travis & Leech, 2014). Socioeconomic status, access to resources, and other barriers have significant associations on youth development (Travis & Leech, 2014). As a result, individuals may formulate unsupported personal views and opinions toward colleges, workplaces, and other institutions (Travis & Leech, 2014). Although many African Americans believe that they can be successful in college, workplaces, and other institutions, some feel that they do not belong, will fail, or lack the training to be successful in these areas.

Adults can assist youth in overcoming societal issues that may hinder their positive development. For example, Price-Mitchell (2014) said goal-seeking youth try to locate positive role models to learn techniques to achieve their goals. Adults who are important in a young person's life may create a support structure that influences individuals to make positive choices (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 2012). Support from outside adults has an influence on racial and ethnic identity (Hurd, Sánchez, Zimmerman, & Caldwell, 2012). Adult connections with a young person could serve as a protective factor to improve academic performance and fight against substance use and

exposure to violence in poor neighborhoods (Culyba et al., 2016). These bonds among an adult and a youth have more favorable results in navigating the environment than an adolescent trying on their own (Futch Ehrlich et al., 2016).

Background

As they are developing, youth are faced with positive and negative factors that may help or interfere with positive youth development, but adults can play a vital role in helping them through their maturation process. Chung and McBride (2015) discussed the significance of student's overall learning, including social and emotional during the teenage years, and used a positive youth framework to provide a discussion of the possible outcomes that social learning had on social and emotional learning. Culyba et al. (2016) evaluated the relationships between adult connection and school performance, substance use, and exposure to violence among adolescents in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and concluded that encouraging adult connection may aid in protecting youth in disadvantaged circumstances in urban settings. Dubow, Huesmann, Boxer, and Smith (2016) studied childhood and adolescent protective factors for forecasting violence in adulthood and found that by age 8 years old, youth who experienced aggression and poverty were at risk for violence in adulthood, and emphasized that interventions to increase vital protective factors must be provided for at-risk young people's later years to decrease the likelihood of adulthood violence.

Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Anthony, and Jenson (2015) studied risk, protection, resilience, and positive youth development in adolescents and found that social level barriers such as poverty, gangs, and school environment may impede young peoples'

learning and development if not addressed. Futch Ehrlich et al. (2016) provided valuable information regarding the different characteristics of adult relationships that are critical to adolescents. Kim, Oesterle, Catalano, and Hawkins (2015) found that protective factors are essential through all phases of youth development and recommended the appropriate timing and implementation of community-based interventions to promote youth development. Zaff et al. (2016) studied high school dropouts and discussed the factors that were important to the teenagers in relation to youth development. These researchers found that young people who leave school without graduating possessed some attributes that needed to be re-engaged to develop adequately. All of the studies revealed that youth have the ability to engage in positive youth development when protective factors are present, and adults can play a crucial role in helping guide them through the process.

Problem Statement

The overall wellbeing and development of children in the United States is an ongoing concern. Griego (2014) found that, in the United States, around nine million children lacked a relationship with adults who cared for their needs. African American children are disproportionately challenged. As of 2014, 24% of the overall population of children in foster care were African Americans (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2016). According to Vespa, Lewis, and Kreider (2013), half of all African American children resided in a single-parent household. Statistics reported by the United States Department of Education showed that around one-third of African American students fail to complete their high school requirements on time (2012). Four percent possess the skills and knowledge that prepare them for college (United States

Department of Education, 2012). African American male youths are at greater risk of dropping out of high school and face higher rates of imprisonment than the national average.

Researchers at The National Mentoring Partnership, an organization focused on youth mentoring have proposed that children involved in positive mentoring relationships improved in numerous areas of development (The National Mentoring Partnership, 2016). Mentored youth are likely to attend college, volunteer, mentor someone later in life, and hold leadership positions. Youth, as they are developing into adults, find that challenging situations change as well as coping strategies; so their social environment has to develop appropriately with them and provide the necessary strategies and interventions to address those needs (Lee, Cheung, & Kwong, 2012). Administrators in organizations in the field of mentoring are grasping the concept that several mentors, informal and formal, assist youth in becoming successful (Sebenius, 2016). For those without family role models, substitute mentors can play a role in teaching adolescents morals, values, learning techniques, and other skills applicable to their life. Relationships with substitute mentors influence the social development and overall development of these youth. Disadvantaged children do not have access to a full scope of mentors and information relevant to their development (Sebenius, 2016). Bruce and Bridgeland (2014) estimated that around nine million disadvantaged youth in the United States have never had a mentoring relationship. The National Mentoring Partnership discussed that youth not involved in a mentoring relationship have more school absenteeism and behavioral issues than those with mentors (2016). Evans et al. (2012) explained that numerous studies

provided research on negative influences on youth development, but further research on positive youth development among disadvantaged African American youth is essential. While the above research illustrates the opportunities for mentored youth, I did not find research about informal mentoring and the outcomes described by youth involved in multiple adult mentoring relationships. There is missing information on the opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping youth develop.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore, document, and analyze the cases of a sample of young men and women who were mentored as youth by multiple informal substitute mentors and to explore the lived experience of having multiple informal substitute mentors as role models. A definition for substitute mentors is individuals outside the young person's immediate family who were trusted by the person to establish a relationship and share vital information (Rolfe, 2016). This study contributes to the research of positive youth development among disadvantaged African American youth by having youth involved in multiple adult mentoring relationships describe the outcomes of the informal mentoring bonds.

Research Questions

The research questions that I used to guide this study were:

Research Question 1: How do informally mentored individuals describe the influences of the mentoring relationship?

Research Question 2: From the perspective of informally mentored individuals, do interactions with multiple substitute mentors assist in the development of an individual's social and cultural environment?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Social development theory as described by Vygotsky (1978) was appropriate as a framework for the study because the principles of the theory can be used to understand learning achieved through interaction within an individual's social and cultural environment. Vygotsky suggested interactions within a person's social setting are critical to the cognitive development process. Vygotsky maintained that learning within the social environment occurs before development. Vygotsky asserted that cultural maturation in a person occurs first through socialization and then on an individual level.

Vygotsky (1978) discussed adult direction and more advanced peers as instrumental in helping children learn as they possess more skills or expertise in an idea, activity, or task than the person that they are interacting with. Vygotsky also discussed the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as a vital component to the theory as the idea is the gap between what is recognized and unfamiliar concerning knowledge by the person. Vygotsky explained that the ZPD is the variation between the capabilities of the learner to complete a particular task under the direction of an adult or peer and independently. Vygotsky stated that learning occurs in the ZPD and development of the ZPD to the full potential is based upon the exposure and amount of social interaction. Vygotsky argued that the range of abilities can be enhanced vastly by adult guidance and working with peers than what can be achieved on an individual level.

Nature of Study

Vygotsky (1962) maintained that language is critical to cognitive development as adults through social interactions communicate information to children. Social development theory is consistent with the current study as many substitute mentors are transferring information to individuals through social interactions to expand their knowledge. The collaboration between an adult and young person in an environment promoting learning provides a setting for enhancing an understanding of the world. Substitute mentors are serving as knowledgeable adults assisting in increasing development in the ZPD so individuals can work toward reaching their full potential.

Operational Definitions

African American: How the participants describe their ethnicity in the study.

In this study, participants' self-identification of ethnicity as African American.

Formal Mentoring- An adult who assists a young person in their life in a formal setting (Eby et al., 2013).

Group Mentors- Several unrelated older adults and youth who assist in fostering maturation in young people (Washington, Barnes, & Watts, 2014).

Informal Mentoring- Less structured bonds initiated by mentored individuals and involves peer mentoring, family members serving as mentors, and mentoring involving two people working together (Bynum, 2015).

Mentoring- A caring adult who offers guidance and encouragement to develop competence and character in young people (Mitchell, 2013).

Multiple Informal Mentoring Relationships- Youth formulating different informal relationships with several adults who they choose are more aligned with their interests (Zeldin, Christens, & Powers, 2013).

One-on-One Mentoring- A positive role model who assist a youth in their development (Pryce, 2012).

Peer-Mentors- Older teens serving as role models and providing assistance and guidance to youth (Klodnick et al., 2015).

Role Model: A person outside another's immediate family who offers guidance (Price-Mitchell, 2014).

Substitute Mentors- Individuals outside the young person's immediate family who are trusted by the person to establish a relationship and share vital information (Rolfe, 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions are ideas found in the study that are rational and recognized to be valid (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). I assumed that participants in the study would feel comfortable and respond sincerely. I also assumed that participants would have multiple mentors, faced barriers during their teenage years, and had experienced success in adulthood.

Limitations are weaknesses in the study that are out of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). One limitation for this study was that the sample of participants was from a convenience location and may not have represented the experiences of all youth who have been mentored. Another limitation was that the

participants were limited to their viewpoint and experiences and may not have been totally accurate because they were asked for in recall as part of the study.

Delimitations are the boundaries or limits established so that the study's goals can be achieved (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). A delimitation was that the results of the study were restricted to African American men and women. Another limitation was generalization, as the results may not represent the whole population of African American women and men who have had multiple mentors, faced barriers during adolescence, and experienced success.

Significance

The significance of this study is that it adds to the body of knowledge on mentoring African American youth and may contribute to positive social change. Harper and Leicht (2015) defined social change as a notable improvement on the social structure and cultural designs over time. Those participating in the study faced the same adversities as other individuals but have developed into a productive adult. Hearing from these people who have navigated through life is necessary for social change. Their voices and experiences can contribute to the literature, community, schools, individuals with similar backgrounds, as well as may influence policies at the state and community level that affect youth development. The information acquired from African American young persons can provide a blueprint for other teens, ages 12-17, with identical circumstances on the support needed to accomplish their goals in life. The relationship between African American youth and substitute mentors can reveal information that is important to all groups that are involved with the development of the population.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I discussed African American youth and the barriers they face as they develop into adults. The background and statement of the problem outline the importance of examining these youth and the issues that they face. Youth mentored by multiple informal substitute mentors to explore the lived experience of having multiple informal substitute mentors as role models are discussed and provides an overview of the purpose of the study. I described Vygotsky's social development theory and outlined its use as the framework for this study. I listed the operational definitions and described the assumptions, limitations, scope, and delimitations, as well as the significance of the study. The next chapter will include the literature review, search strategies, and theoretical framework. Chapter 2 also includes methodologies were used in the past to explore multiple mentoring and the gap in the literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Review of the Literature

In this chapter, I discuss the search strategies and the theoretical foundation of this study. I did not find research about informal mentoring and the outcomes described by youth involved in multiple adult mentoring relationships. There is missing information on the opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping youth develop. I will explore numerous forms of mentoring throughout the chapter along with a discussion of role models and their role with helping or hurting the development of individuals. I will also discuss youth development and successful strategies, methodologies used in the past to explore multiple mentoring, and the gap in the literature to conclude the chapter.

Search Strategies

I conducted a thorough search using the terms *one-on-one*, *peer*, *group*, *formal*, and *informal* with the keywords *youth* and *mentoring*. Multiple databases contained duplicate articles with the search results used from Eric and Google Scholar. *Youth*, *success*, *barriers* and *youth*, *success*, and *definition* were keywords I used to locate scholarly journals and articles in Eric. I used the terms *role models* and *youth*, and *gangs* and *influence* to find articles that discussed the issues youth face without positive adult figures. In addition, I conducted a search using the terms *adult*, *role models*, *youth*, *mentoring*, *multiple informal mentoring relationships*, *youth development*, and *successful strategies*.

The literature review consists of seven key sections. In the first section, I discuss the theoretical foundation. In the following section, I describe barriers youth encountered on their path to success with subsections explaining success, problems youth experience without role models, and the need for adult role models in youth development. In the next section, I discuss mentoring and how it helps, and describe the numerous types of mentoring. Multiple informal mentoring relationships are discussed in the third section. The fourth section contains the section Youth Development and the subsection Successful Strategies. I then explain the gap in the literature and what is not known. In the last part, I will discuss methodologies used in the past to explore the concept of multiple mentoring.

Theoretical Foundation

In this section, I will discuss the theoretical framework and link the concepts to individual learning and mentoring. My goal for this study was to understand if the mentoring of youth by an adult or other people who have more knowledge helps or hurts the positive development of an individual. Because learning is a critical concept that is explored in this section, I will explain how knowledge is acquired from adults or peers. Social development theory as described by Vygotsky (1978) is appropriate as a framework for the study as the principles of the theory can be used to understand learning achieved through interaction within an individual's social and cultural environment. Vygotsky suggested that interactions within a person's social setting are critical to the cognitive development process. Vygotsky maintained that learning within the social environment occurs before development and asserted that cultural maturation in a person

occurs first through socialization and then on an individual level. In the social development theory, Vygotsky focused on changes in social surroundings and human actions.

Vygotsky (1978) considered direction from adults and more advanced peers instrumental in helping children learn as they possess more skills or expertise in an idea, activity, or task than the person that they are interacting with. A vital component of Vygotsky's theory is the ZPD, which is the gap between what is recognized and what is unfamiliar concerning knowledge by the person. Vygotsky explained that the ZPD is the variation between the learner's ability to complete a particular task under the direction of an adult or peer and that individual's ability to complete the task independently. Vygotsky stated that learning occurs in the ZPD, and development of the ZPD to its fullest potential is based upon exposure and the amount of social interaction. Vygotsky described the ZPD as the development on one's own identity comparison to maturation under the direction of a peer or adult. The range of abilities, according to Vygotsky, can be enhanced vastly by adult guidance and working with peers than what can be achieved on an individual level.

Vygotsky (1962) maintained that language is critical to cognitive development as adults use social interactions to communicate information to children. Social development theory is appropriate for this study because many substitute mentors are transferring information to individuals through social interactions to expand their knowledge. The collaboration between an adult and a young person in an environment promoting learning provides a setting for enhancing an understanding of the world.

Substitute mentors are serving as knowledgeable adults assisting in increasing development in the ZPD so individuals can work toward reaching their full potential.

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory Applied to Similar Studies

Athanases and De Oliveira (2014), Benko (2012), and Finch and Frieden (2014) used Vygotsky's social development theory to explain the concept of scaffolding in their studies. Neely (2015) and Vadeboncoeur and Collie (2013) used the theoretical framework to discuss culture shaped through social interactions. Linton and Rueda (2015) described development through human interactions. César and Dias (2014); Brown, Terry, and Kelsey (2014); and Thompson, (2013) explained that development is increased through social interactions and collaborative work. Similar studies by Pink and Butcher (2014) and Fung and Lui (2016) emphasized the influence on an individual by a more capable person in group work and social settings. Social skills, development of moral behavior, and building knowledge are concepts that were explained using Vygotsky's theoretical framework (Alves, 2014; Davis & Bergen, 2014; Jeffrey, Matheson, & Hutchinson, 2015).

Youth Barriers Encountered on Their Path to Success

Definition and Measurements of Success

As youth acquire knowledge from others through mentoring, they may develop positively and may achieve success throughout the process. I will look at success throughout this section as the term may have several definitions and meanings.

Karabanova and Bukhalenkova (2016) measured success by a questionnaire named the Adolescent Perception of Success that covers an individual's achievements, recognitions,

self-actualization, and overall development and awareness of the concept of success. Individuals defined success as increasing their knowledge and understanding, enjoyment, and personal motivation to apply learned strategies to everyday life. (Loizzo, Ertmer, Watson, & Watson, 2017). Youth defined success as educational achievements, completion of targets, and participation in extracurricular activities (Killoren, Streit, Alfaro, Delgado, & Johnson, 2016). Adults viewed young persons as being more advanced than others since they were involved and participated in the workforce with careers (Force, 2014). Morimoto and Friedland (2013) found that youth link success to involvement in volunteer opportunities and civic activities.

There are several different ways that success can be defined. Pecora (2012) explained that success into adulthood is viewed as completing high school and attending a post-secondary institution to extend educational outcomes, whereas Jones (2012) discussed some measures of youth success as graduating from high school and the continuance of pursuing educational goals. That is important, as individuals view graduating from high school as a success in their teenage and young adult years, and that the accomplishment can help them thrive in adulthood by taking advantage of post-secondary opportunities. Wilhsson, Svedberg, Carlsson, Högdin, and Nygren (2017) found that boys and girls in their study strived equally to better their lives and saw positive decision-making as vital for prolonged success. Educational attainment has a connection to obtaining employment, thus increasing people chances of future success (Wilhsson, Svedberg, Carlsson, Högdin, & Nygren, 2017). Young people who want to improve their lives may seek out an adult or peer that may assist them in making the right

decisions that may lead to success in life. Kunkel (2016) explained that graduates of the high school in their study described post-high school success as attending college and persevering, receiving a certificate or degree in post-secondary education, having a job and being able to pay bills, and raising a family. Owning a home, community involvement and leadership, volunteering and being involved in the community, following dreams, and happiness are indicators of success after high school (Kunkel, 2016). As described, success can be defined in several ways and happiness, accomplishments, and bettering lives are the constant concepts, but the term can be explained by people on what success means to them.

Problems Youth Encounter Without Role Models

Price-Mitchell (2014) noted that role models could be negative, and regardless of how detrimental the relationship is, a young person will emulate the behavior of the individual they admire. Youth may not have goals they view as achievable or see themselves as hard workers, so they may move toward role models who will help them learn harmful strategies to navigate through life (Price-Mitchell, 2014). Price-Mitchell explained that goal-seeking youth seek positive role models to learn techniques to achieve goals, but if no positive adult is in the life of a child, that young person may either fail to develop positive strategies to be successful or seek out a negative role model.

Youth will turn to a person or group for guidance. Initially they may lack the support from positive adults in their lives to develop positively and as a result may experience difficulties in their growth as individuals. Merrin, Hong, and Espelage (2015)

noted that children with several adults to rely on resisted gang membership better than their peers who lacked the same support system. Many adults can help children participate in positive activities and provide them with choices that may aid in positive growth, whereas an individual without any support may give in to peer pressure and see no other option but to join a gang and make unsafe decisions. Without the involvement of families, schools, the community, and many adults who are important in a young person's life, the individual may lack a web of positive influences that prevent them from risky choices (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 2012). Mental health issues such as depression have been found in adolescents who fail to receive the support needed from parents, peers, and adults outside their immediate family (Hurd, Stoddard, & Zimmerman, 2013). Positive adults within a child's social network are vital as they can protect them from barriers and aid in healthy development.

The Needs for Adult Role Models in Youth Development

People learn by watching and modeling their lives after others, and as a result, they acquire experiences throughout their existence that mold them to determine what is right and wrong in the world, as well as how to achieve their goals and aspirations (Price-Mitchell, 2014). Walters (2016) explained that role models who bond with youth in their early adolescent life provide a barrier preventing them from linking with rebellious children and delinquent groups. Adults who create relationships and serve as role models for youth with disadvantaged situations in urban settings are vital as they can act as a protective factor against low school performance, substance abuse, and violence (Culyba et al., 2016). Williams (2011), in discussing foster care youth, highlighted that an adult

role model could be viewed as a positive figure and serve as a barrier to adverse outcomes. The adult-youth relationship is important as the teenager's decision-making and other skills are enhanced, thus, resulting in less destructive behaviors (Crean, 2012).

What is Mentoring and How Does it Help?

Mentoring has been described in several different contexts. Mitchell (2013) described mentoring as a structured relationship between a young person and caring adult who offers guidance and encouragement to develop competence and character. Pryce and Keller (2013) discussed mentoring as influential adults in a relationship with a young person to assist them in understanding themselves and the world. A bond with two-way communication between a child and adult is how Reagan-Porras (2013) explained the mentoring relationship. Tolan, Henry, Schoeny, Lovegrove, and Nichols (2014) used the terms *provider* and *recipient* to highlight a single mentoring relationship for the benefit of the child. Anastasia, Skinner, and Mundhenk (2012) defined the mentoring relationship as youth connected to a nonparental adult who provides support and serves as an active adult figure, whereas Loeser (2016) used the word *mentee* to refer to a youth and *mentor* as the adult who formulated a relationship to provide assistance to a young person in several areas of their life.

DeWit, DuBois, Erdem, Larose, and Lipman (2016) discussed that mentors might assist youth with communicating and regulating feelings, as well as provide them with strategies for dealing with adversity in their lives. Close bonds between the adult and young person may help the young person develop a positive outlook regarding relationships (DeWit, et al., 2016). Mentors may intensify the children's self-respect

through compliments and activities that are educational and recreational. By teaching and challenging the minds of a young person, a mentor boosts the development of distinctive skills and cognitive abilities and encouraging positive views toward learning (DeWit et al., 2016). Mentoring has helped in improving academics and overall attitudes in school and society (Pryce & Keller, 2012). Martin and Sifers (2012) highlighted that youth involved in mentoring relationships had shown a definite increase in the areas of socioemotional, academics, and behaviors. Watson, Washington, and Stepteau-Watson (2015) highlighted that mentoring programs targeting African American male teenagers and violence had shown favorable results as they can reduce violence in the targeted population.

Types of Mentoring

Peer

Youth during their adolescent years spend most of their time with peers rather than family members (Smith & Petosa, 2016). Individuals may look to their peers for assistance in different aspects of their lives, thus initiating a mentoring relationship. Older teens serving as role models and providing assistance and guidance to youth is a form of peer-mentoring (Klodnick et al., 2015). Smith and Petosa (2016) discussed peer mentoring as experienced students with sufficient grades who mentor by providing support to teenagers at least two years younger than them. James, Smith, and Radford (2014) explained peer mentoring as established students assisting new peers in adjusting socially and to the school setting and staff. Trained older teenagers in a single relationship with a younger student who supplies structured information are illustrated as

peer mentoring (Petosa & Smith, 2016). Ryan, Kramer, and Cohn (2016) described peer mentoring as a relationship between an adult at least a year or older with a young person to assist in helping them become successful. Kalpazidou Schmidt and Faber (2016) described peer mentoring as a supportive bond between a mentor and mentee with the goal of enhancing their skills in a needed area.

Smith and Petosa (2016) explained that in structured mentoring programs peer mentors are utilized to build and strengthen the young person's social network and provide social support in their endeavors. Cropp (2017) used peer mentors that were deemed outstanding students to offer motivation and educational support. College students majoring in a child development related program was utilized to serve as peer mentors to elementary aged youth who were selected by teachers to improve their behaviors and self-esteem, as well as serve as positive individuals in hopes of preventing future drug and alcohol abuse (Pryce et al., 2015).

Smith and Petosa (2016) discussed that peer mentors should be at least two years older than the individual they are mentoring. McLeod, Jones, and Cramer (2015) used peer mentors who were juniors and seniors to provide mentorship to ninth graders who were at risk for academic problems. The characteristics of the peer mentors included good grades, positive personality, and attributes for future leadership (McLeod, Jones, & Cramer, 2015). All peer mentors received extensive training and high school credit for their time (McLeod, Jones, & Cramer, 2015). Sato et al. (2016) described that they used young adults ages 18-22 to serve as peer mentors to youth ages 10-14 and that all mentors

completed training. Every peer mentor had an understanding of youth development due to their educational backgrounds (Sato et al., 2016).

Group

Washington, Barnes, and Watts (2014) described group mentoring as a relationship among several unrelated older adults and youth to foster maturation.

Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, and Lawrence (2013) explained the concept as a one-on-one relationship between a mentee and mentor who participates in group activities with other pairs with similar interests. A voluntary connection among several youth and many adults to engage in healthy activities and to improve social competencies is a form of group mentoring (Cawood & Wood, 2014). Several high school students with many college adults in a group setting discussing issues vital to everyone Maslow et al. (2013) described as group mentoring.

Cawood and Wood (2017) in their study of group mentoring used a sample of eleven youth involved in the juvenile justice system and two adult coordinators. Learning in a group setting provided positive results as young people were able to improve their decision-making skills and participate in positive activities (Cawood & Wood, 2017). Sink and Simpson (2013) discussed that black students could benefit from facing experiences in life by doing group activities such as sharing viewpoints on challenges, roleplaying, and interacting with several speakers that serve as role models and mentors. Working in groups could assist black students with difficulties in their developmental years and enhance their skills to overcome problems they face in life (Sink & Simpson, 2013).

Donlan, McDermott, and Zaff (2017) explained in their study that each mentor spent sufficient time working with several youths and received adequate support and training to serve the group, thus exhibiting a strong bond between the young persons and adult that may lead to positive youth development. Watson, Washington, and Stepteau-Watson (2015) discussed that mentors in the group setting enhanced the overall well-being, provided social support, connections to building positive associations, and be someone parents and guardians can ask for assistance. Youth found the mentoring relationships supportive and influential in helping them socialize positively and how to communicate their thoughts to other people (Watson, Washington, & Stepteau-Watson, 2015). The program activities provided a safe environment where everyone could have fun and enjoy themselves amongst others (Watson, Washington, & Stepteau-Watson, 2015).

Morgan, Sibthorp, and Browne (2016) in their article focused on a program that utilized group mentoring with youth ages 9-14 years old and several staff members as mentors. The program intends to build personality, psychological, moral, social, and abilities in a positive learning environment (Morgan, Sibthorp, & Browne, 2016). The mentors provide opportunities for setting goals, use strategies to direct behavior, and observe the youth's accomplishments (Morgan, Sibthorp, & Browne, 2016). Deutsch, Reitz-Krueger, Henneberger, Futch Ehrlich, and Lawrence (2017) in their study focused on the Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP) that integrated group and one-on-one mentoring for 113 adolescent girls. Reports indicated changes in the area of academics, relationship development, self-regulation, and understanding oneself (Deutsch, Reitz-

Krueger, Henneberger, Futch Ehrlich, & Lawrence, 2017). Individuals in the study announced that mentors assisted in academic changes than the mentoring group, but the mentoring group helped change relational development than the mentors (Deutsch et al., 2017). Self-regulation and self-understanding were equally affected by both mentors and the mentoring group (Deutsch et al., 2017).

When teenagers interact with other adults and youth outside of their mentoring relationship, the result can be detrimental as the individual connection between mentor and mentee can be lost due to the group aspect (Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, & Lawrence, 2013). Although the group aspect of mentoring may supply mentors with peer assistance, the mentor connections with each other may hurt the individual adult and youth relationship (Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, & Lawrence, 2013).

Young people may join a group that has positive or negative characteristics. Hennigan, Kolnick, Vindel, and Maxson (2015) explained that youth exploring whether to become part of a gang are prone to group impacts that inspire and encourage interests further than what a person would select to participate in outside of gang life. Gangs have targeted and found in communities with social and economic issues such as poverty, violence, lack of jobs, and dysfunction in households and the neighborhood that individuals are more likely to join them seeking a supporting environment (Hennigan, Kolnick, Vindel, & Maxson, 2015). Problems within communities such as lack of opportunities, marginalization, and family characteristics and many more negative attributes plaguing populations are linked to gang membership (Hennigan, Kolnick, Vindel, & Maxson, 2015). Many dynamics regarding individual, family, friends, and

community situations are included in the steps of obtaining gang membership (Hennigan, Kolnick, Vindel, & Maxson, 2015). Young people who grow up in distressed environments where violence and impressing others are frequent and parents have a hard time or are not willing to provide the needed direction are suitable fits for gang membership (Hennigan, Kolnick, Vindel, & Maxson, 2015). In turn, gang members fill the void in the neighborhood by serving as role models, and the group can give these vulnerable individuals the social identity they are seeking (Hennigan, Kolnick, Vindel, & Maxson, 2015).

Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, and Lawrence (2013) found no significant difference among groups on mentors and mentees with their experiences when girls involved in groups indicated less gratification with their mentoring relationships. Having contact with other adults than a youth's own mentor can add to a deficiency of the relationship between the two individuals (Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, & Lawrence, 2013). Although group mentoring provides the opportunity for mentors to provide support to each other, the attention of the group dynamic may take away quality time to bond with mentees and can be viewed as negative rather than positive in building a connection with each individual young person (Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, & Lawrence, 2013). Mentees who link with other young people instead of the comprehensive group togetherness may not realize the benefit of the group element (Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, & Lawrence, 2013). Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, and Lawrence discussed that dissatisfied groups were higher in youth who received free or reduced lunch and mentors who socioeconomic status was higher than their mentees.

As a result, some problems were associated to issues connecting across race or social and economic status (Deutsch, Wiggins, Henneberger, & Lawrence, 2013).

One-on-One

A volunteer who is identified a mentor who is matched with a youth is explained as one-on-one mentoring (Pryce, 2012). Individual mentoring is described by Lakind, Atkins, and Eddy (2015) as a gender-specific connection between a youth and adult. Intergenerational relationships between women and young girls are a form of individualized mentoring (Leyton-Armakan, Lawrence, Deutsch, Lee Williams, & Henneberger, 2012; Marshall, Lawrence, & Peugh, 2013; Muno, 2014). Mentoring amongst a mentee and mentor who meet weekly in the community and a school-based setting is one-on-one mentoring (Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012; Rekha, & Ganesh, 2012). Individualized mentoring amongst a woman and girl or boy and man and boy Pryce et al. (2015) explained as one-on-one mentoring.

Park, Liao, and Crosby (2017) in their study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) described mentoring relationships as a one-to-one between a disadvantaged financially unstable youth and an adult. The purpose of the bond between the young person and adult is to enhance the feeling of trust in one's skills, qualities, and judgment, to encourage academic excellence, and to promote positive interactions with relatives, peers, and other adults (Park, Liao, & Crosby, 2017). Lakind, Atkins, and Eddy (2015) described youth mentoring as a mentor and mentee relationship where mentors interact with the young people in their social settings and with other individuals who associate with them. Liang, Spencer, West, and Rappaport (2013) explained that

mentoring involves a youth at-risk for unfavorable outcomes matched with a non-relative adult volunteer with the intent that a productive and positive relationship will improve the conditions of the child and enhance their development.

Scannapieco and Painter (2014) noted that barriers might impede the mentoring relationship between an adult and youth such as mentors not being sufficiently prepared to deal with the unique problems of some young people. Also, time is a barrier, and a mentoring relationship may fail if the youth move or contact with a mentor lacks at least a year in length (Scannapieco & Painter, 2014). Mentors should maintain contact with youth if placed in confinement, hospital, or any other placement as positive interactions through tough times are essential to keep the relationship and prevent a failed bond (Scannapieco & Painter, 2014). Links that are unsuccessful are mentors who lack the knowledge and skills to grasp the attention of the youth, are not able to make a long-term commitment, and those who do not have the time to meet with young people in person weekly (Scannapieco & Painter, 2014).

Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, and Drew (2017) in their study found that weak mentoring relationships most likely discontinued due to discontent with the connection by the mentor or teenager. Youth that has had a mentoring relationship end incidentally noted that they experienced confusion, disappointment, and anger about the process (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). When their mentors abandoned youth, they felt agony and questioned themselves on what actions they displayed that prompted the mentor to depart the mentoring relationship (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Youth viewed the adult and teenager

connection negatively when the relationship was handled inadequately, mostly when the adolescent and their guardian see the mentor as causing the bond to end (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Several of the relationships discontinued due to the youth or mentor being unhappy (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). The causes for the discontent were not feeling appreciated, not seeing any positive change in the person and the thought that the youth no longer needed a mentor (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Other causes of the mentoring relationship ending were difficulties with staying in contact with the youth due to insufficient phone services and changes in family schedules (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017).

Raposa, Rhodes, and Herrera (2016) found that emotionally taxing environments in the home and school setting, in conjunction with behavioral problems and poor grades can affect youth and the mentors' capability to create healthy and enduring mentoring relationships. Due to a high level of environmental stressors, these youth experienced their mentoring relationships end prematurely (Raposa, Rhodes, & Herrera, 2016). Also, adolescents with elevated levels of behavioral issues had their relationships with adults viewed negatively as the youth were unhappy and mentors displayed the bond as inadequate (Raposa, Rhodes, & Herrera, 2016).

Bayer, Grossman, and DuBois (2015) found that individuals communicated mostly that they failed to have a close bond with their mentors when the match met with other pairs at the identical time and place with contact occurring at the maximum of twice a month. Large settings involving groups where all pairs met at the same time and place

weakened the development of the relationship despite the mentor being a high school student (Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2015). Individuals felt closer to adult volunteers than college student mentors but felt a closer bond to high school student mentors (Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2015). Same gender and race of the mentors and their matches did not affect the closeness of the relationship (Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2015). Close ties were likely to occur when mentors kept obligations and met with the person periodically (Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2015). Bayer, Grossman, and Dubois reported mentors who were given more extensive training than others before and during the mentoring match were more likely to possess close bonds with the person.

Bayer, Grossman, and DuBois (2015) suggested that the adverse effects seem focused toward rematched individuals who lack a close bond with their new mentors. The emotional state of the new relationship is critical and undesirable results may be rushing into the next match and pairing an individual with a mentor less prepared and suitable than their first match (Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2015). Another issue may be that the person may have felt abandoned due to their initial mentoring relationship ending, hindering their capacity to quickly formulate a bond with another mentor assigned through the program (Bayer, Grossman, & DuBois, 2015).

Some of the circumstances that may cause a match to dissolve are changes in life circumstances, mentor dissatisfaction, youth dissatisfaction, gradual dissolution, and mentor abandonment (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Changes in life circumstances include sudden moves, notable changes in employment, and educational opportunities in other cities (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew,

2017). Failing to meet expectations, the feeling that one is making a difference in a young person's life, unsuccessful in becoming close or linked to the youth, lacking appreciation from the young person, and the expectations of the match being met are characteristics of mentor dissatisfaction (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Youth dissatisfaction involves individuals feeling they do not need a mentor and are not happy with an element of the bond. Lack of consistent communication between the mentor and youth, communication issues, and participants giving up due to the loss of a steady relationship evolving is characteristics of gradual dissolution (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Mentor abandonment includes all contact lost between the mentor, agency, and family, communication stopping after canceling numerous activities, and the parent and young person having no comprehension to why the mentor lost contact (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017).

Formal

A mentor and young person formally entered into a mentoring relationship are utilized by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (Eby et al., 2013). Larsson, Pettersson, Eriksson, and Skoog (2017) described formal mentoring as a relationship lasting at least one year between two people who have a ten year age difference, depending on utilizing volunteers from the community as mentors in an institution. Miller, Barnes, Miller, and McKinnon (2013); Kanchewa, Rhodes, Schwartz, and Olsho (2014) describes formal mentoring as programs that provide ongoing training to the mentors to be successful in their matches with youth. The term structured is used to identify formal mentoring programs (Fernandes-Alcantara, 2015). Gettings and Wilson (2014) explains that formal

mentoring programs promote bonds that benefit the youth. Having a strong support system and staff to talk with to improve the mentoring relationship is a form of formal mentoring (Anastasia, Skinner, & Mundhenk, 2012).

Youth mentoring aim is to expand the number of children who have at least one caring adult that formulate a mentoring relationship with them (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016). As a result, formal mentoring programs have mainly centered their work on obtaining volunteer mentors and connecting them with youth who are at-risk for adverse developmental consequences (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016). Formal mentoring relationships differ with informal or natural mentoring, that emerge naturally between a child and the adults in their immediate and extended families and their social environments (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016). Natural mentoring has been used over time and passed on through generations to communicate culture, information, abilities, and aid to youth (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016). Several formal mentoring relationships are one-on-one relationships amongst youth in an underprivileged community with a middle-class adult who do not reside in their neighborhood (Schwartz & Rhodes, 2016).

Informal. Mulcahy, Dalton, Kolbert, and Crothers (2016) described the informal mentoring experience as a connection with a high school student and supporting adult without the assistance of a formal program. Bynum (2015) explained that informal mentoring relationships are less structured than formal bonds and are initiated by the mentored individual and involves peer mentoring, family members serving as mentors, and mentoring involving two people working together. Welsh, Bhave, and Kim (2012) discussed informal mentoring as a person formulating a mentoring relationship with an

individual they trust when a formal mentor is unavailable. Ortiz-Walters and Fullick (2014) explained informal mentoring as a natural relationship between a person who identifies and has confidence in a more senior member without the assistance of a third-party.

Youth who had a close relationship with their natural mentor had increased social skills and an overall better well-being than children who lacked a mentoring relationship (Rowley, Hurd, Varner, & Rowley, 2013). Greeson, Thompson, Ali, and Wenger (2015) in their study of foster care youth explained natural mentoring as a strategy encouraging growth and long-lasting relationships between a young person and warmhearted, concerned nonparental adults from within the child's current network of acquaintances and friends. Youth that was in a serious and reliable relationship with a nonparental adult had enhanced self-esteem, life satisfaction, good health, higher likelihood to finish high school and attend college and maintain their jobs (Greeson, Thompson, Ali, & Wenger, 2015). These youth were less likely to be involved in gangs, participate in negative and risky behaviors, and be physically hostile toward others (Greeson, Thompson, Ali, & Wenger, 2015).

Hurd and Sellers (2013) found that youth having a tight bond to a caring nonparental adult may have positively influenced interpersonal skills and morale. Natural mentors can assist in helping young people learn how to communicate and control their feelings, as well as feel more self-confident and competent through encouraging relationships (Hurd & Sellers, 2013). Having the ability to seek out encouraging nonparental adults rather than parents for support with school or personal issues may help

with constructing a sense of independence in early adolescence (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Natural mentors serve as an individual that adolescents can discuss plans with, therefore fostering goal-orientation in these youth (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017). Also, the young persons displayed substantial social skills and psychological stability resulting in heightened academic involvement (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, Walsh, & Drew, 2017).

Hurd and Zimmerman (2014) in their study indicated that natural mentoring relationships that were close, contact was frequent, and duration of relationship lasted over long periods of time may foster advancement in psychological health among young people with more significant experiences of social assistance from others they trust. Relationship elements are essential in learning the benefits of natural mentoring relationships, and these bonds may be related to psychological well-being among young adults (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2014). Hurd and Zimmerman suggested that a robust interpersonal relationship is necessary for natural mentoring bonds to assist mentees in constructing vital interpersonal abilities, reassessing working models of bonds, formulate a fixed sense of attachment, enhance their feelings of acceptance, and having the ability to deal with conflict in outside relationships (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2014). Hurd and Zimmerman found that relationship length and frequency contact is linked to relational closeness. Contact occurring often is vital to new relationships to create closeness but established long-term relationships do not need constant contact to retain the current close bond (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2014).

Hurd, Varner, and Rowley (2013) found that young people may seek out adults who are the same race and gender and having similar demographic elements may facilitate mentoring bonds. Those involved in natural mentoring relationships indicated substantial levels of involved parenting than individuals without a mentoring relationship (Hurd, Varner, & Rowley, 2013). Natural mentoring bonds may help aid in assisting the parents with caregiving, thus allowing parents to exhibit effective parenting (Hurd, Varner, & Rowley, 2013). Young persons may learn from the natural mentoring relationship how to view positive parenting or to seek out a positive relationship with their parents (Hurd, Varner, & Rowley, 2013). Hurd, Varner, and Rowley (2013) discussed that youth who parents display involved-vigilant parenting are more likely to start a natural mentoring relationship, due to parents encouraging the maturation of outside supportive relationships to enhance interpersonal skills.

Multiple Informal Mentoring Relationships

Natural mentoring involves a relationship between a youth and non-parental adults where the individuals have made a difference in the life of the young person's life, have been in contact with the teenager within the previous year, and the youth feel somewhat close those individuals (Zinn, 2017). Zeldin, Christens, and Powers (2013) discussed that youth formulate different relationships with several adults who they choose are more aligned with their interests. Risser (2013) explained that a less knowledgeable individual would develop multiple informal relationships with others who have expertise in the subject area they seek to gain a better understanding when a mentor assigned to them lack the skills. Sanfey, Hollands, and Gantt (2013) described that people

might need multiple mentors with different skills to meet several needs, and the relationships may be formal and informal. Informal mentoring with multiple mentors helps mentees as they have more flexibility to gain guidance from several diverse individuals to address their needs (Bynum, 2015).

Hamilton, Hamilton, DuBois, and Sellers (2016) in their study explained that 34% of youth indicated they had two mentors and 22% pinpointed they had three mentors. 66% of the students revealed that they knew the mentors in a school environment and indicated they were teachers, advisors, administrators, or coaches (Hamilton, Hamilton, DuBois, & Sellers, 2016). 18% of the students described that through their participation in sports, faith-based activities, and arts that they met their adult mentors (Hamilton, Hamilton, DuBois, & Sellers, 2016). Older friends, neighbors, and family friends accounted for 16% of the students' adult mentors (Hamilton, Hamilton, DuBois, & Sellers, 2016). Hamilton, Hamilton, DuBois, and Sellers discussed that the adult mentors could help youth who lack adequate resources by as a group participating in their roles to reduce inequality and enhance human and social capital.

Youth Development and Successful Strategies

Kim, Oesterle, Catalano, and Hawkins (2015) discussed that protective factors is essential through all phases of youth development and asserts that appropriate timing and implementation of community-based interventions is vital to promote youth development. Culyba et al. (2016) explained that the adult connection between young people could aid as a protective factor for school performance, substance use, and exposure to violence among adolescents in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Futch Ehrlich et al. (2016) described

that the bond between an adult and youth are more able to navigate the environment toward favorable results than an individual alone. Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Anthony, and Jenson (2015) suggested that identifying risk factors and positive influences in the lives of youth are essential to the effectiveness of programs operating in the community.

Debnam, Johnson, Waasdorp, and Bradshaw (2017) described that being connected and involved in school is vital to advance positive youth development. Refining school equity may aid in furthering positive youth development in schools. Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro (2013) research revealed that high levels of school engagement has a positive link to academic success, as well as strengthen numerous areas of students' well-being, such as healthy emotions and satisfaction with life. Students' engagement in school develops through the support of their teachers, a positive and learning environment in the classroom, and by parental assistance (Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2013). Vella, Oades, and Crowe (2013) highlighted that a coach who uses transformational leadership behavior and possesses a coach-athlete relationship has an average positive association with developmental experiences. The best indicators on development are a blend of the coach transformational leadership behavior and the value of the coach-athlete relationship, with individual reflection, intellectual stimulation, and proper role modeling as the most dominant leadership actions (Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2013). Teachable moments from coaches by going through the good and the bad are associated with positive maturation results (Vella, Oades, & Crowe, 2013).

Unsuccessful Mentoring Strategies

All mentoring matches do not have a positive effect as Lakind, Atkins, and Eddy (2018) explained that mentors described that other vital adults that influence a mentee's life might disrupt or cause the mentoring relationship to fail. Mentors felt that adults in the individual's life did not support the mentoring relationship, thus hindering their work and causing the bond to be ineffective (Lakind, Atkins, & Eddy, 2018). Dewit, DuBois, Erdem, Larose, and Lipman (2016) discussed that short-term mentoring relationships provided no positive benefits to the youth. These mentoring relationships have had adverse effects on the youth's perception of the bond, therefore causing these individuals to experience no positive benefits when matched with another mentor (DeWit, DuBois, Erdem, Larose, & Lipman, 2016). DeWit (2016) noted that boys that were re-matched with a new mentor did not display any positive effects of the relationship and displayed lower scores on some outcomes than boys that were never mentored. Other elements that cause mentoring relationships to fail are insufficient communication, inexperienced and unprepared mentors, lack of commitment to the link, and competitiveness between mentee and mentor (Straus, Johnson, Marquez, & Feldman, 2013).

Methodologies used in the Past to Explore Multiple Mentoring

Bird, Martin, Tummons, and Ball (2013) explored adult and youth relationships utilizing a single case methodology. Interview questions were designed around displaying issues of the case and perspectives and experiences of the youth and adult relationships of those involved in the study (Bird, Martin, Tummons, & Ball, 2013). Transcription of the data included full text and the utilization of triangulation to establish credibility. Lakind, Eddy, and Zell (2013) used in their study a sample of diverse youth with challenging

situations and interviewed mentors who have had multiple relationships with several adolescents regarding their role and perception of the organization that employed them. Sawiuk, Taylor, and Groom (2016) interviewed mentors to understand better how a system of multiple mentors works in the field of coaching.

The Gap in the Literature; What Don't we Know

Hamilton, Hamilton, DuBois, and Sellers (2016) described that an individual youth may be participating in several activities with multiple mentors with each adult role functioning differently at the same time or in a set order and that the phenomenon has importance and lack investigation. McLaughlin (2005) studied middle school students and the relationships that they maintained with numerous adults and youth outcomes. McAllister (2012) discussed that foster care youth need a network of adult relationships to aid in their transition adulthood. Although the researchers bring to the forefront the importance of a group of older people in a child's developmental years, the gap in the literature is that there is no research about informal mentoring and the outcomes described by African American youth involved in multiple informal adult mentoring relationships. There is missing information on the opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping African American youth develop.

Case Study Methodology

Riddler (2017) discussed that the multiple case study research design expands the instrumental case study. Riddler asserted that several cases enlarge the comprehension and reinforce theorizing by comparison of the cases. Multiple case study designs allow

for comparison of cases and strengthen the chance to theorize (Riddler, 2017). Riddler explained that literal replication is cases chosen to forecast like results, whereas theoretical replication involves selected cases that anticipate differing outcomes but for theoretical intentions.

Purposeful sampling is administered if an extraordinary or uncommon case is selected and if seldom noticeable phenomena can be explored with consideration to uncertain situations and their associations (Riddler, 2017). Familiar cases permit interpretations for a broader class of cases while revelatory cases offer the chance to explore into a previously unreachable question (Riddler, 2017). On the opposing side when a gap is utilized a preliminary theory is present (Riddler, 2017). The end stage of analysis focuses on the matching of the theoretical framework or concepts with patterns from the data (Riddler, 2017). Both procedures condense the data, and the final element of the research process involves full accounts of the cases to acquire knowledge from and for categorical likeness (Riddler, 2017).

Cronin (2014) described that the data analysis phase is in the middle of constructing a theory from case studies and can be the most strenuous section. Case study analysis requires the researcher to involve themselves deeply in the data, describing each case, and fully knowing each case to the point that the researcher and data are one (Cronin, 2014). As a result, distinct patterns of each case materialize to the researcher before they are combined across cases (Cronin, 2014). By becoming one with the data, researchers can conduct cross-case comparison by allowing the data to be viewed in several different ways (Cronin, 2014).

Researchers can accomplish viewing data in many ways and comparing them by looking at categories or themes that occur several times and looking for likeness or differentiation among the cases (Cronin, 2014). Cronin explained that a strategy used was to go across each case and down techniques in a grid. Another strategy an individual can employ is dividing the data amongst researchers, with one conducting the interviews and the other taking care of the observations (Cronin, 2014). Cronin noted that when patterns did emerge and were confirmed by verification from other methods, the discoveries became sounder and logical. Cronin discussed that the process is repetitious and intense, and theory and data has to be compared methodically. As a result, definitions are improved, and ideas and theories are enhanced (Cronin, 2014).

The goal is to accomplish construct validity, and the researcher can achieve the task by using many sources of proof to describe and differentiate other ideas and theories (Cronin, 2014). Riddler (2017) explained that data triangulation is created to reduce the issues of construct validity, several sources of data yield multiple operations of the same phenomena. Riddler maintained that case study research is sufficient for investigating the theory. Cronin (2014) asserted that before the data analysis phase is ended that an element of constructing theory is to compare the existing literature and the surfacing patterns, themes and ideas, focusing on likeness and differing viewpoints. Cronin advised that a researcher should immerse themselves into a comprehensive variety of data and investigate the literature to grasp a more in-depth understanding of the outcomes and results relating to the theory. As a result, the theory may possess stronger internal

validity, precise generalizability and a more significant conceptual measure (Cronin, 2014).

The current study will utilize the case study approach to explore how informally mentored individuals describe the influences of their mentoring relationship. The strategy will allow the participants of the study to explain if interactions with multiple substitute mentors assist in the development of their social and cultural environment. Social development theory by Vygotsky (1978) principles can provide an understanding of learning achieved through interaction within an individual's social and cultural environment. Thoroughly analyzing and understanding multiple cases will allow for Vygotsky's theory that adult direction and more advanced peers as influential in assisting children to learn as they have more skills and expertise than them to be validated or not confirmed. This is consistent with the focus of the study to provide a thorough analysis and understanding of multiple cases answering the research question and exploring if multiple informal mentors act as role models and help youth develop.

Summary

The current section discusses the literature review, search strategies, and theoretical framework. Also, Chapter 2 describes methodologies used in the past to explore multiple mentoring and the gap in the literature. The next chapter describes the research design and method, participants of the study, and the ethical protection of participants. Thoroughly discussed in the following section are the research questions, procedures, data collection, data analysis, and the verification of the finding

Chapter 3: Research Method

Research Method

In the two previous chapters, I described various opportunities for mentored youth, and I suggest that multiple, informal substitute mentors and their relationships with adolescents might play a role in an adolescent's ability to identify positive lifestyle options. The substitute mentors may provide adolescents with a forum to increase their learning that can lead to the young adult living a successful life. There is a gap in the literature regarding the impact of informal mentoring relationships and multiple adult mentoring relationships on youth development. Additionally, the literature is missing information on the opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping youth develop into adulthood. Social development theory by Vygotsky was the lens through which I analyzed the cases of the young adults in my study.

In this chapter, I discussed the qualitative method and design I used to understand how young adults described their relationships with substitute mentors. I also detailed the background of the participants that I recruited and the recruitment process I used for the study. I addressed the ethical protection of the participants, the steps for gathering data, the process I used for data analysis, and the verification of the findings in this section.

Research Methodology

I used a qualitative case study design for this study (Yin, 2013). While there are numerous studies that illustrate the opportunities for mentored youth, there is a gap in the

literature regarding informal mentoring and the outcomes as described by youth involved in multiple adult mentoring relationships. More information would be helpful on the opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping youth develop. I used the qualitative case study approach to explore how informally mentored individuals described the influences of their mentoring relationship. The approach allowed the participants of the study to describe if interactions with multiple substitute mentors assisted in the development of their social and cultural environment. Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, and Robertson (2013) explained that the result of utilizing a qualitative case study approach is a case report consisting of the themes of the cases. This is consistent as the focus of the study is to provide a thorough analysis and understanding of multiple cases answering the research question.

Research Design and Rationale

Cronin (2014) described that case study research approach centers around particular circumstances and giving an account of one or several cases. The objective of case study research is to construct a precise and thorough illustration of the case or cases under study (Cronin, 2014). Using the case study approach allows for an inquiry into the cases to provide a better understanding of the how the participants explain their experiences with the central concept and themes that developed in the study across numerous cases.

I reviewed several qualitative methods as potentially useful for my research but determined the others would have been insufficient in providing a comprehensive understanding of the informal mentoring relationship from many individuals. For

instance, a narrative study uses storytelling to assist with individuals associated with organizations or those from different nations to make sense of the world (Hansen, 2012). Narratives can be stories told individually or by a group with shared characteristics (Hansen, 2017). Artifacts and rituals are combined with narratives to support them in providing meaning to an identity or community (Hansen, 2017). This type of study may highlight an individual and the narrative provided to explain their experiences and journey with their multiple mentoring relationships, therefore failing to illuminate the key factors and outcomes related to the mentoring relationships among several people. Grounded theory is another method considered and the concept deals with the creation of theory emerging from the data (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). The method is incompatible for the research since the purpose is not to construct a theory from the data but rather to utilize Vygotsky's social development theory to guide the information collected. Desmond (2014) explained that ethnographies gather data from specific locations and groups to provide an understanding of the social world. The ethnographic approach is not adequate for the current study as the sample is not large enough, the participants' backgrounds differ, and they do not belong to a formal system or group that can be explored. One last approach considered is the phenomenological approach, the understanding of the phenomenon experienced by a group (Kafle, 2013). Since my intent is to identify key factors and outcomes related to the mentoring relationship with informal mentors, the phenomenological approach is not appropriate for the study.

Participants of the Study

The inclusion criteria for the eight participants will be African American young men and women, ages 18–21, who lived in a single-parent household, below the poverty line, in a high crime neighborhood, or had a parent that was incarcerated. Single-parent may consist of mother, father, uncle, aunt, grandmother, grandfather, or foster-parent. Below the poverty line means \$16,240 for a family of two, \$20,420 for a family of three, \$24,600 for a family of four, \$28,780 for a family of five, \$32,960 for a family of six, \$37,140 for a family of seven, and \$41,320 for a family of eight (HealthCare.gov, 2018). A high crime neighborhood consists of communities with heightened levels of murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2018). The individuals are currently employed or in college and live independently. Participants relationship with multiple substitute mentors that are from the person's extended family or community such as an uncle, aunt, or blood cousin or someone not blood-related to them are a criteria for selection. Substitute mentoring relationships among participants are those connections with contact occurring at least four times a month for a 1-year period between the ages of 12-17 years old.

Participants are recruited from a large church located in a Midwest state. The church location in a high crime area and the large membership makes the building appropriate for the study. I met with a senior member of the church and discussed the elements of the study. The individual representing the church agreed to post the letter I constructed and assisted in the recruitment of the participants. A formal letter of agreement (Appendix A) is attached. The arrangement agreed upon is that once the

participants call the number and inquire about the study, I will conduct a meeting with the participants and describe the study and answer any questions the individuals may have. A recruitment letter describing the study was sent to the church contact to post on their bulletin board. The letter is in Appendix B.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do informally mentored individuals describe the influences of the mentoring relationship?

Research Question 2: From the perspective of informally mentored individuals, do interactions with multiple substitute mentors assist in the development of an individual's social and cultural environment?

Ethical Protection of Participants

Ethical considerations impacted the age of the participants as adolescents were considered but, according to Graham, Powell, Taylor, Anderson, and Fitzgerald (2013), children are not necessary for the study and information can be obtained through other means by using young adults. Those participating in the qualitative case study were young men and women ages 18-21 years old who have experienced disadvantaged conditions such as living in a single-parent household, below the poverty line, a high crime neighborhood, or having a parent that is incarcerated. They were involved in a relationship as a youth with multiple informal substitute mentors. They had the opportunity to volunteer and participate in the study. The church where the recruitment took place were not informed of who or how many people came forward to participate in the study. The study had no identified risks. I communicated to each that their association

with the study would not affect any business relationships or their employment. I informed the people involved in the study that they could stop participating at any time and that if any hardships or difficulties occurred that they could contact Walden University at the phone number provided to them at the onset of the study. I went over the consent form with everyone before obtaining their signature and ensured to them that their confidentiality would be safeguarded. Recordings, files, contexts, transcripts, and artifacts are stored and locked in a secure location. Those involved in the study have access to the information in the study to verify the outcomes. Pseudonyms are used to identify the individuals in the study and the church. Information about free follow up counseling were made available to all participants of the study.

Procedures

The list of procedures served as a guiding list to recruit and inform participants, assemble and examine data, and validate the findings. Participants in the study were recruited by a flyer (Appendix D) describing the nature of the study and my contact information. The informational flyer was located in a church on their bulletin board that was visible to all who entered the facility. Once eight young men and women ages 18-21 years old that fit the criteria of the study have contacted me and agreed to participate in the study, I asked the church to remove the flyer and started setting up dates and times to interview individuals.

I let each participant choose a location suitable for them to conduct the interviews. I went go over the purpose and elements of the study with each participant. I had a copy of the consent form and a document describing the study. I went over the interview

protocol and informed each individual that they may halt their participation in the study at any given time. I asked each individual if they had any questions and understood all of the documents that they were given. After questions and concerns were answered, I had participants sign the Consent Form.

The interview included asking questions listed in Appendix C. If questions arose that were not on the list, I let the participants elaborate on them as they may reflect on the research questions. I thanked everyone for their participation in the study and provided them with my contact information if they had any questions or concerns that occurred after the interview. Data consisted of handwritten notes, recordings, and responses to the questions. I invited each participant to bring any artifacts or documents if any existed that they associated with the mentoring relationship. I used the Livescribe 3 Smartpen during the interviews. The Livescribe 3 Smartpen converted handwritten notes to text, conducted searches of targeted and specific words, provided audio, and had capabilities with numerous mobile devices and computers (Livescribe, Inc., 2017). I used the Livescribe 3 Smartpen to transcribe the recordings. I asked each participant if they would like a copy of the study. Those who wanted a summary was informed to provide their contact information or email.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of oral responses, contexts, documents, and artifacts from eight young men and women participating in one interview. Artifacts that participants used that they link to success included but not limited to were pictures,

trophies, inspirational quotes, books, gifts received for achievements, and personal journals. Documents that interviewees felt that defined their life included but were not limited to grade reports, job offers, college acceptance letters, high school diplomas, letters of achievement, promotions, etc.

Interview orientation involved constructing a rapport, discussing the purpose of the study, and signing the Consent Form. I asked questions that were focused toward the research questions (Appendix B). The interviews were conducted at a place of each participant's choice that ensured privacy and was distraction free. Each interview was recorded and transcribed, as well as handwritten notes were taken during the interviews.

The data was organized by constructing files of the interviews. The files and recordings are stored and maintained in a secure location in my home office. After transcribing the data, I analyzed the information.

Data Analysis

I analyzed all of the data acquired from the participants in the study including interviews, contexts, and artifacts. Yazan (2015) discussed that researchers using the case study approach should acquire data from several sources such as documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and artifacts to apprehend a comprehensive understanding of the case. Consistent with Boblin, Ireland, Kirkpatrick, and Robertson (2013), I analyzed interview answers, contexts and documents, and artifacts relevant to the participants. I used *a priori* coding for the documents and artifacts as the participants were linking them to success. I examined each case arrangement, and

Radley and Chamberlain (2012) explained that doing so allow for case comparisons that allows for generalizations from them.

Smith and Noble (2013) explained that in the initial stage of data analysis in-vivo codes involves focusing on each line of data to identify key words and phrases from the participant's words. I placed a code next to a word or phrase as I went through the interview transcripts. Once the data was broken down into sections that were manageable the researcher looked for patterns and sequences and assigned codes (Bendassolli, 2013; Smith & Noble, 2013). I analyzed each document and manually coded and used in vivo coding for phrases and sentences that were patterns in the data. I made a list of all of the relevant information and made them into codes. I went back and analyzed the data and placed the codes next to the data. The next stage involved taking similar categories and bringing them together into broader themes (Smith & Noble, 2013). I used all of the information provided by the participants in the study to provide an understanding of the similarities and differences of the African American young men and women in the study who had experienced adversities when they were youth and had relationships with substitute mentors. I documented how I moved from the data to developing final themes as Smith and Noble explained that doing so demonstrates robustness of the findings.

Verification of Findings

I verified the findings in the study. Noble and Smith (2015) explained several strategies to provide credibility to the results of the research. Of the list that Noble and Smith provided I accounted for researcher's bias, established careful record keeping, included a rich and thick explanation of the participant's account to support the findings,

as well as member checking. I established credibility by verifying the findings of the research with the participants of the study. As Cope (2014) suggested, I built credibility by noting my involvement in the study, my procedures for observation, and by providing an audit trail. The researcher had no bias in the study but is familiar with experiences of the individuals in the study. Cope (2014) suggested describing how interpretations and results were established and showing that they came straight from the data as maintaining confirmability. I established confirmability by providing quotes from emerging themes (Cope, 2014). As Cope (2014) explained a study have transferability if the findings have meaning to people that are not involved and those reading the research can connect the results to their own experiences. I provided an adequate amount of information on the participants and the research context to allow those reading the research to analyze the study's ability to be suitable or transferable (Cope, 2014). The study had dependability as there were sufficient information throughout each stage of the research process that replication of the study would yield similar findings (Cope, 2014).

I am an African American male who has been involved with multiple informal mentors as a teenager. Multiple informal mentors were integral in the development and learning of the researcher. Although the researcher is aware of past experiences and conscientious of this information, the investigator understands researcher bias and put aside all preconceived ideas and did not influence the data. Also, after acquiring a signed letter of confidentiality I had a qualified individual in qualitative research conduct the peer review. I provided a copy of all of the data for the individual to check. Transcripts, notes, quotes, artifacts, and all information was acquired and stored in a secure location

in my home office for 5 years. Following these strategies for verifications of the findings allowed the researcher to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cases.

Summary

The case study approach allowed for the comparison of cases of African American individuals that experienced adversities when they were youth and their relationships with substitute mentors and analyzed them for similarities and differences. The data collection method I used were interviews, contexts, and artifacts. I accounted for researcher's bias, established careful record keeping, included a rich and thick explanation of the participant's account to support the findings, as well as member checking to verify the findings. Chapter 4 discusses the findings that have materialized from the information provided by the individuals in the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore, document, and analyze the cases of a sample of young men and women who were mentored as youth by multiple informal substitute mentors. I investigated their lived experiences of having multiple informal substitute mentors as role models. In this chapter I present the findings of the study and provide a better understanding regarding the outcomes of the informal mentoring bonds as experienced by the eight participants in the study.

The research questions for this study were:

Research Question 1: How do informally mentored individuals describe the influences of the mentoring relationship?

Research Question 2: From the perspective of informally mentored individuals, do interactions with multiple substitute mentors assist in the development of an individual's social and cultural environment?

Participants' Demographics

The participants were African American young men and women, ages 18-21. The inclusion criteria included individuals who grew up in a single-parent household, or below the poverty line as determined by the Census Bureau, or in a high crime neighborhood as determined by the Census Bureau, or had a parent that was incarcerated during their teenage years.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

	Age	Gender	Community	Education Level	Family
Participant 1	18	Female	Urban	College Freshman	Homeless
Participant 2	20	Female	Urban	College Sophomore	Single- Parent
Participant 3	20	Male	Urban	Technical Degree	Single- Parent
Participant 4	19	Male	Urban	College Freshman	Foster- Parent
Participant 5	20	Female	Urban	College Sophomore	Single- Parent
Participant 6	19	Male	Urban	College Sophomore	Single- Parent
Participant 7	20	Male	Urban	College Sophomore	Single- Parent
Participant 8	20	Female	Urban	College Junior	Foster- Parent

Each participant chose a public library to meet for their interview. Before each interview, I described the study to the participants and answered their questions. The

consent form was explained and signed. I also presented the interview protocol and the estimated time needed to conduct the interview. Before starting the interview, I asked if there were any additional questions or concerns and reminded them that if any issues arose during the interview that made them not want to continue, that they could stop at any time. Each interview lasted no longer than 30 minutes. I took handwritten notes during the interview with the Livescribe 3 Smartpen. A backup electronic recording device in the Livescribe 3 Smartpen was used to record the interviews. All participants were interviewed once and thanked for their time.

Data Collection

Data were collected from eight participants that were African American young men and women, ages 18-21, who lived in a single-parent household, below the poverty line, in a high crime neighborhood, or had a parent who was incarcerated. I utilized the case study approach to collect the data. Baskarada (2014) explained collecting enough data to inform the main points is vital so data collected consisted of oral responses, contexts, documents, and artifacts from all individuals participating in one-on-one interviews. Each participant chose a public library to meet for their interview. Before each interview, the study was described to the participants and questions they had were answered by the researcher. The Consent Form was explained and signed, as well as the interview protocol and the time needed to conduct the interview. I asked if there were any additional questions or concerns that the participants may have before starting the interview and reminded them that if any issues arise during the interview that they could stop at any time. Each interview lasted no longer than 30 minutes with open-ended

questions asked as suggested by Baskarada to allow flexibility and rich data. I took handwritten notes during the interview with the Livescribe 3 Smartpen. A backup electronic recording device and the Livescribe 3 Smartpen were used to record the interviews. All participants interviewed were thanked for their time.

Participant Description

In this section, I describe briefly the case of each participant in the study. I discuss their current living situations to provide context for their discussion of mentorship. The relationship they had as youth with informal mentors is also described for each participant. Lastly, mentor characteristics and what was learned from them is discussed in this section.

Participant 1

Participant 1 graduated high school while being homeless and living with friends for free in a low-income apartment complex. She currently is a college student and employed. Participant 1 described mentorship as helpful guidance, giving advice, and helping others physically or emotionally. She identified four informal mentors: a teacher, secretary, and two adults who work for a social service agency. The teacher mentored her for 2 years, secretary for 2 years, and the two adults from the social service agency for 1 year. Homelessness, making sure to eat, graduating from high school, and being stable emotionally and mentally were challenges she faced while being mentored. Her mentors assisted with these challenges by telling stories about themselves, giving advice, and taking her to receive needed services. Participant 1 stated that she learned from her mentors how to be strong in any situation that arose and to have a positive outlook on

situations no matter how negative they were. The mentors provided out of town trips, and Participant 1 noted that being outside of the city provided a different perspective of the world. This broader perspective led her to believe that she could “make it” as there are several opportunities to succeed. She discussed that her motivation was to change how she grew up and to relocate. Participant 1 explained that she did not want to look back 10-15 years from now and say, “I did not try.”

Participant 2

Participant 2 lived in a single-parent household and is a college student. She described mentorship as providing an outlet and being the outlet for the person, helping others become a better form of themselves, and helping people to evolve into something greater. She identified her mother’s friend and another lady who worked with her mother as informal mentors. Her mother’s friend served as a big sister and mentored her for 10 years and her other informal mentor mentored her for 9 years. Taking feedback and listening to others, coming to a realization that adults were right with the advice they were providing her, and her not wanting to be wrong with her decision-making were challenges faced while being mentored.

Participant 2 stated that her mentors helped with these challenges by saying things that reassured her, and that doing positive activities and making good choices was best for her, helping her find her identity and informing her to be herself and not to follow negative people, and after being truthful with her they built her up to let her know that this is best for you. Staying diligent and humble, never forgetting where you came from, and being thankful that people helped you and helping others when you are able are what

was learned from the mentors. Both mentors had Participant 2 participate in etiquette dinners, service-learning activities, volunteer work, serving the homeless, and church activities to help in her learning and maturation process.

Participant 3

Participant 3 lived in a single-parent household and is a college student. He described mentorship as learning something new every day, taking someone under their wing and showing them the way, and helping someone get somewhere. He identified his basketball coach, family friend, and an older youth in high school as informal mentors. Participant 3 was mentored by his basketball coach for 5 years, family friend for 5 years, and three older youth for 3 years. People not wanting him to make it, negativity, and his environment were challenges he faced while being mentored. He learned from his mentors to go to class, maintain good grades, not to be a follower, and knowledge that he needed to reach his goals. Activities that he participated in with his mentors that helped him learn was college visits, volunteering to help others such as toys for tots, and basketball trips outside the state. Participant 3 found that the activities gave him the chance to see the world differently and revealed to him that there is more to life than what he currently knew.

Participant 4

Participant 4 lived with a foster parent and is a college student. He described mentorship as teaching someone something, a lesson or something in life they will need to know. He identified his sports coaches, older friends, and his preacher as informal mentors. Participant 4 was mentored by two coaches for 2 years and two older friends

and his preacher for his whole life. Moving from house to house was a challenge he faced while being mentored. Mentors assisted him with challenges by talking him through problems, talking about decision making and going down the right path, and believing in him when he did not believe in himself. He learned from his mentors how to take the right path, decision making skills, how to become an adult, identifying career paths, and staying focused toward his goals.

Participant 5

Participant 5 lived with a single-parent and is a college student. She described mentorship as coaching an individual in life, school, college, or organization and helping them with any aspect of their and giving them the resources they need to be successful. She identified her high school college advisor and youth church director as informal mentors.

Participant 5 stated that her college advisor mentored her for 4 years and the youth church director for 8 years. Challenges faced while being mentored included informal mentors not always being available and issues with time and meeting obligations. Letting her come to their house when she had problems, talking about doing things differently, and explaining that some things are out of her control is how mentors assisted with her challenges. Participant 5 described that she was open to her informal mentors because she viewed them as successful and that they taught her many life lessons. Shopping, eating dinner, talking about life, and visiting colleges were activities she participated in with her informal mentors that she found helpful in her learning.

Participant 6

Participant 6 lived with a single-parent and is a college student and employed. He described mentorship as changing a person life and helping them mature and grow up. He identified his two basketball coaches as informal mentors. Participant 6 was mentored by the two basketball coaches for 2 years. Family problems, financial struggles, and being hard-headed and not listening were challenges faced while being mentored. He described that mentors assisted with these challenges by talking with him and informing him to stay positive. Participant 6 learned from his mentors that school was important and to keep working hard toward his goals. Trips to several colleges and visiting different cities and states were activities he found helpful in his learning. He discussed that the activities and overall mentoring experience helped him see the world differently.

Participant 7

Participant 7 lived with a single-parent and is a college student. He explained mentorship as an older adult helping someone younger to be better. Participant 7 identified his two basketball coaches and barber as informal mentors. He was mentored by his basketball coaches for 3 years and his barber for 10 years. He identified trust and criticism as challenges faced while being mentored. Participant 7 discussed that mentors assisted with his challenges by talking with him and helping him with the college process. He learned from his mentors that hard work pays off and education is important. Participant 7 noted college visits as helpful in his learning and that paying attention to everyday things in life is critical to success.

Participant 8

Participant 8 was adopted and lived in a single parent household. She is a college student and employed. Participant 8 described mentorship as having someone to guide you and help you be successful. She identified the mother of her church, and two ladies that worked in the community as her informal mentors. She was mentored by the mother of her church for 7 years and by the two ladies working with youth programs for 6 years. Participant 8 stated that her challenges were that she did not know her potential. She stated that her mentors helped with her challenges by visiting colleges and going out of town so she could see the opportunities out there for her. Participant 8 stated that she learned a lot and her mentors told her to do what she is supposed to do and to work hard for what she wants. College visits, talking about life, going out to eat, and having someone there when she was in need are activities she participated in with her mentors that helped her learn.

Artifacts

I asked all participants that if they had any artifacts (see table 2 below) that they saw defined their success or were symbols of success to bring them with them to the interview. Some participants brought in quarterly grade reports that displayed that they made the honor role for the quarter. Several had with them their high school transcripts showing all years of making the honor roll and improvement from one year to next, noting that their mentors stressed maintaining good grades and helped tutor them. They all discussed that high school graduation was important to them and that their high school transcripts would help them gain acceptance into college. Numerous participants brought in their college acceptance letters and discussed that they were going to be the first in

their family to attend college and that college is their road to success. A couple of participants brought in sports medals. Several participants stated that their coaches were mentors to them and that they told them that hard work will be rewarded. They stated that the sports medals were symbols of success in the sport and that their hard work paid off. Two participants brought in theater play programs. One participant talked about how her mentors assisted her with locating the right people in the acting industry to provide her with the opportunity to co-write and act in a theater play. She stated that the accomplishment was a dream of hers and that she felt fortunate to conduct a successful play. The other individual discussed that her mentors talked with her and gave her the confidence to try out for a theater play. She said once she was selected and acted in the theater play that she felt she was on her way to a successful acting career.

Table 2

Artifacts Brought by the Participants

Sports Medals	4
High School Transcripts	3
College Acceptance Letters	3
Grade Reports	3
Theater Play Programs	2

Data Analysis

I transcribed each recording and placed the data under each interview question. I then placed the data from each interview to the appropriate research question. During this process, I focused on each line of data to identify key words and phrases from the participant's words (Baskarada, 2014). I placed codes next to words and phrases as I went through the data produced from the interviews (Baskarada, 2014). After breaking down the data into sections that were manageable I looked for patterns and sequences and assigned codes (Baskarada, 2014). The codes were short phrases and sentences that consisted of: definition and meaning of mentorship, what mentorship means to me, who are the informal mentors, characteristics of the informal mentors, barriers, hardships, and challenges faced while being mentored. Additional codes included: how did the informal mentors help them in life, what was learned from informal mentors, what activities were helpful, how did informal mentors help them achieve success, and how the mentees define and display success. The categories that were formulated from the codes was (a) the definition and meaning of mentorship to the participants, (b) informal mentors characteristics and years mentored, (c) challenges faced while being mentored and how mentors helped navigate them, (d) what was learned from informal mentors and activities that helped with their learning, (e) how informal mentors helped young people achieve success and (f) the mentees definition and display of success. Once I identified the categories of data, I then combined the categories into broader themes.

Categories

In this section, I discuss the categories that were created from the codes in the data. All participants provided information for each category, but I display the quotes that best summarize each category. The only part that lacked a lot of data is category 5 since each participant listed who their informal mentors were and how long they were mentored. More explanation was given in the other categories as participants discussed their information in more depth to provide a clear understanding of what they were saying.

Category 1: Definition and Meaning of Mentorship to the Participants

Participants described what the value or meaning of mentorship was in their lives. Participant 5 stated: “Coaching an individual in life, school, college, or organization and helping them with any aspect of their life and giving them the resources they need to be successful.” Participant 7 stated: “An older adult helping someone younger to be better.”

Category 2: Informal Mentors Characteristics and Years Mentored

Participants described who the informal mentors were in their lives and how long they had a mentoring relationship with the individuals. Participant 3 stated: “I had 5 informal mentors. I was mentored by my basketball coach for 5 years, family friend for 5 years, and 3 older teenagers for 3 years.” Participant 4 stated: “I had 5 informal mentors. My 2 basketball coaches mentored me for 2 years and 2 older friends and pastor my whole life.”

Category 3: Challenges Faced While being Mentored and How Mentors Helped with them

The participants described the challenges they faced while being mentored by informal mentors and how these adults assisted and provided solutions to overcome those issues. Participant 1 stated: “Challenges faced while being mentored included homelessness, food instability, graduating from high school, and being stable emotionally and mentally. Informal mentors assisted me with these challenges by telling stories about themselves, giving advice, and taking me to receive needed services.”

Participant 2 stated:

Taking feedback and listening to others, coming to a realization that adults were right, and not wanting to be wrong were challenges I faced while being mentored. Saying things that reassured me that changing my thought process to be more positive was best for me, helping me find my identity and informing me to be myself and not follow negative people, and after being truthful with me they built me up and informed me that this was best for me were tactics informal mentors used to assist me with my challenges.

Category 4: What was Learned From Informal Mentors and Activities that Helped with their Learning

Participants described what lessons and pieces of information from their informal mentors that they found important that they could apply to their lives, as well as, several activities they participated in with them that helped the young adults add to their learning.

Participant 6 stated:

I learned from my informal mentors that school was important and to keep working hard toward my goals. Trips to several colleges and visiting different

cities and states were activities I found helpful in my learning. The activities and overall mentoring experience helped me see the world differently.

Participant 8 stated:

I learned a lot and my informal mentors told me to do what I was supposed to do and to work hard for what I wanted. College visits, talking about life, going out to eat, and having someone there when I was in need were activities I participated in with my mentors that helped her learn.

Category 5: How do Informal Mentors help Young People be Successful

Participants described how informal mentors helped them throughout their lives to achieve their goals and discussed their success and brought in artifacts that represented symbols of success. Participant 1 stated:

My informal mentors helped me with homelessness by providing food stability, community resources, and a safe place for tutoring and finishing homework. My informal mentors stressed the important of maintaining excellent grades and pursuing post-secondary education as a way to move to a more stable life.

Participant 5 stated:

My informal mentors discussed with me what my goals were in life were and what I wanted to accomplish in life. I told my mentors that I wanted to go to college for acting. My informal mentors talked with me about the importance of good grades so that I could gain acceptance into college. I brought in my high school transcripts and showing my first two years were satisfactory but I finished with excellent grades as my mentors helped with tutoring and stayed on me about

grades. I brought in a theater program that I co-wrote and acted in a play. My mentors knew that writing and acting in a play would help with college admissions so since my grades were good they connected me with several contacts that assisted with performing a theater play.

Category 6: Mentees Definition and Display of Success

Participant 1 stated:

The artifacts I brought was my high school grades showing I made the honor roll every quarter in high school through graduation and my college acceptance letter. These accomplishments are part of my success and I will continue to move forward and graduate from college and work in her field of study and live an independent and stable life.

Participant 5 stated:

I am in college studying acting and without my mentors I would not be where I am today and when I graduate and become an actor I will be a mentor to others and hopefully can be a part of their success.

Themes

I broke down the data into sections that were manageable and looked for patterns and sequences and assigned codes. Then I formulated categories from the data. I analyzed each category and identified what the common theme was within each case. Then the categories were brought together into broader themes that I discuss below.

Theme 1: Mentorship From the Viewpoint of Positive Outcomes in their Life

I analyzed the data and found that the participants discussed mentorship as integral in their success. They all noted that mentorship helped them in several aspects of their lives. As I went through the data I found that that all of the participants describing mentoring as a positive aspect of their life. Participants described that they would not be where they today without the help of their mentors. They discussed that they knew what they wanted to accomplish in life but did not know the path to take to be successful. All participants noted that the mentors assisted helping and guiding them in the right direction to achieve their goals. Some examples are tutoring, stressing homework completion and maintain good grades, talking with them about achieving goals, and assisting with college applications.

Participant 3 stated: “I learned from my mentors to go to class, maintain good grades, not to be a follower, and knowledge that I needed to reach my goals.”

Participant 4 stated: “I learned from my mentors how to take the right path, decision making skills, how to become an adult, identifying career paths, and staying focused toward my goals.” Participant 7 stated: “I learned from my mentors that hard work pays off and education is important.”

Theme 2: Trust Relationship Between Mentees and Multiple Mentors

As I interviewed participants, several of them discussed that trust was an important aspect of their mentoring relationship. They talked about that they would not open up to anyone with their issues and challenges if they did not trust the person. As I went through the data, I found the trust relationship as a theme since the term continuously showed up in the data as an important aspect of the mentoring relationship.

Participants described individuals that they trusted to help them to be successful as they move into the next phase of their life. All participants explained that they knew their informal mentors for an extended time and along with their characteristics, educational and employment background, similar upbringing, and being more knowledgeable due to age and life experiences, that allowed them to open up to them and ask for guidance.

Participant 4 stated:

I moved from house to house and grew up in the foster care system. It was a challenge for me to trust people but the longer I knew my informal mentors I trusted them more and they helped me by talking me through problems, decision making and going down the right path, and believing in me when I did not believe in myself.

Participant 5 stated: “I was open to my informal mentors because I viewed them as successful and that they taught me many life lessons.”

Theme 3: Not an Easy Road

I analyzed the data and found that all participants discussed challenges they faced while being mentored. As I looked closely, I found that the information provided were barriers that they were trying to overcome to move forward in life. All participants faced challenges while being mentoring and turned to their informal mentors for advice and strategies to overcome them. Some of the challenges that participants discussed that mentors helped them with were homelessness, graduating from high school, negativity and taking the right path, family problems, financial struggles, and having someone to talk to in a time of need. Participant 3 stated:

People not wanting me to make it, negativity, and my environment were challenges I faced while being mentored. I learned from my mentors to go to class, maintain good grades, not to be a follower, and information I needed to reach my goals.

Participant 6 stated: “Family problems, financial struggles, and being hard-headed and not listening were challenges I faced while being mentored. My mentors assisted me with these challenges by talking with me and informing me to stay positive.”

Participant 7 stated: “Trust and criticism were challenges I faced while being mentored. My mentors assisted with my challenges by talking with me and helping me with the college process.”

Theme 4: The Mentor Directed Activities Opened the Mentee Eyes to New Opportunities

The data revealed that all participants discussed that activities helped them in their life. Some participants revealed more data than others but the common theme is that the activities they participated in with mentors helped them view life differently and provided new opportunities. Participants stated that they learned from their informal mentors and participated in activities that was vital to their learning and success. Some of the activities that participants discussed were important to their learning were talking about life, visiting colleges and other cities, basketball trips outside the state, volunteering, and shopping and eating to spend time discussing the mentees progress toward their goals.

Participant 2 stated: “I participated in etiquette dinners, service learning activities, volunteer work, serving the homeless, and church activities and they helped me in my learning and maturation process.” Participant 3 stated:

Activities I participated in with my mentors that helped my learning were college visits, volunteering to help others such as toys for tots, and basketball trips outside the state. I found that the activities gave me a chance to see the world differently and revealed to me that there is more to life than what I currently know.

Participant 6: “Trips to several colleges and visiting different cities and states were activities I found helpful in my learning. The activities and overall mentoring experience helped me see the world differently.”

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Noble and Smith (2015) explained several strategies to provide credibility to the results of the research. Of the list that Noble and Smith provided I accounted for researcher’s bias, established careful record keeping, including a rich and thick explanation of the participant’s account to use in support of the findings, as well as member checking. After each interview, I read back responses to the participant to ensure they were correctly interpreted. I made sure that I repeated key points and interpretations to the participants to ensure that the data was accurate. Also, I had each participant bring artifacts and documents that they viewed as part of their success. The artifacts, documents, and the interview data provided triangulation. As Cope (2014) suggested, I built credibility by noting my involvement in the study, my procedures for observation,

and by providing an audit trail such as my interview recordings and research documents used for the study. As Cope (2014) explained a study have transferability if the findings have meaning to people that are not involved and those reading the research can connect the results to their own experiences.

Transferability

My intention was not to highlight the experience of a whole population but emphasize and understand the experiences of a small group of African American men and women who provided a comprehensive and thorough account of their informal mentoring encounters as teenagers. All participants were given the opportunity to add additional comments after the interview as well as elaborate on any information provided during the interview. I provided an adequate amount of information on the participants and the research context to allow those reading the research to analyze the study's ability to be suitable or transferable (Cope, 2014).

Dependability

All of the interview questions were approved by the Walden University IRB and were appropriate to the research being carried out. I used the Livescribe 3 pen to record the participants during the interviews so I could provide an accurate account of the information provided rather than my interpretation of what was being said. The Livescribe 3 pen was the recording device utilized; the device records information and can be uploaded into text in a Word document. The study have dependability as there is sufficient information throughout each stage of the research process that replication of the study will yield similar findings (Cope, 2014).

Confirmability

The researcher had no bias in the study but is familiar with experiences of the individuals in the study. Cope (2014) suggested describing how interpretations and results were established and showing that they came straight from the data as maintaining confirmability. Also, I established confirmability by providing statements from emerging themes (Cope, 2014). I analyzed each document and manually coded using in vivo coding for phrases and sentences that were patterns in the data. I made a list of all of the relevant information and made them into codes. I went back and analyzed the data and placed the codes next to the data. Then I took similar categories and brought them together into broader themes (Smith & Noble, 2013). I hand coded all transcriptions to divide the data into five categories. After establishing the categories, more coded was completed to formulate the themes that materialized in each category.

Researcher Bias and Role

I am an African American man who has been involved with multiple informal mentors as a teenager. Multiple informal mentors were integral in the development and learning of the researcher. Although the researcher is aware of past experiences and conscientious of this information, the investigator understands researcher bias and put aside all preconceived ideas and did not influence the data. Also, after acquiring a signed letter of confidentiality I had a qualified individual in qualitative research conduct the peer review. I provided a copy of all of the data for the individual to check. Transcripts, notes, quotes, artifacts, and all information acquired will be stored in a secure location in

my home office for 5 years. Following these strategies for verifications of the findings allowed the researcher to provide a comprehensive understanding of the cases.

Summary of Findings

The first research question, How do informally mentored individuals describe the influences of the mentoring relationship? A theme that was crucial to the mentoring relationship was trust. The term trust repeatedly showed up in the data, and participants explained that they would not open up and share personal information with people they do not trust. Mentor characteristics, educational and employment background, similar upbringing, life experiences, and time knew are what participants explained built trust between them and their informal mentors. The participants described the mentoring relationship as positive and impacting their life. All participants noted that informal mentors were integral in their learning. They explained that their informal mentors influenced the life they are living today since the individuals knew what goals they wanted to achieve but did not know the steps to take to accomplish them. The informal mentors aided in directing them in the right direction to achieve their goals and helped them with challenges and provided strategies to overcome them. Some techniques informal mentors used to assist the participants were tutoring, emphasizing the importance of completing homework and obtaining good grades, continuously revisiting and talking about achieving their goals, and guiding them through the college admissions process. Also, these individuals gave them advice and exposed them to activities and learning opportunities that helped them with their future goals. They acted as a person that the participants could trust and talk to in a time of need.

The next research question, From the perspective of informally mentored individuals, do interactions with multiple substitute mentors assist in the development of an individual's social and cultural environment? Everyone noted that they learned from their informal mentors. All participants experienced challenges and barriers. Negativity, lack of positive support for taking the right path and achieving goals, and financial struggles are some of the barriers that participants had to overcome on their journey to completing their goals. They used the informal mentors to learn how to take the right path, decision-making skills, how to become an adult, identifying career paths, and staying focused toward their goals and found them helpful in their maturation as a person. The informal mentors assisted with making positive decisions and looking toward the future. They pushed them to continue on the right path toward post-secondary, employment, and training opportunities so they can support themselves and transition into adulthood. Participants described that informal mentors provided activities that influenced their life. They took them on out of town trips, college visits, and other activities that revealed the many options in the world for a different life choice to be successful. The shared theme among the individuals is that the activities assisted them in viewing life differently and offered new opportunities. Several participants noted that their informal mentors helped them see that they could be successful through their social support.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I have discussed the demographics of the participants and the data collection method and analysis. Also, I described the findings and the themes that were

extracted from data. In the next chapter, I will be discussing interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, and the meaning and implications with recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This study explored missing information on the opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping African American youth develop in adolescence and early adulthood. The study intended to learn from the experiences of African American youth as they provided an understanding of how they learn from others. The chapter will highlight a blueprint for successful informal mentoring covering six key points. The chapter will discuss the interpretation of the findings concerning mentorship from the viewpoint of positive outcomes in the participants' lives, the trust relationship between mentees and multiple mentors, how the road to success was not easy, and how the mentor directed activities opened the mentee eyes to new opportunities. I discuss the limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications in this chapter.

Interpretation of the Findings

Mentorship From the Viewpoint of Positive Outcomes in their Life

All individuals in the study had positive goals and aspirations that they wanted to achieve. The research showed that they did not know how to reach their goals. Individuals noted that they reached out to adults that they trusted and talked to them about their goals and what they wanted to accomplish in life.

The following points are laid out to help readers to see them as a possible applied guide to informal mentoring. Point 1: Participants stated that the mentee has to have some identified goal. The informal mentors connected with the young people and helped them

with completing their goals. Informal mentors are a piece of the overall mentoring, but they provide some connection to exposure to education, and experiences beyond the scope of the youth's existing environment. Point 2: Participants also stated that the mentor needs only to provide a single additional access point to be valuable. They emphasized the importance of maintaining good grades, exposed them to colleges, and the college application process. Informal mentors provided service and volunteer opportunities, took them out of their environment to other cities, and other educational and cultural activities to help them see the world differently. For example, Participant 6 stated: "Trips to several colleges and visiting different cities and states were activities I found helpful in my learning. The activities and overall mentoring experience helped me see the world differently."

The results of this study are consistent with Loizzo, Ertmer, Watson, and Watson (2017) that people strive to increase their knowledge and apply those strategies to everyday life to achieve success. The results revealed that the participants noted success as graduating from high school, acceptance into college, having a job, volunteering and participating in extracurricular activities, and living independently. The results are in agreement with Killoren, Streit, Alfaro, Delgado, and Johnson (2016), that youth defined success as participation in extracurricular activities and obtaining educational achievements. Success was linked to participating in the workforce, involvement in volunteer opportunities and civic activities, and attending post-secondary events (Force, 2014; Morimoto and Friedland, 2013; Pecora, 2012). Participant 7 stated: "I learned from my mentors that hard work pays off and education is important. Also, college visits were

helpful in my learning and that paying attention to everyday things in life are critical to success.”

The research results revealed that participants used mentors early in their teens to navigate through high school and life. Point 3: Start mentoring at high school entry. The individuals had goals that they wanted to achieve but did not know how and if they would meet them. Therefore, they utilized the strategies and tactics the mentors provided to be successful in school and life. For example, Participant 3 stated: “I learned from my mentors to go to class, maintain good grades, not to be a follower, and knowledge that I needed to reach my goals.” The study findings support the literature as mentoring provides young people with a relationship with an adult where they provide support and assistance in many areas of their life, and aid them in having a better understanding of the world and themselves (Loeser, 2016; Pryce & Keller, 2013; Anastasia, Skinner, & Mundhenk, 2012).

Several participants in the study discussed being the first in their family to go to college. As a result, they expressed that they did not know the process of gaining acceptance into college or the route to take to gain entrance into a post-secondary institution. Consistent with Price-Mitchell (2014), young people learn by observing and modeling their lives after adults they trust, and as a result, their experiences provide them with the knowledge and strategies to utilize to achieve their goals and aspirations. Individuals revealed that while they were trying to work toward college, they still had to worry about distractions such as negative influences at school and in their neighborhoods and life barriers that could alter their path in completing their goals. Informal mentors

helped the young people avoid negative influences by encouraging them to be around positive peers, speaking with them about walking away from arguments and negative interactions, and offering to give them a ride home or to an activity where the individual may have to walk through a dangerous neighborhood. For example, Participant 4 stated: “I learned from my mentors how to take the right path, decision-making skills, how to become an adult, identifying career paths, and staying focused toward my goals.” The study agrees with the literature, as Crean (2012) explained that the adult-youth relationship is essential as the teenager’s decision-making and other skills are enhanced, thus, resulting in less destructive behaviors. Point 4: Focus on decision-making skills in mentoring.

Trust Relationship Between Mentees and Multiple Mentors

The research results revealed trust as an integral part of the informal mentoring relationship. Point 5: Trust between the mentor and mentee are essential to the relationship being successful. It takes time to build trust. Participants in the study explained that they needed to trust an adult before they could open up to them about their problems and goals. They discussed that due to negative occurrences and circumstances that they encountered in life, they were hesitant to discuss personal information with adults. For example, Participant 4 stated:

I moved from house to house and grew up in the foster care system. It was a challenge for me to trust people, but the longer I knew my informal mentors, I trusted them more, and they helped me by talking me through problems, decision making and going down the right path, and believing in me when I did not believe

in myself. The literature supports the finding as informal mentoring was explained as a person creating a mentoring relationship with a more senior member they have confidence in and trust (Walters, 2016; Welsh, Bhave, & Kim, 2012).

The research showed that individuals in the study viewed their informal mentors as successful. Because they saw them in that manner, participants explained that they were open to their ideas and strategies that they provided to help them achieve their goals. The participants discussed that they only knew so much in life and that their mentors possessed more knowledge than them and could pass that information to them so they could be successful in life. For example, Participant 5 stated: “I was open to my informal mentors because I viewed them as successful and that they taught me many life lessons.” Point 6: Respect for the mentor is a key component of the relationship. The research is compatible with the past literature that discussed that a less knowledgeable individual would formulate several relationships with many adults who they choose are more aligned with their interests, have expertise in the subject area they seek to gain a better understanding, and multiple mentors with different skills to meet many needs (Risser, 2013; Sanfey, Hollands, & Gantt, 2013; Zeldin, Christens, and Powers, 2013).

Not an Easy Road

The research showed that participants in the study faced many obstacles and hardships on their road to success and completing goals. Some of them were personal, like not wanting to listen to people and being involved in harmful situations like physical altercations and arguments. Other issues included homelessness, family issues, food instability, and numerous others that served as barriers to the participants on their road to

success. For example, Participant 6 stated: “Family problems, financial struggles, and being hard-headed and not listening were challenges I faced while being mentored. My mentors assisted me with these challenges by talking with me and informing me to stay positive.” The literature supports the research as Price-Mitchell (2014) explained that goal-seeking youth seek positive role models to learn techniques to achieve goals, but if no positive adult is in the life of a child, that young person may either fail to develop positive strategies to be successful or seek out a negative role model. Without the involvement of families, schools, the community, and many adults who are important in a young person’s life, the individual may lack a web of positive influences that prevent them from risky choices (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 2012). Lastly, adults creating relationships and serving as role models may help individuals with their hardships and disadvantaged situations (Culyba et al., 2016).

The research revealed that participants wanted to make the right decision in life but did not know what steps to take. They discussed that many negative peers were telling them that they would not be able to be successful in life and that those words affected them since they were having a hard time moving forward in life with making the right choices that would lead to them completing their goals. Participants described that turned to informal mentors that they trusted to help them with making positive choices and guide them through the college application process, as well as assisting them with the job and volunteer applications. For example, Participant 7 stated: “Trust and criticism were challenges I faced while being mentored. My mentors assisted with my challenges by talking with me and helping me with the college process.” The past literature supports

the research as an adult role model could be viewed as a positive figure and serve as a barrier to adverse outcomes (Williams, 2011).

The Mentor Directed Activities Opened the Mentee Eyes to New Opportunities

The research revealed that participants' learning was limited to what their family, environment, and school taught them. They discussed that they were limited because they only knew so much information. Participants noted that informal mentors took them on various activities outside of their environment and that they were able to see the world differently and learn about new opportunities. All participants discussed that going on college visits eased their fears of the college application process as they learned about financial aid and everything that they needed to complete to gain acceptance into college. For example, Participant 6: "Trips to several colleges and visiting different cities and states were activities I found helpful in my learning. The activities and overall mentoring experience helped me see the world differently." The literature supports the research as Price-Mitchell (2014) explained that we learn by watching and modeling our lives after others, and as a result, we acquire experiences throughout our existence that mold us to determine what is right and wrong in the world, as well as how to achieve our goals and aspirations.

Participant 3 stated:

Activities I participated in with my mentors that helped my learning were college visits, volunteering to help others such as toys for tots, and basketball trips outside the state. I found that the activities gave me a chance to see the world differently

and revealed to me that there is more to life than what I currently know.

Compatible with past literature, youth defined success as educational achievements, completion of targets, and participation in extracurricular activities (Killoren, Streit, Alfaro, Delgado, & Johnson, 2016). Morimoto and Friedland (2013) found that youth link success to involvement in volunteer opportunities and civic activities. Vygotsky's social development theory suggested that interactions within a person's social setting are critical to the cognitive development process. Vygotsky (1978) maintained that learning within the social environment occurs before development and asserted that cultural maturation in a person occurs first through socialization and then on an individual level. Vygotsky considered direction from adults and more advanced peers as instrumental in helping children learn as they possess more skills or expertise in an idea, activity, or task than the person that they are interacting with.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of the study is that the sample of participants came from a convenient location and may not represent the experiences of all mentored youth. Explanations of the participants are limited to their viewpoint and experiences and may not be accurate because they are asked to recall information as part of the study. The results of the study are restricted to African American males and females. The final limitation is generalization as the results may not represent the whole population of African American women and men who have had multiple mentors, faced barriers during adolescence, and have experienced success.

Recommendations

I recommend that future researchers sample another minority group such as Asian Americans, Japanese Americans, American Indians, etc. Another recommendation is to have a sample without restrictions to race. The sample can be larger by going into the middle and high schools throughout a school district to help with generalization is another recommendation. I also recommend that groups such as coaches, teachers, and others that are not engaged in formal mentoring will come to understand that informal mentoring is better than no mentoring at all and will continue to find creative ways to engage in informal mentoring. According to Sanchez (2016), African American men are more likely to engage in informal mentoring rather than formal mentoring due to they experience barriers in becoming a mentor in formal mentoring programs. Lastly, there is a population of potential mentors that are unable to engage in formal mentoring due to failing to meet the specific criteria of a mentoring program. It is recommended that these individuals are made aware from mentor programs that they can lend their expertise and mentor youth informally.

Future research could explore mentors perspective of informally mentoring youth in their community. Future researchers could explore informal mentoring on a specific subset such as gender, class, origin to understand how these groups view their experience with informal mentoring. A focus group could be conducted of mentees that were engaged in informal mentoring to gain an understanding of how they learn from their mentors and others.

Furthermore, a researcher could explore comparing and contrasting a subset that has been mentored formally and a subset that has been mentored informally to gain a better understanding of both mentoring styles and how each group learn from their mentors and others. Further research could look at taking a group such as coaches, teachers, and others who have access to youth and explore if the group identify themselves as informal mentors. Lastly, further research could explore if informal mentors enhance their overall learning from young people throughout the mentoring process.

Implications

Harper and Leicht (2015) defined social change as a notable improvement in the social structure and cultural designs over time. The participants in the study faced the same adversities as other individuals but have developed into a productive adult. Hearing from these people who have navigated through life is necessary for social change. Their voices and experiences can contribute to the literature, community, schools, individuals with similar backgrounds, as well as may influence policies at the state and community level that affect youth development. The information acquired from African American young persons can provide a blueprint for other teens with identical circumstances on the support needed to accomplish their goals in life. The relationship between African American youth and substitute mentors can reveal information that is important to all groups that are involved with the development of the population. Also, the data from the study can disclose vital information to readers who may work in youth-related fields or who socialize with youth daily.

Potential informal mentors will realize that they are mentors and continue to support youth in their quest to reach their goals and endeavors. Furthermore, this current study may help parents, educators, and mentors realize that informal mentoring is another form of mentoring for youth. A challenge in working with any group of youth is deciding on how to meet their overall needs while having mentoring be tailored to the needs of the specific person being served (Sanchez, 2016). Another implication is that parents and programs will realize that not every youth requires the same type of mentoring.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study described how important informal mentors are in the lives of young people. All of the participants wanted to be successful in life but lacked the support and knowledge to have a clear path toward completing their goals. Along with hardships and barriers, they had to turn to adults that they trusted to assist in their journey to success. The informal mentors were able to use their knowledge and expertise to expose the participants to new activities and places to provide opportunities for success for them. The young people were able to use the different adults to help aid them in their journey. As a result, all of the young people noted that they achieved success and that the informal mentors were integral in their lives.

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Appendix A: Letter to Church Official

Date:

Name of Church Official

Address

Dear (Name),

My name is Faraji Martin and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting dissertation research on young men and women who were mentored as youth by multiple informal substitute mentors. There are a vast number of studies on formal mentoring and youth development. What is not known, however, is research about informal mentoring and the outcomes described by youth involved in multiple adult mentoring relationships. This research will provide insight into the opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping youth develop.

Your assistance in conducting this much needed research is important. I am asking that you post a recruitment flyer on your bulletin board. Once I have the amount of participants needed for the study, I will contact the church to remove the flyer.

I would welcome a telephone call from you to discuss any questions you may have concerning this study. I can be reached at or emailed at.

Sincerely,

Faraji Martin

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

Appendix B: Letter to Participant

Date:

Name of Participant

Address

Dear (Name),

My name is Faraji Martin and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I am conducting dissertation research on young men and women who were mentored as youth by multiple informal substitute mentors. There are a vast number of studies on formal mentoring and youth development. What is not known, however, is research about informal mentoring and the outcomes described by youth involved in multiple adult mentoring relationships. This research will provide insight into the opportunities and strategies that arise when multiple informal mentors act as role models in helping youth develop.

I understand that your time is important to you, and I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. To fully understand your experience, we would need to schedule an interview for about 30-45 minutes. The interview will take place at a location of your choice, and you will not be required to do anything that you may feel uneasy doing. The interview is constructed to know you better and learn about your experiences as a youth

with informal mentors. All information acquired during the interview will be kept confidential.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience to schedule a date and time that we can meet. My telephone number is. You can also email me at. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Faraji Martin

Doctoral Candidate

Walden University

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

Date: _____

Location: _____

Name of

Interviewer: _____

Name of

Interviewee: _____

1. What does mentorship mean to you?
2. Who do you identify as an informal mentor?
3. What was the length of your mentorship?
4. How many adults have mentored you?
5. What challenges, if any, have you faced while being mentored?
6. How have your mentors assisted with these challenges?

7. What have you learned from these mentors?

8. What activities did you participate in with your mentors that you found helpful in your learning?

Appendix D: Mentoring Study Flyer

RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT HAVING MULTIPLE MENTORS

Be part of an important mentoring study

- HAVE YOU HAD A FEW PEOPLE OTHER THAN YOUR PARENTS WHO GUIDED YOU IN YOUR LIFE?
- ARE YOU BETWEEN 18 and 24 YEARS OLD?
- ARE YOU CURRENTLY IN SCHOOL OR HAVE A JOB?

If you answered yes to all of the above questions, you may be eligible to participate in the research study.

There is Research Study being conducted on the experience of having a few people other than your parents who helped and guided you in your life. Participating in this research study would mean meeting with the researcher for an hour for a confidential conversation about your experiences. The researcher is conducting the study for their Walden University dissertation. There is no compensation for being in the study.

If you are interested please contact Faraji Martin at for more information.