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Exploring Mentoring Relationships and Student Empowerment: A Phenomenological Study of Four Women's Experiences

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EXPLORING MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FOUR WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctorate of Philosophy in Composition and TESOL

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
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Title: Mentoring Relationships and Student Empowerment: A Phenomenological
          Study of Four Women's Experiences

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Mentoring relationships can play important roles in students' progress through their degree program and the decisions they make in their future lives. This phenomenological study examines the mentoring relationships of four women in an attempt to find answers to what mentoring actually means and what drives mentoring relationships, how those relationships affect both mentor and mentee in their lives, and the progression from mentee to mentor. It was guided by a critical feminist framework, drawing from current feminist theories as well as from Freire's critical pedagogy.

Each mentor's and mentees' autobiographical rendering of their experience as a mentee and a mentor and various interviews are incorporated to give a more comprehensive idea of the mentoring relationships and the mentoring experiences. Using current mentoring literature, the themes which emerged from the stories are discussed including igniting shared passions, finding the road to (self)empowerment, extending relationships beyond the classroom, claiming positions of leadership, becoming an agent of change, and moving from mentoring relationships to friendships. Finally, implications for composition teachers, women's studies teachers, and scholars of mentoring are discussed. The study also outlines areas for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally, I could not have done this without the love and support of my family and friends. They were by my side to celebrate victories as well as to help soothe my frustrations throughout this entire process. There are too many people to list, but there are a few who cannot go unnamed.

My parents, Pat and Paul Jones, have always encouraged me and have continually reminded me of how proud they are of me. They have had a hand in helping me feel confident that I can complete anything, and I know I would not have made it this far without their unwavering belief in me. I want to thank them for that and for the "space" in which I was able to complete all of the parts of my academic journey.

My husband, Ryan, deserves a lot of credit for standing by me through two graduate degrees and all of the stress and frustration that came with them. He has been a driving force behind my success. I want to thank him just for being himself, for making me laugh when I wanted to scream, and for encouraging me when I needed it most. He is a great partner, and I am very lucky to have him in my life.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO MENTORING AND THE STUDY

"Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to others….

And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical" (Freire, 2009[1], p. 89).

As Freire argues, love is a two-way process that requires courage and

commitment. A loving relationship is not as simple as one person being the lover and the

other person being loved. The definition of each role is difficult to define because they

are rarely consistent and may sometimes merge or overlap. The same is true with

mentoring relationships or any relationship that revolves around loving or caring. While

it may seem as simple as one person acting as a mentor and the other person being a

mentee, the relationship between the two is much more reciprocal and complicated.

Various scholars have attempted to define exactly what constitutes mentoring in the

classroom, how to be a good mentor, and what the outcomes of mentoring relationships

may be, but few have come to a consensus.

In essence, this study will support or redefine current definitions of teacher-

student mentoring relationships and will add another dimension to the ongoing discussion

by detailing more specific, lasting effects. Specifically, I examine the relationships Grace

Chorley[2] built with the women who would become her mentees: me, Lydia Mitchell, and

Samantha Nefindon. By introducing and analyzing actual mentoring relationships, I seek

to come to a better understanding of the journeys mentors and mentees take and to

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[1]All references to Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* come from the 2009, 30th anniversary edition of the
text.

[2] All names and institutions in this dissertation are pseudonyms.

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discover how different lived experiences of mentoring relationships are similar and are different. While paying specific attention to the relationship between each role, I also hope to share how mentoring relationships may play a part in mentors' and mentees' concepts of self as well as how those relationships affect their conceptualizations of their own futures.

Defining Mentoring

Defining mentoring is no easy task, and its definition varies according to the context and the person defining it. As Roberts found in his review of the literature (2000), there are various interpretations of the activity: some that are alike and some that are drastically different. Alas, we must begin somewhere; Campbell and Campbell (2000) define mentoring as:

> a situation in which a more-experienced member of an organization maintains a relationship with a less-experienced, often new member to the organization and provides information, support, and guidance so as to enhance the less-experienced member's chances of success in the organization and beyond….When the mentor is a faculty or staff employee of the university and the mentee is a student, the goal of the mentoring relationship is to enhance the student's academic success and to facilitate the progression to post-graduate plans—either graduate study or a career in the workplace. (para. 3)

Roberts' (2000) definition closely mirrors this one, though it does not specifically address mentoring in an academic situation. However, Roberts (2000) also asserts that the mentor "actuates a supportive role of overseeing and encouraging reflection and learning" (p. 162), which may be a key part of a mentoring relationship.

Conversely, Kram (1985) identifies mentoring relationships as a process with four stages through which to progress: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. During initiation, both parties slip into their respective parts: mentors as respected advisors, and mentees as the promising tutees. Once roles are established, the relationship is further developed during cultivation; trust is established and built upon, and mentors are rewarded as they watch their mentees begin to blossom and gain a more solid understanding of their new situations and the skills necessary to excel. It is during this stage that the relationship begins to be more reciprocal as mentees begin to share in contributions to the professional side of the relationship. The third stage, separation, is when the two separate for whatever reason, and mentees must attempt to continue their own journeys without the constant support of their mentors. Finally, redefinition occurs as the mentors and mentees must reanalyze the relationship when the mentees no longer need mentor-support, and the two must begin to view each other as peers (Kram, 1985). While these stages seem to be consistent among mentor-mentee relationships, how each stage develops and the time spent in each stage is frequently different for each grouping; Gurvitch, Carson, and Beale (2008) have even suggested that the stages can be recursive as mentee needs prescribe (p. 257).

According to Andy Roberts' series of work (1999a; 1999b; 2000), mentoring can require mentors to adopt androgynous behaviors; mentors must be ready to blend traits that are both instrumental (masculine) and expressive (feminine). This blending of what Roberts identifies as gender traits allows mentors to prepare themselves to act as a support system for their mentees in various situations. Roberts found that many of the

mentors demonstrated more expressive traits than instrumental traits, but that both kinds of actions were useful in mentoring relationships.

A mentoring relationship can presently be loosely defined by the literature as moving within and beyond the classroom and as a relationship that encourages and informs while welcoming an individual into a community and helping him or her adjust to a new environment and new expectations (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Okawa, 2002). Mentoring is not restricted by gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, class, or other descriptors of the human condition. The only barrier between a mentor and a mentee is self-erected and can be dismantled through collaboration once both people have become open to the relationship. Some students may initially be resistant to trusting an authority figure because of past experiences, while others may have such severe self esteem issues that they do not feel deserving of specialized attention. A mentoring relationship may be initiated by either party or may be the result of an organized curriculum.

Mentors are often said to take on the traits of teachers, academic advisors, research advisors, evaluators, confidants, guides, facilitators, friends, coaches, counselors, and role models (Barnett, 2008; Goldner & Mayseless, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Moberg, 2008; Okawa, 2002; Roberts 1999a; Roberts, 2000). Adopting Freire's (2009) beliefs, mentoring is reciprocal and dialogic, and requires mentors to abandon the beliefs of the status quo in support of individual truths. Mentoring relationships require mentors and mentees to establish clear, open avenues of communication (Schlosser and Foley, 2008). Finally, mentoring is a reciprocal relationship that requires commitment and

provides benefits for both parties involved (Okawa, 2002; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Metzger, 2004).

Perhaps the most important aspect to remember about mentoring is that it is not something that can be done alone, nor is it something done *to* another person. Mentors and mentees must both be active participants in the relationship in order for it to be successful. As Freire (2009) points out, "The pursuit of full humanity…cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity" (p. 85). In the same way, mentors and mentees enter into their relationship as partners with a common goal.

Contextualizing Mentoring

The topic of mentoring relationships is deeply personal for me because I have adopted both the mentor and mentee roles during my time as a student and as a teacher. To me, school has never been just about sharing and gaining knowledge on the path to graduation; it is about the relationships that are built in and out of the classroom over the course of that journey. As a student and mentee, I grew as a person and learned how to trust in myself and my own abilities. I realized my own potential and that helped me to push beyond my comfort zones and progress into a career that allows me to attempt to recreate a similar experience for others. As a teacher, I strive to make sure students know that I am available and that I genuinely want to help support them in their journey as writers and as individual men and women in any way that I can.

Even though I know I have a long way to go in terms of my career, I feel like I have had a start of which I can be proud. I have mentored students in and out of the classroom. I have nudged my students toward being involved in student activities; I have

tried to teach them new ways of creating through advanced readings and assignments that ask them to think differently and through multimodal projects that ask them to become literate in new technologies. I think that I have been successful as a teacher and a mentor, but I want to be better. I do not think I will ever know enough about teaching or about mentoring, and that is the driving force behind this dissertation study.

Since research can never be truly objective, it is crucial to have a basic understanding of the researcher's background and how his or her experiences may impact the findings and, more importantly, to gain some insight into what might have initially prompted interest in the study being undertaken (Ramanathan, 2005). Having a basic understanding of the researchers' situations not only reveals motives, but also the unique ways in which they may view the world, the values they may hold, and the ideals they may hope to promote.

Connecting with "Real-Life" Mentoring Experiences

The most poignant mentoring relationship I have had was with a woman I met in my freshman year of college. Her name was Grace Chorley, and she was one of the first college instructors with whom I worked. My relationship with Grace was not contained within the classroom, but expanded across the small campus. I was not only her student, but also I was the editor of the campus newspaper she advised; I was a student representative for one of the clubs she chaired; I worked as a peer mentor in many of her classes; and perhaps most importantly, I was not afraid to go to for help with academic problems.

All of these interactions played a definite part in my development during my undergraduate career. Upon entering college, I was unsure of who I was, and I had little

faith in my own thoughts and abilities. Through working with Grace both in and out of class, I slowly began to trust in myself more fully. As my self esteem increased, I began to feel more capable and genuinely began to like the woman I was becoming. As I learned more, I began to see the value of my own opinions and point of view. I moved from relying on Grace to feeling that people could rely on me. This culminated in my decision to pursue degrees in teaching with the hopes that I could be a part of recreating empowering experiences for future students.

My experience is not as singular as it may seem. While the specific details of my experience are unique, there are many other students who have had similar mentoring relationships with Grace. For instance, Lydia Mitchell was a student in one of the classes I peer-mentored with Grace. She worked closely with Grace and me, and also chose to continue on after graduation to work toward being a teacher and mentor. Presently, Grace is working with Samantha Nefindon, a woman who is not only one of her students, but who has been an imbedded tutor in several of Grace's classes.

Theoretical Framework

My own background will influence how I look at mentoring in general, how I perceive mentor-mentee interactions, and how I interpret what participants will say during our interviews. Accordingly, I will adopt a critical feminist theoretical framework. In Hesse-Biber's (2007) introduction to *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Practice*, she explains that a feminist framework allows researchers to embrace their subjectivity instead of attempting to avoid their own experiences. Since our perspectives are always colored by our pasts, such avoidance would be unlikely to actually occur.

Because of my close connection to the subject through my own experiences and because of my present commitment to being a mentor, I am emotionally invested in this project and am unable to maintain the distance some more positivistic researchers feel is necessary when conducting a study. As I will discuss more completely in chapter III of this dissertation, subjectivity is inescapable as we are all in some way influenced and may be approaching the subject from different perspectives because of past knowledge, experiences, or emotions (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003; Gannon & Davies, 2007; Jaggar, 1997; Maxwell, 2005; Ramanathan, 2005; van Manen, 1990).

My framework is also influenced by Freire's discussion of critical pedagogy. While ideas circling critical pedagogy have developed and changed, reading Freire's (2009) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was a crucial moment in defining my own pedagogical perspective. My understanding of his concepts of oppression, dialogue, and the banking model have all impacted my idea of what characterizes a mutual, empowering classroom and thus affects my definitions of mentoring and my theoretical lens.

Finally, using a feminist framework also allows me to invite my participants to embrace their own stories and emotions because of its emphasis on the importance and value of lived experiences. This study attempts to weave together many different components: my own story, current critical feminist theory, recent literature that focuses on the issue of mentoring, and most importantly, the stories of several individuals who have been mentors, mentees, or, perhaps, both. I hope to both combine and juxtapose these different sources in such a way that they create a better picture of how teachers may be mentoring students in their writing-centered classrooms and how those mentoring

relationships have affected, and continue to affect, students both personally and professionally.

Statement of Purpose

From the time I began to teach, I realized that walking into the classroom was more than just a job for me; it was something deeply personal about which I was extremely passionate, but I was not sure why I felt that way. Writing my own mentoring autobiography made me realize a great deal about my reasons for becoming a teacher. I was not just inspired to mimic a woman who made me feel better about myself and my own life; rather, I came to the realization of just how much impact a single teacher can have on the lives of her students, and I wanted to do that—to positively impact maturing individuals' lives by being an active and empathetic mentor. In having decided to make teaching and mentoring my life's work, it only made sense to focus my dissertation on that subject.

Keeping my own mentoring experiences in mind, I used a critical feminist theoretical lens to see if other students were having similar experiences, and as they were, I looked at some of the ways mentoring was happening in and out of Grace's classroom. To find out answers to these questions and to gain a more comprehensive idea of what defines mentoring, I asked my participants, comprised of Grace, Lydia, and Samantha, to write their own mentoring autobiographies and to be a part of one-on-one interviews on multiple occasions. Allowing each participant to present her story in her own words provided each with the agency to decide how her story was presented. By sharing, analyzing, comparing, and contrasting all of these stories, a clearer picture of what

mentoring means in this context is revealed (See Appendix A for a visual representation of these overlapping relationships).

Since mentoring relationships are so complex, it will be helpful to look at the different places where mentoring happens. For instance, all of the mentoring relationships Grace and her mentees developed began in the classroom, then moved outward to the campus community, and later became genuine friendships that stretched beyond the campus boundaries and state lines. Analysis of all of these stages and the transitions between them will aid in exploring the study's research questions.

<div align="center">**Research Questions**</div>

The main research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- What is mentoring, and what drives teachers to take on a mentoring role?
- How do mentoring relationships affect the lives of both the mentor and mentee in the immediate as well as the long run?
- How do mentees become mentors?

To unpack the complex dimensions of mentor-mentee relationships and to offer insight into the possible responses to these questions, I not only look at the stories of these three individuals but also I look at my own story since it was the catalyst that brought about this inquiry into mentoring relationships. Beginning with my autobiographical narrative in Chapter III of this dissertation, I explore how one specific woman changed my life by providing me with the tools to empower myself and face challenges instead of hiding in the background. From there, I explore Grace's story, Lydia's story, and Samantha's story as all of our experiences are connected through the relationships we have built.

Prospective Participants and the Study Context

In looking at the fields of composition, women's studies, and TESOL to see if others had similar mentoring experiences, I discovered that, while there were articles present, none were focusing on the same issues that interested me. There are some personal stories shared, namely Juanita Johnson-Bailey's work (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005), but most studies are written from a third-person perspective about mentoring or are studies of other people's experiences—and even these works are not prevalent. In this study, I attempt to fill that gap by looking at how Grace mentored Lydia, Samantha, and me while we were students in her classes and how those mentoring relationships grew out of the classroom to the campus as a whole and later developed into personal and professional relationships.

The Setting

My study takes place at a branch campus of a larger state university. I chose this school because of personal and professional contacts I have with the institution and because of my familiarity with the student population, the teachers, and the campus itself. More importantly, it is the campus where Grace teaches and where I graduated from as an undergraduate. The school has a fairly small student body and is located in a small town, with a population of around 7600 residents. The campus's students are mostly commuters as the school does not provide residence halls; however, it has recently begun to promote enrollment of international and inner-city students, though these populations are still minimal, and has hopes of adding on-campus housing within the next decade. The environment is similar to that of its larger university since it has a student union, various campus sports teams, clubs, and activities, but on a much smaller scale.

The majority of students take classes on campus for two years before moving to the main campus, though some do remain at the branch to complete any of the five four-year degrees. Unless the students have chosen to come to the branch campus because of geographical reasons, students are normally placed at the smaller campuses because acceptance committees do not feel they are ready to take classes at the main campus. Like most smaller, transitional campuses, faculty and staff strive to help prepare students for their futures at the larger campuses. While some schools have organized teacher-student mentoring programs, this school does not, and any mentoring that occurs is on a voluntary basis.

The Primary Mentor: Grace Chorley

The study revolves out from my mentor, Grace. She has taught college courses for 27 years. Grace and her husband Lorenzo both teach on the campus, and they have one child. She has spent almost the entirety of her career at the same institution and is a senior instructor and head of the Women's Studies Program on the campus; Grace teaches primarily English or women's studies courses. In the English department, she regularly teaches Basic Writing, Composition I, and the Business-oriented Composition II course. She has taught literature courses focusing on alternative voices, women writers, black American writers, women writers and their worlds, and black, feminist writers. Some of these courses are cross-listed as women's studies courses. Other women's studies courses include the introductory class and a course focused on feminist theory. Besides teaching, Grace was also selected to restructure the campus tutoring center because of her prior experience working in a writing lab at her graduate school. She recreated the center and

ran it for three years. This study took place during the first academic school year that she returned to full-time teaching.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I wanted to take the opportunity to observe Grace in the classroom to pay specific attention to her mannerisms and interactions with her students. During the spring semester of 2011, she taught a first year composition course, two sections of business writing, and a women's studies course focused on black feminist theory. I acted as an observer in all of the courses so that I could see Grace's interactions in the variety of courses she regularly teaches. It is also notable that all of these classes are extremely writing-centered, which allows Grace to not only learn about her students lives through their writing, but also to build or maintain relationships through one-on-one discussion of their work.

The courses include writing assignments that vary in subject, purpose, and length. For the composition class, students complete several individual activities and group activities, all of which focus on and include writing. In addition to these shorter assignments, students must also complete five traditional essays that are three to 10 pages long. Students write a mini-essay to start, then move on to a cause and effect essay, a problem and solution essay, a summary response essay, and then complete the largest assignment: a traditional research-essay that students spend the last month of classes collecting sources for and writing. Throughout the semester, students also receive points for visiting the campus's tutoring center to get additional help with their writing.

Grace's business writing class focuses on providing students with writing assignments that mirror what they may actually encounter in their future careers. They complete a variety of different letters including a cover letter, a routine letter, and a

sensitive letter to have models on how to disseminate certain kinds of information in the workplace. They also create a resume, a portfolio, and work together on the course's major assignment: designing a proposal to help remedy a problem a company may be having. To make this assignment more relevant, students are encouraged to attempt to solve problems that are actually happening in the community or on the campus. For instance, a few students focused on trying to create a better way to advertise one of the campus's minors. Another group was working with the local American Legion to devise ways to increase their membership. In comparison to the other courses Grace teaches, this one seems to be the most student-driven, with students consistently working on their proposal and projects outside of the classroom.

Finally, the Women's Studies course, which was a 400 level course entitled "Reading Black, Reading Feminist," only had four students in the class, three whom Grace had worked with in previous women's studies courses. In the course, students were assigned to complete a mix of at least one paper and two presentations, one of which was for Women's History Month that would be open to the campus and the public. The final project in the class allowed students to choose whether they wanted to complete a paper or complete another presentation. Grace spent class time discussing readings and offering students free time to work on their presentations.

Grace's Mentee: Lydia Mitchell

Lydia is one of Grace's former students and mentees and was also a student in one of the courses where I was a peer mentor. She is 42 years-old and was raised in the region in a working-class family. Lydia and her husband have four children, many of whom are in college and on their own, and she lives half of the week at home and the other half at

the school where she is taking classes. She first met Grace and her husband Lorenzo

during her first semester at the campus, when she took two classes with Grace. Her story

is similar to my own in that she moved on from being a mentee in Grace's classes to

being a mentor in her own courses. After graduation, Lydia went on to graduate school to

work toward an MFA in creative writing. While taking courses and working on her

manuscript, Lydia also teaches. She is presently teaching for her sixth semester, and has

taught composition classes, including composition with a gender studies focus. Lydia

does have prior classroom experience as she worked as a peer mentor during her

undergraduate years just as I did, helping in four of Grace's courses, including women's

studies, women's literature, and African American literature. When Grace first began

running the tutoring center, Lydia also acted as a tutor in the center.

Grace's Mentee: Samantha Nefindon

Samantha has been a student in Grace's courses for over a year. Samantha is a 37

year-old woman, and she and her partner are mothers to four children. She grew up in the

area and returned to school so that she could graduate college by the time her daughter

graduated high school. During her first full school year, Samantha took two courses per

semester with Grace, including the Introduction to Women's Studies course, a women

writers course, a feminist theory course, and a business writing course. She admits to

actively searching out courses to take with Grace each semester and was enrolled in

Grace's "Teaching Black, Teaching Feminist" course. Samantha is involved with a

variety of activities on the campus, many of which she learned about through her

mentoring relationship with Grace. Some of these include the Liaison Committee to the

Commission for Women, the campus's honors society, the SAFE (Students, Allies, Friends, and Educators) club, and the yearly Clothesline Project.

The lived experiences[3] that are shared in this dissertation are not intended to serve as an example of how mentoring relationships are developed in any other context. These instances are valuable in their descriptions of how mentoring has impacted or is impacting lives through interactions with a specific teacher, just as Grace's story may give us clues into how mentors develop. Samantha's story is important because she provides us with a snapshot of what it can feel like to be in the midst of a mentoring relationship, and the stories of Lydia and myself are important since they detail how mentoring has changed our lives in the long run and has impacted how we view our roles as educators.

Their (Dis)Connection to Current Mentoring Literature

This study is not alone in looking at a small, transitional campus, though it does have many elements that are unique in its focus on mentoring and the writing classroom. In addition to the plethora of studies solely focusing on two-year schools, whether focused on community colleges or branch campuses, there are a few studies that look at how mentoring is being used to help prepare students for their future studies and careers. For instance, Ramirez's (2009) dissertation is about mentoring academically underprepared students, but it does not specifically focus on the writing classroom or present narratives of the teachers' or students' experiences.

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[3] Using the term "lived experiences" may seem to be an oxymoron. When using "lived" experiences, I borrow van Manen's (1990) frequent use of the phrase as an object of study in phenomenological research in the same way that Freire calls for critical reflection (2009).

Okawa (2002) looks at writing teachers and their mentoring relationships with their various mentees and shares the experiences of both the mentors and mentees; however, Okawa's study presents relationships that have developed at large campuses rather than smaller, branch campuses. The seven mentoring partnerships under analysis in Okawa's study all begin in different ways, and none of them discuss an undergraduate classroom specifically.

Conversely, my study looks at the smaller branch campus, an atmosphere that is very different from that of a larger institution, and it will focus on specific, writing-centered classrooms. This specific location presents a unique situation since it does not include student housing on campus and is thus made up of commuters who are in large part non-traditionally aged students. Much of the work published about mentoring relationships takes place on larger campuses with a more traditional campus population and atmosphere. Finally, few studies (Okawa, 2002; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004, Metzger, 2004) look at the long-term effects mentoring relationships have had on mentors and mentees (though they do strongly focus on mentees).Thus, there is a need for a study such as this dissertation provides, which addresses and connects these specific contexts and results: analyzing how mentoring takes place on a small, branch campus in writing-centered classrooms and specifically focusing on individuals' stories and the implications mentoring relationships have and have had on their lives.

Significance of study

This study analyzes mentoring relationships and their effects in a very small sample of participants. It does not attempt to generalize, but instead presents observations

and shares the lived experiences of both the teachers and the students[4] involved. At the same time, I hope to raise awareness of the beneficial aspects of mentoring relationships and to be sensitive to how such relationships may differ for different people in different contexts while at the same time promoting more research about mentoring relationships. I hope that the results of this study will suggest the need for more teachers to take an active role in mentoring the students they encounter. The mentoring practices of the teachers discussed as well as suggestions I find in the literature may act as models for other teachers hoping to learn more about effective and ineffective mentoring practices, specifically in the writing classroom.

The stories of the participants will be similar in that they are tied together through common mentoring relationships with Grace (Appendix A). While this study may show these similarities, it will also show how those relationships differed in each case. Allowing all of the participants to tell their own stories highlights the uniqueness of each experience. Georgakopoulou (2006) explains:

> Narratives are of utmost importance in both communication contexts as ways of jointly interweaving events and characters from daily experience and (re)fashioning interpretations of them, working out and through the emotional impact of them. They are also fundamental acts of sharing and through doing, reaffirming closeness in positions and viewpoints, putting them to the test, or revisiting them. (p. 241)

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[4]Because this study focuses on mentoring in the writing-centered classroom, mentor and teacher will be used interchangeably; the same is true for mentee and student.

My aim will be to invite the telling of these stories through the autobiographies and through reflective, open-ended questions and through follow-up questions that will ask for specific details.

Many of the available studies of mentoring relationships are second-hand accounts of mentor and mentee experiences that preserve what some might say is a necessary distance for conducting qualitative research (Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1993). The short vignettes regularly included in the literature offer a variety of experiences and are important in that they show that mentoring is taking places in multiple settings with multiple effects. These articles are crucial parts of the mentoring conversation and have laid the groundwork for continued approaches to understanding how to improve mentoring attempts and how to increase mentoring opportunities.

Nevertheless, I question whether this is the only way to go about describing mentoring relationships and the benefits that result from them. Snapshots of mentoring relationships observed from an outsider's perspective may not adequately describe how much of an impact a mentor can have and how that impact may continue to affect the mentee in the future. It can also be problematic when one person speaks for another; even when researchers use transcribed accounts of conversations with their study participants, the researchers must still make the decision about what parts of the subjects' study are included. When participants literally write their own stories, they gain the agency to present their own perspective and their own story. Unfortunately, extensive autobiographical accounts of mentor/mentee experiences are fairly absent when surveying the literature.

Thus, there is a clear need for research focusing specifically on autobiographical accounts of mentoring in the fields of composition and feminist studies. This study attempts to direct attention to a subject that is mutually beneficial for both teachers and students. Mentoring relationships have shown to benefit teachers by providing them with reflexive opportunities, a clearer look into their students' rapidly changing lives, recognition, and valuable friendships (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Metzger, 2004; Okawa, 2002). While students gain these same benefits, they are also provided with an entry point into the world of academia, may be assisted in understanding future career options, can gain a sense of security when questioning traditional norms, and may find that their self esteem is bolstered, which, among other things, can result in having more confidence (Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Ferrari, 2004; Metzger, 2004; Ramirez, 2009; Roberts 1999b).

While composition studies and feminist studies are talking about mentoring, the discussion is only beginning. It is my hope that this dissertation does more than just add to the conversation already taking place; I hope that it will spark the interest of more members of the academy and bring this topic to the forefront. In the following chapter, I will present a comprehensive review of what the literature is saying about teacher-student mentoring relationships and how these relationships fit into the fields of composition and women's studies. In Chapter III, I will present the methodologies used in gathering and analyzing the data collected for this study. Next, Chapter IV will trace the journey from mentee to mentor, highlighting the steps each participant took and isolating the similarities and differences of the paths each participant chose to take. Finally, Chapter V will present the findings of this study and the implications for future research.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORING THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will move from the general discussion of mentoring in Chapter I to a more in depth analysis. Through a thorough review of the literature, I will identify elements commonly connected with mentoring and discuss the relationships between those points. I explore the effects of mentoring relationships between teachers and students as such a relationship has had a positive impact in my growth as a student, as a teacher, and as an individual. Specifically, I wanted to know how much research is being conducted in the fields of composition, feminist studies, and TESOL that directly relates to the connections between mentoring and the college writing-centered classroom.

In conducting this review, I looked at five different refereed journals that are fair representatives of current research in the fields. I looked at the past eleven years of both the *College Composition and Communication* (*CCC*) and *College English* journals. I also looked at the past eleven years of the *Feminist Teacher* journal, *Mentoring and Tutoring*, and the *Journal of Second Language Writing*. To narrow down articles, I browsed through each volume and isolated articles by looking at titles, reading abstracts, and skimming articles without abstracts. While I mostly focused on the composition and women's studies classrooms, I did not discount articles that focused on other courses such as Writing Across the Curriculum, First Year Seminar classes, and relevant articles concerned with graduate student mentoring. After finding each article, I only included it in my list of sources if it also discussed teacher-student relationships and/or mentoring. This search initially produced 30 articles.

To further supplement this style of research, I did an electronic keyword search using the word "mentor" to see if there were articles I missed. Generally, the only articles that did not match were those that discussed relationships in passing or did not strongly focus on mentoring in writing situations. Articles from this keyword search that did meet the requirements listed above added three more articles. This concluded my search with 33 total articles. From this point, I supplemented my research with various other pieces of scholarship with which I am familiar or that I have come across while familiarizing myself with this topic.

Research in these journals on mentoring relationships and interactions between teachers and students is scarce. Critical discussions of mentoring are most strongly presented in the journal, *Mentoring and Tutoring*. Even though *CCC* and *College English* do touch on the teacher-student relationships in some instances, they do not have much scholarship directly responding to mentoring relationships in the writing-centered classroom. Likewise, while *Feminist Teacher* does spend more time discussing relationships, they fail to examine how those relationships impact students' comfort levels with writing in an academic context. Finally, *The Journal of Second Language Writing* has the largest gap in the literature, not only on the mentoring relationships that develop between teachers and students, but on relationship development in any method beyond written feedback. This gap in the literature shows a need for more research on how the influence of mentoring impacts college writers.

Most of the articles found were qualitative research studies and case studies, though some included quantitative analysis. Certain articles used actual stories of classroom discussions and student reactions, or they used fictional vignettes of classroom

situations as examples of how a theory might play out. In several situations, personal narratives were included as a way to show past and present mentoring relationships or examples of writing as a means of empowerment. Some articles were reflections of the authors' experiences in the classrooms as students or mentees and how their past translates into their classrooms now that they are teachers.

I begin this chapter by detailing a critical, feminist theoretical framework and follow with a discussion connecting feminist and composition classrooms and how mentoring fits into these environments. From there, I offer explanations of how mentoring is being defined, including the implications of how culture, gender, and language may affect mentoring relationships. Next, I discuss how mentoring relationships are formed, paying specific attention to negotiations of power, classroom interactions, and teacher-student discussions of writing in terms of conferences and written comments. Finally, I end with a review of the benefits mentoring partnerships can have on both faculty mentors and student mentees.

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by a critical feminist framework, drawing from current feminist theories as well as from Freire's critical pedagogy. By connecting these two perspectives, I can better create a platform from which to analyze current mentoring literature as well as my experiences and the experiences of my study participants.

I have also chosen this theoretical lens because it holds significant personal meaning in my life. What I learned through feminist theory, via Grace and the classes I had with her, assisted in helping me to believe my own value and gain the confidence I needed to pursue a career that would continually test my abilities and place me in the

position to influence the lives of future students. In the same way, Freire's book was essential to my understanding of the process that led to those changes in my life. The praxis Freire presents was an integral part of the mentoring relationship Grace and I shared then and still share now. In addition, Freire's focus on a dialogic teaching model has impacted my pedagogical point of view as well as affecting my everyday interactions with students and my understanding of Grace's approach to teaching.

Understanding Feminist Theory

Feminist theory provides the freedom to not fear personal experiences, subjectivity, and emotional involvement. According to Gannon and Davies (2007) critical feminism, which is often grouped with postmodernism and poststructuralism, "is not an orderly, agreed on, and internally consistent set of ideas. What [it means] depends on the vantage point from which the speaking or writing is being done" (p. 71). Gannon and Davies (2007) assert that what these frameworks (critical feminism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism) do have in common is the idea that objectivity does not really exist but that every perspective is situated in a specific place, time, location, etc., and all studies are written for specific reasons. As a result, as Maxwell (2005) points out, "*Any* view is a view *from some perspective*, and therefore is shaped by the location (social and theoretical) 'lens' of the observer" (p. 39). Any attempt at writing "is always therefore a partial and particular account, an account that has its own power to produce new ways of seeing and that should always be open to contestation" (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p. 72). In addition, critical feminism calls for a careful and deliberate questioning of traditional norms including the ideas of established truths or definite facts (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Consequently, this framework allows me to embrace the emotional responses that come from reviewing my past as well as present connections and commitments to mentoring. As Jaggar (1997) claims, emotions are inescapably tied to research, not only in interpretations of findings but also in the initial reasons for beginning a study, in the formation of research questions, and in the choice of research subjects. While this does not mean that I should be overly emotional, it does acknowledge the effects my emotions and memories have on the study as a whole.

Understanding Freire's Critical Pedagogy

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2009), Freire tackles the problems of Brazilian peasants' oppression. After detailing how oppression works by outlining what it means to be the oppressor or the oppressed, Freire uses the term "dehumanization" to poignantly describe what happens to those who are oppressed (p. 44). This dehumanization results in the oppressed people's mindset that they are deserving of their second-class status, and results in the belief that "oppressor" or "oppressed" are the only identity options available. This cycle, reliant upon such a narrow worldview, acts as a further form of oppression and causes the oppressed to believe the "truths" that the oppressor presents. Freire describes the resulting self oppression: "They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized" (p. 48). The willingness to believe the oppressor and the absence of critical thought helps to maintain their oppressed situation.

Freire (2009) presents a solution to oppression through the praxis of the pedagogy of the oppressed, "the pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation" (p. 53). The recursive stages of this pedagogy are reflection and action. According to

Freire, true critical reflection will always result in action, but for the process to be successful, the product of that action must also cause and be followed by more reflection. The oppressed must ensure that their rebellion from oppression does not result in a reversal of the same situation but instead must be a new reality where neither oppressor nor oppressed exist (p. 66).

While Brazilian peasants and their oppression are far removed from the realities of the privileged college classroom, Freire's praxis can be put to effective use in this different setting. The end goal of the pedagogy of the oppressed is to help people develop a new worldview that includes critical thinking skills and to allow them to understand what other identity options are available for them. Mentoring is frequently concerned about this same kind of metamorphosis. As Freire succinctly puts it: "Liberation is praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 79). In my own case, Grace provided me with the tools to empower myself, and through that empowerment, I was able to reconceptualize the vast array of possibilities that existed for me.

Friere explains that "while no one liberates himself by his own efforts alone, neither is he liberated by others" (p. 66). Dialogue is a key part of the pedagogy of the oppressed and a pedagogy concerned with mentoring. Since the oppressed have internalized the oppressor's views, the oppressed have little faith in the worthiness of their own thoughts. Dialogue helps the oppressed to speak and to begin to comprehend what it is they have to say. The very act of presenting one's thoughts for the first time can be the most powerful and freeing action because it requires moving beyond the self by putting thoughts into speech. As their thoughts are reflected on and they are questioned

more, the oppressed begin to understand what they know and what other opportunities to know await them through discussion and reflection.

Yet Freire warns that praxis is not the end of liberation: "It is essential for the oppressed to realize that when they accept the struggle for humanization they also accept, from that moment, their total responsibility for the struggle" (p. 68). The praxis must be internalized and become a common, everyday occurrence; it must become an automatic mode of thinking and acting. This responsibility is clearly tied to mentoring as a teacher. When students are taught critical thinking and other skills in the classroom, those skills are meant to become a part of how that student thinks and acts even after they leave the classroom. As a writing teacher and mentor, I am committed to helping my students believe in themselves and to aid them in whatever way they require in their own battles against whatever oppressors they face whether they are academic or personal.

Composition and Feminist Studies

Mentoring relationships are well suited with the fields and classrooms of composition and feminist studies. Because composition is a required course at most universities, almost all students pass through the composition classroom; thus, writing teachers have the opportunity to reach students from across the campus community whether they are English majors or not. As a result, the number of new opportunities for mentoring relationships is increased. Yet because of the wide variety of students composition instructors teach, they need to be ready to adapt to individual student needs and to be open to diverse student populations and situations. A feminist pedagogy may be one of the most effective ways to approach a large and often varied audience as it accounts for difference and encourages students to embrace ideas and points of view that

may be unfamiliar to them (Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005). While this may not always be an easy task to accomplish and may include dealing with situations that may be uncomfortable, the practice of analyzing and discussing these differences holds intrinsic value. To use hooks' (1994) words: "Confronting one another across differences means that we must change ideas about how we learn; rather than fearing conflict we have to use it as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth" (p. 113). Questioning traditional methods of learning seems to be a natural part of a feminist teaching agenda.

While understanding the stereotypes that frequently surround terms such as "feminist" and the likelihood that I may be (and have been) placed in this category, I embrace the label when defining myself because I have a firm understanding of what feminism means to *me*. For me, being a feminist is about acceptance, inclusion, community, support, and building and maintaining relationships that are both professional and personal. These interactions cut across the boundaries of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, linguistic differences, and religious beliefs. Feminism focuses on the commonalities that can be found between individuals while also acknowledging each individual's unique personality and background—in other words, it walks the tricky line that values both similarities and differences while attempting not to isolate, favor, or stereotype according to either.

Teaching via a feminist pedagogy may be approached in various ways, but all of them centralize the importance of student growth and empowerment. While a feminist pedagogy is regularly expected to appear in a women's studies classroom, both Carillo (2007) and Copp and Kleinman (2008) mention the importance of utilizing such pedagogy in other classrooms as well. They argue that keeping feminist pedagogies only

in the women's studies or feminist classroom fails to accomplish anything. If one of the

goals of such pedagogy is to bring about transformation, we must go into new

environments where feminist values may not have been traditionally valued or forwarded

in order to bring about transformation and broaden our student base—even if we suffer

from students' sometimes-biased opinions of feminists or feminisms, which can result in

lower course evaluations and common misconceptions of teaching methods (Carillo,

2007). However, Breeze (2007) suggests that combating misconceptions of feminism

may be one of the primary reasons to teach from a feminist perspective—no matter the

cost.

As such, the composition classroom, which is already known for encouraging

students to find their own voices and write from their own experience (Murray, 2003), is

a logical venue for feminist pedagogy, especially when focusing on mentoring and

empowering students. Feminist pedagogy and much of composition pedagogy is student-

centered and is driven by classroom discussion rather than the "banking methods" of

teacher-focused lecturing (Carillo, 2007; Copp & Kleinman, 2008; Crawley et al., 2008;

Freire, 2009; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005; Porter, 2001; Pratt, 2005). Johnson-Bailey

and Lee (2005) point out that it is also a "nurturing" place (p. 111,) where educators can

empower students in "a caring and safe environment" (p. 114) . Even if some of these

scholars cited above do not overtly claim a feminist pedagogy as their own, their teaching

methods place them into this category by holding the same values.

The relationship between feminism and composition has a long, though not

necessarily widely published, history (Flynn, 1988; Ritchie & Boardman, 1999).

Feminists have spent considerable time looking into issues such as gendered writing

styles, subjectivity, collaboration, and personal narratives. Based on their review of 30 years of literature, Ritchie and Boardman (1999) argue that "in the future these relationships will persist—with unspoken alliances between feminist thought and composition" (p. 601).

Other scholars have named specific pedagogies that are well suited to the feminist, composition classroom. These may have positive empowering effects on students while also promoting mentoring relationships. Okawa (2002) offers the very act of mentoring *as* a pedagogical strategy to reach students and encourage advancement. Lynch (2009) uses Neil Postman's "thermostatic" metaphor as a base to build a method that relies on the instructor's ability to react to student transformation. Lynch's thermostatic classroom is a place where traditional binaries are not present, but where a teacher-student equality is understood as unrealistic as well. The teacher must find the balance between the two. Haswell, Haswell, and Blalock (2009) suggest a pedagogy of hospitality—in terms of treating the classroom similar to how they would treat relationships where people have been invited into a person's home. An environment employing a pedagogy of hospitality is not student-centered but consists of reciprocal relationships that mirror that of a host and his/her guests, where mutual respect is a primary agent. Finally, Goldner and Mayseless (2008) suggest that mentoring may be a natural aspect of teaching and that it may "offer a unique and an extensive way of teaching that combines academic, instrumental learning with a caring and dyadic relationship" (p. 418). What connects all of these pedagogies is that they create relationships between the teacher/mentor and the student/mentee that may not traditionally appear in all classrooms.

<center>**Mentoring**</center>

Mentoring is a broad topic in terms of its use in voluntary as well as organized situations not only in schools but also in the workplace and in business. Thus, it is important that we take the time to clearly discuss what is meant when using the term mentoring throughout this study.

Defining Mentoring

In a 20 year review of the literature, Roberts (2000) found that mentoring can be described in essentially eight ways:

1. a process form

2. an active relationship

3. a helping process

4. a teaching-learning process

5. reflective practice

6. a career and personal development process

7. a formalized process

8. a role constructed by or for a mentor

He stresses that mentoring is a process rather than an event because it is ongoing and adaptable to situations as they change. Okawa (2002), on the other hand, does not begin her discussion of mentoring by defining it, rather she questions it—why do we mentor, and what are the benefits for both mentor and mentee? (p. 510). While Okawa (2002) primarily discusses the importance of academic mentoring for faculty and students of color, her claims about the importance of mentoring can be applicable to different kinds of mentoring and to mentoring of all races. In this assertion, I do not aim to neglect or

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undervalue the importance of same-race mentoring, but instead to forge a connection and show the value of mentoring for all faculty and students.

While some consider mentoring to be ingrained, a practice that some teachers do without thinking, Okawa looked at the cases of two mentors and their various mentees to go beyond that assumption. She discovered that mentoring may not be innate but may be commonly defined by the mentor through past experiences and as a means of helping students adapt to new environments. The student mentees described the process as being welcomed into the academic environment and different communities as well as being encouraged to go beyond what they thought were their own capabilities. The mentees also were excited to be able to be invited to enter into discussions of their work with scholars in their fields and to be given information that had first seemed "hidden" from them as students of color. The feeling of mutuality is a common theme in some of the literature, implying that it can be helpful if both mentor and mentee share similar worldviews or backgrounds (Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Okawa, 2002).

Scholars have also stressed the importance of mentor interest beyond schoolwork by understanding and sympathizing with family situations. In Okawa's (2002) study, mentors were available to help students deal with transformation as a result of what the mentees were learning and to provide encouragement when students felt they were unable to continue in higher education. These mentoring relationships resulted in greater self confidence for the students. Okawa (2002) concludes that mentoring is the creation of a bond between individuals, one that is "trust based on mutual self-disclosure and sharing" (p. 527).

In looking at the faculty perspective, Roberts (1999a) found that mentors expected to have to take on androgynous roles that blend what he calls instrumental qualities, masculine traits which focus on self promotion and goal achievement, and expressive qualities, feminine traits that require mutuality and show awareness of the mentees' feelings. While there are distinct problems with attributing such qualities with gender, Roberts' work is still valuable in that once looking at how mentors really performed, Roberts (1999b) found that mentors displayed more expressive qualities than instrumental qualities, though some were occasionally present. Mentors who are conscious of opportunities to blend instrumental and expressive traits, even if they do not actually enact them, prepare themselves to be versatile and flexible in order to adjust to the various roles mentoring situations require of them. In surveying students at Hong Kong Baptist University, Mee-Lee and Bush (2003) found that the top three characteristics students found admirable in a mentor were expressive traits such as being "understanding and sympathetic," "accessible to students," and "communicates well." These traits were followed by preferences for enthusiastic personalities, good teaching skills, and attractive lifestyles (p. 268).

The variety of roles that come hand-in-hand with being a mentor require individuals to be teachers, academic advisors, research advisors, evaluators, confidants, guides, facilitators, friends, coaches, and role models (Barnett, 2008; Goldner & Mayseless, 2008; Johnson, 2008; Moberg, 2008; Moss et al., 1999; Okawa, 2002; Roberts 1999a; Roberts, 2000). Roberts (1999b) found that mentors did not find these roles to be conflicting with mentoring, with the exception of evaluation. While some mentors may not feel comfortable developing a level of friendship with their students,

such attachments seem to typically become a natural, sometimes unplanned, aspect of mentoring relationships.

One of many keys necessary for successful mentoring relationships is the ability to juggle many different "hats" (Young et al., 2004). Since mentors may have to perform many roles, it is vital that they make it clear which hat they are wearing at different times (Moss et al., 1999; Young et al., 2004). For instance, when a student comes to talk about a personal crisis, the friend hat would be more appropriate than an evaluator hat. Being clear about the position from which the mentor is speaking is a way to help avoid betraying the mentee's trust. Communicating clear ideas of expectations is also important in not only maintaining trust, but also creating it in the first place. As Schlosser and Foley state (2008), mentors should, at the very beginning of the mentoring partnership, clearly inform their mentee about potential costs and benefits that may come about as a result of the relationship.

In terms of developing mentoring relationships, most articles discuss a one-on-one partnership. Packard, Walsh, and Seidenberg (2004) found that first-year student mentees did tend to choose only one mentor, but graduating seniors regularly reported having multiple mentors, including mentors from academic settings, from their home lives, or from social relationships. It could be that having mentors from different contexts allowed students to choose mentors who were able to fulfill different requirements and limit the number of "hats" a single mentor may have had to wear.

Building on the work of these scholars, I define mentoring as a relationship that can (and often should) move beyond the classroom, a relationship that encourages and informs while welcoming an individual into a community and helping him or her adjust.

Mentoring requires good communication skills from both parties (Schlosser and Foley, 2008). Perhaps most importantly, mentoring is reciprocal—it has benefits for both the mentor and the mentee (Okawa, 2002; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Metzger, 2004). Mentors can learn more about themselves and their work while also being reminded of how important and fulfilling interpersonal relationships can be. Meanwhile, mentoring can empower students in various ways from building self confidence to granting validity to students' own viewpoints and writing.

Complex Identities that Influence Mentoring Relationships

Both mentors' and mentees' identities play a role in shaping how the mentoring relationship forms and develops. Elements such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, age, relationship history, as well as innumerable other factors or combinations of factors affect not only how individuals define themselves but in how they define relationships with others. Some may be more comfortable speaking openly about thoughts and emotions while others may prefer to be prompted with questions or stories.

As Okawa (2002) posits, culture, in terms of teacher and student race, ethnicity, and background, can impact how the mentoring relationship is formed and sustained. There is controversy about whether or not pairing similar situations can be beneficial for faculty and students, with each side of the argument presenting valid pros and cons. In terms of supporting relationships focused on similar backgrounds, much of the literature shows a focus on building mentoring relationships between minority groups (Bizzaro, 2002; Cambell & Campbell, 2007; Ferrari, 2004; Flower, 2003; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005; Kinloch, 2005; Okawa, 2002). Okawa

(2002) suggests that such relationships will benefit students by validating their cultural values while Bizzaro (2002) suggests that these relationships will help students learn how to work together to fight against ethnic stereotypes. Meanwhile, Campbell and Campbell (2007) suggest that ethnicity-matching may have a positive effect on mentee success and tends to increase student interest in pursuing a graduate education.

In cases where mentors and mentees come from different cultural backgrounds, Schlosser and Foley (2008) highlight several ethical issues that can arise and suggest that mentors, as the ones in a position of power, need to be willing to understand and accept difference. Gonsalves (2002) also mentions that cultural background can result in misunderstandings between faculty and students, specifically when they are discussing the students' writing. In order to accomplish a clear means of understanding and communication, mentors and mentees must be willing to focus specifically on communicating and discussing each person's expectations to prevent misunderstandings or unintended offenses (Shore, Toyokawa, & Anderson, 2008). The same can be true when working with students who have different sexual preferences, come from a different social or economical standpoint, or are of a different age.

Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004) also focus on cross-cultural mentoring relationships and explain that a more complicated trust is required than in same-race situations because of historical racial tensions. They claim that working closely with someone of a different race can enhance awareness of privilege and vulnerability for both people. They go on to explain that such associations do differ from a more traditional mentoring situation because it is almost impossible for the mentor to "re-create their

mentees in their own image, relying on a plan that proved successful in their academic careers" because of the political implications connected to race (p. 16).

To have a successful bond, mentor and mentee must learn how to both "see" and "forget" race (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004, p. 18). By this, Johnson-Bailey and Cervero mean that each member of the mentoring relationship must see the other as an individual person—a complex person whose identity includes membership in a racial group—but also recalls that the person does not represent that entire racial group—in essence, forgetting their race. This is a valid point when dealing with any kind of difference. It is crucial that mentors and mentees remember that just because a person falls into a certain category does not mean that they will live up to any stereotypes associated with the group or that their actions or thoughts represent how that group as a whole may think or feel. This creates an interesting and useful conversation as "by regularly discussing the barriers, we can act as if they are not there" (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004, p. 18).

Likewise, gender also must be considered in mentoring relationships. There are few scholars willing to take a firm stance about whether mentoring pairs should be gender matched or not. In their quantitative study of mentoring pairings for at-risk students, Campbell and Campbell (2007) found that gender-matched pairings may have had slightly detrimental effects on mentees in terms of their GPAs, graduation rates, and interest in continuing into graduate programs; however, the study also showed that gender-matched mentoring tended to increase students' desire to gain teaching credentials. While there is no consensus about the benefits or drawbacks of cross-gender pairings, some have shown that these partnerships could be problematic if the mentors

take on authoritative roles while mentees take on passive roles which fail to showcase their skills and abilities.

Meanwhile, others argue that mixed-gender mentorships have few, if any, negative effects (Roberts, 1999a). Shore, Toyokawa, and Anderson (2008) have analyzed in depth the four variations of gender-paired mentorships and discussed the implications associated with each. Roberts (1999b) found that both male and female mentors did not feel as though their gender prevented them from being attentive and empathic. While they did acknowledge that cross-gender mentor-mentee relationships could have potential problems, none of the 16 who were interviewed reported actually encountering any of those problems, which may suggest that awareness of what could be problematic may help prevent problematic cross-gender situations from materializing. Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004) echo the importance of maintaining awareness as their relationship was not just cross-cultural, but also cross-gender.

It is also important to remember that gender plays a part of representing oneself as not only a mentor, but as a feminist. Specifically, male feminist teachers may experience different obstacles while attempting to build teaching or mentoring relationships with their students (Bizzaro, 2005; Breeze, 2007). Breeze (2007) discusses the problem of students questioning male teachers' authority or their ability to speak authentically from a feminist perspective. Feminists must "face the challenge of presenting an alternative and more accurate view of feminism than students typically bring to class," including the idea that men can be passionate feminists just as women can (Breeze, 2007, p. 59). Meanwhile, Bizzaro (2005) asserts the importance of mature male feminists in being mentors and role models for younger men. He sees a need to help young men realize that

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there are other options out there beside the traditional male stereotypes. Both Breeze (2007) and Bizzaro (2005) claim that being clear about their position as a male feminist is a crucial step in achieving positive relationships with students.

Finally, language can impact mentoring relationships in terms of mentors' and mentees' language abilities. Having a supportive mentor can help students feel more confident in their speaking and writing abilities while also providing them a safe space where they can ask questions and get advice. In some ESL classrooms where "teachers are 'supposed' to operate dispassionately" (p. 118), Blanton (2005) suggests that welcoming students into a community environment and encouraging them to work with invested mentors may be the key to helping students gain better literacy skills and become better writers. Likewise, Kinloch (2005) suggests that accepting students' home languages may result in a reciprocal acceptance of classroom policies and teaching practices (p. 100).

Varying Approaches to Mentoring Relationships

While all of these factors are important aspects of any kind of mentoring relationship, it is important to acknowledge that mentoring can take place in a variety of different forms. Different approaches to mentoring can empower people in various ways, and some students may only respond to certain types of mentoring. One brand of mentoring may be academically-driven or career-focused and happen serendipitously while others, specifically in the business world, are formally organized. Some institutions and businesses employ faculty and staff to act in a mentor capacity, assigning incoming students or employees to mentors, and requiring mentors to track their mentees' progress. Certain mentoring relationships take place between peers. Finally, specific mentoring

partnerships may call for more emotional support where mentors and mentees meet to discuss traumatic events or daily situations that may be causing the mentee unnecessary emotional distress (Durfee & Rosenberg, 2009). No matter the kind of mentoring that may be taking place, and it may be a mixture of several types, mentoring does happen, and it can be a valuable experience for everyone involved. In an academic setting, mentoring can take place in a variety of settings including classrooms, study halls, residence halls, or writing centers. There has also been a recent trend of virtual mentoring relationships that occur on-line through MOOs, e-mail, chat rooms, blogs, and forums (Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005; Turpin, 2007).

Forming Relationships

No matter what kind of relationship teachers hope to build with students, all relationships require mentors to be cognizant of the differences between themselves and their mentees and the fact that both parties are taking a risk. Kalbfleisch and Davis (1993) explain that mentors and mentees must progress into mentoring relationships with the understanding that they will "expose themselves to the risk involved with being cognitively and emotionally intimate with another party, especially when this party is part of a professional environment" (p. 403). While mentors and mentees may share some commonalities, mentees should be treated as the vulnerable party, and mentors should be prepared to advocate for them—specifically when looking at the dynamics of the mentoring relationship. There are intricate power dynamics in the relationship where the mentor is usually in a position of power. It is important that mentors find some common ground with their mentees; however, it is equally important that they establish and maintain certain boundaries. Mentors need to monitor not only their in-class interactions

with their mentees but also any out-of-class interactions whether they are academic or social.

Negotiating Unequal Power Relationships

To begin, teacher-mentors must always keep in mind that the relationships they share with their student-mentees cannot be relationships of equality as long as teachers are responsible for assigning grades and maintain other academic roles (Lynch, 2009; Myers, 1986; Powell & Takayoshi, 2003; Roberts, 1999b). However, this does not mean that teachers and students cannot have meaningful, reciprocal relationships that extend beyond the classroom and a single semester. Copp and Kleinman (2008) are well aware of power relations in their classrooms and describe their relationships with students as an understood and discussed "state of temporary inequality" (p. 102). Clearly defining the power structure as such allows students to come to terms with traditional teacher and student roles. Such understanding brings students and teachers closer together as the semester progresses.

Powell and Takayoshi (2003) also acknowledge the impossibility of creating an equal relationship, claiming that even if authority figures present such an image, students may ultimately view them as "the teacher" or "the mentor" and will recreate the traditional roles as the relationship develops despite the mentor's original intentions (p. 403). Yancey (2004), Wallace (1999), and Myers (2003) encourage teachers to be more aware of the power they exert in the classroom and how students respond to their authority. Power differences are even more notable when mentors differ from their potential mentees in terms of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and/or linguistic competence (see "Complex Identities" section above).

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Leveling the field. Mentoring relationships can often develop from normal classroom interactions. While it is important for mentors to maintain their authority when dealing with students, studies have shown that it is also crucial that teachers let students know that they care about them both in terms of academic development as well as personal growth (Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; Mawhinney & Sagan, 2007; Meyers, 2009).

Meyers asserts that students do notice whether teachers exhibit signs of interest and care about the individuals in their classroom. He found that when defining "effective teaching," students rated personal interactions higher than most teachers did. He urges teachers to find a way to balance caring, on both the instructional level and the personal level, as both are critical to increasing "students' motivation and engagement and ultimately can advance their education" (Meyers, 2009, p. 208).

The "motivation and engagement" that Meyers mentions is often a result of good teacher-student rapport, which Benson, Cohen, and Buskist (2005) claim results from immediacy: "the extent to which teachers establish a supportive and caring learning environment through their verbal and nonverbal behavior, which includes establishing eye contact, smiling, and calling students by name" (p. 237).

Mawhinney and Sagan (2007) suggest additional ways to build rapport, including getting to know students, practicing a level of self-disclosure to allow students to get to know the teacher, reestablishing interactions with a student after a negative incident, having high expectations for *all* students, and being an "active and empathetic" listener. The classroom environment can have a definite effect on students' learning and their "mental state of readiness" (Mawhinney & Sagan, 2007, p. 461). Positive rapport can

create a safe environment, and "…higher-order thinking is more likely to occur in the brain of a student who is emotionally secure than in the brain of a student who is scared, upset, anxious, or stressed" (Mawhinney & Sagan, 2007, p. 461).

While these scholars specifically discuss classroom interactions and teacher-student relationships in general without looking specifically at mentoring, a secure classroom environment is an ideal place to initiate mentoring relationships. As Meyers (2009) explains, "Supportive relationships in the classroom can encourage students to become more invested in learning, enable them to extend beyond their current abilities, and form a bridge for mentorship" (p. 209). By initiating interactions with students from a more caring perspective, a potential mentoring relationship may seem more and more appealing as the semester progresses. What begins as a relationship focused on academic interests and improvements frequently morphs into a different relationship that, while possibly still prioritizing academics, focuses on personal interactions—discussion of romantic and familial relationships, plans and concerns about the future, and other general problems the mentee may be having. While these discussions may not be appropriate for the classroom at large, they are commonly part of mentor-mentee interactions. A certain level of personal connection is not only favorable but also beneficial to both the mentor and the mentee; however, it is vital that mentors take the responsibility of maintaining some personal-professional boundaries.

Maintaining necessary boundaries. As previously stated, the relationship between teachers and their students is not and cannot be equal because teachers have the responsibility to evaluate and grade students. Thus, it is important for teachers to keep this fact and the responsibilities connected to it in the forefront of their minds. Roberts

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(1999b) suggests that assessment and mentor roles may not be compatible in that mentees may not be comfortable approaching mentors who have power over their advancement in a class or program. Likewise, Johnson (2008) questions whether mentors can be biased in their evaluations if they focus too much on classroom mutuality. He suggests that teacher-mentors must be well versed at drawing relational lines and they must regularly practice critical, correctional feedback rather than focusing solely on positive feedback, though both are extremely valuable. Mentors must be able to provide "guidance via constructive and positive criticism whilst not shying away from honesty on performance" (Roberts, 1999b, p. 214).

It is also valuable when mentors are willing to remind mentees of the reality of their situations—even if the news may not be exactly what the mentee wants to hear. Balmer (2008) shares her story of idealistic visions of her own research, and her mentor who "gently brought [her] face to face with reality, and then let [her] grieve" (p. 189). This is not a call to trample on the dreams of mentees; rather, it is a request to help keep their heads low enough in the clouds that they can still see what they are walking into.

In the same way, mentors must monitor levels of intimacy between themselves and their mentees. As a result of the special relationship they share, mentors and mentees may spend many hours together working on papers or research, planning the mentees' futures, sharing personal stories, and discussing current academic, professional, and personal situations. It is important that as the relationship develops and the members of the relationship get to know each other and care about each other that intellectual stimulation and fulfillment is not confused with sexual attraction (Barnett, 2008).

Students should have a clear understanding of exactly what kind of interest their mentors have in them. Most importantly, sexual relationships should be avoided at all cost as they have great potential to harm both of the persons involved but have specific, detrimental effects on the more vulnerable mentee (Schlosser & Foley, 2008; Shore, Toyokawa, & Anderson, 2008). Mentors have the responsibility to protect their mentees, especially from what could become an emotionally compromising element of the relationship.

Along the same lines, mentors must be mindful and respectful of their mentees' privacy. Mentors should be wary of asking for personal details and disclosures that students may not be willing to share and should, instead, wait for mentees to volunteer information after establishing whether or not they are willing to discuss such matters. Haswell et al. (2009) never require students to self-disclose as they feel that asking students to do so may be an abuse of the power that comes with being a teacher. Any request for students to share should be sensitive to student willingness and resistance. At the same time, when students do share their concerns or personal crises, it is vital that the mentor respects the mentee's feelings even if the mentor does not understand the situation or if the mentee's issues may seem insignificant from the mentor's point of view.

Once having established mentoring relationships with students, it is crucial that these relationships are viewed positively rather than negatively by other students and the campus community at large. Various scholars have stressed the importance of not showing favoritism (Gonsalves; 2002; Metzger, 2004; Schlosser & Foley, 2008). Metzger (2004) highlights the potential for alienation of other students if we bestow our "blessing" on only one or two students. She defines "blessing" as when teachers "[single]

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out [students] for praise and recognition" (p. 66). Instead, Metzger suggests that all students, whether they be mentees or not, should be given attention equally, an idea echoed by Mawhinney and Sagan (2007). Likewise, Gonsalves (2002) asserts that asking several students for their opinions can empower them and give their thoughts value; thus, distributing our "blessing" more equally could also result in a greater number of empowered students (Gonsalves, 2002; Shor, 1992).

A different form of "blessing" may appear after emotional mentoring, when a teacher may have been available to talk with a student about a personal problem or a traumatic incident written about in a journal or personally reflective essay. According to Durfee and Rosenberg (2009), students can become emotionally invested in what they have written and may want to talk to someone. They assert that teachers should understand that it is not their job to fix emotional problems that may come with writing about a tragic incident, but instead teachers should be supportive and help the student work through the problem by being an active listener. The challenge is to return to "normal" classroom interactions after what might have been an extremely personal meeting. Durfee and Rosenberg (2009) advise discussing future interactions with the student ahead of time so that he or she does not dread coming to class and being spotlighted or given special treatment; confidentiality is a vital part of emotionally-supportive mentoring. At the same time, while advocating for students is also critical, it is important to keep in mind that students are not always looking for someone to fight their battles or solve their problems and that they may sometimes just need to talk to someone.

While these boundaries are necessary to maintaining a clear and successful mentoring relationship, they are in no way static or impenetrable. As Barnett (2008)

explains, boundary crossings are not necessarily boundary violations as long as the intent is not malicious, as long as both parties are comfortable, and as long as it is done ethically and not for one person's gain over the other. He offers a model to help mentors determine when crossing boundaries may or may not be appropriate. Being cognizant of our position of power in the classroom is crucial to not only enacting critical pedagogy but also in monitoring how we interact with students in other settings.

Optimizing In-Class and Out-of-Class Interactions

Many mentoring relationships that evolve between teachers and their students take root in the classroom. Classroom interactions allow teachers and students to form first impressions and learn about each other through class discussion, everyday dynamics, and writing assignments. At the same time, outside-of-the-classroom exchanges also play a valuable role in the development of mentoring relationships. While some of these interactions may still be academically focused, such as one-on-one conferences and written comments on student writing, mentors and mentees may also connect for purely social reasons, whether it is to talk about future plans, encourage students to be active on the campus, or to simply get to know each other.

Classroom dynamics and assignments. Freire (2009) discusses the values of a dialogic model of communication. In *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he pinpoints the downfalls of lecture-based communication, what he calls the "banking method" (p. 72). He proposes that teachers use an approach based on discussion not only because it humanizes the students rather than turning them into knowledge receptacles, but also because "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with

the world, and with each other" (p. 72). In essence, we must give students the ability to be active agents in their own education by allowing them to develop, discuss, and question their own points of view rather than presenting them with ready-made knowledge and beliefs.

Following Freire's model, Carillo (2007), Crawley et al. (2008), and Pratt (2005) also specifically focus on the values of a discussion-based dynamic. They emphasize the importance of "guided inquiry" (Crawley et al., 2008, p. 14-16) which involves using questions as the primary method of leading class discussion. Instead of lecturing, the teacher builds upon what students are saying by asking more questions about the topic and leading them in new directions based upon what is already known. Through these questions, students create their own knowledge and connect what they are learning with their actual experiences. This can give additional meaning and relevance to the topics of the day.

Pratt (2005) also stresses the importance of encouraging students to express their opinions, even if teachers do not agree, and of not providing a "correct" teacher-given answer (p. 6). Lindquist (2004) furthers this idea by pointing out that the focus should not be about the teacher's experience or views: to do so creates a narcissistic, teacher-focused classroom environment. Instead, teachers should encourage students to go from "surface acting," pretending they are emotionally responding, to "deep acting," a real recognition and expression of emotion (Lindquist, 2004, pp. 196-197).

Assignments are another important aspect of teachers' interactions with students and is key in providing students with the opportunity to empower themselves. In a

discussion centered on helping students in a research writing course, Brent (2005) explains:

> in order to [teach research methodology to freshmen students] effectively, [teachers] needed to allow time for students to explore the unfamiliar alleys and back roads of the process, to mentor students individually, to send work back with revision-promoting rather than editorial comments, and above all *to empower students to make mistakes* [emphasis added]. (p. 273-274)

Academic mentoring such as this often revolves around encouraging students to keep trying their own methods rather than outlining teacher-created steps for the student to follow. This helps guide students toward an alternate view of learning that enhances their feelings of being capable and able to solve their own problems. At the same time, it can teach them how to devise their own learning strategies. Students should be aware that guidance is available, but they benefit most by being encouraged to find their own way and to discover what works best for their own unique needs.

One strategy that gives students agency to find their own way are popular assignments which focus on students writing personal autobiographies or narratives. Crawley et al. (2008) assign a final project that is a student-based autoethnography (p. 24), while Pratt (2005) creates assignments that require reflection on life experiences and values because her students claimed connecting their own stories with popular representations was an extremely effective way to learn (p. 7). In Pratt's student-centered class, all of the students were organized into groups. One way in which she emphasizes the importance of each student's lived experience was to make a rule that, in order to get

the highest grade, students had to think about some way of connecting their topic to something they had actually experienced.

However, Powell and Takayoshi (2003) warn that students may not represent themselves honestly and instead "perform" what they think the assignment requires. Instead of this being a drawback, they assert that such performances can actually be good for students and can provide them with various strategies to use when approaching writing for different genres. Roberts and Cimasko (2008) suggest that the ability to write in different genres, specifically scientific genres, is valuable for students. They specifically focus on second language learners as they may be judged more harshly by university professors from the fields of math and science. Zhu (2004), when analyzing how faculty weighed the importance of academic writing, found that instructors were divided. Some felt that writing instruction should be about teaching general writing rules, while others felt that content should be an important part of writing instruction so that students had a better understanding of genre.

Porter (2001) attempts a different method where assignments provide students with the vocabulary and strategies to understand higher order writing concerns, thereby empowering them in situations of peer critique while also benefitting an understanding of their own writing. This knowledge does not just help the students improve their writing in the course, but it can also increase their level of self-assurance about writing in other genres in and out of the classroom. Additionally, assigning texts that students can not only relate to but also be inspired by is another way students can be empowered (Pough, 2002; Stover, 2003); however, not all scholars feel that using texts in the classroom is a successful or effective pedagogy. For instance, Hurlbert (2006) argues against using

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textbooks in the composition classroom, instead encouraging his students to create their own books that explore topics that they want to know about and to share with the world around them. According to Hurlbert (2006), working in a workshop setting with students allows all members of the class to interact more freely.

Outside conferences, comments, and social meetings. While classroom interactions are important, what takes place when mentors and their mentees meet outside of the classroom deserves equal attention. Writing conferences may seem to be a natural venue for teacher-student mentoring, but mentoring may not happen naturally. Teachers have to be willing to give up their role as the authority and be willing to meet students on their own levels. Gonsalves (2002) points out that "It's much easier to have a candid conversation about student writing if faculty and student already have enough of a connection so that the student feels safe revealing his or her confusion about [the teacher's revision] expectations" (p. 454). For a conference to be an empowering experience for students, they must be active participants in a dialogue. Without conscious reflection on the level of teacher-student interaction, many teachers may not realize that students are not given an opportunity to take on an active role (Ewert, 2009).

For instance, teacher-student conferences provide teachers with the opportunity to allow students to express their opinions and are where Metzger (2004) claims "real transformations [take] place" (p. 73). Lerner (2005) outlines the history of conferencing in composition, dating its beginnings in the 1800s and posits that conferencing is "a way to meet individual students' needs" (p. 187) and "to create meaningful relationships with an increasingly diverse student body" (p. 203). Haswell, Haswell, and Blalock (2009) also see the value in conferencing and feel that students should talk as much or more than

the teacher during these meetings, a belief echoed by Ewert (2009). In looking specifically at the interactions between second-language writers and their writing teachers, Ewert found that scaffolding and negotiated discussion of revisions between the teacher and the writer resulted in better revised papers when both parties were frequently invited to speak.

Mentoring relationships may also blossom through writing-based first-year seminars (FYS). Brent (2005) recognizes that the FYS is a valuable place to work closely with students on their writing—especially when it leaves room for shared interests and time for individual conferences (p. 267). Students' identities are closely connected with their writing, so conferencing about what students write about may be an opportunity to get to know them better at the same time.

Since daily or even weekly conferences are not usually possible, writing teachers interact more frequently with their students by responding in writing to student work. Copp and Kleinman (2008) discuss how valuable commenting on student papers can be when it is a means "to *connect* [emphasis added] to students rather than to *correct* [emphasis added] them" (p. 109). While they acknowledge the importance of making sure students are learning, they claim that focusing on connection will help students feel more comfortable expressing their own views and opinions without feeling the need to censor themselves due to what they may originally view as a barrier between themselves and an evaluator.

Just as it is important to consider conference interactions with students, it is also crucial that teachers remember how seriously students take their written comments and become reflective about the commenting they actually do versus the commenting they

think they are doing. Montgomery and Baker (2007) conducted a study looking at how students perceived feedback on their writing, what teachers thought they were commenting on, and what they were actually writing to students about. They discovered that what the teachers reported that they had focused on in their analysis did not match up with what they actually commented on in students' drafts. Instead of focusing on global issues, the teachers focused on local matters despite the fact that they were trained to do the opposite. Lee (2008) also looked at teacher feedback and found that too much "teacher-centered" feedback and feedback focused on local problems causes students to be passive and to become reliant on continued, similar feedback. As a result, students often fail to take the initiative to learn from their mistakes. Thus, it is important for teachers to be self-reflexive about the feedback they are giving their students and consider the impact those comments have on their students' writing and their attitudes about writing.

Goldstein (2004), in an attempt to find a way for multilingual writers and teachers to both get the most out of written feedback, suggests that communication may be a key factor. Teachers need to be careful that the comments they make do not alter the student's original purpose or alter the intended meaning. She suggests coversheets as a means of communicating the anticipated audience and purpose and encourages face-to-face discussion of revisions if meanings are unclear for the teacher or the student. Lindquist (2004) also stresses the importance of communication. When responding to student papers, teachers must be certain to respond to what students were originally asked to do. For this to work, teachers and students must have very clear, matching ideas of what the assignment entails and how it will be assessed.

Miao, Badger, and Zhen (2006) analyzed Chinese EFL students' responses to feedback from both peers and teachers and discovered that students took teacher feedback more seriously and responded to more of the teacher's suggestions than those made by their peers, a difference of students adhering to 90% of teacher comments and only 67% of the comments made by students because students felt more confident in following the teacher's advice than suggestions made by their peers. On the contrary, Lee and Schallert (2008) found that not all students are confident in teacher feedback, suggesting instead that students are more apt to follow teachers' advice if students and teachers have formed a reciprocal, trusting relationship first, a fact which further emphasizes the value and importance of mentoring relationships.

There was a definite lack of articles that discussed teacher and student interactions and mentoring practices beyond the walls of the classroom. I did not come across any articles in these journals that discussed how mentors encouraged students in terms of campus activities that were non-class-related. For instance, there was little discussion of teachers encouraging students to write outside of the classroom as my mentor Grace encouraged me to not only write for but to take a leadership role in our campus newspaper. Likewise, there was no discussion about encouraging students to be involved in extra-curricular activities including clubs and sports, interactions which can help promote self esteem and can assist students in making friends and becoming members of the campus community.

Finally, there were no articles that discussed teacher-student friendships outside of the classroom. I find this troubling as, in my personal experience, social interactions outside of the classroom between my mentor and me were a crucial element to our

relationship. These everyday exchanges helped to increase my self confidence in areas other than academics. Grace encouraged me to take on leadership roles, and I learned more about who I was and what I could accomplish on my own. At the same time, having the opportunity to observe how she interacted with her peers, those with whom she was and was not on the best terms, provided me with alternate points of view about the academy and about "adult" life.

It is extremely problematic that there is no discussion about how teachers and students interact outside of the writing classroom. This study seeks to remedy this oversight. In understanding how our classrooms fit into the campus community as a whole, there is great value in seeing how teachers who act as mentors help students become members and leaders in that community. We must begin to question our roles as teachers and redefine not what we are expected to do but what we would like to do to contribute to the lives and experiences of every member of that community. It is important to understand the benefits of contributions that may stretch our initial understandings of our jobs because that will allow us to see not only how our students grow, but also how we grow and learn as mentors. This dissertation seeks to begin this discussion and encourages others to share their stories and points of view.

Benefits

Mentoring is a reciprocal relationship, where both mentor and mentee benefit in some way. Rhodes' (2005) and Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang and Noam (2006) explain that "the beauty in mentoring lies in the variety of shared moments and experiences, fun times and trying times, that form a relationship from which mentees can draw strength in

moments of vulnerability or share victory in moments of achievement" (as cited in Goldner & Mayseless, 2008, p. 423).

While there is a give and take in mentoring relationships, Shore, Toyokawa, and Anderson (2008) express that it is impossible for the level of reciprocity to be equal during all stages of the mentoring process. In many long-term mentoring partnerships, there will be a strong feeling of interdependency, at different points, for both mentor and mentee (Young et al., 2004). Sometimes what is gained through this mutual dependence is unclear; sometimes one party may feel like they are getting more or giving more to the relationship, and there are rarely clearly defined lines. As Cervero, in a co-authored article with his mentee, admits while considering the past fourteen years of their association: "I often wonder who is mentoring whom in this relationship?" (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004, p. 9).

Mentor Benefits

Relationships with students, whether they be academic, personal, or a mixture of both, can also cause teachers to reflect on themselves, their past experiences, and their current teaching practices. For instance, when Metzger (2004) reviewed a past semester of her course, she noted that two students did not achieve the course goals. At first, she was frustrated by their "failure," but after reflecting on the experience, she realized that she was guilty of the same problems when she was a student. This realization allowed her to be more understanding of her students' situations and resistance to certain lessons. Likewise, Okawa's (2002) mentors acknowledged that as their mentees learned new things, they did as well. Finally, Moss et al. (1999) claim that these interactions can help

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"restore our own humanity and grow emotionally through the experience of being a mentor" (p. 423).

As mentioned above, mentoring requires quite a bit of reflexivity in analyzing the actions, words, written comments, and other interactions teachers have with their mentees. Besides reflecting on these and their own experiences and learning, mentors who are reacting to and analyzing their relationships with their students may also examine their pedagogies, classes, and goals. Perkins (2001) focuses on "the conversion story" of composition studies where freshman students "shed their inexperience, resistance, and narrow-mindedness and don garments of (relative) enlightenment and grace" and where their teachers are able to use the students' successes (or failures) as a means to evaluate their own teaching methods and render them successful (or not) (p. 585).

Meanwhile, Yagelski (1999) and Crawley et al. (2008) stress the importance of critical pedagogy, and Crawley et al. claim that such a method is not always easy. They explain that teachers must be flexible and ready to react to changes in the classroom environment or mood. However, critical pedagogy does allow instructors to analyze their own positions and responses to topics and discussions. Wallace (1999) warns that teachers make political statements, whether they acknowledge or deny their power, and fail to consider the impact that has on the students in their classrooms, and VanderStaay, Faxon, Meischen, Kolesnikov, and Ruppel (2009) use portraiture to demonstrate authority as "enabling empowerment" in a technical writing classroom.

Mentors may also receive a certain amount of recognition from mentoring successful students. When the student does well, the faculty member is often recognized

for their guidance, though they should not necessarily expect this outcome (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004). Mentors may also benefit from forming friendships and gaining opportunities to learn about other ways of life and how other people live their lives. Finally, perhaps one of the most poignant benefits is knowing that, as a mentor, one has had the opportunity to have "a direct and immediate impact on another's survival in the academy" (Moss et al., 1999, p. 422).

Mentee Benefits

Likewise, mentees receive a variety of benefits through membership in a mentoring relationship. Students are provided with general and specific encouragement and affirmation, they gain opportunities for professional development and for networking, and they get an insiders' view of the academy. Students may also have increases in self esteem, opportunities for empowerment, and gain the power and confidence to question traditional norms in the academy/classroom. Teachers may give students protection by advocating for them or provide guidance in developing an ethical standpoint and encouraging problem solving skills. Finally, students also have opportunities to develop a friendship and be exposed to alternate viewpoints (Johnson, 2008; Moberg, 2008; Okawa, 2002).

Empowerment. Student empowerment is a widely discussed result of mentoring relationships. It is important to remember that teachers cannot force students to be empowered and that not all students may want to be empowered. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2009) discusses empowerment in depth, using it as a tool to fight against dehumanization. Empowerment is not a gift that can be *given* to students; rather, teachers can provide the tools to empowerment through education and mentoring

interactions. Empowerment must be accepted and enacted by the students and cannot be forced upon them (Freire, 2009). Critical pedagogy is Freire's response to the question of how to liberate oppressed individuals. His plan heavily relies on dialogue, critical reflection, and empowered action. Critical pedagogy has become a staple in teacher education and has been echoed and adapted by scholars in the composition field.

For instance, in *Empowering Education*, Ira Shor (1992) introduces his pedagogy for student empowerment, arguing that student empowerment will result in social empowerment. Shor defines his process of empowerment as "active, cooperative, and social" (p. 15) and asserts that "Students in empowering classes should be expected to develop skills and knowledge as well as high expectations for themselves, their education, and their futures" (p. 16). Shor stresses that creating and maintaining an empowering atmosphere for students is the teacher's responsibility and outlines a similar pedagogy that can be translated into various classroom settings.

Likewise, Linda Flower (2003) points out the values of difference and suggests that intercultural rhetoric is a way to connect students through the process of making new meaning. She presents it as an alternative to disconnection through isolation and division because of differences in race, ethnicity, or experience. Using critical race theory, Flower explains that empowerment can lead to the discovery of a "special voice" which can be "grounding for individual liberation" from societal norms and expectations (p. 45). Flower identifies various, sometimes contradicting, scholarly definitions of empowerment through writing, stating that empowerment takes place both through expressive writing that values individual uses of language as well as writing that

conforms to the traditional discourse as a way to advance in a sometimes-homogeneously-centered society.

Building on the scholarship of Freire (2009), Shor (1992), and Flower (2003), I define empowerment as an understanding of one's identity and identity options and how they relate to and connect with the surrounding community and society. At the same time, by understanding the value of individuality, and perhaps through embracing differences, students can build self confidence and establish a feeling of agency or power. While Flower generally talks in terms of racial difference, I expand that definition to all kinds of difference—whether it is race, gender, sexual orientation, financial or social status, ethnicity, religion, culture, age, etc. Most importantly, students should be empowered to leave their comfort zones and to try new things that may at first seem challenging. Empowerment can be encouraged by giving students a strong belief in themselves as individuals with valid and important talents, beliefs, and ideas.

Challenging traditional classroom standards. When students are mentored and empowered at their schools, they are provided with strategies to adjust to academic and professional expectations and to succeed both in the classroom and in later life (Ferrari, 2004). In her reflection of her experiences as a student and how they have translated into her role as a teacher, Metzger (2004) traces the history of her relationships with women from her graduate program:

> the relationships … that have survived and grown in the last ten years are … relationships with women who explicitly mentored me, women I explicitly mentored, women who openly shared my rejection of the traditional institutional

value of proof by disproof, women with whom the fact and meaning of our own

and the institution's power was on the table, scrutable, negotiable. (p. 66)

These mentoring relationships, a mixture of academic and peer mentoring, focused on

fighting against the academic expectation of competition between students—an

expectation she, her instructors, and her fellow classmates felt isolated and separated by.

Metzger (2004) shares her experiences with students in her own classes as a way to bring

the class together as a community and as a means to continue to fight against a

traditional, competitive environment.

New perception of self and increased self esteem. In her dissertation, Ramirez

(2009) asserts that mentoring academically underprepared students can help them

construct new "possible selves," an idea developed by the work of Markus and Nurius's

(1986). This newly formed version of the students' self can act as a means of transition

between how students currently view themselves and how they envision their selves in

the future. While it is incredibly valuable to help students feel more confident, it is

important that mentors learn how to help students deal with issues of low self-esteem,

how to empathize without being patronizing (Roberts, 1999b).

As a result, supportive mentoring relationships can also improve students' sense

of their own academic identity. Students who were mentored felt more comfortable

taking on higher course loads over the length of their undergraduate career. In the first

year of mentoring, mentees' grades did tend to be higher than non-mentored students,

though that trend did not continue, and the same was true concerning retention and

graduation rates (Campbell & Campbell, 2007).

At the same time, students may also gain a stronger feeling of ownership over their own writing as a result of being mentored. In discussing the prevalence of plagiarism in the composition classroom, Ritter (2005) calls for teachers to be more encouraging in promoting students to gain a positive feeling of authorship over their texts. She suggests that if students are proud of the work they produce and see its value, the draw of paper mills will be lessened and instances of plagiarism will decrease while students' self esteem will increase.

Finally, students who have been mentored frequently continue on to pursue other forms of learning after undergraduate graduation (Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Ferrari, 2004). Campbell and Campbell (2007) found that students who had been mentored decided to continue their schooling to gain one or more graduate degrees.

The Basis of My Research Foundation

As this review of literature has shown, there is a great deal of discussion about mentoring. However, there is not much literature that specifically addresses the effects mentoring has outside of the classroom or over a long period of time. Similarly, discussion of mentoring on small, branch campuses and specifically in the writing-centered classroom is also lacking. Trends of effective mentor-mentee interactions need to be pinpointed and discussed more thoroughly. Thus, more research is needed in discovering how all of these areas can be connected and put into practice.

For the purposes of this study, I share the stories of the lived experiences of three women who have experienced mentoring and who have strong feelings and opinions about how it has impacted their lives. Drawing from the work of Freire (2009), Johnson-Bailey and Cervero (2004), Metzger (2004), Okawa (2002), and Roberts (1999a; 1999b;

2000), I seek to look at mentoring in my own specific context and to begin a new conversation about the long-term effects of mentoring relationships at a small, branch campus, especially the relationships initiated in the writing-centered classroom. I hope not only to connect current scholarship with my findings but also to offer new ways that mentoring can occur in the writing classroom through writing practices and through teachers' relationships with their students.

In the next chapter, I turn to the design of this study which highlights my own subjectivity and its impact on my motivations for undertaking this research project. At the same time, it discusses the importance of my connection to mentoring relationships, specifically my mentoring relationship with Grace Chorley, since I attribute that relationship to being one of the driving forces that brought me to be a teacher-mentor. In addition, I also discuss my methods for gathering and analyzing data.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I plan to expand upon the use of phenomenological methods in this study and to detail the overall design. I begin by narrating the story of my own mentoring experiences, continue on to outline the data collection methods I will use, and end with a discussion of the risks and benefits of being a part of the study that may impact my participants. All of these elements are important in achieving the end goal of this research project: to gain an understanding of mentoring relationships and to understand how one specific mentor affected the lives of at least three of her students in terms of their conceptions of themselves as well as in their decisions about their futures as teacher-mentors. Thus, it is important to revisit the questions that guide the study:

- What is mentoring, and what drives teachers to take on a mentoring role?

- How do mentoring relationships affect the lives of both the mentor and mentee in the immediate as well as the long run?

- How do mentees become mentors?

These questions are directly applicable to the study's approach.

This will be an attempt at a hermeneutic phenomenological research study using a critical feminist theoretical framework. According to Max van Manen (1990) in his book, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, phenomenology is a methodology that primarily looks at lived experience in a pre-reflective way and focuses specifically on what we are conscious of. It is a thoughtful method that requires the researcher to find the data in the situation by asking questions that search for meaning rather than questions aiming to solve a problem. In essence,

"Phenomenology always addresses any phenomenon as a *possible human experience*" (van Manen, 1990, p. 58). Because a phenomenological approach focuses on sharing the points of view of the participants, it gives them the opportunity to have their own voice and is an attempt to level out the power structure between researcher and those being studied.

Researcher Positionality

Any descriptions of the lifeworld of my participants or their lived experiences are simply textual representations of their memories about those experiences. From the words I choose to use in writing this dissertation to the participants I invite to be a part of the study, my own perceptions and feelings about mentoring will impact this project as is the case in any qualitative, subjective research study. For that reason, it is important that I not only gain an understanding of my own preconceived notions about mentoring for myself, but that I also make my standpoint known for the reader. This does not mean that I will attempt to separate myself from the research. As Maxwell (2005) explains, such separation can prevent the researcher from accessing "a major source of insights, hypotheses, and validity checks" (p. 38). In using my experiences and background to aid me throughout this project, I open myself to a research journey that explores the personal-political connection.

Redefining Objectivity and Subjectivity

Subjectivity is inescapable, no matter how hard one might attempt to be objective (Josselson, 2006; Smith & Deemer, 2003, van Manen, 1990). Josselson (2006) points out that even if people study the same topic, they will undoubtedly have varying interpretations of the subject and may approach the study in different ways or end up with

conflicting findings. At the same time, Freire (2009) reminds us that the subjectivity and

objectivity cannot exist without each other, that their relationship is dialectical. Thus,

rather than clinging to traditional definitions of objectivity and subjectivity, it is helpful to

think of these terms in a new way. Van Manen (1990) calls for a reexamination of

objectivity and subjectivity and suggests new definitions:

> Both find their meaning and significance in the oriented (i.e., personal) relations
>
> that the researcher establishes with the "object" of his or her inquiry (Bollnow,
>
> 1974). Thus, "objectivity" means that the researcher is *oriented* to the object….
>
> Objectivity means that the researcher remains *true to the object*. The researcher
>
> becomes in a sense a guardian of the true nature of the object…. "Subjectivity"
>
> means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be
>
> in order to show or disclose the object in its full richness and its greatest depth.
>
> Subjectivity means that we are *strong* in our orientation to the object of study *in a*
>
> *unique and personal way*—while avoiding the danger of becoming arbitrary, self-
>
> indulgent, or of getting captivated and carried away by our unreflected
>
> preconceptions. (p. 20).

Keeping van Manen's definition in mind, I find it only fitting to share my own unique

and personal connection to mentoring relationships.

In order to understand what motivates my interest in this topic, it is crucial to

understand my own recollections and analysis of my own experiences as a mentee and

my relationship with Grace Chorley, the woman connecting the various stories that will

unfold in the following chapter. In retelling my experiences, more importantly, in writing

my experiences, I also learn more about myself and gain a better insight into a facet of

my identity, as Pennycook (2005) asserts that "writing is how we get a hand on ourselves as writers and researchers" (p. 300). I strive to recall that "writing is not a process of transparent representation whereby we report on things we observed, but rather is a constitutive act through which the observations are created" (Pennycook, 2005, p. 303). Likewise, in their discussion of memory as a collective "cultural phenomenon," Atkinson and Coffey (2003) further this point by arguing that "memory and experience are social actions in themselves" (p. 118).

It is important to also put my story in context; this story is a collection of memories and impressions of my experiences as an undergraduate at a small university. The memories I have from my time there are positive and colored by my belief that the school and the people I met there contributed to my present position, success, and happiness. Additionally, critical feminist research has called for researchers to reveal who they are—in terms of their gender, age, class, sexual orientation, religion, political views, etc.—to help contextualize the ideas they present; however, this practice may not be enough. What do writers mean if they admit to being "feminists" or "members of the middle class"? Labels themselves are opaque without descriptions of what they mean to the labeler, and one of the best ways to define these terms can be through descriptions of individual experience, which not only provide a surface view of meaning but can also be used to infer from what is not said. In fact, as Ramanathan (2005) explains, our research "endeavours are not 'studies' as much as they are extensions of our understanding of the worlds we seek to more fully comprehend" (p. 291).

My relationship with and feelings about Grace in the past and in the present will unarguably have an impact on how I have chosen to conduct this study, how I will

interpret the stories my participants share with me, and how I choose to question participants during interviews. Smith and Deemer (2003) explain, "To not make judgments is to lose sight of one's orientation in moral space, which is to lose one's grounding as a human being" (p. 445). The factors listed above are an important aspect to the study, especially my appreciation to the people who have helped me succeed up to this point. In fact, van Manen (1990) argues that love is a crucial element to conducting research since "we can only understand something or someone for whom we care" (p. 6). My reliance on my definitions and memories about my mentoring experience lay the groundwork of the study.

Likewise, my experience is important in that it shows my own perspective, the perceptions I already have about what mentoring means to me, and, perhaps most importantly, because it shows my transformation from unsure student to confident mentor-teacher. The use and value of my own narrative is also relevant from a phenomenological point of view, one that suggests that "one's experiences are the possible experiences of others and also that the experiences of others are the possible experiences of oneself" (van Manen, 1990, p. 58). Similarly, Chase (2008) asserts that "any narrative is significant because it embodies—and gives us insight into—what is possible and intelligible within a specific social context" (p. 79). So now, I turn to my story of how I was mentored and how that mentoring relationship played a central part in my growth as an individual, as a student, as a teacher, and as a mentor.

Sharing My Story

The story of my academic beginnings is a story about mentoring. To be more specific, it is about a mentoring relationship's effects on my perceptions of myself. My

mentor not only helped me succeed academically, but also personally, as my self esteem

increased drastically over the duration of our relationship during my undergraduate

career, an experience that is common in the mentoring literature (Campbell & Campbell,

2007; Gurvitch, Carson, & Beale, 2008; Hoffman & Wallach, 2005; Okawa, 2002;

Ramirez, 2009). While I might describe myself as a white, heterosexual, Christian,

middle-class woman, labels that place me in the status quo, my experiences are unique to

my own life; thus, they may provide insights into how any number of students (whether

they be white, heterosexual, Christian, and middle-class or not) adjust to college life and

use the relationships they form as incentive to leave their comfort zones (Okawa, 2002).

As will be seen in Chapter IV of this dissertation, my story does reflect some of the same

feelings and situations that appear in the autobiographies of my participants, even though

each of us met Grace during very different times in our lives. In writing my own history, I

pay specific attention to the details of the mentoring relationship Grace and I shared

while inserting references to current mentoring literature to show how this story, even

though it is individual to my own lived experiences, may relate to a more universal whole

and the current conversation about mentoring.

Growing up. As a child, I rarely had people do things for me; instead, the adults

in my life showed me how to do something and then left me to do it. Thanks to these

learning opportunities, a strict Catholic primary education, and the independence

exemplified by my mother, I liked to consider myself an independent person who could

take care of herself—not that this meant that I was always a happy child. My periods of

discontent might have resulted from the muffled realization that I was not actually as

independent or as confident as I wanted to believe. My biggest problem as a child was a

desire to be wanted—my father says that my mantra as a child was "I don't have any friends" or "I need to do this/get this to have friends" even though I showed no signs of being socially impaired. Such longing to belong seems to appear frequently in stories of growing up (Muncey, 2005). It seemed that the harder I tried, the more difficult it was for me to develop solid, lasting friendships. I often felt like an outsider, possibly because my groups of friends changed so frequently. I was not happy or secure in my own personality or in my place in the larger social setting. I assumed that there was something lacking in my life—something that would be filled by material possessions or popularity.

Once in middle and high school, I began to find a way to fill that void as I begin to enjoy the aspects of school that did not revolve around social interactions. I began to become excited about learning, especially in my English classes. I found that I enjoyed writing and that it came easily to me. There were clear, understandable rules, but writing still allowed me the freedom to use (or not use) those rules in whatever fashion suited the situation. I also loved that writing made sense. The rules of English could be explained, and I understood them more easily than the intricacies of adolescent cliques. By design, I was a particularly average student—average grades, average social activities, average just about everything. I did not study hard because I did not think it would make a difference. I did well, kept my mouth shut unless called upon in class, and tried hard to blend in. As Muncey (2005) expresses in her autoethnography, "I worked hard and appeared successful" (p. 4) even though I felt confused and alone. I became a great actress, performing the actions of a happy, model student while trying to hide the feelings of unhappiness that still swirled in my psyche.

When I got my first "real" boyfriend as a junior in high school, I clung to him. As is common for many teenage girls raised in a patriarchal society, I began to define myself in relation to his achievements. In my young mind, I mistakenly believed that he was considerably more special than I was since he was a well known varsity athlete. I wanted to make him happy because if he stopped liking me, I was frightened that I would feel alone again. Without realizing it, I adopted the oppressive, patriarchal belief that he defined me, and through that definition, I thought I gained worth. As a result, after graduating from high school, I decided to attend a small branch campus of a state university that was only a half hour's drive from my house. I could save money by living at home, I reasoned, and more importantly, I would not have to move away from my boyfriend and the security I thought he offered.

Facing reality. I took mostly general education courses and electives my first semester of college, and one of the electives was a literature course called Women Writers. If I want to be dramatic, I could say that walking into that classroom changed my life, but it was not that instantaneous. I went to the class, met my classmates and the teacher, a Ms. Grace Chorley, and then I left to go on with the rest of my first day of college. I will admit I was impressed with Grace early in the semester—she was a strong woman with a sarcastic sense of humor who had a serious attitude toward work. I was taking an honor's section of the class, and she was very clear on what she expected, which was a lot more than I had been asked to do in high school. I was really challenged by her class because it required me to do the best work of which I was capable (I felt that I could no longer skate through by being "average"). In addition, she assigned work that

was more complicated than anything I had previously encountered. Perhaps because of the workload and the various challenges it offered, I relished the class from the start.

So the semester continued, and I began to look at things differently. Early in the semester, Grace and I began to mold what would become our mentoring relationship, though I do not think I was cognizant of it. I began to respect Grace more than any of the other teachers I had studied with in the past because of her no-nonsense attitude and her passion for teaching. I met with her about upcoming projects and was surprised by her enthusiasm to help me do well. The fact that she cared surprised me as I was not accustomed to such individualized attention from a teacher. My low self esteem contributed to my reliance on Grace and her opinions as a basis for building a new conception of the world. Gurvitch, Carson, and Beale (2008), in sharing their own experiences as mentees, also admit to clinging to mentoring relationships because of low self esteem, claiming that the mentoring relationships eventually led them to a greater belief in self.

Establishing a new worldview. Through her mentoring in and out of the classroom, Grace made me feel like she believed in me, and for the first time, I began to truly believe in myself, a process that required me to question my previous beliefs about my capabilities, my worth, and how the world worked. Muncey (2005) recalls a similar experience where she began to question "conventional approaches to what knowledge is, a knowledge system that appeared to exclude the meaning of the lived experiences of many people" (p. 5). From this new questioning perspective and the real confidence it gave me, I could begin to make my own judgments and to see the value of my own perspectives.

Grace's interactions with me allowed me to raise my opinion of myself in a healthy way. As I said, her class was much more demanding than what I was accustomed to, and she assumed I would be capable of doing the work—making this assumption seem natural or common place. At the same time, Grace was always there, available if I or any of the other students had questions or needed extra help. Most importantly, she spent time with me. Since I had little belief in myself going into college, her implicit belief in me and the investment of her time had a greater impact than if she had expressed her faith in me aloud.

Leaving the classroom. Grace also mentored me outside of the classroom. One student activity I shared with Grace was the campus newspaper. Midway through my first semester, the newspaper began to have problems and the current editor wanted to step down. Grace and her husband, Lorenzo, who was also an advisor of the club, encouraged me to fill the position and sort out the mess. I do not think I would have been brave enough to take on or even to consider myself as a candidate for the position if they had not encouraged and supported me (Okawa, 2002). Grace also invited me to become a part of other organizations including being the student representative for the campus's Liaison Committee to the University's Commission for Women. In my sophomore year, she asked me to be a peer mentor in her classes—a paid position that invited me into the classroom to act as a role model and tutor to new students.

Grace gave me responsibility without questioning or testing my limits and also gave me my first opportunity to act as a mentor to others, a role that has since become habitual. In my role as a peer mentor, I modeled her behavior, trying to attain that same approachable, no-nonsense composure that she maintained so naturally. I met with Grace

to discuss classwork or school activities, I sat with her in the cafeteria for lunch, and I ran into her frequently on the small campus. This was extremely beneficial as one of the crucial elements to a positive mentoring experience is time mentors give to their mentees (Gurvitch, Carson, & Beale, 2008, p. 254). I noted her behavior with her peers. Because of the campus size, I was also able to see how she interacted with other members of the faculty and staff. She never seemed to allow disagreements or disapproval to alter her stride. She was, without realizing it, showing me what other identity options were possible for me (Morgan, 2004). I continued taking classes with her each time she offered something new, and I peer mentored for her every semester until I graduated.

Considering new possibilities. Peer mentoring with Grace was the catalyst that made me seriously think about becoming a teacher. I really enjoyed working with students and giving them advice and simple tips to help make their time in college more enjoyable. My position in the classroom was significant in that I was neither a student nor a teacher; consequently, I was able to observe classroom interactions in a new way and had the opportunity to *be* a mentor. I sat in on classes and held office hours where students could come to me with their papers or with questions about the course or simply to chat. I was able to work with them one-on-one and see their writing and critical thinking skills develop as the semester progressed.

I was not burdened by the responsibilities of my job; instead, I was eager to walk into the classroom each day to have another opportunity to interact with the students with whom I was building relationships—relationships that formed without the great effort and anxiety I had been accustomed to growing up. Naturally, I had wanted the students in the class to like me, but because "I had a job to do," being liked was not my top priority

and rarely crossed my mind. Yet I formed friendships with many of the students, and I was able to get them to discuss their work in and out of the classroom. My time spent as a peer mentor taught me that personal relationships can be great motivators in writing and in learning (Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; Mawhinney & Sagan, 2007; Meyers, 2009).

In talking about the class with Grace, I began to share my thoughts, and our relationship became more reciprocal. Because of the collaboration that resulted from peer mentoring, Grace invited me to present at an academic conference with her to discuss the way inclusion of a peer mentor impacted critical thinking. She invited me into the world of academia as a member instead of as a spectator and made me feel as if I belonged there (Gurvitch, Carson, & Beale, 2008; Okawa, 2002). She offered me the opportunity to say something—something that other people (important people, in my opinion) wanted to hear! I was enthralled by the panels I observed, and I enjoyed being a part of the dialogue that grew out of our presentation. As those scholars talked *with* me about my experience and opinions, I began to understand my own intellectual value—a value I had doubted despite carrying close to a 4.0 grade point average.

Fully accepting myself. When it was time to decide what I wanted to do with my life, the answer was simple: I wanted to make a difference in someone else's life in the same impactful way Grace had made a difference in my own. This is reminiscent of Merriam, Thomas, and Zeph's (1987) assertions that many mentors, intentionally or unintentionally, groom their mentees to follow similar career paths. By the end of my college experience, I felt like I was a different person—I was a woman who was intelligent, driven, and capable. Instead of basing my life and future around my

boyfriend, with whom I had broken up in the spring of my freshman year, I began to think about what *I* wanted—to stay in education and aspire to be as influential of a mentor as Grace had been.

Unsurprisingly, as my departure from undergraduate study approached, Grace and her husband were the ones who encouraged me to go to graduate school. I applied to several schools and focused on enjoying my last semester of classes, secretly dreading having to leave the small campus that had been my haven and home. I had grown so much in the four years I had been there and had developed some strong friendships. It was devastating to even think about leaving.

One morning a few days before graduation, I received two surprising phone calls, one following the other. The first was from the Director of Graduate Studies at one of the graduate schools to which I had applied. He was calling to offer me a teaching assistantship. I was completely caught off guard—I had not imagined that (despite my high grade point average, excellent letters of recommendation, and a long list of campus activities and awards) someone would want to offer me so much to come to their school. Only minutes after I had hung up, the phone rang again. This time it was a representative from my own college, telling me I was the student with the highest academic standing and that they wanted me to speak at graduation. I remember laying my head down on the kitchen table and crying. I was completely overwhelmed. It was during those moments when I finally began to realize and to accept what I had accomplished in the previous four years, and I began to have a clearer picture of the successful woman I had become— the successful woman Grace always seemed to have seen and believed in.

Starting a new life. Relocating to North Carolina for my Masters degree was by no means easy, but I know that having confidence and believing in myself made the entire process much easier than it would have otherwise been. Going to graduate school was the first time I would leave my family and the house I grew up in. I enrolled in the Literature program, following in Grace's footsteps, but as part of my assistantship, I was to teach freshman composition. In the fall semester I observed, and in the spring semester, I team taught. My second year, I finally had classes of my own: two sections of Composition I in the fall and two sections of Composition II in the spring. I barely remember the rush of those first few weeks of the fall semester, trying to get to know each student and get them interested in writing. I focused the class on popular culture and tried to impress upon my students that writing could be rewarding and, whether they believed it or not, enjoyable.

When I taught the research-focused class the following spring, I actually liked the subject matter there better. Once again, I was enveloped in the world of rules that I could easily understand, and I tried to help my students understand the steps of the research process. In that spring, I had my first opportunity to mentor outside of the classroom when a student from the fall semester approached me with a problem she was having. It was a personal issue that she needed to work through, and she just wanted someone to talk to and to get some advice. It was a shock to realize that I was someone she felt she could go to, someone whose opinion she respected. We met several times over the semester for coffee, just to chat about what was going on in her life. I fell back into the mentoring role I had so enjoyed as an undergraduate, a role I had not considered as being part of my new position.

Becoming a "real" teacher. After graduating, I moved to the mountains of North Carolina and tried hard to find a job. Like many fresh graduates, I was not able to procure a teaching position right away, but I did find work copy editing a women's magazine. I still kept my eyes open for teaching jobs and sent out my Curriculum Vitae. A year later, I was hired as a lecturer at a state-system university, and had my first real job with a steady salary and benefits. Despite having a degree in literature, I once again taught composition classes. At first I was less than thrilled, but after the first semester, I realized that teaching composition courses offered the opportunity to work one-on-one with students and to develop the personal rapport that I had always loved so much. During my time there, I mostly taught research writing, and I really began to love what I was doing.

The time I spent with those students, many of whom frequently visited with me after they had completed my course, and some of whom I still keep in contact with now, led me to the decision to pursue a degree in Composition, even though I did not have much theoretical training in the area and it was very different from Grace's educational background. Despite the fact that the decision resulted in leaving a good position, I knew that going back to school to learn more would only make me a better teacher for future students.

Since then, and as a result of the variety of experiences I have had, I have discovered my own teaching personality, one that reflects what I've learned from Grace as well as the variety of other, less formal mentors during my education. Now, Grace and I have a new relationship that is more reciprocal. A lot of what I have achieved over the years has been through the praxis Freire (2009) suggests, through reflecting, acting, and reflecting again. Yet Freire warns that praxis is not the end of liberation: "It is essential

for the oppressed to realize that when they accept the struggle for humanization they also accept, from that moment, their total responsibility for the struggle" (2009, p. 68). My own responsibility did not end when I got up from my parents' kitchen table before I graduated from my undergraduate institution. Instead, it has become a part of me, internalized just as my former fears had been. Yet my responsibilities as a teacher and a mentor only bring me joy and hope for the future. As a writing teacher and mentor, I am committed to continuing to fight oppression, to help my students believe in themselves, and to aid them in whatever way they require in their own battles against whatever oppressors they face.

My experience and my growth is not just a tale of maturation, but acts as one example of the profound and lasting impact mentoring relationships can have on students. I am still in contact with Grace, and she has continued to help me over the years, sending me sample syllabi when I began teaching, offering me valuable advice when I began acting as Assistant Director of a Writing Center, agreeing to be a large part of my doctoral dissertation, and, perhaps most importantly, being available for lunch to catch up and chat about life. What lies beneath the surface is that she still inspires me to go beyond my comfort zone and to remember that the external worries do not hold as much weight as I may sometimes believe. Friere (2009) explains that "while no one liberates himself by his own efforts alone, neither is he liberated by others" (p. 66). Grace alone did not make me independent, but I do not believe I would have so seamlessly attained liberation from my own fears without her.

Study Design

While the following section will describe how I conducted research for my dissertation, I also acknowledge that these practices were not necessarily set in stone as qualitative research is always a fluid, shifting task (Aguinaldo, 2004; Creswell, 2007; Morse et al, 2002). As a researcher, I am required to painstakingly plan out my study (choosing a topic, a methodology, participants, and weighing risk factors) while also being prepared to change course quickly since research is "a story that unfolds over time" (Creswell, 2007, p. 43).

Prospective Participants

My experience shares many similarities with my participants' experiences for a variety of reasons. First, my story is also a story about Grace. All of the participants' stories also focus on their interactions with Grace since she is the common thread that runs through our mentoring experiences. Likewise, Lydia and Samantha have also spent the beginnings of their academic journeys at the same small, branch campus, more specifically in Grace's classrooms. The types of classes they attended included composition courses and women's studies courses, and each had experience working for Grace as a peer mentor or tutor while she acted as director of the campus's tutoring center.

At the same time, I have also had interactions with these women; for instance, Lydia and I met when she was a student and I was the peer mentor in one of Grace's women's studies courses. Samantha came through Grace's classroom after I had graduated and left the state, but she and I have gotten to know each other through social

events Grace has invited us both to. Each of these commonalities are a thread that plays a part in weaving together the tapestry that will be this completed dissertation study.

Data Collection

There are several elements to data collection, including observation in all four of Grace's classes during a spring semester (a general composition course, two business writing courses, and a 400-level women's studies course), narrative protocol writing where participants had the opportunity to write about their experiences being a mentee and/or mentor, conversational interviews with Grace, Lydia, and Samantha, and my researcher's journal. The use of multiple data sources has helped provide me with richer data for analysis and has assisted in making the study more rigorous.

Data including participant observation, autobiographical narrative writing, individual interviews, and my researcher's journal was collected during the 2010-2011 Academic Year. Data was collected after receiving IRB approval from my university as well as Grace's and adhered to those guidelines.

Participant observation of mentor-mentee classroom interactions. I began the study by acting as an observer in Grace's classes. I visited each class for a week-long span at two points in the semester: during the first week of classes and during a week in the middle of the semester. By observing interactions that happen regularly rather than creating a staged setting, I more fully embraced phenomenological aims by attempting "to explicate the meanings as [the students] live them in [their] everyday existence, [their] lifeworld" (van Manen, 1990, p. 11). At the same time, being an observer allowed me to enter their lifeworld and to observe mentoring interactions as they occur rather than only relying on after-the-fact reflections. I had a chance to gain first-hand experience of

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the lifeworld of Grace's classroom and to better understand Grace's pedagogy and daily interactions with her students. As Aspers (2004) explains, "Meanings … come in structures and attain meaning in relations to other meanings, not in isolation. This process of meaning constitution is largely a social process, which means that the researcher who is interested in this must study it when people interact" (p. 4).

By being present in four different classes, I had the opportunity to see Grace work with students in both the writing classroom as well as a women's studies course—a subject that by its nature promotes relationships and mentoring (Goldner & Mayseless, 2008; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005). While observing each class session, I took hand-written notes to record my observations of the classroom interactions as opposed to recording class sessions through video recording or audio recording. My methods were less intrusive than video recording or similar methods as it prevented students from feeling anxious or nervous. In many cases, I sat in the corner or back of the room, and many of the students appeared to ignore me. Hodder's (2003) discussion of how context affects meaning remained present in my mind while I was in the classrooms. The same claims he makes about analyzing material culture can be applied to my analysis of what Grace and her students say and do. As the meanings of objects change according to contexts, how I saw their actions changed as well. What is said or done in class one day may have a completely different meaning if it were to be said or done in the same or in a similar way on a different day.

After each class, I kept a journal of my reflections on the day's events, highlighting specific moments where I felt mentoring or relationship-building might have been taking place. Such reflective journaling promotes reflexivity on the researcher's part

and encourages clarity about how past experiences may be impacting observations and notes. In addition, writing also served as a way to think through and reprocess the interactions I observed (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008). Journaling after each class assisted me in tracing the journey of the class as it formed bonds between Grace and her students while also recording my own journey through the observation and data collection processes.

  Autobiographical rendering of mentors and mentees experiences. In order to gain a more intense look at the participants' lived experiences, each was asked to write a narrative that was autobiographical in nature and asked them to record their thoughts, feelings, and memories about mentoring experiences—whether they have been the mentor or the mentee or both. In Atkinson and Coffey's (2003) words, "memory is grounded in what is tellable. In many ways the past is a narrative enactment" (p. 118). Providing participants with the opportunity to tell their stories gave them a chance to begin to gain a better understanding of what mentoring means to them while also providing them with the time to concentrate on the words and images they wanted to use when telling their story.

  When defining narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) sum it up as "stories lived and told" (p. 20). The reasons for using narratives to gather data seems almost natural when one takes into consideration that "life—as we come to it and as it comes to others—is filled with narrative fragments, enacted in storied moments of time and space, and reflected up on and understood in terms of narrative unities and discontinuities" (p. 17). In fact, as Freeman (2007) explains, it is the very process of reflecting on previous experiences that drives autobiographical writing; he explains that

"the aim of autobiography is not simply to depict the past as it was but precisely to understand it, to make sense of it, to fashion meanings that were not, and could not be, available in the flux of immediate experience" (p. 132). Such reflection is important when looking at mentoring relationships as many mentees do not realize they are being mentored, and if they are aware of the roles they and their mentor are taking on, they are often not aware of the effects of the mentoring relationships until they have moved into a new stage of their lives. At the same time, narratives may be the best way for participants to recall their experiences as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that "narrative is the best way of representing and understanding experience" (p. 18).

Aspers (2004) argues that one of the most important aspects of a phenomenological study is that "scientific explanation must be grounded in the first-order construction of the actors; that is, their own meanings and words" (p.2). This act of giving participants their own voice, their own subjectivity, follows in the wake of other feminist research, with the aim of appreciating "women as social actors in their own right and in the subjective meanings that women assigned to events and conditions in their lives" (Chase, 2008, p. 62). The stories that participants chose to include are useful in understanding transformation, in isolating instances that may have impacted the way they have chosen to live their lives in the past or in the present.

All of the participations were asked to write two to three pages of text detailing their experiences as mentees (See Appendix B). Since Grace and Lydia are both actively teaching, they were asked to write an additional narrative about their experiences as teacher-mentors. What is most crucial about the inclusion of the participants' narratives is that they offer an intimate window to their reflections of personal experiences. These

stories are about sharing lived experience and the potential ways that mentoring has affected people's lives. It is not important if the events are completely "factual" or "true"; the *experience* from the participants' point of view takes precedence (Atkinson & Coffey, 2003; van Manen, 1990).

In presenting these stories in later chapters, I made a conscious decision to adopt what Chase (2008) calls an "interactive voice" when introducing and analyzing participant stories. She explains that researchers who use an interactive voice feel "the need to understand themselves if they are to understand how they interpret narrator's stories *and* that readers need to understand *researchers'* stories … if readers are to understand narrators' stories" (p. 77). This idea of learning from others and learning from oneself is similar to what Fontana and Frey (2008) call "the hermeneutic circle" or the "circle of understanding" (p. 141). For this reason, my own autobiographical narrative about my mentoring experiences is crucial as my own life experiences will be used as my means of understanding the experiences of the other participants.

Individual interviews with mentors and mentees. After gaining IRB approval, I met with each of the participants to conduct an initial interview. During the interview, I focused on asking questions about how they originally met Grace and the impacts she had on them (See Appendix C). I also used this meeting to detail my expectations about the narrative. After participants had written their narratives, I conducted a second round of interviews about what they had written while also prompting more general discussion of mentoring. I wanted to allow my participants to tell their own stories in their own words, and I wanted them to feel that they could do so in a neutral environment and without the

pressures that could sometimes go hand-in-hand with writing. In order to achieve these

things, I conducted interviews in private offices on campus or at the participant's home.

I used an unstructured, conversational interview style, somewhat reminiscent of

van Manen's (1990) work or Aspers (2004) presentation of A-scheme interviews, which

focuses on helping the researcher fully understand the meaning behind the participant's

words. I began with a few general questions and moved onto asking questions that

responded to what the interviewee had already said while also requesting specific details

and clarifications. This helped to creating a story rather than giving the impression of a

question and answer format because a similar thread was traced throughout the interview.

The approach attempted to move the focus from what I wanted to know to the stories that

the participants wanted to share, in a sense changing our roles from interviewer and

interviewee to listener and narrator (Chase, 2008). However, the resulting stories that

came from the interviews differed from the single-authored narratives participants will

have already written, though the information in the narratives sometimes overlapped with

the data from the initial interview. What came out of the interview was essentially a

collaboration between the participant and me (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Georgakopoulou,

2006; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003).

Interviews lasted anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes or until participants expressed

a desire to end the meeting. When selecting the locations where interviews were

conducted, I took into account convenience for the interviewee and the importance of

protecting confidentiality so that participants did not have to worry about being

overheard. All interviews were digitally recorded using a Zoom h4n recorder and

transcribed verbatim using Express Scribe software. I used member checking techniques

by offering to send copies of the transcribed interviews to participants to allow them the opportunity to correct, reflect, and respond. Member checking also provides participants with the opportunity to check for accuracy and to validate my data at different stages in the research process.

I hoped to be able to retell participants' stories in powerful and effective ways. In sharing their lived experiences, I wanted to be able to create a bridge between current mentoring literature and my participants individual lived experiences. It was my goal to use the participants' exact language frequently and in such ways that "description reawakens or shows [readers] the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner" (van Manen, 1990, p. 10). Essentially, I wanted their stories to evoke a response from the reader, to draw them into their experiences, and to interest them enough to make them begin to think and to ask questions about my participants' experiences specifically and mentoring relationships in general.

Data Analysis

In order to conduct a rigorous study, Bogden and Biklen (2003), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Morse et al. (2002) argue that a researcher should be interacting with and analyzing data concurrent with gathering it so that the researcher can adapt future questions and methods to match what they are finding throughout the length of the study. I analyzed my data as I moved through the data collection process so that both took place simultaneously. Thus, my analyses assisted me in the direction of my collection, thereby creating a cyclical process.

In analyzing my data, I used my research questions as a guide to look for reoccurring patterns or themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994) that appeared not only in

participants' narratives, but also in their interviews and in what I observed in the classroom. It was helpful to see that their experiences were aligned with what had already been published about mentoring relationships. In order to be successful, I had to continuously revisit my data from all areas: returning to my literature review, my notes from classroom observations, the autobiographical narratives, and the transcribed interviews.

Having numerous sources for data collection allowed me to better understand my participants and their stories. In the same way, all of the data collection methods impacted each other in some way. Since many of the methods took place at the same time, they naturally informed each other. For instance, the time I spent as an observer helped to determine the interview questions for the second interview since the narratives that participants wrote were the central focus of the second interview and those narratives often spoke of their classroom experiences with Grace. In the same way, because of the unstructured interview style, participants' responses within the interview prompted other questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Likewise, the conclusions I came to while observing influenced what I looked for in the narratives or in the participants' responses to interview questions.

When analyzing the data, I used interpretivistic approach, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994). This approach required me to enact "an empathy or indwelling with the subject" (p. 8). While writing each participants mini-biography, I attempted to include some of the same areas of interest that appeared within each narrative or interview:

- the individual's initial feelings about Grace

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- her feelings about Grace now

- her personal definition of mentoring

- key events or experiences they discussed in the narratives or in the interview that would fall under mentor-mentee interactions, including when they felt their mentoring relationship began with Grace

The first two categories permitted me to see how perceptions of mentors evolved as the mentoring relationships developed. In my own case (and as it turned out, in the cases of Lydia and Samantha), I was slightly intimidated by Grace and constantly strived to live up to her expectations of me. Now, I see her as more than an authority figure and as a woman with many of the same issues I face; I now consider Grace to be a close friend—a development that was also true for Lydia and Samantha, though they seemed to have reached this point earlier than I did. I was able to use each mini-biography to compare and contrast how these individuals defined, recalled, and perhaps idealized their mentoring relationships with Grace.

Since my interpretations sometimes did and sometimes did not coincide with the interpretations of my participants, member checking played an important role in my analysis of all of my data sources (Bogden & Biklen, 2003, Creswell, 2007). As Freeman (2007) explains, the process of taking autobiographical narratives and turning them into biographical information can be complicated:

> What a narrative researcher often deals with, in essence, are *auto*biographical (i.e., first-person) data that he or she must render in *bio*graphical (i.e., third-person) terms. Even if he or she aspires toward achieving some measure of objectivity vis-à-vis these data, there nevertheless remains the stubborn fact that these same data

will be shot through with subjectivity, interpretation, and imagination. (p. 128-

129)

Member checking allowed my interpretations to be laid bare to my participants and gave

them the opportunity to talk with me about areas they may have felt I had misinterpreted

their stories or explanations.

The main goal in analyzing and interpreting the data is to find the underlying

meaning of mentoring since, as Miles and Huberman (1994) state, "People are meaning-

finders" (p. 245). Even though participants tried to define what they meant through their

experiences, it was necessary to look further to see if how they define mentoring is

aligned with the ways that they describe their experiences. In many cases, participants'

definitions were very close to the experiences they had defined. In fact, it seemed that the

participants used their own experiences as foundations for their definitions.

Since the human mind tends to automatically decipher patterns, it was very

important that I did not stop upon first "discovering" patterns, but that I instead took the

time to be certain that there was genuine evidence supporting those patterns. At the same

time, I had to be willing to be skeptical or to dismiss patterns if I found evidence

suggesting that the original was contradictory or easily disproven through other actions or

statements (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Trustworthiness

In order to ensure that my research and analysis methods were both trustworthy

and valid, I adopted Richardson and St. Pierre's (2008) crystallization. They define it as:

Crystallization, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of

'validity'; we feel how there is no single truth, and we see how texts validate

themselves. Crystallization provides us with a deepened, complex, and thoroughly

partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what

we know. Ingeniously, we know there is always more to know. (p. 479)

Even though I used crystallization, I still employed several different methods in order to

maintain the trustworthiness of what I had written. To ensure this, I have included a

section focused on my positionality and bias, took part in critical peer review, spent

prolonged periods of time with my participants, and incorporated member checking into

my data analysis (Creswell, 2007). In peer review, I chose an advisor who is critical,

honest, and experienced. As Creswell (2007) explains, this reviewer "asks hard questions

about methods, meanings, and interpretations" in order to assist me in remaining true to

my participants and to the goals of this research project.

My goal was and is to relate the stories of these specific individuals and to share

their interpretations and stories about mentoring. I worked hard to remain true to what

they wrote and said, as they are the foundation of this study. At the same time, I also

spent time with my participants in order to build on the relationships we already had so

that they were comfortable and were able to be open with me in a researcher-participant

relationship. In addition, I also attempted to gain a better understanding of them as

mentors/mentored individuals (Creswell, 2007).

The individuals, their experiences, and their feedback on my work are what make

this study both trustworthy and credible. In the same way, because they are included as

part of the process of writing this dissertation, through member checking specifically,

they also gain ownership over what is published (van Manen, 1990). Each participant will

have the freedom to point out any discrepancies or misinterpretations and to verify the accuracy of what I have written (Creswell, 2007).

Transferability

The use of autobiographies detailing mentoring experiences, my own and my participants', provides a new way of understanding the meaning of mentoring and the experiences of individuals in mentoring relationships. The use of stories is particularly important as Georgakopoulou (2006) suggests that humans may "actually perceive the world in narrative form" (p. 236). The fact that "rich, thick description" will be used throughout the study "allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability," particularly in deciding if the conclusions drawn in this study can be applied to a different context (Creswell, 2007, p. 209).

The stories of my participants are not provided in an attempt to form some kind of generalizable outcome about mentoring, but rather the goal is to present some examples from a specific context (Chase, 2008). Generalizability is not possible when attempting a phenomenological study simply because such assumptions contradict the very reasons why one would turn to this method of inquiry. Phenomenology is a "theory of the unique" that attempts to study subjects that cannot be replaced or recreated (van Manen, 1990, p. 7). However, it may be useful to use these examples as a "way to compare how other individuals in similar roles function in similar situations" (Charney, 1996, p. 586). At the same time, while my goal was not to present information solely focusing on gendered relationships, that did end up as a contributing factor. The compilation of stories presented in this manuscript mainly serves as a way to understand mentoring as a

phenomenon. Each story has its own value because each offers a different way of perceiving everyday interactions between mentors and mentees.

Participant Protection

Asking people to voluntarily help with one's research is asking a lot. I was very aware that my participants were gifting me with their time and stories and with the fact that they may not have had any initial reasons to be willing to help me. Understanding this made me extremely aware that I had a huge responsibility to my participants, a responsibility that included keeping them safe and maintaining their confidentiality.

The first measure that was taken in order to protect my participants was to make sure they were fully informed about the research project. I took the time to be available to answer any questions they had about qualitative research in general or about my project more specifically. I wanted them to understand my own motives and my personal connection to mentoring, to the campus, and to Grace. I attempted to be clear on what I expected from them in terms of their autobiographical narrative and the number of times I wanted to meet with them for interviews so that they had a clear idea of what was required of them. I made sure all participants had a copy of the Informed Consent form (Appendix D and E). Most importantly, I stressed that their participation in the study was completely voluntary and their decision to accept or decline a position as a participant would not affect our friendships or, in Samantha's case, her grades in Grace's class. In an additional effort to protect my participants' privacy, each woman selected a pseudonym to be used in the study when referencing them.

All electronic files including audio recordings, transcriptions of interviews, notes from observations, data analyses, and manuscript chapters were kept securely in locked,

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password-protected files, and any paper copies were kept locked up or were shredded after they had served their purpose.

Risks and Protection

No research study is without its risks. For this particular study, I dealt with college faculty and students. This research endeavor was relatively low risk. There was a potential for participants to be bored and frustrated throughout the course of the study, though that did not seem to be the case for Grace, Lydia, or Samantha. All participants might have experienced discomfort or feel a low degree of pressure in connection with the writing element of the study, though none of them took that option. If this discomfort was too intense, participants were offered the opportunity to opt out of this section of the study. In order to deal with this pressure, all three of the participants asked me if I would look at their narratives and give them a chance to revise it. In each case, this was done. The only suggestions for their narratives were highlighting of places where they could have provided additional detail or the suggestion to include a written definition of mentoring. I also attempted to balance any pressure that they felt by being available to talk to participants about what they were writing and to provide a variety of prompts if they need help getting started.

Of all potential participants, Grace is at the highest risk of being recognized in the study. Because she is the person who connects the rest of the participants, it will be almost impossible to keep her identity a secret. She is fully aware of and in acceptance of this fact. Upon publication of the manuscript, some participants' stories could be recognized by other people, though pseudonyms were used for individuals and locations and participants were made aware of this risk upon invitation to be a part of the study.

Benefits

Despite the risks that come with participation in this study, participants may also benefit. For instance, Grace may come away with a new perspective on her teaching style and gain a different perspective on her interactions with students. Since Grace is a veteran teacher on the campus, she does not regularly have her peers observe her classroom. My presence and critique may provide her with an alternate perspective of the interactions that take place in her classroom. An additional benefit may be that all participants, as well as the general public and the academic community, may learn more about mentoring as a process and as a pedagogy. The participants may gain better understandings of their own roles in the classroom and their roles as mentors or mentees as a result of reflection brought about by interview questions or by my presence. They also have the opportunity to view the final dissertation that is the outcome of this study and may learn more about mentoring from reviewing it.

Finally, participants may also benefit by learning more about the research process as I was open with them about what I did over the course of the study as well as through the different member checking steps. This was a specific benefit because it is unlikely that students and faculty on this small, branch campus would have many opportunities to be a part of a research study.

In the next chapter, I begin to explore the narratives of Grace, Lydia, and Samantha. Throughout the chapter, I use their definitions of mentoring as a way to introduce them as individuals. Additionally, I describe each of their relationships with Grace from their points of view as well as from Grace's point of view. I begin with short introductions to each woman—their backgrounds, what brought them to the campus, and

what their initial memories about mentoring are. Then I move to a discussion of the common traits that both mentees and mentors look for in their partners and then begin to relay definitions of mentoring relationships according to Grace, Lydia, and Samantha and detail how each of them has and continues to mature as a mentor.

CHAPTER IV

THE MENTORING JOURNEY

"Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by

reconciling the poles of contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and*

students" (Freire, 2009, p. 72).

In this chapter, the stories of Grace Chorley, Lydia Mitchell, and Samantha

Nefindon are traced through their experiences as mentees. Simultaneously, their growth

toward being mentors is examined. In order to understand why each of these women is a

successful mentor and to understand why students are drawn to them, it is also valuable

to look at their pasts, their mentee and mentor experiences, and their strategies,

mannerisms, and interactions both in the classroom and outside of it. The journey of each

of the women analyzed in this study is just as important as the mentoring relationships

that were shared as it shows the development of mentee to mentor and provides insight

into how mentors formulate their own definitions of what being a mentor means. In order

to remember how each of these women's experiences overlap, it may be prudent to revisit

the visual representation of our mentoring relationships:
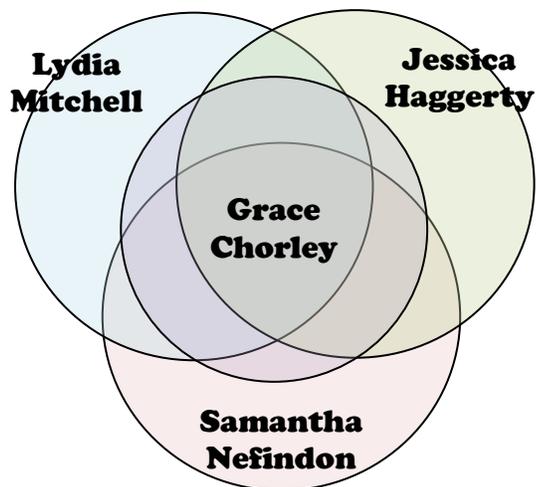
This venn diagram displays the complexities of the overlapping relationships and how they are all connected. If one sphere were to be removed, there would be a noticeable absence that would impact all involved. Also important is the fact that while Grace is the link to all of the mentees' relationships, the mentees have relationships with each other outside of her influence.

Before we move into a deeper discussion of the journey mentors and mentees undertake, it is important to respond to the question: "Why these women?" In some way, we could say that the relationships that formed between Grace and her mentees were serendipitous. None of us went into the classroom looking to build a mentoring relationship, not even Grace. It could be summed up as saying that we were all in the right place at the right time, but that would be an oversimplification. After much thought about her practices, Graced noted that there were things that attracted her to us: our passion for the subject, our openness to relationships, and our writing abilities. These traits will be discussed more thoroughly later in the chapter.

However it is also important to note that the relationships formed were not solely the result of Grace's admiration of our skills and personalities. Lydia, Samantha, and I all made the choice to be an active part of the relationship. There are many students, as Grace notes later, who do not want a relationship with their teacher. These mentoring relationships would not have happened if Lydia, Samantha, and I had not also been, consciously or unconsciously, reaching out for someone and acknowledging and accepting Grace's role as our mentor. As Freire (2009) notes, it takes both the oppressor and the oppressed coming together in dialogue to effectively create change. In the same way, it takes willingness from both the mentor and the mentee to build a mentoring

relationship because of its dialogic and reciprocal nature. Since Grace is the nucleus of this study as she mentored me, Lydia, and Samantha, it is best to begin our discussion of the mentoring journey with some history about the time she spent as a mentee.

The Onset of Grace's Journey

Grace Chorley's life was filled with mentoring experiences, many that were similar to my own. She recalls being mentored by her parents, by high school and college English teachers, and later in life, she "matured" as a teacher to where she took on the job of mentoring others.

Grace's first mentors were her parents and that relationship began during her childhood. One of the strongest ways that she felt they mentored her was through an implicit belief in her ability to succeed in life. Grace explains:

> [my parents] never made me feel like, because I was a girl, I couldn't do this or that or that I shouldn't do this or that. It was always just assumed: "Yeah, you're going to go [to college]. You're going to be successful. It's going to be awesome." (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010)

They encouraged Grace to be whoever she wanted to be without feeling the need to constrict herself according to gender roles. Grace was expected to go to college, even though neither of her parents had a chance for post-secondary education, and to find "professional" employment instead of taking on the traditional roles her parents occupied as a stay-at-home mother and a steel-mill-worker father. At the same time, they never pressured her to marry and have children, a strain that Grace recalls as being very common for many of her friends in the late 1970s.

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When reminiscing about the contribution of her parents as mentors, Grace stressed the fact that they just *assumed* that she and her two siblings would be successful. Their expectations were a driving force in Grace's success since she had constant support. This unstated belief in achievement also appears in the stories Grace's mentees tell about her. Lydia, Samantha, and I each wrote or spoke about the fact that Grace had high expectations for us, and even if we were not sure we could achieve the level of work expected, we pushed ourselves because it was implicit, and we were often surprised and pleased by the quality of work we produced. While we frequently measured the quality of the papers according to Grace's opinion—Lydia fondly remembers the "You Rock!" comments she would find at the end of her writing—we also began to really like what we had written on our own. Samantha remembers looking back at what she had written for a Women's Studies class with Grace and thinking, "This is good. This is *really* good. I really like this. I would read this if I hadn't written it….I love it" (Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010).

Like Lydia, Samantha, and I, Grace also found some of her mentors in school. She recalls two women who taught at her high school and influenced her perception of female teachers. The women were very different in age, in appearance, and in what they focused on about writing. One of Grace's mentors "emphasized the basics: grammar, spelling punctuation" while the other "encouraged us to be creative and come up with original ideas." Grace has combined both of these perspectives in how she teaches writing; she strives to be open "to [students'] ideas, different types of writing/projects," but she also refuses to "let them get away with anything in terms of the writing itself" (Autobiographical Narrative, Grace).

These women also taught Grace a lot about feminism and feminist education, even if that was not their aim. The older teacher, who focused on grammar, was very independent and travelled all over the world every summer, while the other teacher encouraged Grace to write stories that bordered on being controversial for the school newspaper. She recognized these women's lives as alternate identity options for her. As a mentor to all of the students that enter her classroom, Grace attempts to demonstrate to her students that women have the freedom and capability to take on different roles and to be successful and professional in their endeavors.

Grace went on to undergraduate and graduate schools and was mentored by three more women, all of whom were literature teachers. She learned important teaching strategies from each woman. The first teacher, while trying to help students understand Pater and his "small bits of beauty," placed a small vase of flowers in the room, which the students failed to notice. When she pointed it out, Grace learned how to comprehend Pater but also learned:

> that teaching was not just about showing up and lecturing at the students. In fact, [she] learned (but failed to put into practice until much later) that sometimes education lies in surprises, visuals, and being caught off guard and forced to rethink your approach. (Autobiographical Narrative, Grace)

Her mentors helped her to deepen her understanding of how to enact a feminist pedagogy as she was empowered enough to question common practices in the academy that did not seem right to her, including a time when she had the courage to ask a male teacher why they were only reading male writers in his class. This willingness to question and to fight

against traditional norms is mirrored in the literature as Metzger (2004) mentions in her own discussion of mentoring relationships.

Perhaps Grace's most influential mentor was a woman who taught a Chaucerian literature course, a subject for which Grace had very little interest. Despite her lack of interest in the subject, she did learn valuable things from this woman about teaching and about living the life of a female professor. Grace writes in her autobiographical narrative:

> the way she taught the course and related things to the students brought it to life for me. More than anyone else, she taught me through example about ways to relate to students, create rapport with them, by relating the subject matter to current events, issues of student concern, even popular music and culture.
>
> (Autobiographical Narrative, Grace)

Grace's relationship with this woman went beyond the classroom, however. She house sat for her mentor at one point, and throughout the length of their relationship, Grace gained insight into what life was like for a woman in the academy as her mentor freely discussed publishing pressures and the difficulty of balancing family life with work. Because Grace had no prior experience with the academic lifestyle, watching all of her female mentors live successful and fulfilling lives allowed her to imagine herself in their positions and to say, "Oh, I can do that" (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010).

And Grace has done it. She has become an influential and well-respected member of her campus community. She not only teaches, but also she serves on various committees, advises clubs, and regularly advocates for students. She has become a mentor to countless students in some of the same ways her mentors inspired her. At the

same time, Grace has combined the traits of the many women who influenced her and has developed her own style of mentoring for the students who come into her classroom.

The Onset of Lydia's Journey

Lydia's story is very different from mine or from Grace's. She grew up in a working class home, and the only mentoring she welcomed came from her grandmother and mother, who taught her "how to bake bread and pies, how to mend clothing, how to preserve food for the winter" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia). When teachers at school showed special interest in her, Lydia withdrew from them because she did not want the individualized attention. She explains, "In our blue collar neighborhood, children in the early '70s didn't dream of college, but rather truck driving and marriage and babies" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia). Lydia lived according to those expectations, immediately going into the workforce after graduation.

> She sums up her life after that point:
>
> For seven years in the middle of a string of jobs I held over fifteen years, I stayed home and raised children. I also drank, which, for "normal" people is often part of community, but for me, an alcoholic, it led to more and more isolating.
>
> (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia).

Lydia's addiction did not remain solely with alcohol; to help with the pain resulting from an accident that placed her in a wheelchair, she also became dependent on pain pills. When, in 2002, she decided to become clean, she met the first person outside of her family that she would consider as a mentor: the woman who would help her to become sober and remain that way. Lydia learned:

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To be sober, I had to know myself as an individual, not as an incomplete being

looking for a man to make me whole…. I was confused, wrapped tight in a thirty-

four-year conditioned experience of gender—who women were, who mothers

were, what opportunities and how much power was available to us. I may have

begun to see myself as an individual, as a human being, but the perceived limits

of my potential were still very firmly in place. (Autobiographical Narrative,

Lydia)

As she attained sobriety, Lydia's life began to change for the better, she learned to walk

again, she met a man who respected her, and they came together with their children as a

family. She enrolled into the local branch of the state university, where her outlook on life

and her feelings about herself would continue to change, and she would take the first

steps toward becoming a mentor through the relationship she built and shared with Grace.

The Onset of Samantha's Journey

Samantha does not recall having mentors, nor does she remember ever looking for

one. Even when she met Grace, Samantha was not looking for a mentor, but she does

recall wanting to please Grace in the same way she worked hard to make all of her

professors respect her as a student. Her eagerness to be accepted, much like my own,

stems from her experiences as she grew up and became a woman.

Samantha was born as the only girl in the family, the youngest of three children.

As a child, she had a bone disease and spent almost a year of her life in a children's

hospital. Thinking back, she explains, "I think that has a lot to do with my wanting to

please attitude because I was taught: you're not allowed to cry, and you've got to be

quiet, and you know, it probably, I'm sure, had a lot of effect on me in that point."

(Interview, Samantha, Mar. 4, 2010). Samantha recalls spending much of her time growing up trying to please and be accepted, a feeling I can easily relate to even though I spent more time blending in than in actively seeking attention and approval. Like me, Samantha found a man who would help her feel good about herself. She married him at 19 and became a Jehovah's Witness to please him. They had two daughters and remained together for nine years, until her husband fell in love with another woman, Samantha's best friend at the time.

Left alone to care for her two daughters, Samantha had to take care of herself. After a time, she met another man who loved her and her daughters, though she did not feel that she could make herself completely vulnerable to him after her first husband's betrayal. During their marriage, Samantha had her third child, a boy.

Then things changed again when Samantha met Claire, and she fell in love again—the same kind of love she had had for her first husband, the kind of love she swore she would never feel again. She explains that the experience "was scary because it was a woman, but the feeling was familiar because I had loved someone before" (Interview, Samantha, Mar. 4, 2010).

Samantha left her husband, and she and her children moved in with the woman she had fallen in love with. She sums it up: "basically I was married almost twenty years to two different men and then fell in love with a woman" (Interview, Samantha, Mar. 4, 2010). After Samantha and Claire were discriminated against at their work because of their relationship, they both decided to return to school. Samantha's biggest motivating factor was the fact that her oldest daughter had just turned 14 years old. In her mind, if

she went back to school, she could graduate from college at the same time her daughter would graduate from high school.

In her narrative, Samantha explains her strategy to succeed as a student, a strategy reminiscent of her earlier relationships:

> I studied not only what [my professors] are teaching, but studied their mannerisms, their humor, their style of teaching….I learned what they were looking for: in my work, in my behavior, in my attitudes. Then I adjusted myself to try to create their perfect student. I will add here, it was not always successful. As in many areas of life, when I tried to become what others wanted me to be, I would fail many times. (Autobiographical Narrative, Samantha)

Like me and like Lydia, one of Samantha's first classes was with Grace Chorley. She noted that Grace was different, that she seemed uninterested in Samantha's attempts to impress her. It was not until she realized that Grace simply expected great work that Samantha began to be more comfortable in the class and with Grace.

When Samantha and Claire were having relationship problems, and Claire moved out, Samantha did not know what to do and began to think that the best option for her was to leave school. Many of her classes had been with Claire, and she found it difficult to focus on her schoolwork when she was experiencing intense emotional distress. To top things off, one of the classes the two had together was Grace's Women's Writer's course, and they had been reading Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt*, a novel detailing the development of two women's relationship. The book highlights the societal difficulties that went hand-in-hand with lesbian relationships in the 1950s as one of the main characters must choose between her female lover and attempting to gain custody of her

daughter. To Samantha, the storyline hit too close to home, and she missed two sessions of Grace's class, one when a paper had been due.

Samantha finally went to campus because she needed to talk to someone; she needed to talk to Grace. She recalls thinking, "'I don't know if she likes me or not. She intimidates me,' but for whatever reason, that's who I wanted to talk to" (Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010). Despite her resolve to keep a "stiff upper lip," Samantha broke down and cried, something very unusual for her, as she told Grace what had happened and why she was planning to drop out of her classes. Even though she was embarrassed about her emotional outburst, Samantha admits to now being glad that she went to see Grace, who reacted very calmly. Grace told Samantha that she was sorry about everything that happened but that it was not a reason for her to drop out of school. She helped Samantha create a plan to catch up on her work. As Samantha prepared to leave, Grace said, "Well, you know, I'm very sorry that happened but I think you're going to be okay." Samantha remembers that those words "gave me strength. It was like, okay. I can do this" (Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010). This memory is more than just an example of how Grace helped Samantha through her complex situation; it marks the beginning of their mentoring relationship.

What was even more important to Samantha was the way Grace acted after the event, giving credence to Durfee and Rosenberg's (2009) warnings that mentor's must not act differently after a discussion of personal problems. While many of Samantha's friends were not supportive when she and Claire got back together, Samantha recalls how Grace acted:

She was nice to [Claire]. And she was nice to us as a group, but never brought it

up again. It's never been brought up. And I think that little aspect, and because I

bawled, and I don't typically cry, I think that is what kind of started the friendship

part of it, a little bit, and what made me start to be more comfortable with her,

because I had opened that up. (Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010)

In addition, Samantha explains that Grace did more than just "accept" her. When she

came out to a few of the other teachers to whom she was close, Samantha recalls feeling

that they accepted her; however, when she came out to Grace, she felt that Grace

"*encouraged"* her to not only be herself, but to explore how she could not just be herself

but how she could have an impact on others (Interview, Samantha, June 17, 2010).

Through her classes in that first semester, and specifically through this personal

experience, Samantha entered into the first stages of her mentoring relationship with

Grace, even though, she says in her autobiographical narrative, that had been the last

thing for which she was looking.

Qualities Mentees May Desire in a Mentor

In the following sections, the various traits Grace looks for in her mentees will be

detailed. Thus, it is important to also discuss what mentees, specifically Lydia, Samantha,

and I, look for in our mentors. These descriptors will fit Grace in most cases, but the list

is also valuable when looking at the other people who have mentored us in our lives

whose mentoring approaches may have differed from Grace's personality. These qualities

were compiled by looking at the autobiographies, the interview transcripts, and by simply

looking at the responses each participant provided when asked what qualities they found

most appealing in their mentors.

Something that is important when deciding to accept someone's offer of mentorship is that they are open, honest, and willing to listen. To us, these traits require more than just being willing to talk about one's own life, but in wanting to hear what the other person has to say, in questioning, in offering empathy and advice, and in clearly and kindly offering one's own perspective, even if it does not align with the mentee's thoughts and opinions. The mentor must show an honest interest in the mentee's life and must do more than just accept the mentee but to encourage their growth personally and professionally. Our mentors must be willing to actively help us discover what drives us, what our passions are.

Another important trait is a positive outlook and disposition. In Grace's case, each of us was drawn to her because of her humor and her contagious laugh. It is also easier to work with someone who is more willing to talk about what is possible rather than what might be difficult or unpleasant. As Lydia points out, sometimes we encounter mentors who are not positive, and in many ways they mentor us by providing a model of what we do not want to do or who we do not want to be as mentors (Interview, Lydia, Apr. 24, 2010).

We also want mentors who are worthy of our time and energy; someone who is appreciative and acknowledges our accomplishments and the hard work we do—whether it is for them or for ourselves. In our minds, our mentor should be worthy of our respect by being a good role model personally and professionally. They must hold honesty and integrity in high esteem. They should be actively working to improve their abilities whether they are addressing pedagogy or social interactions with peers, students, or the campus as a whole.

Something that may tie to the previous trait is that the mentor be eager to continue to question and to learn. If one does not love to learn, then the shared desire to explore and discover new things in the field and in the classroom may be absent, thus leaving a noticeable lack in the relationship. In the same way, a mentor who may feel that she already knows everything could stifle the curiosity of her mentee, discouraging them from finding their own interests and discovering their own truths.

Another valuable quality is that the mentor is willing to be a cheerleader to the mentee but also knows the value of cracking down on a procrastinating mentee. Because we are cognizant of our own work ethics, we know that sometimes we may need someone to cheer us on, to tell us that we are fantastic and capable, but at other times, we may need someone to remind us of deadlines and push us through our procrastination and beyond our comfort zones.

We admit that the final trait does not always have to be present in a mentoring relationship: each of us has a desire for someone who has an affectionate side. We would like a mentor who is willing to give the occasional pat on the back or hug when we are feeling sad or when we have accomplished something important to us, although we acknowledge that some mentors may not be as comfortable with this as others.

Mentoring: According to the Mentors

Because the current literature has varying definitions of what mentoring actually is, it is crucial that each of the participants of this study have the opportunity to define what mentoring means to them and how they enact it in their own lives and classrooms. A definition of mentoring is not static and may be hard to define in any tangible way. The most common way that people define mentoring is through their own experiences with it.

While some, like Lydia, may hold building a personal relationship as an important part of mentoring, others, like Grace, may be more concerned with helping students develop professionally.

The first definition discussed is Grace's definition of mentoring since she has the most experience acting as a mentor. Grace's definition of mentoring goes in depth and includes discussion of classroom and individual mentoring and includes examples of how Grace enacts her own description of mentoring described in the interviews and narratives of Lydia, Samantha, and I. It is important that we thoroughly understand Grace's concept before moving on to discuss Lydia and Samantha's perceptions of mentoring relationships as their experiences and feelings about mentoring are intricately tied to their interactions with Grace. In a sense, her definition of mentoring has laid the groundwork for how each of us perceives mentoring relationships.

Grace's Definition of Mentoring

Since she has had the most experience as a mentor, Grace's definition is perhaps the most comprehensive and thought out. For Grace, defining how she is a mentor was difficult because she feels that her mentoring behavior is mostly unconscious and is a natural part of her pedagogy. Noddings (1984) argues that feelings of "naturalness" are part of a caring ethic because it means we react because we want to, not because we feel that we "must" or that we are responsible for acting in a certain manner. She explains "The most intimate situations of caring are, thus, natural….In caring, we accept the natural impulse to act on behalf of the present other" (p. 83). In line with Noddings's assertions, Grace's initial inability to narrow down how she has been a mentor places her pedagogy in an ethics of caring.

However, after some thought Grace was able to identify some traits she thinks are necessary for a mentor to possess. For instance, she explained that mentors really have to be willing to be involved in the campus community beyond what is required of them. Even if there are pressures to conduct research and to publish, teachers must take the time to develop genuine relationships with students. At the same time, mentors must be willing to "put themselves out there" (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010). Just as Grace's Chaucerian mentor made a point of opening herself up to Grace and sharing her own experiences and thoughts about her work, mentors must be willing to share some of themselves and certain aspects of their lives with their students so that the relationship has a level of reciprocity.

Another important factor is getting to know and remembering students from one semester to the next. For instance, in her Composition course, Grace had a number of students she had taught in Basic Writing the previous semester. On the first day of class, she greeted those she knew personally, asking them about the break and lives, even teasing a student whose favorite football team would play against Grace's favored team the following weekend. Likewise, when Grace sees students in the hallways or common areas, she makes a point of greeting them by name and asking how they are. If Grace has worked with a student in one of her Women's Studies courses, she often knows more personal details about their lives and will ask about their families or specific events. Grace's ability to create cohesion between semesters is one of the ways that she helps enhance the feeling of community on the campus as a whole as well as laying the groundwork for potential mentoring relationships.

After some thought about how she might define mentoring, Grace identified two different kinds of mentoring she enacts as an English and women's studies instructor. The first type of mentoring is a wider-reaching mentoring relationship between her and all of the students who take a class with her. While these relationships are important and have lasting effects on the students and Grace, personal, regular communication often does not last beyond the end of the semester. The second kind of mentoring focuses on individual relationships with students that Grace views as being "life-long commitments" (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010), relationships that may grow out of the larger, class-wide mentoring Grace describes.

Classroom mentoring relationships. Grace understands that mentoring is inherent in teaching. While she knows she cannot have an intense one-on-one relationship with every student she teaches, she does feel that she tries to mentor all of the students who enter her classrooms. One of the ways that Grace defined a mentoring pedagogy was through role modeling. She strives to be a positive role model for her students by expecting from herself what she expects from them. For example, Grace acts in a professional manner in the classroom, is prepared for class, and produces quality, interesting work in terms of lesson plans, hand outs, and assignments.

Creating and maintaining a student-centered atmosphere. In the same way, Grace is thoughtful about what goes on in the classroom and attempts to expose her students to new cultures and perspectives. Her classes revolve around group work, and she painstakingly arranges students into groups based on a variety of factors. In all of her courses, she takes age, ethnicity, and gender into account to avoid having homogenous groups. In her Composition course, she carefully arranges the groups so that there is a

mix of students who had her course the previous semester and are familiar with Grace's methods with those who are taking a class with her for the first time. For her Business Writing class, she uses a student-written profile, the results of a leadership exercise, and everyone's daily behavior to help her determine the best groups. Throughout the semester, she continues to take note of the students' actions so that when she creates new groups at other intervals, she still has a fresh outlook on how to make the groups the most effective and beneficial to student learning.

Organizing one's courses solely around group work may at first seem threatening to many teachers as well as to the students in the classroom, even though some professors have found group work to be extremely successful (Pratt, 2005). As a student and as a teacher, I disliked group work, instead strongly preferring large class discussions. I was skeptical when Grace detailed that her classes were run entirely around group work, and it took seeing these groups in action to really understand how they effectively create a classroom that is student-centered and conducive to student empowerment.

Giving up one's place in the front of the classroom can be a scary thing as a lot of control is lost. Grace remembers struggling with the transition since she considers herself to be a bit of a "control freak." When she first started organizing her courses around group work, she often found herself wanting to "direct" the students frequently, but over time, she decided to step back and allow the students to find their own answers. She explains the importance of that decision:

> I can't be in every group every minute, so I'm not in control of what goes on in the classroom all the time, but I think that's good actually. It gives the students much more choice, it gives them more power, it gives them more agency. That's

what they need. When they get out of school, when they do anything, if they want

to be active citizens in the world, that's what they need. (Interview, Mar. 4, 2010)

Grace keeps in mind the effects of group work, and uses groups for reasons besides

granting students agency.

Groups are also an important way that students can build relationships. Grace has

noted that students form connections with other group members. She explains that these

connections help students acclimate themselves to the campus and feel as though they are

members of that community. This, in turn, positively affects retention. She explains that

the formation of relationships is quite common since she has changed her classroom

approach. Referring to three students who had previously taken a course with her:

they didn't know each other before English 004 and now they're going to

lunch…and they're hanging out. They feel a connection to somebody, to me to a

certain extent, to each other, and that is a big part of it for me. (Interview, Mar. 4,

2010)

And even if students are apprehensive about the nontraditional classroom setup, they

quickly become at ease.

Because of the detailed handouts Grace prepares and because students are placed

in groups from the first week of classes, students quickly become comfortable about the

expectations Grace has for them and about their contributions to their own learning. That

is not to say that this level of comfort does not take more time for some students and, in a

few cases, is not achieved before the end of the semester. Scapp (hooks & Scapp, 1994)

suggests that this resistance to a non-teacher-centered atmosphere may be due to how

students are conditioned throughout their educational careers. He explains, "they've

already been trained to view themselves as not the ones in authority, not the ones with legitimacy. To acknowledge student responsibility for the learning process is to place it where it's least legitimate in their own eyes" (p. 144). To help deal with this issue, Grace takes the time to explain her reasoning behind using groups, even providing students with a graph showing how much more information is retained when students are actively involved in discussing and teaching rather than simply listening to a professor's lecture.

Scapp sees the value in teaching students to not only speak and share their experiences, but to listen in a "serious" way to what others are saying in the classroom and to value what is being said without necessarily needing the teacher to approve the comment. Group work effectively leads students to this kind of attitude because of the necessity of reliance on group members to complete the tasks at hand as well as the physical and verbal absence of the teacher during a large part of the learning process.

While Grace does spend the class period moving from group to group, students spend the majority of class time working on their own, and they are, in turn, given control of their own learning. Students are provided with a handout outlining what they need to accomplish in the time given, which is typically one or two class periods. Even though they have a guideline of what they need to accomplish, the students are able to decide what to talk about first, the amount of time they want to spend on each area or writing strategy, and how they will connect what they are learning to their lives. Students even have the freedom to abandon the tasks at hand, though this does not seem to happen very frequently. If students do get off task, one of the group members normally guides them back to or makes a connection to the course material. hooks (1994) and Crawley et al. (2008) suggest that allowing students to make the connection between the subject matter

and their personal lives, by inviting them to open up and write or talk about their experiences, may inspire them to be more active and aware in the classroom.

Grace regularly visits quickly with each group at the beginning of the class, but normally she does not stay more than three or four minutes. Later, she returns to each group for a lengthier visit to see if students have questions or if they are having problems with the assignment. If groups are quiet while she is there, she asks again if they have questions and has even offered to move on to the next group if her presence makes them uncomfortable. Grace also takes the time to notice who is more outspoken in the groups and has assigned "reports" where students who are quieter have the opportunity to present what they think. This strategy also requires the more outspoken students to take the time to sit back and listen to alternate views.

Grace is also sensitive to the fact that her students may get burnt out on group work, so she will break up the schedule by giving students days in class to workshop their work or where they can work on individual activities. In addition, she does not keep students in the same group for too long, switching groups about three to four times a semester to reinvigorate students and to refresh the energy in the classroom. At the end of the semester, after students have had the opportunity to work with several different groups, Grace gives them the option of deciding with whom they would or would not prefer to work.

By allowing students a say in not only who their group members are but in how they will conduct themselves and in how much they will learn, Grace provides students with a feeling of agency that they may not often encounter throughout their undergraduate career. Lydia, who now places great emphasis on agency and trust in her

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classroom, recalled, "She trusted us. It didn't seem at the time that it was a trust thing, but she trusted us to work together, to generate ideas and material together. She also trusted us in the classroom to have something to say" (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17, 2010). Expecting students to take on such responsibility for learning from the start can be extremely empowering for them, especially if teachers are celebrating education as a practice of freedom (hooks & Scapp, 1994; Mawhinney & Sagan, 2007).

Grace's decision to give the students so much freedom over daily classroom interactions shows her implicit trust in the students to take learning seriously and her desire to allow students to have a sense of agency about their education and the choices they make in her classroom. In discussing the importance of caring in the classroom, Gay (2000) explicates:

> It is manifested in the form of teacher attitudes, expectations, and behaviors about students' human value, intellectual capability, and performance responsibilities…. teachers who really care about students honor their humanity, hold them in high esteem, expect high performance from them, and use strategies to fulfill their expectations. They also model academic, social, personal, and moral behaviors and values for students to emulate. Students, in kind, feel obligated to be worthy of being so honored. (p. 45)

Gay's words do an excellent job describing what Grace accomplishes in her group-oriented classroom. Grace models responsible yet relaxed behavior while also letting students know that she believes they are capable of completing the assignments she has assigned. As a result, she gives them the power to make decisions instead of using class time to lecture and further her own agenda.

Finally, Grace not only trusts her students and expects quality work from them, she also accepts them for who they are and does not try to make them fit into a certain mold. Samantha explains:

> It was in those classes that I came to the realization that Grace taught by accepting. She accepts assignments, assuming that it is a student's best work, and grades fairly. She accepts opinions, recognizes that they may differ from her own, and respects diversities. She accepts respect, and gives it in return. She accepts me, even before I completely accepted myself. (Autobiographical Narrative, Samantha)

Such an approach to teaching can be very helpful to students, especially if they are still trying to become comfortable in who they are and who they want to become.

Fostering an environment of empowerment and mutuality. However, it is not just the students who are empowered by the interactions in Grace's classroom. hooks (hooks & Scapp, 1994), explains that every person in the classroom should be included in the distribution of power in their own way and that "we professors should be empowered by our interactions with students" (p. 152). Grace has admitted that she has learned a lot about opening herself up to her students through her interactions with them, most specifically in her Women's Studies classes. She connects this development to her ability to form more personal mentoring relationships. In addition, she has learned more about their lives and experiences and has used this knowledge to find ways to understand her past, present, and future students.

Another way that Grace empowers her students is by introducing them to the resources available on campus. Within the first week of classes, Grace took her writing

class to the tutoring center to show them where they could get additional writing help. In her business writing and women's studies classes, she had one of the librarians come in to show students how to use the library's on-line resources and to share ideas of how to best approach researching for their assignments. Midway through the semester, Grace invited the Director of Student Affairs into her Business Writing classroom to help students understand the best way to build a professional portfolio. The regular visitors to her classroom helps students see the wide variety of resources they can access on the campus.

Perhaps the most notable way that Grace acts as a mentor is by showing students that the classroom should be a place where learning goes hand-in-hand with being human and having natural emotions. hooks and Scapp (hooks & Scapp, 1994; hooks, 2003) write about a common problem in the academy where professors feel that they must remain neutral in the classroom—to separate the mind from the body, a sentiment echoed by Blanton (2005). Grace enacts hooks' pedagogy by appearing human and being a physical presence in the classroom. She moves around the classroom from group to group, and she will pull up a chair or squat down when she visits so that she is on the same physical level as the rest of the group. Scapp points out that leaving the front of the room creates potential for personal relationships and more open reception to the information being covered in that "suddenly, what [the teacher has] to say is not coming from behind this invisible line…" (hooks & Scapp, 1994, p. 138). In the same way, Grace's classroom is a place where emotions are permitted and encouraged, the most common emotion seeming to be humor. Students frequently laugh in her classroom, whether it be about a joke someone has cracked (often, this someone is Grace herself) or over a sentence Grace has written on the board, in an assignment, or on her syllabus.

For instance, it was Grace's syllabus that first piqued Samantha's interest in her course. She admitted to laughing out loud when she read a copy of the syllabus that Claire had brought home. She explains that at one point, Grace is "telling you that regardless of how much time you spend on something, it does not guarantee a grade, and if you want her to illustrate, she will gladly tell you the story of her trying to learn to roller skate at the age of twelve" (Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010). She enjoyed Grace's brand of sarcastic humor, from such amusing anecdotes to Grace's "Anti-Whining Warning." It perplexed Samantha when other students did not seem to get the jokes or when they took them literally: "I thought she was so funny in different ways like that, in very subtle ways. That she'd say something that I would think was hysterical and other people didn't always laugh" (Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010). While Samantha thoroughly enjoys Grace's humor, she did express concern that it might also alienate students if they were not entirely secure about themselves.

In general, students seem to enjoy Grace's humor. For example, when Grace was taking class time to discuss compound and complex sentences, she used all of the students in the classroom as the subjects of the sentences. For example, one sentence read "Sally enjoys writing in her journal, and Garrett thinks that's fabulous." She even wrote an amusing sentence about herself that poked fun at her age, her aging body, and not being a "spring chicken" anymore. Several students chuckled over the sentence, making the "grammar lesson" that most students find tedious much more interesting for them.

Grace's ability to create such a positive rapport with her students is also related to her desire to make the material accessible to them. She carefully chooses books that state the information in a straightforward manner. When students do not understand a concept,

she takes the time to provide an example or to direct them to a place where they can more clearly find the information. Noddings (1984) urges teachers to make an effort to take the students' points of view into consideration:

> The teacher, because she is a teacher, must see things through the eyes of her student in order to teach him. She looks at and speaks about subject matter, of course, but she looks at it and speaks about it from two poles. She must interpret what she sees from one pole in the language that she hears at the other. Further, it is not only the subject matter that she must view dually. She must also grasp the effectance motivation of the student. What does he want to accomplish? Of what may the proposed subject matter be to him in his strivings for competence? What interests has he that may help her to persuade him to look at the subject matter?
>
> (p. 70)

Grace accomplishes this by taking the time to reflect on past classes and by getting to know her students, most often through their writing. Before writing a paper, she asks students to clearly state their goals and to be thoughtful about their audience. If they still have difficulty, she takes the time to explain the importance of knowing these things ahead of time, often by asking them questions that will make them think more deeply about their topics.

The atmosphere of the classroom not only impacts the classroom as a whole, but it also plays a part in how her one-on-one mentees have gained an understanding of effective, rewarding teaching. Both Lydia and Samantha worked as a peer mentor or an embedded tutor in Grace's classes as well as other teachers' courses. In both situations, Lydia and Samantha already had positive relationships with the female professors with

whom they worked. However, the differences in pedagogic strategies and the repercussions of those differences were obvious to them as student-observers.

Lydia had the opportunity to work with another English professor in a writing class as a peer mentor after having worked with Grace for several semesters. The classroom was arranged differently in that the students sat in rows facing the front of the room where the teacher lectured, while in Grace's classes, students often sat at circular tables for discussion. In talking about the more traditional classroom, Lydia recalls:

> the students in that class were a lot less likely to take advantage of what I was offering them…. It was a lot different in that, you know, we weren't working together in small groups, we weren't getting to know each other. I probably couldn't name three students that I was in that class with because we really didn't get to know each other on the level that we did in Grace's classes. (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17, 2010)

While Lydia cannot remember the students in the class, she can remember feeling less satisfied with her place there. As a result, she now places great emphasis on relationship-building in her own classroom. She does not just want her students to learn the material; she wants them to get to know her and the other members of their learning community as well.

Likewise, Samantha had another experience as an embedded tutor to compare with her time in Grace's classes. She worked in a literature class that was cross-listed under English and Women's studies with a different professor. In looking back, Samantha says that she felt more "useful" in Grace's classes since they were group-focused. In the other English course, she admits to feeling more like just another student, since her main

function was to take notes to share with students who may have missed class. In fact, most of the students in the class thought she was a student as well, not understanding Samantha's role as a tutor placed there to help them understand the content. At the same time, Samantha felt that Grace treated her as more of an equal, perhaps because of the classroom organization.

Like Lydia, Samantha admits to not remembering many of the students in the course, where the students from Grace's course still regularly speak with her as they see her on the campus. Both Lydia and Samantha understood the importance of getting to know students by name. They also learned how rewarding it was for both the students and themselves to continue relationships beyond the span of a single semester.

Individual mentoring relationships. The other kinds of mentoring relationships are those that are much more personal and long-lasting. In the following section, Grace's relationships with three women—the women with which she has most recently had close mentoring relationships—will be explained. Beginning with Grace's recollections of her experience mentoring me and then moving onto her relationships with Lydia and Samantha, it is possible to trace Grace's maturation as a mentor. With each relationship, she opened herself more personally with each subsequent mentee and has had the opportunity to watch them grow and succeed as they left her classroom and, in my and Lydia's cases, went on to graduate school and our lives as teacher-mentors. Campbell and Campbell (2007) found that such a progression is natural in mentoring relationships, when students who are mentored decide to go on to gain graduate degrees.

In general, mentoring relationships may begin in different ways, and mentors and mentees may be drawn to each other for different reasons. When thinking back to her

relationships with Lydia, Samantha, and me, Grace found it difficult to pinpoint exactly

when we became her mentors:

> A lot of what I do as a mentor I think is unconscious. I mean, I don't recall, say
>
> with you or with Lydia or with Samantha, ever being like "okay now. I'm their
>
> mentor. So number one: I'm going to do this. Number two: I'm going to do that."
>
> I think a lot of it is just how I am and how I operate. How our relationship just
>
> sort of evolved, you know? It's not really something you can always put a pin on.
>
> (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010)

The formation of these mentoring relationships seemed to be a serendipitous event,

without planning or recognition of a moment where both parties suddenly realized they

were in a mentoring relationship.

> ***Identifying similarities and differences in Grace's mentoring relationships.*** In

the case of Grace's mentees, we all have some things in common (our enthusiasm for

learning, our interest in Women's Studies, our eagerness to help and inspire others, and

our need to have someone verify our intelligence and capabilities), but we all are very

different people with contrasting backgrounds. I was 18 and started classes in 2001;

Lydia was 36 and began her coursework in 2004; Samantha was 35 and returned to

school in the spring of 2009. I was white, middle class, Catholic, heterosexual, and had

just finished high school. I had no children and had to divide my time between school and

two jobs.

> Lydia was of mixed heritage, came from a working class background, and had

spent most of her life working in manual labor. When she decided to come back to

school, Lydia was disabled, was recovering from addictions and alcoholism, had a history

of abuse, was responsible for several children (her husband's and her own), and was just starting to heal in a number of ways. She returned to school out of the need to gain the skills for non-labor-intensive work.

Finally, Samantha was a white, middle class, lesbian woman with several children, her partner Claire's and her own from previous marriages. Samantha grew up with a strong desire to please the adults around her, became a Jehovah's Witness, and married and had children early. She returned to school after dealing with discrimination over her sexual orientation and was fueled by the desire to create a better life for herself and her family.

Grace's interactions with each of us varied, but she did note that there were some things that were similar:

> you're all three—and I could tell from the beginning—passionate. About what you care about, what you believe in, what you read. That's the first thing that I see, usually, in somebody that I think I'm probably going to be a strong mentor to, is that passion. (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010)

All of our relationships began in an academic arena. Lydia, Samantha, and I first met Grace when we took her Women's Writers course during our freshman years. Grace remembers that we quickly became discussion leaders in the class. Because we showed that initiative, Grace asked me and Lydia to act as peer mentors, and when that position evolved into an embedded tutor, Lydia and Samantha took on that role. As Grace explains in her autobiographical narrative:

> This allowed all three to attend classes, set an example for the other students. All three mentees met with students to help them adjust to college life and the specific

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course. They critiqued student papers, asked probing questions in class, met with

small discussion groups, and in essence, acted as a role model for students in

those courses. (Autobiographical Narrative)

Since we acted as role models in Grace's classes, we spent time with her in order to

discover what her expectations were, to ask her questions about issues that came up

during class time, and to get her advice on how to improve our performance as peer

mentors or tutors. This role was also important for me and Lydia, because it was how we

met. As a senior, I was a peer mentor in one of Grace's classes where Lydia was a

freshman student. The friendship formed in that class gradually moved outside of the

classroom as we also became involved in similar activities.

In order for a mentoring relationship to be successful, it is important to have

common interests. Grace admits that she just "clicks" with her mentees but acknowledges

that such a connection would not be possible if her mentees were not willing to be a part

of the relationship and also thinks it is crucial that they are devoted and interested

students. In the composition or literature classrooms, many students are only taking the

class because they have to meet general education requirements. Grace points out that

this can be where mentoring relationships start—when students take a course as a means

to an end but discover that they honestly care about the subject matter and want to learn

more. Grace enjoys watching students' interest and passion about writing, literature, or

feminism flourish. When describing how this can relate to the development of a

mentoring relationship, Grace explains, "I think that common interest has to be there. It's

like an undefinable thing. It's that passion for the material, and love of it, and that sort of

thing" (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010). A shared concern about a topic can help to

create a bridge to a personal relationship that might not otherwise exist between the mentor as the teacher and the mentee as the student.

Excitement about the subject is not the only kind of passion Grace discussed. She also mentioned that all three of her mentees were eager to learn on our own, and more importantly, we were eager to help other students learn. She noticed that we were willing to give our time and attention to other students in the classroom and prompted them to think more critically about things. Grace explains how our willingness to help other students appeared to her:

> That's a big deal. You may not think it is when you're doing it because that's just how you are, but from my side of the desk, that's a big deal. Because a lot of students just want to put in the time, and sit there, and be little sponges, and get their C+ or whatever, and move on. But you three all care about other students, too. Not just your own academic interests and career, but sharing that passion with other people. That's special. (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010)

Our desire to encourage enthusiasm about our class work, what came natural to us because of our love of knowledge, was another way that Grace saw a little of herself in our actions and that, in turn, played a part in the growth of our relationships.

Grace also notes that her mentees' writing ability frequently catches her attention. Because of Grace's appreciation of writing—both the creative side and the technical side—her mentees also had to possess an appreciation of the beauty of the written word as well as an understanding of its grammatical and organizational aspects. Grace argues that, as future writing teachers, "you have to be able to know your way around a sentence and a paragraph. I mean, you can't teach this stuff if you can't write well. You can't get a

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graduate degree if you can't write well" (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010). To build a strong mentoring relationship, Grace had to be able to believe that her mentees would be capable of following in her footsteps, of carrying on what she terms her "legacy." Being a good writer, as well as the passion for learning she frequently referred to, was one of the major necessities in achieving that role.

While she recalls that all of us were good writers, she specifically felt that Lydia's writing was what prompted the initial "click" between them. She remembers Lydia being very insecure about her abilities as a student, and Grace remembers feeling the need to help boost her self confidence. Even though Lydia stuck out to Grace as being significant in terms of having low self esteem, all three of her mentees have admitted that Grace helped us feel more secure about ourselves and gave us the courage to believe in our own thoughts, ideas, and abilities. One of the areas that Grace felt Lydia needed assistance with was reconciling her past and her present since the two parts of her life were extremely different. Grace tried to help her see that her past had a place in her academic life, that it "had a purpose and a value…. That she could write about those things or share those things in certain situations" (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010).

Conversely, Grace explains that she and Samantha first bonded through interactions and discussions revolving around Samantha's sexual orientation. The first time Samantha felt that she connected with Grace was when she went to Grace about her personal problems and Grace sat down with her, let her share her story, and then helped her make a plan that would allow Samantha to stay in school despite her personal problems. After that occasion, Samantha knew that she could rely on Grace. Even though she had wanted to gain Grace's approval before this discussion, the bond that began to

form during that meeting intensified Samantha's desire to build a relationship with Grace and laid the groundwork for their personal relationship later.

What caused the initial click between Grace and me is perhaps the fuzziest, likely because I was the first student Grace built a significant mentoring relationship with and because it began over ten years ago. Grace recalls my passion for the coursework, my writing skills, as well as the fact that I cared about what was being discussed. I recall her praise of my writing and her encouragement to take on leadership positions in and out of the classroom. While Grace acknowledges that she likely did unconsciously mentor students before, she does not feel that she had been ready to build a personal relationship with a student before meeting me in 2001. She posits, "I think it took me a while to become confident enough in my own teaching, in my own abilities. I had to mature as a teacher, a lot more, before I could do that" (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010). She also explains that she had to believe in herself and in her ability to have something to share beyond her expertise as a teacher.

Maturing as the mentor. Over the span of the relationships she had with me, Lydia, and Samantha, Grace has continued to mature and grow as a mentor. Noddings (1984) claims that this may be typical as teachers are "prepared to care" for incoming students because of past relationships with other students (p. 47). While her relationship with me was one that was close, I felt that it had defined boundaries and was primarily an academic relationship. While I would share lunch with Grace in the cafeteria, and we did talk about my life in general ways, I do not think she was ready to share a lot with me about her own life outside of the campus. She acted as an effective professional role

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model, and I learned a lot about what kind of teacher I wanted to be and what my life might be like after graduation.

However, when Grace began forming a relationship with Lydia in 2004, the two seemed to be able to connect in a more personal way. This transition may have been a natural progression of her maturation as a mentor or it could have been a result of a smaller age difference; there was a difference of only seven years between them whereas there had been 22 years between Grace and me. As their relationships progressed, Lydia and her husband often had dinner with Grace and her husband Lorenzo, and the two women spent time sharing personal stories and advice about their lives. In the same way, Lydia had experienced a lot more in her life by the time she began college where I was only transitioning from high school. My naiveté and youth likely made the lives of Grace and I seem drastically different and may have been another reason for the barrier between us, but my maturity and seriousness about my writing served as a bridge to our age difference.

Similarly, when Grace began to mentor Samantha in 2010, she progressed even further in the mentoring relationship by not only acting as a professional role model, but also by building a genuine friendship with Samantha and Claire. While Lydia felt there was still a professional distance, at least at the beginning of their relationship, that began to change when she was in need of extra support. She explains, "I had a troublesome semester, and she extended the hand of friendship. I've never e-mailed her about anything that she was not open to giving me feedback, and now we're sharing [advice about ailing parents]" (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17, 2010). As Grace became more comfortable in her role as a mentor, she opened herself up more to her mentees and their lived experiences.

Though Lydia felt the change was even more far-reaching. She explains, "it seemed to me that after we began sharing with each other in a nonacademic way, she seemed to relax more in the classroom, too. Not just with me, but with others" (Interview, Lydia, Feb. 11, 2010).

Because of the similarities in age, Grace, Lydia, and Samantha had common interests. A significant example is that Grace and Lorenzo's son was the same age as Lydia's daughter, and Grace and Lydia spent time talking about their children's "development, how they were changing, and [their] general awe as mothers watching [their] kids grow" (Interview, Lydia, Feb. 11, 2010). As Samantha built her relationship with Grace, they realized that Samantha's daughter was also the same age as Grace's son, the two went to the same school, and they were both interested in theater. Sharing experiences as mothers was a significant way that Grace bonded with these mentees in a non-academic way. In fact, when Samantha and Claire went on a class trip to Spain, Grace was more than willing to act as a contact for their daughter if she needed a ride to school or to theater practice.

In both Lydia and Samantha's cases, they were comfortable reaching out to Grace when they were in instances of personal crisis, and I believe these moments are when borders of professionalism were crossed and the mentoring relationships began to become more intimate and to include elements of friendship and personal trust (Barnett, 2008; Durfee & Rosenberg, 2009; Haswell et all, 2009). Unfortunately, there was not a similar border-crossing in the mentoring relationship between Grace and me. In my junior year, I found myself trapped in a relationship that was not healthy, but I did not feel that talking to Grace about it was appropriate. Irrationally, I was afraid that if I told Grace

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about my inability to just leave this relationship, she would have been disappointed in me. While I trusted Grace implicitly with my academic life, that same level of trust had not developed in our personal relationship. Undoubtedly, many other factors beside my fear of her reaction influenced my decision not to approach Grace about this incident, my age and immaturity being predominant. However, I do find it promising that both Lydia and Samantha did feel comfortable talking to Grace about their personal issues. Likely, because of the bonds they had already formed because of other shared experiences, like being mothers of children the same age, they had more insight into how Grace might react to what they chose to share. In addition, both Lydia and Samantha had developed off campus relationships with Grace in ways that I had not. Their trust in her and their appreciation for her understanding speaks to the benefits of mentoring relationships developing beyond academic boundaries.

I feel it is important to acknowledge the fact that Lydia, Samantha, and I all have had traumatic incidents in our lives. More important is the fact that none of us considered ourselves victims. In mentioning these incidents in our lives, I am attempting to draw attention to the level of trust that was present in each relationship and how that affected the mentoring relationship as a whole. In this instance, I am specifically focusing on the development of Grace's personality as a mentor and her willingness to be more open on a personal level. While there are various articles focusing on victimized narratives (Baumeister et al., 1990; Draucker, 2003; Parker-Fuller, 2000; Wortham, 2000), this study does not attempt to place any of the participants in that genre. In fact, as Wortham (2000) points out, if we were to view ourselves as victims and to have written about ourselves in such a way, it may have impacted our views of ourselves as victims. Since none of us

have considered ourselves as such, it would not be ethical to analyze these stories in that way (Davis, 2005). However, it is helpful to look at these experiences and acknowledge how they might allow each of us to be more empathic mentors to the individuals we work with in our futures.

Creating a legacy. No matter what level of personal involvement there was between Grace and her mentees, her professional role and impact as a mentor was still present. Just because each of us now knows Grace in a more personal way does not mean that we have lost the desire to live up to Grace's standards professionally. Lydia, Samantha, and I are all concerned about being successful, whether that be personally or academically, for ourselves, but that desire was sparked by our interactions with Grace as our teacher and mentor.

While Gay (2000) gives a great amount of weight to being supportive, caring, and understanding of students' lives, she also stresses the importance of holding her students to high standards of academic performance. Advocating for students may sometimes require teachers to refuse to accept work or behavior that is below their expectations (Gay, 2000; Mawhinney & Sagan, 2007). As stated earlier, Grace frequently displays a similar attitude about writing from not only the mentees with whom she has built close relationships, but also from all of the students in her courses. All three of Grace's mentees, as well as some of her other students, admitted to being almost "intimidated" by Grace's academic expectations. However, we also frequently stated that one of the most powerful driving forces in our relationships with Grace was her implicit belief in our capabilities. By having high expectations of her students' abilities and by giving us responsibilities out of class, Grace motivated Lydia, Samantha, and me to take ourselves

more seriously and to make the effort to produce high quality work that we may not have

initially felt we were capable of. Samantha, who is still a student in Grace's classes,

admits:

> it would be not wanting to disappoint her that keeps me moving forward because I
>
> know that she expects my very best. And there's times when I don't know that I
>
> have even found that yet—of what she's expecting from me. (Interview,
>
> Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010)

Similarly, Lydia initially felt intimidated by Grace but explained that those

feelings did not last long as she and Grace built a friendship. To Lydia, it was important

that their friendship never impacted how Grace evaluated her as a student. She explained

that during one semester, she did not receive an A in Grace's class, and she "would not

have felt good about it" if she had received the higher grade (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17,

2010). Grace cares enough about her mentees' success to not allow her personal feelings

to shake her high expectations. If anything, her personal feelings may reinforce her desire

to see her students exceed them.

At the same time, having students who produce quality work and share her view

on what good research and good writing are allow Grace to have the feeling that she is

leaving behind a legacy of sorts:

> When I'm not here anymore…I know that there will be women particularly, and
>
> some men out there too, I know I've had an influence on…who are out there
>
> doing similar things that I did, and it's like the whole ripple in the pond thing. My
>
> influence isn't going to totally go away when I do, which is a very personally
>
> satisfying thing. (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010)

Knowing that her mentees will continue to enact similar empowering, student-centered pedagogies while still understanding and teaching the importance of using facts and solid research helps Grace to have "faith in the future" (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010). Although Grace does hope that we will be her legacy and that part of her will live on through us, this does not mean that she discouraged us from finding our own interests and in exploring our individuality.

Caring, according to Noddings (1984), can be accepting people as they are in hopes of encouraging them to accept themselves as they are. Grace refuses to force her mentees into any kind of predetermined mold. While she does consider herself a role model and makes it a point to exemplify and encourage behaviors that will allow her mentees to "follow in her footsteps," when they take a different path, she continues to care and support. For instance, Grace's Masters degree was in literature, and while I did go on to get my Masters in literature, I chose to pursue composition for my doctorate. In the same way, Lydia has chosen to pursue her Masters in Creative Writing and has built a close mentoring relationship with Lorenzo, who is a published poet, as well as with Grace. Samantha plans to focus her graduate work in the field of women's studies. While it is true that all of our interests have been influenced by Grace and share similarities with her own areas of research, we have all followed our own paths and found our niches.

Grace continues to be a driving force in our growth as teachers and mentors. In many ways, we continue to emulate her in our interactions with students, both inside and outside of the classroom. Each of us realizes the value of campus involvement in conjunction with academics because of our past experiences with Grace in student activities.

Encouraging beyond-the-classroom excellence. As our mentoring relationships developed beyond the classroom, Grace began to encourage us to be involved with campus activities. However, this was not unique to just her mentees; Grace regularly encouraged all of her students to take part in activities that would make them active and influential members of the campus community. She often wrote campus events of interest on the board of the classroom, and she frequently took the time to speak one-on-one with her students about what they might get out of each event.

My first out-of-class interactions with Grace were as a writer for the student newspaper. After a few months, she encouraged me to step up and rebuild the club that was rapidly disintegrating. She taught me the skills I needed to be successful, especially the importance of delegating, something that I have found to be one of the most important parts of leadership. My position as editor was one of the first ways that I recall being confident in myself—in terms of my writing and personality. I took on a lot of responsibility for a freshman student—running meetings, laying out the paper, getting it to the printer, picking it up, and distributing it—but I think these responsibilities helped me grow as a person and gain a little more faith in myself. More importantly, I wanted to do these things; I thirsted for the responsibility of being the editor, and I wanted to work hard to prove that I would not just succeed, but that I would excel at my job. I did not do this for Grace, though I did want to impress her. I wanted to do this for myself so that I had more confidence in my capabilities.

Grace invited all three of us, as well as several other students interested in the Women's Studies minor, to be involved with the campus liaison committee to the University's Commission for Women. The group introduced us to campus activities that

improved the campus climate for women and helped us really begin to see how feminist values existed in the world outside of the classroom. The committee met monthly on campus, and once a year we had the opportunity to attend a formal banquet at the main campus of the University. Lydia shares, "Grace gave up her seat at the banquet a couple of times to make sure that students could go because [our campus] only got so many tickets. She would give up her seat so that young women could go…" (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17, 2010). I remember how fascinating that banquet was to me as a freshman: the huge number of attendees, the inspiring speakers, the delicious food. But it was more than that. It was very exciting to see so many people coming together to discuss issues that directly affected women—to see activism happening. That experience would not have been possible for me or the other students who have gone if Grace had not sought us out, personally invited us, and, in some cases, gave up her seat at the dinner.

As members of the liaison committee, we also had the responsibility to organize different Women's History Month activities as well as the campus's annual Clothesline Project, an event aimed at raising awareness of sexual and domestic violence. Lydia's first experience with the Clothesline Project occurred when I asked her to help me at the last minute. She explains:

> I had no idea what we were doing, but I followed along, and by the day's end, I was speaking to others about violence against women, something with which I had first-hand experience, something I'd never spoken about publicly, and something I began, in those hours that day, to see as a part of public discourse—a moment of awakening for me. As a result, I involved myself in every woman-centered project I could on campus and beyond. I began writing about women's

issues, not just in assignments for my Women's Studies courses, but also in my

writing courses. (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia)

Lydia's awareness of the importance of these issues did not fade but were instead

amplified as was her motivation to make a difference on the campus. She took on several

other roles on the campus that were not directly connected with Grace, including

continuing the tradition of a Take Back the Night Rally, creating a peer support group for

those in addictions recovery, and acting as the campus's legal affairs liaison. Grace noted

that our out-of-class involvement played a part in increasing our self-confidence,

organizational skills, and feminist philosophy. It is no surprise that we each branched off

and became leaders in other campus activities as well.

Due of the encouragement of Grace and the Student Life Coordinator, Samantha

and Claire were able to organize a SAFE (Students, Allies, Friends, and Educators) Club

on the campus that focused on Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transexual (GLBT) issues.

Samantha felt that Grace really provided opportunities for her to test out her ability to

lead before prompting her to help organize this club; in fact, those trial runs may have

provided her with the confidence to act as President of SAFE. She explains how she first

began to believe in her capabilities after helping organize the Women's Liaison Kick-Off

Luncheon:

because she gives us responsibility, it makes others see us as having more

responsibility, and then it makes us feel more responsible, and then act more

responsible….I think she does that with a lot of things, even in the classroom. She

gives you an assumption, it's like an assumption of power, or control or

something, and then others see that, and so then you live it, because you're there.

(Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010)

Because she began to "live" as the kind of organized and productive leader that she thought Grace wanted, Samantha was able to get the club up and running, and it has since become an important way to connect the campus's students with faculty and staff in their efforts to make the campus a safer and more welcome place for all students.

Having the opportunity to meet other faculty members out of the classroom (through out-of-class activities) also allowed us to begin to see them as people instead of as unreachable and hard-to-relate-to professors. Samantha recalls her apprehension during the first lunch she attended when she agreed to be a member of an award selection committee comprised of faculty and staff. At a lunch meeting with the other members, she thought, "These women were distinguished faculty and staff. They had not seen my work….They did not know me the way Grace knew me, and I was convinced they would not accept me" (Autobiographical Narrative, Samantha). To her surprise, Samantha enjoyed the lunch, began to feel more comfortable, and began to see herself as more than just a student distinctly separated from the faculty and staff at the campus.

Finally, Grace also invited us into the world of academia by encouraging us to present our work at conferences and symposia. She gave us the courage to act as professionals, even though we felt we were "just" undergraduates. As I mentioned previously, Grace took me to my first conference as a co-presenter. In Lydia's case, Grace encouraged her to submit some of her poetry to an annual conference. For both of us, attending a conference not only increased our belief that we were worthy to share our work alongside professors and graduate students, but also confirmed for us that we

wanted to be active members of academia. Samantha was also encouraged to submit one of her papers to an undergraduate research symposium, and she placed fourth overall. In all three situations, Grace did more than just tell us about these professional scholarship opportunities. She was willing to work with us on perfecting our presentations and proposals, and she was there when it was time for us to present our work, allowing us to stand on our own, and boosting our confidence and applauding our accomplishment when we were finished.

All of these different out-of-class activities not only helped us feel more confident about ourselves and what we were able to accomplish, but it also began to prepare us for our future lives as educators. Having responsibilities in these clubs taught us leadership skills, the value of being prepared, and the importance of delegating and giving credit to others. These skills play a part in our personas as teachers by showing us that any group, students in the classroom specifically, works best in a place that does not focus solely on the teacher but looks to the benefit of the community as a whole.

Lydia's Definition of Mentoring

Now that we have explored Grace's definition of mentoring and how that definition has played out in her relationships with me, Lydia, and Samantha, we turn to how each of the mentees defines mentoring relationships. To begin, Lydia's definition of mentoring comes through the stories of her experiences—not just her experiences as a mentee with Grace, but through the experiences that helped her grow as a mentor, to truly begin to understand how mentoring relationships work.

An impactful first experience. Although she currently mentors her own students at her graduate institution as well as several of her peers in her addictions recovery group,

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Lydia began mentoring her fellow students at the small campus where she earned her undergraduate degree. As a peer mentor, she was provided with several opportunities to work with students who needed her help. She recalls assisting students with "A roommate problem, an overbearing boyfriend, a young man who needed guidance writing about his own substance abuse recovery," and any number of other problems (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia).

However, the closest mentoring relationship Lydia had with another student occurred when she was the peer mentor in Grace's Introduction to Women's Studies course, the same course in which I had peer mentored Lydia. During that semester, Lydia met a young woman named Catherine. Lydia recalls:

> Catherine was young enough to be my daughter, though she was also considered a non-traditional student like me. She'd given birth to her own daughter at sixteen, was studiously applying herself, wanted to be a writer, too. Catherine had lost her own mother in a car accident when she was young, so Grace and I became sort of surrogates to her. Grace encouraged her in the same way she encouraged me, and I think I slipped into a hybrid role—student like her, mother like her, mottled past like her. (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia)

As the semester went on, Lydia noticed in Catherine what Grace had noticed in her and in me: an interest and passion in the subject material. Through Grace and Lydia's support and advice, Catherine became more involved in campus activities, and Lydia even encouraged her to step into a leadership role of the campus's honors society when Lydia stepped down to prepare for her move to graduate school.

Unfortunately, Catherine's past began to catch up with her. She confided in Lydia and asked for help. Lydia recalls that "I offered her aid, planned to take her to the group that helped me with my own alcoholism, but we never made it. Less than 24 hours after she canceled our date, she died from a heroin overdose" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia). Lydia was deeply affected by Catherine's death. She explains:

> When the [mentor-mentee] connection *does* happen, and when the relationship deepens, a break in that relationship is painful—incredibly painful in such a permanent break. It's happened other times in my recovery circle, though with Catherine, perhaps because our relationship was so multilayered (academic, political, parental, spiritual), after two and a half years, the pain is still acute.
>
> (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia)

This tragedy took place as Lydia was preparing to graduate with her Bachelor's degree and move on to graduate school. While Catherine's death did have an impact on her, Lydia did not allow the incident to negatively influence her decision to be a mentor to others. Instead, she learned something from it; she learned that "Mentorship cannot be forced. It is a relationship of willingness on both sides, and neither party has the authority to demand it be taken or taken up" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia). Lydia knew that she could not force Catherine to accept her help or her advice; the decision was Catherine's.

This is an incredibly valuable truth that all mentors should accept. As mentors, we can only offer guidance to our mentees. We do not control nor should we take responsibility for the choices our mentees make in their own lives. Lydia explains, "Part of mentorship is…modeling and emulating the strength to stand alone, for there are times

when the body of our mentors cannot be present, when it's the spirit of our mentors that must sustain us" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia). Mentees may sometimes follow in our footsteps and at other times, they may decide to forge their own paths. Setting off on their own can sometimes lead them to make mistakes, but these mistakes are often important part of learning—for both the mentee and their mentor. Because Lydia understood this, she only became more determined to be a strong, influential mentor when she began teaching her own classes.

When asked to define mentoring, Lydia's first comment was to say that she has many mentors that she has never even met, but who have mentored her through their writing, people like Audre Lorde. Lydia sees mentoring as the opportunity to provide someone with a model "that either supports and encourages…or helps [reveal] different possibilities" (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17, 2010). In her narrative, she simplifies her definition: "Very simply, mentoring, to me, is the passing on of experience and knowledge from one person to the next in a meaningful way" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia). Lydia stresses the importance of being "human" while acting as a mentor, a human with insecurities and who is, above all, not perfect. Especially in her work mentoring people recovering from substance abuse, she explains that perfection may sometimes create a divide between mentor and mentee—and the same can easily be true for students who reach out for help whether it be with a serious addiction or a smaller writing-focused issue. Being human can help a mentor be a little less of an intimidating authority and more approachable in general.

Lydia's maturation as a mentor. Lydia's classroom is very similar to Grace's in that it has a strong focus on classroom community. Lydia was inspired when, in her first

semester teaching, her students became friends outside of the classroom and made connections that may have seemed unconventional, like "the football player from Harlem [who] could share and relate to the sociology major from a small town near Scranton" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia). Lydia's excitement only increased as a trend began to form:

> My biggest thrill is when I get past the end of the semester and one of my former students will friend me on Facebook, and when I accept the friend request, I see that some of them have become friends…. And that I see in the feed that they're actually talking to each other. Here it is two years later, and these two students met in my class and bonded over a piece of writing. (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17, 2010)

Lydia explains that she had been skeptical about these sorts of relationships forming in her classroom because her graduate university was so much larger than her previous school. She was very pleased to find out that she had been wrong and that lasting relationships could happen in the same way she was accustomed to, except in the larger more diverse setting.

But the relationships formed in the class are not limited to interactions between peers; Lydia also builds lasting relationships with her students. She recognizes that there are distinct differences between her approach to teaching and Grace's methods. Acknowledging her maternal side, she admits, "I see every student coming in as some sort of surrogate, I hate to say this, some sort of surrogate child that I'm responsible for for fifteen weeks" (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17, 2010).

Lydia attempts to nurture her composition students by encouraging them to write about their own lives and experiences instead of assigning source-driven research papers. In addition, she encourages close contact, holding one-on-one conferences with her students so that they can talk about writing or the current class topics. She also, like Grace, strives to present herself as the questioner in the classroom rather than the authority, asking students to explore what has led them to believe something instead of directing them to any opinions she might hold. Lydia explains, "If I walk out of a classroom, and I'm sorry to see it end, then I know I've probably done okay in that class" (Interview, Lydia, Dec. 17, 2010).

Lydia keeps in contact with her past students and is often asked to write letters of recommendation for a variety of reasons: internships, study-abroad opportunities, and applications to transfer schools. She feels that her focus on relationships and building a supportive classroom community is the reason students often ask her for letters of recommendation. Because of the open and intimate relationships that are formed, Lydia says, "They trust that I've taken the time to get to know them and can represent them better than another instructor who's kept a clear and hierarchical boundary in place" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia).

Samantha's Definition of Mentoring

Because Samantha did not have much prior experience with being in a mentoring relationship, she has relied on Grace as a role model for what a good mentor is while also being able to remain critical. Samantha is able to see what strategies Grace uses that she would choose to enact as a mentor herself while also being able to see the ways that she might personalize her own mentoring identity.

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Samantha at first considered mentoring to be like being a parent, but after more consideration, she decided it was much different because of the differing complexities of each relationship. One of the differences was that Samantha felt that mentors did not provide their mentees with unconditional support in the same way a parent might. Samantha explained:

> it's not unconditional. You have to tell them when they're wrong. You have to get them on the right track if they are doing something or saying something that's wrong, you have to fix it. You have to tell them that you don't agree with them, and I think, whether it's Grace or any mentor, it would be not wanting to disappoint her that keeps me moving forward because I know that she expects my very best. (Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010)

While she acknowledges the importance of taking these same measures with her children, Samantha identified that the biggest difference comes from the mentee's perspective. She laughingly commented that she wished her children had a similar attitude toward her that she has toward Grace. In other words, while a mentor may act maternally toward her mentees, mentees frequently have a strong desire to please their mentors; the same is not always true in a family situation where children may not be as devoted in striving for their parents' approval because of their feelings of security in their parent's love and support.

> Samantha finally settled on explaining that a mentor is:
> a person who guides you along a certain path, but allows you to choose the path for yourself. A mentor encourages you to do more, not just for others, but also for yourself. A mentor realizes your potential, and assists you in recognizing it in

yourself. A mentor supports you in proving that potential to the world, while

confirming it to yourself. A mentor celebrates you, and helps you celebrate

yourself. (Autobiographical Narrative, Samantha)

While her definition may seem poetic, it honestly represents how Samantha was affected

by her relationship with Grace and other teachers on the campus. Her mentoring

relationship with Grace allowed Samantha to identify other people in her life who had

and were mentoring her, the "other strong women who were teaching me how to be

me….The former students who show me how far I can go. My mother, my daughters,

my partner" (Autobiographical Narrative, Samantha).

In terms of Samantha's maturation, she is growing and learning more about how

to be a teacher-mentor, but has not yet had the opportunity to experience it since she has

not yet graduated. She still has another year to work with Grace as her embedded tutor

and will continue to learn and grow as a mentee and mentor.

Similarities in Definitions of Mentoring According to the Mentors

When looking at the words of each participant, certain areas seemed to overlap.

There were various things that we agreed about unanimously. The first was that

mentoring relationships are rarely sought. Each of us mentioned that we were not looking

for someone to mentor us, and Grace admits that, while she keeps an eye out from

promising students, she does not encourage them only in hopes of gaining a more

permanent relationship.

Another thing on which all of us agreed was that mentoring relationships cannot

be forced. The mentor has to be willing to share their time and experience with their

mentees. In the same way, the mentee must be open to developing a personal relationship,

to accepting advice, and to enter into an open conversation with their mentor about their futures as academic professionals and possibly as future mentors. This willingness is not present in all students as some are not yet at the point in their lives where they want close contact with an authority figure.

Although Grace admits to looking for the spark of passion she has seen in her recent mentees, it is also safe to say that mentors may not immediately be recognized. As a relationship between a teacher and a student develops, it may become more intimate and turn into a mentoring relationship, or it may not and may remain a more traditional relationship between a teacher and a student.

Also, Lydia, Samantha, and myself realized the importance of recognizing our mentors, realizing that in doing so, we give credit to the persons who have helped us to achieve our goals and to be successful women. It has been said in the literature as well as in each of these stories that mentees tend to follow in the footsteps of their mentors. Thus, in identifying our mentors, we can more clearly visualize what it is we valued about their interactions with us and begin to model those same behaviors in our relationships with our students and mentees. Finally, as Lydia reminds, "We were not born so smart and capable. We've been nurtured along the way….Humility is a peaceful virtue, and recognizing mentorship encourages humility" (Autobiographical Narrative, Lydia).

Repercussions for Future Mentoring Relationships

As students, mentees, and now as independent women, Lydia, Samantha, and I want to be successful teachers and mentors to our present and future students. Part of being successful has included fulfilling the example and expectations that Grace Chorley

set out as our mentor in the past and in the present. However, that does not mean that we have or will always hold Grace's standards or expectations above our own.

One of the things Grace taught us was that we have the power to make our own decisions and to speak out when we do not want to do something. As an undergraduate, it is easy to believe that you lack power, but when Grace gave us responsibilities in the classroom as well as out of it, we began to realize that we did have options and that we had the ability to make choices about what we would or would not do. In some cases, that might mean that we resisted socially accepted norms or the opinions of those who had power over us in our lives or at the university. At times, it might even mean expressing that we did not have the time to accomplish something that Grace asked us to do.

We have respected Grace since the first semester we met her, and as students each of us sought her approval, but the most important thing that Grace taught us was to accept ourselves and to live according to our own standards. When comparing our actions as mentors to Grace's, we often experience moments of resistance, where it may take us a moment to realize that doing something our own way instead of Grace's way is perfectly all right. In fact, because we have each been able to create our own mentoring identity and have found the most successful mentoring methods for each of us, we are better mentors because what we do now is natural to us, just as Grace's methods were innate for her.

By looking at the stories of these women and tracing their maturations as mentors, one begins to understand the fluid nature of mentoring relationships and how different individuals define mentoring according to their own experiences. First, I have explored how Grace followed in the footsteps of her mentors and how Grace's mentees have

followed in her footsteps, but it is clear that each mentee has found a way to make her own career unique to her own interests and life. Second, I have described Grace's classroom environment and how it promotes mentoring relationships through student empowerment. Because of its success, her mentees have emulated her pedagogy. Third, I have isolated similarities and differences in Grace's mentoring relationships with each mentee, demonstrating that all mentoring relationships are, by nature, unique and that they will develop as the mentor and mentee do. Finally, I have drawn attention to the importance of encouraging students outside of the classroom to help them achieve agency and self confidence.

In the final chapter, I theorize themes that tie these different stories of mentoring together through a critical feminist lens and then connect the themes to the current mentoring literature. Through these themes, I theorize how mentoring relationships have positive and lasting effects on both mentors and mentees and how they address the research questions that guided this study. Finally, I discuss the implications mentoring relationships have in the composition classroom and in our lives as teachers and students. I conclude with my own reflections as well as the reflections of Grace, Lydia, and Samantha as we each ponder how this project has personally impacted each of us.

CHAPTER V

UNPACKING THE THEMES OF THE MENTORING JOURNEYS

When I began this research project by writing a teaching autobiography, I simply was trying to discover what events had led me to find myself in a Ph. D. program in Composition and TESOL. I had no idea that it would not only change my understanding of my own journey but also lead me to the realization of a subject that has been an unconscious passion. I have been mentored by a large number of different people in my life, and in some cases without realizing it, I have been a mentor to different individuals through the relationships I have had with them. By first understanding how mentoring affected my own life, I was able to gain an awareness of how it has affected others and how we, Grace, Lydia, Samantha, and me, have grown in those mentoring relationships. We are all mentors, and we are all mentees, and we continue to shift between these roles (and many others) in our daily lives.

Revisiting the Research Questions

In order to have a comprehensive look at what is taken from this study, it is helpful to go back to the beginning and revisit the questions that instigated and have guided the study.

- What is mentoring, and what drives teachers to take on a mentoring role?
- How do mentoring relationships affect the lives of both mentor and mentee in the immediate as well as the long run?
- How do mentees become mentors?

The answers to these questions are woven through the themes that have appeared through analysis of the commonalities of the mentoring experiences discussed in the prior chapter.

Exploring Themes Across Our Mentoring-Mentored Experiences

Each mentoring experience is unique. However, when looking at the narratives and interviews, a number of themes began to emerge as being common to the experiences of Grace and her mentees. Perhaps what is most valuable about these themes is that they represent avenues for further contemplation about teacher-student mentoring relationships and also begin to lead us to an understanding of the developmental processes of those relationships. In essence, they can be the additional steps to fully understanding what the research questions aimed to discover. To begin, I address part of my first research question: "What is mentoring?" This is followed by an overview of the themes, followed by a more in-depth discussion of each that merges what is discussed in the current literature with references to the stories of the participants.

There have been various attempts to answer the question: What is mentoring? Whether the answer came from a review of the literature, from my own experiences with mentoring, or from each of my participants, mentoring has always been defined in a slightly different yet multifaceted way. The only constant seems to be that each mentoring relationship is different according to the context and the personalities of the individuals involved. It is crucial to recognize that mentoring relationships are personal and will adapt to the needs of the individuals involved, and that very fact makes it difficult to settle on any one explanation. To create a single, solid definition of mentoring would deny the variety of experiences that have been discussed here and those that exist elsewhere.

However, it is possible to identify a process of mentoring relationships between teachers and students, which will be discussed in the themes below. There were various

themes that became apparent while analyzing the data, but I was able to narrow the list

down to six notable themes. First of all, we all shared a common passion with Grace and

with each other in our desire to learn and share our intense interest in feminist issues.

Second, all of us were empowered by the mentoring relationship as it allowed us to learn

more about ourselves and provided us with agency. Third, the mentoring relationships we

shared were not tied to the classroom, but instead affected our lives as members of the

campus community. Fourth, for each of us, mentoring led to leadership roles and

increased confidence in our ability to lead and be positive role models. This allowed us to

take on roles that would allow us to raise awareness across the campus for both our

teachers and our classmates. Fifth, we became agents of change, using our leadership

roles and our newfound confidence to speak up for what we believed in. Finally, as we

moved forward in our educational careers, and as some of us graduated, we became

colleagues and friends.

Theme 1: Igniting One Another's Passions

It may seem to be common sense that mentors and mentees share similar interests,

but it is not a theme that can be taken for granted as it is often the spark that initially

ignites the mentoring relationship (Campbell & Campbell, 2007; Johnson-Bailey &

Cervero, 2004; Okawa, 2002). Perhaps one of the first ways that Grace and her mentees

connected was that we all were women in a male-dominated academy, and even more

specifically, at a small, branch campus in a rural area where "feminist" was often seen as

a dirty word (Moss et al., 1999). It can sometimes be difficult for women growing up in

a rural area to find a female role model who has reached a high level of success, yet we

were lucky enough to find that in Grace. What drew us together was a strong desire to

learn and a shared interest in Women's Studies, passions that some of us did not realize resonated so deeply within us until we entered Grace's classroom.

What was most important during our discussions about the topics we studied—both in the classroom and outside of it, was the fact that we were welcomed to question things. When we did question, Grace did not attempt to simply provide the answer to us. Instead, she was frequently opening her filing cabinet and handing out articles or pulling a book off a shelf and lending it to us. Noddings (1984) explains that it is crucial that while teachers may attempt to guide their students in a certain direction, the teachers must know that the students have their own ability to make decisions, and they "will learn what [they] please" (p. 176). Most importantly, Noddings (1984) argues, the teacher must accept and encourage students to have the freedom to exert their will as they choose. Instead of simply providing the answers, Grace provided us with the means to find the answers to our own questions and to follow the thread of information in any direction we chose, a successful approach to empowering students to learn independently (Brent, 2005; Carillo, 2007; Crawley et al., 2008; Lindquist, 2004). Even though we may have all taken a slightly different route, we still maintained similar attitudes and maintained the same core feminist beliefs and values.

This theme can also present insight into the second half of our first research question; Grace's desire to share that passion may have been one of the driving forces in her decision to take on a mentoring role in addition to just being our teacher. In addition, she may have also wanted to create a legacy, or, as in the case of her mentees, to follow in one's own mentor's footsteps and give back to the next generation of students. Even though these are common motivations, it is also important to remember that all mentoring

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relationships are unique, guided by the personalities of both the mentor and the mentee, and that the reasons presented above are closely connected to this specific group of women in this specific context. There are doubtless scores of other reasons for why mentors are inspired to build relationships with their mentees. One thing that can be ascertained from the literature as well as the participants' comments is that the mentoring relationship really is a dialogic process that cannot be forced. The relationship has give and take from both sides and must be a true collaboration between mentor and mentee for it to exist in any real sense.

Theme 2: Finding the Road to (Self) Empowerment

Moss et al. (1999) remind us that "Because undergraduates are relatively powerless as a group, we are in touch with some of the most obvious manifestations of academic power when we are in dialogue with undergraduates" (p. 420). This is crucial when discussing this point because, as established earlier in this paper, empowerment is not something that can be done "to" a mentee and we must be aware of the power we hold as teachers in a classroom. Shor (1992) even argues that creating an empowering atmosphere for our students is an important part of our responsibilities as teachers. Mentors must remember that empowerment is a dialogic process that requires both the mentor and the mentee to be open to the idea (Freire, 2009). In a sense, the mentor does not empower the mentees; the mentor provides the tools that the mentees use to empower themselves.

When considering the question "How do mentoring relationships affect the lives of both mentor and mentee in the immediate as well as the long run?" being empowered, gaining self confidence, and a resulting richer educational experience were obvious

answers. Increasing our views of ourselves and our beliefs in ourselves seems to be the real catalyst to these other improvements. An increase in self confidence can be directly tied to each of the other ways we grew as students, mentors, and future teachers. To begin, Grace and each mentee recalled lacking self esteem in some way or another at the inception of the mentoring relationships. Even Grace could be included in this section as she had to gradually build the confidence to fully embrace the role of mentor as she learned from her mentees (Metzger, 2004; Okawa, 2002; Perkins, 2001). While each of us may have had our own reasons for having insecurities, all of us benefited from the empowering effects of the relationship and discussed these in connection to our beliefs in ourselves and our abilities as individuals and as academics.

This is not an uncommon theme in the literature as well. Noddings (1984) asserts that sometimes for students to believe in themselves, they must first have someone they admire believe in them. As she explains:

> What the teacher reflects to [the student] continually is the best possible picture of reality. She does not reflect fantasy or conjure up 'expectations' as strategies. She meets [the student] as he is and finds something admirable and, as a result, he may find the strength to become even more admirable. He is confirmed. (p. 179)

This was certainly the case for Grace's mentees. Once Grace had established her high expectations and we realized that she felt we lived up to those expectations, we began to believe we were capable of doing the work. In Samantha's words, "Because of her expectations, you're going to do well" (Interview, Samantha, Dec. 14, 2010). Grace's implicit belief in us resulted in our own growing belief in ourselves.

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Similarly, we began to look at ourselves more critically when Grace expressed a personal interest in us. We had to discover what it was she saw in us, and that allowed us to look at ourselves more objectively and to begin to take credit for some of the talents we had, at that point, failed to notice and acknowledge. We discovered that we had knowledge and stories to tell that were relevant. According to Noddings (1984), the teacher not only gives by sharing information and questioning opinions, but also gains by being offered different points of view and learning new information or stories from the students. Grace admitted to this being so in her case as well. Having not consciously considered her mentoring pedagogy prior to this study, she has been empowered to see herself from different perspectives: those of her mentees.

Another outcome resulted from Grace's apparent interest in our thoughts and her encouragement for us to speak up in the classroom environment as well as with the campus community. We were able to see the value in our thoughts and began to move through the transition of passive student to actively-engaged learner. Our engagement directly influenced our ability to have a richer educational experience since we became active participants in our educations, most notably resulting in our decisions to graduate from the campus with a Letters, Arts, and Sciences degree, which allowed majors to combine courses from three different areas to create a degree specifically focused on their unique goals and interests.

In addition, each of us worked with Grace, Lorenzo, and other campus faculty on a number of independent study courses to further hone our knowledge of both English and feminist issues. For instance, since Samantha has realized her desire to become a teacher of women's studies, she and Grace are currently working together on a course

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focused on Feminist Pedagogy. These independent studies were places where we were empowered to learn the self discipline to take on research and writing projects on our own, a skill both Lydia and I have had to rely on to complete our Masters theses and which has been a guiding force in the completion of this dissertation.

However, it was not only our ability to learn independently, but our confidence in ourselves that allowed us to see the relevance of the other courses we took and invest ourselves into those classes in a way we might not have had we remained passive recipients. It is true that we had found our passions and were most invested in the courses related to writing, literature, and women's studies, but we were empowered to make connections in these other courses, to speak up, and to become a part of that conversation in the classroom and through our writing.

Theme 3: Extending Relationships Beyond the Classroom

The experiences of being active in campus clubs and activities and having leadership roles had various positive effects on us and was yet another way our mentoring relationship influenced our lives. It is significant that Grace was the motivation behind our involvement. If she had not encouraged us, we may not have gained the insight that there was more to going to college than just attending classes. In some cases, we took part in activities because we wanted to, and at other times, we did it because Grace asked us to or because the activity was a required element in one of her courses.

By stating throughout this work that the mentoring relationship is reciprocal, I do not intend to imply that it is equal. In many cases, mentees are at a disadvantage because they may need the assistance or approval of the mentor. Even though Noddings (1984) acknowledges that teacher and student may occasionally meet on equal ground, "the

meetings between teacher as teacher and student as student are necessarily and generously unequal" (p. 67). In a typical teacher-student relationship, the teacher attempts inclusion (seeing through their own eyes and the student's eyes), even though the student does not feel a similar way about the teacher. This is necessary for students to pursue their own motives without having to worry about how it will affect the teacher. As a result, the teacher is able to give the student agency and power over their own decisions and creations (Noddings, 1984). Once a mentoring relationship has formed, this scenario changes. It is common for mentees to want their mentors' approval because the relationship has become much more personal (Young et al., 2004).

Thus, while we likely were most willing to join these campus activities because we were genuinely interested in them, interdependency likely played a part. Young et al. (2004) explain that interdependency is a common result of mentoring relationships and can lead to a "desire to not let others down and to learn from each other" (p. 32). This was especially relevant during the initial stages of the mentoring relationship since we were not yet secure in our position as mentees. Because we valued the mentoring relationship, we did not want it to be at risk, so each of us admitted to being eager to follow suggestions Grace made. That is not to say we would have done anything she suggested that went against our personal code of ethics. Because of the kind of mentor Grace is, she never asked or suggested that we do something that she did not think was in our best interest. Yet this point is important because it does bring up some potential problems by presenting the importance of mentors being cognizant of what they say to their mentees and the power they have as a role model.

The activities we took part in did have significant benefits. They allowed us to gain valuable skills that we would use in all aspects of our lives whether they were educational, personal, professional, or social. Unfortunately, this area is sorely lacking in the literature. Most scholarship focuses solely on the classroom and fails to take into account the role of the teacher in the overall campus community. It is important to recall that as professors we do not exist only as teachers or scholars. We are individuals who act as advisors to students and clubs, we are members of committees and boards, and we are a visible part of the campus whether we are spending time in the library, eating our lunch in the cafeteria, or attending university-sponsored functions. It is important that we write about those aspects of our jobs and personal lives and analyze their impact on our relationships with our students and their learning experiences.

Perhaps what can be gained from the information in this study is that these out of the classroom interactions had a significant impact on each mentee as an individual. We not only began to feel more confident in ourselves, but we also came to know Grace and our other professors in a new way. They were no longer just "professors" (though they did maintain that role in our minds as Powell & Takayoshi (2003) note). We began to see them as people who actually ate, had good and bad days, and complained and laughed about things. Car trips to and from events and casual lunches in the cafeteria provided opportunities to ask questions about their lives and to begin to understand what "teaching" exactly entailed and how these women were able to balance it all. These out of the classroom relationships allowed us to reconsider our assumptions about what it meant to be a teacher or a scholar and what it meant to work in academia.

Theme 4: Claiming Positions of Leadership

The mentoring relationships that developed are examples of Moss et al.'s (1999) mentoring as feminist praxis, which promotes "women, people of colour [sic] and others who are less favourably [sic] positioned within the academy and [assists] them in negotiating the relations within the academy" (p. 414). Grace went out of her way to not only help us adjust to her classroom, but also to make our own names for ourselves throughout the campus community by not just interacting in campus activities, but by claiming leadership positions.

We entered into, and in some cases instigated, the campus-wide discussions that were taking place as we became active in different campus activities, which only continued to develop our confidence. We were members of organizations such as the campus honors society, and each of us took the incentive to take on leadership responsibilities: I served as editor of the student newspaper, Lydia was president of the honor's society and started a peer-focused support group, and Samantha took the lead on creating the SAFE (Students, Allies, Friends, and Educators) club, where she is currently still in her tenure as president. Our involvement not only helped us be more visible on the campus as leaders and activists, but it also prepared us for the work we would do as educators in the future: serving on boards, working in departmental and local committees, taking on projects within our communities, and organizing both personal and professional events. Ferrari (2004) claims that mentoring and empowering students is one of the best ways to help them prepare for what they will face at later points in their lives.

By accepting these roles and, in fact, flourishing in them, we were able to further see ourselves as separate beings from Grace, an important part of our development and

movement from being a mentee to envisioning ourselves as future mentors. Instead of placing most of our value in our role as "Grace's mentee," we developed as leaders in areas that were not always connected to her. By beginning to understand the value of our individuality, we came to understand how we could contribute to making our campus and communities better places. While we had already experienced great increases in our self esteem, maintaining leadership roles and finding that we excelled at them only served to continue to build our confidence in ourselves and deepen our understanding of how we could have a positive impact on the world around us. In addition, we also came to understand that it was our responsibility as feminist members of the community to step forward and fight against forms of injustice whether large or small.

We became involved in other places like the campus's student government. We acted as peer role models and mentors to other students, and we made a point of knowing people on the campus and coming up with ways to provide support for them, even if it was just knowing where to direct them or offering advice about a project or assignment. By being leaders on campus, we became more visible to the campus community as a whole, and found that that popularity provided us with opportunities to get to know more students and more faculty and staff members. We built relationships across the campus and found ways to network and to promote change. It was not enough for us to be empowered; we wanted to help others gain a similar sense of capability and control.

Theme 5: Becoming Agents of Change

The emotions one experiences in a mentoring relationship seem to be mildly addicting, and once one has been a mentee who has had a positive experience, there is a driving urge to then share that experience with others by mentoring them. This leads us to

the question of why mentees become mentors, and it is, perhaps the hardest question to comprehensively answer. Mentoring is a fluid, cyclical experience and the role of mentor itself is not static but evolves as well. Yet it is important to note that part of Grace's mentoring approach was to place us in positions where we would be mentoring others—whether it was as a peer mentor in her classes or an imbedded tutor in the tutoring center. Grace presented us with opportunities to safely test out the role of mentor (Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005). Meanwhile we were still mentees in our own mentoring relationships, and whether cognizant of it or not, this led us to take on other mentoring roles on the campus.

Through our everyday interactions with other students or through larger projects like a peer support group for addiction recovery or organizing a celebration of National Coming Out Day, we took steps to bring about change. We wanted to provide support to people who had been victims of intolerance and injustice, and at the same time, we simply wanted to share our feelings of empowerment and belonging. Our reputations across the campus and the relationships we had built gave us the support and notoriety we needed to make these events successful. We had built a network of support, not just for ourselves, but for anyone who wanted to be a part of that community. In a way, we had created our own legacies by initiating discussions about social justice issues that would continue even after we graduated.

Yet our roles as agents of change did not end with graduation. The mentoring actions, which we had internalized through our experiences with Grace, stayed with us as we all made the decision to become teachers. Because Grace had provided us with a model on which to base our own views of our future selves (Campbell & Campbell,

2007; Ferrari, 2004; Ramirez, 2009), we were able to take steps to achieve the goals we set. From classroom lectures and one-on-one conversations to the discussions we instigate and take part in at scholarly conferences, all four of us are actively engaged in learning and living lives focused on sharing knowledge.

Yet that is only a small part of why we are teacher-scholars. Grace, Lydia, and I are all very focused on creating communities within our classrooms, and Samantha, as an imbedded tutor, sets an example by playing the role of a community elder. We understand how valuable and necessary relationships are to the learning experience. We do not teach students; we teach people. While we know it is not possible to have close mentoring relationships with every student the way we have with each other, we know it is important and beneficial to have a relationship with all our students, and that they have relationships amongst themselves as members of our classroom and campus community.

In a way we continue Grace's legacy; we went on or made plans to continue on to become teacher-mentors, though, as noted in Chapter IV of this dissertation, we each followed our own paths and pursued degrees in fields different from Grace's degree in literature. In our own classrooms, Lydia and I continue to build relationships with students as mentors, and as we have found other areas of work outside of the traditional classroom. We have found positions that allow mentoring to be at the forefront of our interactions with those around us. Lydia has found a job as a peer-support specialist so that she can continue to help others around her. In my own work as a full time Course Mentor for an online university, I have been able to work with students of all ages as a subject area expert and a mentor. Because of the university's approach to education, my students come to me and expect me to do more than help them understand how to write;

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they expect me to act as a mentor to them, and I can honestly say that after only working in the position for half a year, I have built some amazing mentoring relationships with students who I hope have been inspired to go out and mentor those around them.

Theme 6: Moving from the Mentoring Relationship to Friendship

Noddings (1984) posits that caring is a selfless act, and in mentoring (which is centrally an act of caring), that is certainly true. Noddings explains that we do not care about someone in hopes that we will gain something; we do so to benefit the welfare of the persons we care about and do not take into consideration their appreciation or what we may receive in turn. Because we cannot force anyone into a mentoring relationship, we may act as mentors to students who do not ever take us up on the offer of building a reciprocal relationship. Yet when it is accepted, this care is important not only during the mentoring relationship but after as well. As this study shows and as various scholars have found, friendship is an important part of the mentoring relationship (Johnson, 2008; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Moberg, 2008; Okawa, 2002; Young et al., 2004), and friendship often lasts beyond the confines of the classroom or campus.

Perhaps one of the most important commonalities in the mentoring relationships discussed here is that our relationships with Grace did not end when we left her classroom, when we graduated, or even when we went off to graduate school. Not only did we maintain our relationships with Grace, we also began to build relationships with each other when Grace included each of us in different events—whether they were focused on events on campus or social gatherings not connected to academics or the university. In a sense, she has developed a mentoring community where all of us are comfortable turning to the others for help.

It is not uncommon for any of us to contact one of the others. For instance, I have asked Lydia to speak about her nonfiction writing in my English class, and I have spent time with Samantha talking about my graduate school experiences. All of us have come together on numerous occasions for a friendly nickel-ante poker game, bringing along with us our partners and, in some cases, children. We have met for lunch to just catch up with each other or to discuss problems and ask for advice. Mentoring has become more than a one-on-one relationship and is instead a continued, ever-changing conversation among four women who care about each other and who depend on one another in times of frustration or need.

Implications and Future Directions in Mentoring Scholarship

This study presents a variety of opportunities for other teachers and scholars active in composition, women's studies, and mentoring. More importantly, it adds to the current mentoring conversation by giving a focused look at the effects mentoring relationships can have on the individuals involved. Thus, it is important to spend time focusing on the implications of the study.

Implications for Composition Teachers

Composition teachers, scholars, and mentors can gain great insight by noting how writing can be a bridge to mentoring relationships. Specifically in freshman writing courses, many students find that college writing gives them the opportunity to discover their own voice and writing style (Murray, 2003), and teachers can play an important part in this discovery by supporting their students as they experiment with different approaches to and genres of writing (Brent, 2005; Roberts & Cimasko, 2008). Students learn to go beyond writing the traditional five-paragraph essay and share some of

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themselves in their writing, opening the door to allowing their writing teacher to know more about them than might otherwise be possible (Crawley et al., 2008; Durfee & Rosenberg, 2009; Pratt, 2005).

As seen in the descriptions of the mentoring relationships between Grace and her mentees, the primary ways we first connected with Grace was by having her as our teacher and communicating with her through the papers we wrote. She was able to learn about us, our interest in the course material, and our devotion to written language through the papers we wrote. This was extremely valuable as Grace recalls the fact that we were good writers was one of the first ways she felt connected to us and began to take an interest in us (Interview, Grace, Dec. 14, 2010).

This is just one example of a way to find a similar interest between mentors and potential mentees. If both have a passion to write, or even just an interest in writing, a great relationship can spring from that commonality. In the same way, when students share parts of their lives and interests in the papers they write, they also open the door to providing other opportunities for potential mentors and mentees to connect. A mentor and mentee must only find a small bit of common ground on which to lay the foundation of the rest of the relationship. It then develops as they discover other similarities in the process of getting to know one another over time. A budding mentoring relationship can also provide the teacher-mentor with more effective ways to motivate and to help advance the student's writing skills (Gonsalves, 2002; Lee & Schallert, 2008; Meyers, 2009).

At the same time, it is important that mentors are willing to share parts of themselves as well. Mentoring is a two-way exchange, so while finding information

about students' lives may present opportunities for mentors to select their mentees,

mentees must also be willing to enter into the relationship as well, an action students may

be hesitant to take (Roberts, 1999b). To overcome this, the mentoring relationship must

seem possible and the mentor must be approachable. Being friendly, presenting

opportunities for one-on-one interactions, and especially sharing details about oneself are

excellent ways for teachers to present opportunities for relationships for the mentee (Lee

& Bush, 2003; Mawhinney & Sagan, 2007; Metzger, 2004; Okawa, 2002).

If mentors look to student writing and their roles as writing teachers as

opportunities to be open to future mentoring relationships, they may discover mentoring

opportunities that they might have otherwise missed. Teachers must present opportunities

for this type of interaction through the assignments they provide, their interactions with

students during conferences, and written correspondence (Brent, 2005; Copp &

Kleinman, 2008; Ewert, 2009; Goldstein, 2004; Gonsalves, 2002; Haswell et al., 2009;

Lerner, 2005; Metzger, 2004; Porter, 2001; Pough, 2002; Stover, 2003). Mentoring in the

classroom offers the opportunity to not just teach but also to be a part of a "caring and

dyadic relationship" (Goldner & Mayseless, 2008, p. 418).

Implications for Women's Studies Teachers

Implications for women's studies teachers are numerous as one of the primary

purposes of teaching these classes are to raise consciousness and change perceptions

about feminism and about gender roles (Bizzaro, 2005; Breeze, 2007). Women's studies

courses provide the content knowledge and the secure space for students to have

important self revelations about their roles as women and men. Grace and her mentees

often referred to this moment as when a person has a "feminist click." These

transformations are often hard to deal with alone, so it may seem natural for students to reach out to their professor with questions or when they need personal support. These situations are excellent opportunities to forge mentoring relationships or to deepen existing ties between mentors and mentees.

Lydia, Samantha, and I all had our own feminist clicks and the resulting moments where we felt we had to reevaluate our views of ourselves, and our relationships with Grace deepened as we each grappled with the resulting implications for our lives. Each of our experiences was different because of where we were in our lives and what we needed at the time to make us happier and more confident. Lydia was able to overcome some of her own personal demons and to gain confidence in herself while also embracing her identity as a writer. Samantha found power and confidence in her role as a queer woman and used that as a means to become a leader who could help create a supportive environment for others to dialogue about sexuality. My own development included maturing from a naïve and dependent 18-year-old who lived with her parents to an independent woman who would move several states away to pursue a degree in teaching and felt that for the first time, she did not need male approval.

While a great deal of this came from the information we learned from various feminists in our women's studies classes, Grace's willingness to discuss these ideas and to encourage future exploration was key to our movement from passive women studies students to active feminists. Women's studies teachers need only watch for such awakenings or clicks in their students and to provide the support students may need while they grapple with ideas that may be in direct opposition to some of their fundamental beliefs and may even benefit from Lynch's (2009) discussion of Postman's "thermostatic"

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metaphor. Helping students successfully complete this transition can form a bond that is perfectly aligned with mentoring relationships (Okawa, 2002).

At the same time, teachers must be aware that they will frequently deal with student resistance to some core feminist ideals, and they must not allow this to prompt them to discount a certain student from being a potential mentee. Instead, mentors must be patient and give the student room to grow. A mentoring role is not to enforce one's beliefs on the mentee but is a place where the mentor should encourage exploration of different points of view while also being willing to accept when a mentee is not willing to agree with the mentor's perspective. This can be rewarding for mentors as it may require that they reevaluate their own stance on a certain issue and provides an arena for rich debate between mentor and mentee.

Implications for Mentors

Finally, the results of this study also present important implications for mentoring. For instance, contemplating the experiences of these mentors and mentees presents an opportunity for others to reflect on their own mentoring journeys. This type of critical reflection requires mentors to determine their own mentoring approaches and may present opportunities to analyze some of their past actions and decisions in terms of their relationships with their mentees. In some cases, they may even enter into dialogue about the experience with past mentees. As a result, mentors begin to understand their own mentoring pedagogy and isolate the methods they use to successfully build relationships and provide opportunities for their mentees. Such awareness allows the mentor to more purposefully and thoughtfully interact in future mentoring relationships. At the same

time, mentees gain the experience of reflecting on their own journeys as mentees and their development into mentors.

Yet there are potential challenges that come with being conscious of one's role as a mentor or mentee. Focusing too closely on what has been successful in the past may prevent mentors and mentees from being open to the more organic process of allowing mentoring relationships to form serendipitously. Understanding what has worked in the past can be valuable, but mentors should not consider these methods to be guidelines or requirements for future mentoring relationships. It is vital to remember that each mentoring relationship is determined by the needs of both mentor and mentee at that particular time in their lives and no two mentoring relationships will be the same. Mentors must remember that because a method has been successful in the past for one specific mentee does not mean that it will work with a different individual.

Another challenge may be that too much focus on fulfilling the role of "mentor" may actually detract from the experience for both mentor and mentee. Attempting to analyze a situation while one is the middle of it rarely yields positive results. Keeping in mind that the mentor often has more experience with mentoring relationships, mentors should not attempt to orchestrate the experience to fit to their own expectations. Mentees must make the decision to enter into the relationship with their mentor on their own and should have the freedom to make decisions as to how that relationship will form—this cannot be forced. Likewise, the level of intimacy in the relationship may differ according to the personalities and levels of comfort of either party. Mentors cannot assume that they know anything about the mentoring relationship until both people are fully invested in their roles and the relationship. Even at that time, the mentor must realize that they are

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not in control and remember that mentoring relationships are the result of combined decisions from both the mentor and the mentee.

Implications for Future Research

This study is only the beginning of what should be a continued conversation about teacher-student mentoring relationships. There is a plethora of future research that must be done in other areas. First of all, other phenomenological studies and narrative inquiries on the topic of mentoring relationships have immense value as has been exemplified here. Understanding other specific experiences will help to broaden our understanding of the phenomenon in general. Other contexts to explore include, but are not limited to, looking at different geographical areas, gender pairings, racial pairings, and subject matter focuses. By including alternate perspectives, the understanding of what mentoring relationships are, how they unfold, and how they are best maintained can be further developed in a more universal way.

As mentioned earlier, another crucial area for further research includes examining the position of power that the mentor holds—whether that power is actual or simply perceived by the mentee. This can help mentors and mentees become aware of how the power inequalities could not only affect their mentoring and personal relationships but the mentee's perception of academia as a whole as the teacher-mentor acts as the standard of what is and is not acceptable. This power differential needs to be brought into the light so that mentors can be more thoughtful about how they may be influencing or impacting the students with whom they work.

Finally, perhaps the area most lacking in scholarship is that which considers our interactions and relationships with students outside of traditional course boundaries. We

know that learning does not stop at the door of the classroom or the faculty office, so we must begin to identify the varying important ways we act as members of the campus community. It is of great value to explore how students and faculty perceive mentoring relationships in these other areas and how these relationships grow when they are taken outside of the classroom setting. Likewise, we need to know how having these outside of the classroom experiences impact and morph mentor and mentee perceptions of the mentoring relationship. There are a variety of venues to explore: At what point in the relationship is it effective to work with a student on nonacademic projects? What kinds of out of the class interactions are most appropriate or most effective in helping them develop as an individual? Should these types of interactions leave the campus entirely and progress into community-wide joint activities? These are just a few examples, and many more questions are waiting to be answered.

Concluding Reflections

This research project may have been valuable to me, but it has also been valuable to the other three women who have made it possible. As a way to conclude this research project, I wanted to give them the opportunity to reflect on the experience and to share some of the ways they have learned more about themselves as mentors and mentees. Each woman has narrated her reflections as follows, and I conclude with my own reflections.

Grace

At the start of this project, talking about my role as a mentor was difficult because much of what I "do" as a mentor is unconscious. I did not really think about it a lot until Jess started following me around from group to group in my classes with her little

notebook! Then I started thinking, "Oh my gosh, she's writing down stuff I say and do—I'm really having an effect here." I do not think that my new awareness changed how I interacted with my students very much since there is not a lot of time for over-thinking my statements and actions when working with the groups in my classroom. However, this new awareness has allowed me to start thinking more about how I have mentored others and has allowed me to see the extent to which I have had an effect. This may allow me to be more mindful of my interactions with students in the future. Overall, it has been a personally rewarding experience.

Lydia

Prior to this project, I considered mentorship in various ways, and as concrete a term as it is, most of my previous reflection was of the abstract variety. I thought often of the philosophy of mentorship, the spirituality of mentorship (one human being helping another), the feminisms of mentorship, but rarely did I consciously think, "Now, I'm mentoring," or "Now, I'm being mentored." After having articulated (or having tried to articulate) my roles as "mentor" and "mentee," I find myself more consciously categorizing my relationships or thinking about them in terms of mentoring/being mentored. When I knew I wanted to preserve this year's apple bounty, I called my friend, Becky, who is now mentoring me through the process of canning apple pie filling. Just this afternoon, while spending time with a woman I am mentoring in sobriety, I also offered, when she expressed a need, to "mentor" her in the making of eggs over easy!

I have applied for a non-academic job, one that would pair me with others who have some of the challenges I have had, with the specific charge of mentoring them through these challenges, walking with them as they make their way to the other side. It

is a job for which I may not have considered myself qualified before being asked to specify the ways in which I have been helped and have helped others. Rather than seeing one-on-one as too narrow to "make a difference," I'm seeing now that it expands rather than contracts my opportunities

Samantha

This experience has been extremely beneficial for me. I have been fortunate to view the relationship with my mentors from their point of view. It encouraged me to examine my own experience as a mentee and raised my appreciation of those women I already had a deep respect for. This project will and already has helped me with my own interactions with those who I am trying to encourage to look outside themselves and see the world through a different set of eyes…and values. As I continue in my education, this experience will give me insight as to what type of mentor, mentee, professor, and facilitator that I hope to become. I am very grateful to have been asked to participate in this experience.

Jess

Finally, this project has had a huge impact on my views of my experiences as a mentor and as a mentee. In writing my teaching autobiography, I really came to understand how I had grown as a independent woman in my undergraduate years, yet I may not have been as unaware of that development as I had thought. In my application essay to the graduate school where I completed my Masters, I had written that I wanted to take my passion for learning and put it in little boxes to hand out to all my students. It seems that even then, I felt that I had been given a "gift" from Grace and my

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undergraduate professors, and I wanted to emulate them by returning that gift to the my future students. Even though I did not yet know what to call it, I wanted to be a mentor.

Now, I am able to look back and see my own maturation as a mentor and to know that I will learn more and more about mentoring relationships not only through being a part of a scholarly conversation but also through my interactions with my own present and future mentees. These lived stories have widened my understanding of mentoring and have only fueled my desire to spend the rest of my life being a mentor to others. It is my sincerest hope that this study does the same for those who read it.

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Appendix A

Participants' Overlapping Relationships
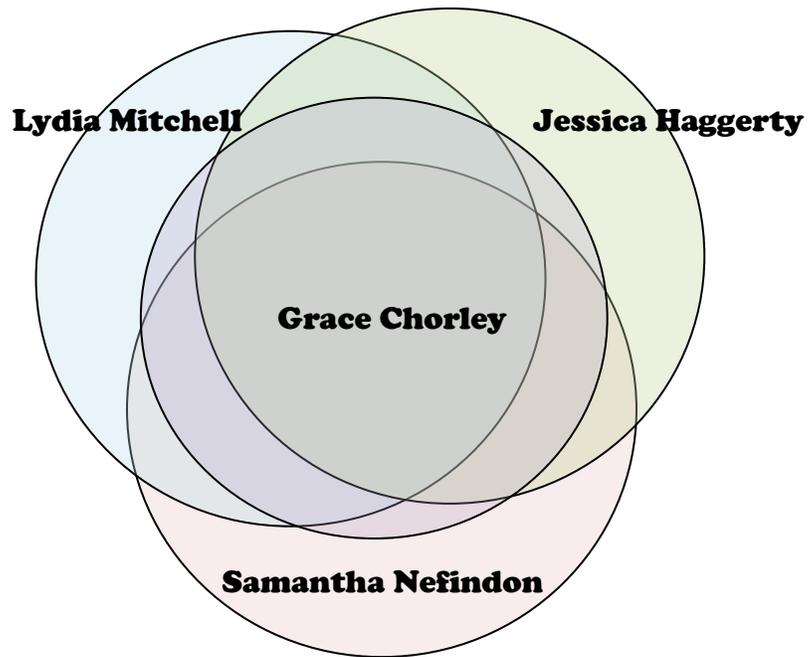
A visual representation of the study participants and their overlapping relationships, which helped to conceptualize how the narrative and experiences of each person contributed to the overall concept of mentoring relationships.

Appendix B

Autobiographical Rendering of Mentors' and Mentees' Experiences

For this data source, I asked participants to write two to three pages of autobiographical text in which they discussed their mentoring experiences. For Grace and Lydia, each wrote two separate sections: one detailing their histories of being mentored and the other discussing how they looked at and are enacting mentoring roles. Samantha was asked to write her autobiographical narrative about her experiences being mentored and was invited to include how they may have affected her role as an embedded tutor in Grace's classes. To help them get started, I provided the following prompts:

- Who was your mentor? How do you think he/she/they mentored you?

- Do you think your mentoring relationship affected your career choices?

- What did you learn from this mentoring relationship and how has it changed how you view yourself as a teacher/mentor?

- Do you consider yourself a mentor? Is mentoring something you do consciously?

- How has your life changed since you have become a mentor in terms of your feelings about yourself (personally or professionally), your future goals (personally or professionally), and/or your teaching philosophy?

Samantha was only be provided with the first four prompts, whereas Grace and Lydia received all five. Writers were encouraged to pick and choose from the prompts and to let their narrative choose its own course instead of attempting to answer all of the prompts in any certain order. In addition, each participant was offered the chance to read my autobiography if they were having a difficult time working on their own.

Appendix C

Individual Interviews with Mentors and Mentees

I interviewed my participants at least two times throughout the course of this study.

First Interview

The initial interview asked participants background and demographic information such as their age, ethnicity, and family background. The remaining questions were appropriate for interviews with Lydia and Samantha:

- Why did you decided to attend college at this stage in your life?
  (Because the campus is made up primarily of commuters, a large percent
  of the students there are non-traditional, as was the case with both Lydia
  and Samantha, and this question may be more relevant than it at first
  seems)

- How did you meet Grace?

- What were your initial impressions of her?

- Have those impressions changed as you got to know her over the course of
  your relationship?

- How would you define mentoring?

I concluded the interview by providing participants with the prompts for the autobiographical narrative and answering any questions they had about the activity.

Subsequent Interviews

Other interviews revolved around the narratives that participants wrote as well as questions that came up while I was writing each mini-biography. The steps of those interviews were as follows:

- I began the interview by inviting the participant to contribute anything they may have forgotten or wished they had included in their autobiographical narrative.

- I then asked them to clear up any points that I might have been confused about or to expand upon any areas that were vague.

- I asked any follow-up questions that arose during my writing process and data analysis.

Appendix D
Informed Consent for Grace Chorley

The principal investigator for this study is Jessica Haggerty, a Ph.D. candidate at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). She is conducting this study as part of her dissertation research. This project has been approved by the Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects and the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

You are invited to participate in this low-risk research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any questions now or throughout the duration of the study, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to explore teacher-student relationships and to analyze how they affect the individuals' present and future lives, decisions, and actions. Inspired by Haggerty's own story of how she was mentored as an undergraduate student and how it has affected her life decisions, she hopes to share the stories of her mentor, of the other students she has worked with, and of some of the students her mentor is currently teaching. From these stories, Haggerty hopes to weave a web that gives a better insight into these kinds of relationships and their lasting effects.

Because of the nature of this study, your identity and privacy cannot be fully protected from potential participants during the study and the public who might access the final manuscript. By consenting to be a part of this study, you acknowledge that you are aware of this fact. You may benefit from this study by learning more about the qualitative research process as well as the relationships that develop in the classroom.

Please complete the next section if you consent to be a participant in this project. The primary researcher will arrange the date and time of any interviews at your convenience (though interviews are not mandatory and may not be applicable to all study participants). You are free to end the interviews at any time.

The researcher takes confidentiality seriously and will keep all relevant materials in a secure, password-protected file or in locked file drawer.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw your participation at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed unless otherwise discussed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence.

Researcher:	Research Supervisor:
Jessica Haggerty	Dr. Gloria Park
English Dept., IUP	English Dept., IUP
Indiana, PA 15705	Indiana, PA 15705
(724) 357-2261	(724) 357-2981
xprp@iup.edu	

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the preceeding informed consent, and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Participant Name: (please print)_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached:_____

Best days and times to reach you:

_____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

This project has been approved by the Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects and the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: (724) 357-7730).

xc: participating subject

Appendix E
Informed Consent for Participants

The principal investigator for this study is Jessica Haggerty, a Ph.D. candidate at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). She is conducting this study as part of her dissertation research. This project has been approved by the Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects and the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

You are invited to participate in this low-risk research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any questions now or throughout the duration of the study, please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to explore teacher-student relationships and to analyze how they affect the individuals' present and future lives, decisions, and actions. Inspired by Haggerty's own story of how she was mentored as an undergraduate student and how it has affected her life decisions, she hopes to share the stories of her mentor, of the other students she has worked with, and of some of the students her mentor is currently teaching. From these stories, Haggerty hopes to weave a web that gives a better insight into these kinds of relationships and their lasting effects.

Throughout the study, the researcher will not discuss your participation or any information shared with other potential participants, with your teacher, or with any school official. The researcher takes confidentiality seriously and will keep all relevant materials in a secure, password-protected file or in locked file drawer. By consenting to be a part of this study, you acknowledge that you are aware of this fact. You may benefit from this study by learning more about the qualitative research process as well as the relationships that develop in the classroom.

Please complete the next section if you consent to be a participant in this project. The primary researcher will arrange the date and time of any interviews at your convenience (though interviews are not mandatory and may not be applicable to all study participants). You are free to end the interviews at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw your participation at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator, without affecting your grade in the course, and without affecting your relationship with your professor. Upon your request to withdraw, all information pertaining to you will be destroyed unless otherwise discussed. If you choose to participate, all information will be held in strict confidence and will have no bearing on your academic standing or the services you receive from the University.

Researcher:	Research Supervisor:
Jessica Haggerty	Dr. Gloria Park
English Dept., IUP	English Dept., IUP
Indiana, PA 15705	Indiana, PA 15705
(724) 357-2261	(724) 357-2981
xprp@iup.edu	

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM:

I have read and understand the information on the preceeding informed consent, and I consent to volunteer to be a participant in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Participant Name: (please print)_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Phone number or location where you can be reached:_____

Best days and times to reach you:

_____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual the nature and purpose, the potential benefits, and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have been raised, and have witnessed the above signature.

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

This project has been approved by the Pennsylvania State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects and the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (Phone: (724) 357-7730).

xc: participating subject