RECRUITMENT and RETENTION OF MALE HIGH SCHOOL PEER MENTORS:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Elaine Ann King

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2022

RECRUITMENT and RETENTION OF MALE HIGH SCHOOL PEER MENTORS:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by Elaine A. King

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2022

APPROVED BY:

Jessica Talada, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Susan Quindag, Ed.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was to develop an understanding of the experiences of high school male mentors who participate in mentor activities for peers with disabilities. The study of high school male mentors was viewed from the theoretical viewpoint of George C. Humans's (1958) social exchange theory, as it addressed the relationships of high school male mentors in terms of establishing, prolonging, and dissolving relationships as mentors for peers with disabilities. The study answered the following central research question: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe their experiences? Criterion sampling was used to select 12 to 15 male mentors from the state of Pennsylvania. The data were collected through individual interviews, reflective journals, and a focus group and analyzed using Clark Moustakas's (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach. The data that was analyzed yielded five themes and four subthemes during data analysis. The themes were recruitment, personal growth, personal challenges, mindset, and life decisions. The subthemes were internal gratification, relationships, reactions of others, and becoming a better person.

Keywords: social exchange theory, phenomenological study, peer mentors, disabilities

Elaine King @ 2022

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children and husband. They encouraged me to pursue my educational goals and endeavors. As I observed my daughter, Ashley, set her childhood dreams into action to become a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, I recognized that I needed to stand by my parental words of wisdom. Dreams only materialize with passion, determination, and resiliency, so quitting is not an option. As my son, Vincent pursued career or athletic positions; we frequently talked about the importance of staying focused and persevering. I thank them for being "my" role model and for their continual words of encouragement that inspired me to follow my dreams. I thank my loving and supportive husband, David, for his ability to recognize that, given my goal-driven personality, not pursuing a doctorate degree would result in a lifetime of internal conflict for me. Thank you, David, for your unwavering support and patience as we traveled the doctoral journey together. I appreciate how understanding my children, husband, family members, colleagues and friends have been of my commitment to accomplish this goal. Finally, thanks to my study buddy Gus, who stayed by my side and kept me company through many, many late nights.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank God for the many blessings in this process. The lesson that impacted my faith most is that everything is in God's perfect timing, not mine. When I was presented with challenges throughout the journey, I would reflect on Philippians 4:6: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God." A tiny, tattered piece of paper with the scribed verse on it will serve as a lifelong reminder of learning to trust in God.

I want to acknowledge the members of my dissertation team, Dr. Jessica Talada and Dr. Susan Quindag. I am so grateful for the ongoing words of encouragement and quick responses to my questions and chapter reviews. You have been a fantastic team, and I greatly appreciate all you have done to assist me with the dissertation process.

Also, I am thankful for the amazing male mentors who shared their stories with me. On many occasions, their stories warmed my heart. They are an extraordinary group of kind, giving youth who dedicate their time to others unselfishly. I cannot thank them enough for taking time out of their busy schedules to be a part of my journey.

Finally, the depths of a mentor's influences can often go unrecognized. So, I must thank Dr. MaryAnne Rhine-Hazer for her unwavering display of passion for educating children. She unknowingly planted the seed for me to obtain a doctoral degree in education. As she has done for me, my wish is to be a positive mentor and role model for students and educators.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)

Community-Based Mentoring (CBM)

Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Learning Disabilities (LD)

School-Based Mentoring (SBM)

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was to develop an understanding of the experiences of high school male mentors who participate in mentor activities for peers with disabilities. Today over 5,000 organizations in the United States offer mentoring support to approximately 3 million youth (Dubois, et al., 2011; Garringer, 2016; MENTOR, 2006b). Unfortunately, fewer males than females participate in mentor activities to meet the needs of youth. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS) is the nation's largest donor- and volunteer-supported community-based mentoring network designed to empower youth. According to BBBS reports, more than 70% of underserved children are boys, while only three out of every ten applicants to be mentors are men (Barry, 2016). Despite the amount of research on peer mentoring and youth served, recruitment and retention of male mentors have become a significant challenge (Bottomley et al., 2015; Haft et al., 2019; Hawkins et al., 2015; Surdo, 2022b). Information derived from the shared views of mentors' lived experiences was intended to provide valuable insight into the male mentors' experiences and develop an understanding of why they gravitate toward volunteering and remaining active mentors. Such information should help reduce the disparity between the number of male and female mentors who provide youth services. To further clarify, a background, identified gap, summary of research literature, and definitions are provided to establish a foundation for the study. The introduction to the study also includes a problem statement, purpose, significance of the study, research questions, and a synthesis of current knowledge related to this phenomenological study.

Background

People who serve as mentors include a diverse array of individuals ranging from youth to

adults. Peer mentoring can be described as a one-to-one relationship between an experienced person and a less experienced person in which the mentor volunteers to give his or her time to support and encourage the mentee to learn and develop socially, emotionally, behaviorally, or academically (Cartwright, 2005; Haft et al., 2019; Knowles & Parsons, 2009; O'Hara, 2011). According to the National Mentoring Center (2017), common mentoring activities in high school settings often involve students who serve as mentors for younger students or students who serve as welcoming committee members to orient newly enrolled students or those transitioning from middle to high school. In addition, medical and business administrators have sought to implement the best practices and strategies by initiating mentor programs to enhance learning and skills development in the educational, medical, and corporate worlds (Beltman et al., 2019; Garringer et al., 2017; Haber-Curran et al., 2017; Kramer et al., 2018; Tench et al., 2016). Mentoring is a commonly used practice designed to facilitate growth and development for diverse populations in many settings.

Historical Context

Mentoring is known to foster individual growth and development among youths and adults (Douglas et al., 2018; Sasorith, 2022). It is an age-old practice that has taken place in various settings and formats. For example, the concept of mentoring originated from Homer's Greek literary classic, *The Odyssey*. This epic poem is thought to date back to 800 BCE (Butcher & Lang, 1890). The term "mentor" came from the name of a character who acted as an advisor to Odysseus's son, Telemachus (Irby & Boswell, 2016). Mentor was responsible for serving as a support person for Telemachus while Odysseus was not present in the boy's life. Over time the word "mentor" came to be used in various languages to describe an individual who provides support for others.

As early as 1884, mentoring became a topic of interest in the educational world when articles appeared in educational journals and publications (Irby & Boswell, 2016). Reports reveal that youth mentoring programs were in place by the 1900's (Varenhorst,1983), but the first school-based mentoring program did not originate until 1983 (Weinberger, 2005). The founding of the Junior Achievement program resulted in a shift in mentoring from the social support system to the educational system due to Horace Moses' innovative idea of providing hands-on learning experiences for youth (Irby & Boswell, 2016).

Developments leading to the formation of youth mentoring programs began in the United States over a century ago in response to poverty and social challenges related to rapid industrialization, immigration, and urbanization (Baker & Maguire, 2005). Initially, programs that supported at-risk youth originated through the juvenile justice system when the first juvenile court was established in 1899. The juvenile court system recognized the need to assign youth to probation offices as a rehabilitative approach needed to support at-risk and adjudicated youth (Baker & Maguire, 2005).

Community-based intervention programs had a significant influence on the mentoring movement because they are one of the oldest strategies used to support at-risk youth, prevent problem behaviors, and promote positive relationships by matching youth with adult mentors (Blakesless & Keller, 2012). During the twentieth century, community youth mentor programs were fully actualized when Big Brothers, now known as Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) was founded in 1910 (Irby & Boswell, 2016). BBBS is the oldest mentoring program for youth, with 350 organizations serving nearly 630,000 youth (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, 2013). In addition, various other programs have been established to support youth, families, and adults, such as Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Young Women's Christian

Association (YWCA) (Baker & Maguire, 2005).

Raposa et al. (2017) conducted a study to analyze a decade of trends in volunteer mentoring in the United States. Summaries of the study and the publicity that it received were the impetus for a more comprehensive mentoring movement. The findings from the report provided scientific justification for policymakers and sponsors from across the political spectrum to promote mentoring (Dubois & Karcher, 2014). A politically motivated promotion of mentoring included influential constituents whose goal of creating two million mentor partnerships by the year 2000 drew national attention, which influenced the development of the National Mentoring Partnership, called MENTOR, founded in 2000 to expand opportunities for youth by building a mentoring field and movement serving as a resource to promote quality mentoring programs (MENTOR, 2006a).

Presidents from both parties and over multiple administrations have endorsed, funded, and publicly supported mentoring programs (President Barack Obama, 2013; President George W. Bush, 2008; The White House, 2001). As well as officials from federal agencies, including the Department of Education, (U.S. Department of Education, 2011), the Corporation for National and Community Service, (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2013) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2013). In particular, President George W. Bush included a three-year, $450 million mentoring initiative to boost the opportunity for mentorship experiences for the millions of youths at risk of not developing as contributing adult citizens (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2013). More recently, Colin and Alma Powell and the America's Promise Alliance collaborated with organizations across the country and identified mentoring as an essential tool to reach a national goal of a 90% graduation rate by the class of

2020. Mentoring in schools makes it possible to reach youth in a natural learning environment to enhance educational and social opportunities for students (Douglas et al., 2018; Garringer & MacRae, 2008; Sasorith, 2022; Schwartz & Kramer, 2018). Currently, mentoring is a common practice throughout the United States, offering mentoring supports and serving approximately 3 million youth (Dubois et al., 2011).

A review of the historical context and present-day needs indicates a defined necessity to maintain and provide support for youth through mentorship experiences; hence, a study to develop an understanding of mentors' lived experiences was needed to establish and sustain youth support. As supported by the findings from the Cavell et al. (2009) study, mentors can significantly impact youth's developmental outcomes. However, mentoring programs across the country face a considerable challenge identifying ways to successfully recruit mentors to work with the youth in their programs or retain the mentors they already have (Bottomley et al., 2015, Hawkins et al., 2015). This is why Opportunity Nation, a national movement of 275 organizations reaching 100 million people, has identified mentoring as an essential component to rebuild the "American Dream" (Mentor's, 2017). As stated, dating back to the 1800's mentoring interventions have served and continue to serve as an indispensable intervention strategy for meeting the various needs of youth.

Social Context

When quality mentoring is integrated with other research-based reforms and interventions, the national dropout rate is reduced, college completion rates increase, economic mobility increases, and ultimately, the economy is stronger (Bruce & Brideland, 2014). In addition, the utilization of mentors may address the need for additional supports for youth. Over the past ten years, spending trends for U.S. education have been negatively impacted due to the

current instability of the national economy and shrinking education budget (Armbrecht et al., 2020). In addition, funding for educational supports has been negatively impacted when the housing values fell (Armbrecht et al., 2020). As a result, schools and businesses may need to explore efficient and effective ways to maximize resources. One valuable resource that is often overlooked, underutilized, and perhaps not well understood is the implementation of peer supports. In addition to easing budgetary restraints, the instructional approach using peer mentors to assist in the classroom setting does not require additional staff or extra funding. It is another means to help students with academics and classroom routines while establishing an opportunity for overcommitted teachers to better manage their multitude of responsibilities (Dopp & Block, 2004; Tanaka & Reid, 1997).

When mentors and mentees develop relationships through mentor activities, the opportunity for appropriate behavioral modeling may enhance social skills for students with disabilities and at-risk students (Douglas et al., 2018; Carter et al., 2015; DuBois et al., 2014; Haft et al., 2019; Kram, 1985). Interactions between mentors and mentees allow students to develop a sense of "belonging," which can generate positive student achievement outcomes (Carter, 2020; Mentoring, 2018; Reister-Wood, 2015; Spencer, 2020). Another chief concern regarding adolescents' social development is the potential for high-risk behaviors to occur, resulting in adverse outcomes (Forbes & Dahl, 2010). Adolescence is a time when mortality and morbidity rates double due to risk-taking behaviors such as substance abuse, unsafe sex, and auto accidents (Institute of Medicine, 2011). Therefore, male mentors are a valuable resource for at-risk students, plus they can serve as trusted peers for students to seek support from when they are hesitant to self-advocate for help from an adult (Douglas et al., 2018; DuBois et al., 2014; Sasorith, 2022; Tanaka & Reid, 1997).

Understanding mentors' lived experiences can be pivotal to addressing young people's issues at the local, state, and national levels. When integrating mentor relationships into national initiatives, mentoring can strengthen efforts to improve educational outcomes, reduce poverty, lessen truancy, mitigate drug abuse and violence, encourage healthy decision-making, increase positive behaviors, and promote solid futures for youth (Blakesless & Keller, 2012; Bruce & Brideland, 2014; Cavell et al., 2009; Sosorith, 2022). Stakeholders across the nation are invested in the concept and implementation of mentoring supports. Perhaps more importantly, according to the results of the national survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau (2011), youth concur that mentoring matters and is linked with their success. By understanding the mentors' perspective on the cost, benefits, and outcomes of mentor experiences, the mentoring gap can be reduced for the good of young people and our country. This intentional relationship building, and collaboration could drastically improve the lives of children, the culture of schools, and the fabric of our communities and nation.

Theoretical Context

Social exchange theory is frequently used to explain the mentoring paradigm (Bang et al., 2009; Carter et al., 2019; Dawe, 2017; Ehrich et al.,1997, 2003; Hoffman et al., 2019). This theory was based on the concept of social economics and suggested that the goal of human interactions and transactions is to maximize one's rewards and minimize one's costs (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993). According to social exchange theory, people evaluate their relationship options based on variables that are important to them. In other words, people make choices that provide the best possible outcome based on options available to them (Smith & Hamon, 2012).

In a 2020 study, Kucuk investigated the relationships among economic exchange, social exchange, and organizational commitment. Data was obtained from 186 employees who worked

in the private sector in Turkey. It was hypothesized that social exchange is characterized by feelings of gratefulness, trust, and commitment to reciprocate, which would be correlated with all subdimensions of organizational commitment. As anticipated, the social-emotional responses of attachment and involvement were associated with an affective commitment.

Social exchange is the cost and benefits of an experience, while affective commitment is characterized by emotional bonding that motivates employees to remain with a place of employment. The researcher found a moderate connection between social exchange and affective commitment. Results of the study indicated that social exchange has a positive impact on the commitment and retention of employees. Kucuk's study the motivational factors for employee retention relates to this study to understanding affective dedication and continuance to serve as a peer mentor for individuals with disabilities.

Others later expanded George Homans's (1958) theory of social exchange to illustrate development of relationships and to understand mentors' social behavior (Blau,1964; Foa & Foa, 1974). The theory of social exchange was put forth by Homans (1958) and later expanded by Blau (1964) and Foa and Foa (1974) to illustrate how relationships can be perceived in terms of benefits provided and costs accrued by the parties involved. Foa and Foa (1974) describe items to be exchanged that can be perceived as benefits and costs, including love, status, information, and money, as well as the costs of time and energy. Thus, social exchange theory emphasizes the importance of understanding costs, rewards, and profits in initiating, maintaining, and ending human relationships (Smith & Hamon, 2012).

Situation to Self

Mentoring and support services for students with disabilities are a part of my personal and professional experience. My father died when I was five years old, leaving my mother to raise three young children. She was an uneducated woman without a high school diploma and worked as a waitress. I grew up in a small mill town and lived in a housing association. My mother's chronic untreated mental illness combined with financial challenges created an environment that put us children at risk for educational, social, behavioral, and emotional problems.

Throughout my childhood and adolescent years, adult mentors in my life provided me with encouragement, guidance, and a sense of importance. My mentors included adults that lived in my neighborhood, church members, teachers, relatives, and babysitters. Through the influences from relationships established with positive role models, I made responsible decisions in my home, school, and community settings.

In addition, I currently teach students who strive to overcome obstacles and find a true sense of belonging in the school setting, which has filled my professional career with a passion for assisting students with disabilities. This passion led me to advocate for establishing a mentor program to enhance interactions between typical peers and students with disabilities. When I was a co-sponsor for a public high school peer mentor club in western Pennsylvania, the initial mission of the club was to influence appropriate social, emotional, behavioral, and academic interactions through the inclusion of students with disabilities. Over the span of eight years, my observations, experiences with mentors, quest for understanding the motivational experiences, and sense of connectedness serving as a peer mentor club sponsor established a foundation for this study. Such observations and personal experiences stimulated my desire to research the

phenomenon of recruitment and retention when high school males participate in mentor activities for students with disabilities. My worldview for this study is constructivism in nature as mentor experiences impact my personal career decisions and my recent desire to provide a voice for male mentors by selecting this research topic.

My epistemological assumption is that there are multiple viewpoints regarding the phenomenon of male mentors who participate in mentor activities with peers that have disabilities. Hence, various perspectives drive me to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of recruitment and retention experiences of male mentors who participate in mentor experiences. Through this research, I want the participants' experiences and perceptions to be heard. Moustakas (1994) recommended that participant voices be heard by developing a phenomenological study that will compile different views through interviews, reflective journal responses, and focus group discussions. Therefore, I will conduct one-on-one interviews, reflective journals, and focus group discussions on exploring the genuine experiences perceived by the mentors. Finally, as supported by Creswell and Poth (2018), determining the truth about their experiences will provide such knowledge.

My axiological assumption is my personal value that both mentors and mentees benefit from the interactions of mentor-mentee relationships. Additionally, male mentors that participate in mentoring activities are highly valued for serving as models due to the disproportionate number of males to females who volunteer as mentors (Barry, 2016; Haft et al., 2019). Hence, the purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of male mentoring experiences and outcomes for recruitment and retention. A vital goal of the study was to provide the participants with a voice to understand how mentoring experiences influence the recruitment and retention of male participants.

I come with the ontological assumption that high school mentors have the ability to serve as positive role models for peers with disabilities. Hence, I believe a better understanding of male mentors' benefits, costs, and outcomes will provide administrators and sponsors of mentor programs with information that may increase mentoring in school and community settings. The social reality that there are fewer male mentor volunteers is evident in the disproportionate number of females who are members of the mentor club that I co-sponsor. My interactions and observations will guide the qualitative data collection as analysis to understand the phenomenon's essence (Creswell, 2013).

The paradigm I bring to the study is constructive in nature relative to personal experiences with family challenges. Constructivism sees knowledge as derived from the unique experiences of each of us. There is no true meaning to an event, only how the event is experienced or interpreted by the individuals who experience it (Stake, 2010). This view suggests that perceptions of experiences are valid and worthy of respect (Patton, 2015). This paradigm will help to produce useful knowledge obtained from the mentors who have lived through a shared phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I served as the human instrument to understand the phenomenon from the voices of the male mentors who participated in mentoring experiences with peers who have disabilities.

Problem Statement

The problem was that a disproportionately low number of males serve as mentors; hence, it was necessary to explore the experiences of high school mentors to better understand the recruitment and retention of males who participate in mentor activities. Today over 5,000 organizations in the United States offer some form of mentoring and serve approximately 3 million youth (Dubois et al., 2011). Unfortunately, evidence reveals that fewer males participate

in mentor activities, and twice as many boys are waiting for mentors as females (Barry, 2016). Specific to the problem, more than 70% of children unserved are boys, but only three out of every ten individuals that apply to serve as a mentor are men (Barry, 2016). Overall, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is a history of disproportionate and declining volunteer rate for the population of both men and women 16 years and older (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). As of September 2011, 29.9% of volunteers were women as compared to 23.5% of men. Reviewing statistics for 2015 reveals that women volunteers have declined to 27.8%, while men volunteers declined to 21.8% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Statistics obtained over the past four years indicate that overall participation has declined, resulting in a continued disproportionately lower percentage of male volunteers. A continued lack of male mentors will result in a higher percentage of underserved boys. Also, a decline in support systems for youth who face challenges may decrease graduation rates. Youth that do not graduate are almost three times more likely to be unemployed (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021), as well as to become high school dropouts (Alliance of Excellent Education, 2013). When youth are not provided with supports, they are more likely to commit crimes. About 75% of unsupported youth end up committing crimes. These staggering statistics reveal that if more youth were involved in mentor program it is likely that we would see a decrease in incidences of assault, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and burglaries in addition to the cost savings. Mentoring programs are an intervention strategy that can benefit youth with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, which would help the nation (Garringer et al., 2016; Haft et al., 2019; Sasorith, 2022).

Mentoring literature lacks valuable information about high school male mentors. The literature also lacks information about the benefits and costs that male mentors face when working and building relationships with peers with disabilities. This study was conducted to

address the problem of fewer male mentors by gathering information and exploring the benefits, costs, and outcomes that high school male mentors encounter when participating in mentor activities, leading to a deeper understanding of mentors' perceptions for recruiting and retaining mentors. Solid information gathered by this study of the benefits, costs, and outcomes of high school male mentors can help organize, improve, and create programs and initiatives to recruit and retain male mentors to equalize the disproportionate number of male versus female mentors. Mentors can make a profound difference in mentees' lives and, and in turn, can strengthen our communities, economy, and country. The stakes are high, and through this study, the voices of mentors should improve the insight of male mentors' perceptions of those who participate in mentor activities to better serve youth in need of positive role models.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences related to recruitment and retention of high school males who participate in mentoring activities with peers who have disabilities. Recruitment and retention of male mentors was defined by experiences that motivate male high schoolers to volunteer as mentors for students with disabilities. A peer mentor is defined for the purpose of this study as a person "who acts as a role model to another pupil (usually younger) who needs support and guidance" (Houlston et al., 2009, p. 328). While defining a peer mentor is vital, it is equally important to understand that mentoring is defined as social interactions between nonparental adults and those in their formative years. The adults serve as mentors without advanced professional training to provide guidance and beneficial supports for youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). Given the disproportionately low number of male volunteers (Alper, 2017; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016; Surdo, 2022b), the study provided male mentors the opportunity to voice their lived

experiences to assist educational leaders and mentor sponsors in understanding key components for increasing male mentor participation.

Guided by Homans's (1958) social exchange theory, this study attempted to expand on this theoretical approach to understand how aspiring male role models experience rewards and risks. The rewards may be viewed as benefits, while risks may be considered costs. Such outcomes may influence ones' desire to participate, decline, or continue as a peer mentor for students with disabilities. Thus, the theory explains social behavior as an exchange process, described as anything experienced as a benefit after the costs are subtracted, resulting in an overall outcome from the relationship (Emerson, 1976). This study connected to the social exchange theory as a theoretical guide for understanding of the rewards, costs, and outcomes in the relationships established when high school males participate in mentor activities with peers who have disabilities.

Significance of the Study

In recent years mentoring has grown in popularity as a strategy for facilitating the learning process, while at the same time research has examined mentor experiences in the educational, business, and medical fields (Beltman et al., 2019; Garringer et al., 2017; Haber-Curran et al., 2017; Kramer et al., 2018). Many empirical studies focus on benefits to mentees (Beltman et al., 2019; Haft et al., 2019). Meanwhile, there remains a disproportionate number of male and female volunteers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). An additional 14 million youth could benefit from having a mentoring relationship (Sosorith, 2022). Hence, evidence suggested that to increase the number of male mentors, additional research should emphasize understanding the lived experiences of male mentors so that programs can satisfy the needs of boys (Rhodes et al., 2006). This unmet need for male mentors constitutes a "mentoring gap." Thus, research

results may offer suggestions for administrators and sponsors of mentor organizations. The derived suggestions may improve the participation of male mentors, contributing to closing the disproportionate gap and meeting the needs of more male youth.

In addition, as a society, we must highlight the positive attributes of young people. In doing so, we need to offer them the opportunity to learn and use skills so youth can make productive and positive contributions their own communities, families, and society (DuBois & Karcher, 2014; Sasorith, 2022). Effective, high-quality, and enduring mentoring experiences are associated with higher academic achievement, more school engagement, and a greater tendency for youth to view their futures positively (Beltman et al., 2019; Rhodes et al., 2006; Schwartz & Kramer, 2018). By connecting youth to caring, reliable, and supportive adults, the nation can help young people achieve their aspirations and strengthen communities, the economy, and our country (Alper, 2017; Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Mentoring has the potential to enhance relationships that improve adolescents' life skills by providing opportunities to promote positive youth development.

Empirical Significance

Empirical research focuses on the outcomes of experiences to understand mentoring influences (Beltman et al., 2019; Hoffman et al., 2019). Despite the amount of research conducted on peer mentoring and youth served, recruitment has become an enormous challenge (Haft et al., 2019; Hawkins et al., 2015). Surdo (2022c) suggested that researchers and mentoring organizations need to continue investigating how apprehension about mentoring commitments can be lessened. Kram (1983, 1985) indicates that mentoring relationships may facilitate early and middle adulthood psychosocial development. While psychosocial mentoring is typically takes the form of friendship, affirmation, modeling, counseling, and support (Kram, 1983,1985),

the focus of this study addressed the psychosocial mentoring of adolescent male mentors who participate in mentor activities for peers with disabilities. The study provided data on the phenomenon based on high school male mentors' real-world experiences to explore the benefits, costs, and outcomes that male mentors encounter when participating in mentor activities. The truths expressed in the voices of male mentors were affirmed by the interpretation of data obtained from mentors' interviews and journal prompts. The findings of this study should benefit educational and mentoring programs that are designed to enrich peers' social, emotional, and behavioral development. Douglas et al. (2018) suggest that peers significantly alter peers' behaviors more than adults do. Such information can help organize, improve, and create programs to recruit and sustain males to serve as mentors.

Theoretical Significance

Homans's (1958) social exchange theory was the theoretical foundation for exploring the perspectives of the male mentors' lived experiences regarding the factors that contribute to effective recruitment and retention of male mentors. This study provided a better understanding of what factors contribute to understanding the benefits, costs, and outcomes related to what motivates and leads to the persistence of mentors. The study added to the validity of the social exchange theory by expanding the utilization to the field of education since it is commonly used to understand employee relationships and work production in the economic and business fields (Kucuk, 2020). It revealed how educational studies aligned with social exchange theory can provide a foundation for exploring and adding to the future research about teacher mentors, teacher-student relationships, and retention of teachers and students. For example, Garcia and Weiss (2019) found that a national teacher shortage is increasing; hence, exploration of teachers' benefits, costs, and outcomes concerning recruitment and retention would add to the viability of

this theory. In addition, research supports that an increased understanding of the influences on male peer mentors' perceptions were needed to improve recruitment and retention so effective programs can be established to enhance students' experiences as well as to address the disproportionately low number of male mentors who support students with disabilities (Haft et al., 2019; Kanchewa et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2006; Surdo 2022c). The active process of understanding male mentors' experiences as they engage in mentoring activities can be understood through the fundamental tenets of the social exchange theory (Homans, 1958).

Practical Significance

The practical significance of this study is critical to addressing the disproportionately low number of male volunteers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). Therefore, it is a worthwhile to develop an understanding of the experiences of male mentors to increase male participation. The findings may provide the information needed to boost the rate of mentor participation and retention. Such information may be applied in school and community settings. For example, one study revealed that males who are provided with mentor supports during their formative years are more likely to participate as mentors later in life (Hawkins et al., 2015). In addition, a report conducted by Surdo (2022a) reveals that adult male mentors who received beneficial mentoring supports as children expressed the personal desire to pay it forward for others. Consequently, understanding the lived experiences of high school male mentors may enhance both present participation and the future desire to serve as a mentor (Barry, 2016). This study can be replicated on a broader scale at the county, state, and national levels to determine if sponsors of mentoring organizations from other geographic areas want to understand the factors that influence the participation of male mentors. In addition, it may support funding requests for future research at federal, state, community, and school district levels to improve recruitment and

retention strategies. As mentoring programs and community agencies strive to increase successful recruitment and retention of male mentors, a better understanding of what inspires and concerns mentors may provide program organizers with strategies that may lead to the longevity of mentors' participation (Bottomley et al., 2015; Haft et al., 2019; Hoffman et al., 2019). A deeper understanding of the phenomenon of peer mentoring is needed as the first step in contributing to an understanding of male mentor recruitment and retention.

Research Questions

The questions guiding this transcendental phenomenological study of the characteristics of mentors who participated in mentoring activities with peers who have disabilities have been developed to understand the lived experiences of male mentors who serve as mentors for peers who have disabilities.

Central Research Question

How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe their experiences? This central question provided an opportunity to obtain valuable insight into the lived experiences from the perspective of male peer mentors. Researchers have explored the benefits from the mentees' perspective (Althouse & Steiner, 1999; Mallet, 2019), but the proposed study aimed to develop an understanding of mentors' perspectives. The research questions for this study included the exploration of internal and external experiences (Homans, 1985) to understand the desire to participate and remain as a mentor.

Sub-Question 1

How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any benefits related to participation in mentoring experiences? This research question was used to facilitate and probe for experiences that may have contributed to mentors' personal and social growth

through their interactions, attitudes, and reciprocal relationships with mentees. This study used

social exchange theory as a framework to provide a greater understanding of the benefits, costs,

and outcomes of those who serve as mentors. The application of social exchange theory in a

qualitative approach by both Theeboom (2020) and Doherty (2009) revealed that investigating

contributions, skill enrichment, volunteer privileges, and positive experiences (over against task

overload, negative experiences, inconveniences, and cost factors) may reveal why individuals

continue or end a mentor-mentee relationship. Volunteers may be more likely to continue in

future volunteer events if they have experienced benefits from previous experiences (Stutzer &

Frey, 2010; Theeboom, 2020). Understanding the benefits of mentors relates to the social

exchange theoretical framework concept that if benefits outweigh costs, individuals may

continue the relationship (i.e., continue serving as mentors as it relates to this study).

Sub-Question 2

How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any challenges

and costs related to participation in mentoring experiences? When volunteers experience

negative outcomes or cost experiences, retention as a volunteer or likelihood of volunteering in

future events may be impacted by previous experiences (Stutzer & Frey, 2010; Theeboom,

2020). Therefore, this question was vital for understanding the challenges and costs for the

mentor, which may impact the recruitment and retention of male mentors.

Sub-Question 3

How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any outcomes

related to participation in mentoring experiences? This question was essential for understanding

the outcomes that are the end results for mentors who experience cost and benefits. For example,

research by Stutzer and Frey (2010) and Theeboom (2020) indicates that mentors are more likely

to continue to participate in events when they experience rewards; hence, this question will offer a deeper understanding of the contributing factors for the retention of peer mentors. The expressed outcomes contributed to the existing research of mentor experiences and the potential for adding to research-based findings. Such findings may be used by community and school-based programs to request funding through federal, state, and grant monies (Surdo, 2022a). Also, a better understanding of mentors' motivational factors and concerns may provide program organizers with strategies to improve recruitment and approaches that may lead to greater longevity of mentors' participation (Bottomley et al., 2015).

Definitions

The following terms are relevant to this study:

1. *Deprivation satiation proposition:* The concept that the more often a person has received a reward in the recent past, the less valuable any further unit of that reward becomes (Emerson, 1976).

2. *Essence:* The meaning of a human experience made up of a complex array of aspects, properties, and qualities (van Manen, 1997).

3. *Mentee:* The individual that a mentor helps through a mentoring relationship (McKimm et al., (2007).

4. *Mentoring:* Social interactions in which nonparental adults or older peers without advanced professional training provide guidance and other forms of support to youth to benefit one or more areas of their development (DuBois & Karcher, 2014, Chapter 1).

5. *Mentor:* Typically, a nonparental adult who participates in mentoring but who is not acting in a formal professional capacity or if young must be an older youth rather than a same-age peer (DuBois & Karcher, 2014, p. 4).

6. *Mentoring relationship:* A relationship built on trust, respect, openness, and honesty in which there is an emotional connection and in which the mentor offers guidance and other forms of support for the young person's social, emotional, and academic development (DuBois & Karcher, 2014).

7. *Peer mentoring*: "A mentoring approach whereby a relationship is formed between a peer mentor who acts as a role model to another pupil (usually younger) who needs support and guidance" (Houlston et al., 2009, p. 328).

8. *Phenomenological study:* A summarization of the common meaning of several individuals' lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

9. *Transcendental phenomenology:* The process of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's own experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

10. *Role modeling:* A "cognitive construction based on the attributes of people in social roles that an individual perceives to be similar to in terms of attitudes, behaviors, goals, or status position to him or herself to some extent and desires to increase perceived similarity by emulating those attributes" (Gibson, 2004, p.136).

11. *School-based mentors:* Individuals in a school setting who volunteer to take on additional responsibilities of fostering and nurturing relationships with at-risk mentees (Garringer et al., 2016; Garringer & MacRae, 2008).

12. *Social exchange theory:* A sociological and psychological theory that studies the social behavior in the interaction of two parties or groups who implement a cost-benefit analysis to determine risks and benefits (Emerson, 1976).

13. *Stimulus proposition:* The concept that the more often a stimulus results in a reward in the past, the more likely it is that the person will respond to it and repeat the action (Emerson, 1976).

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of male mentors as they related to recruitment and retention for male mentors who participated in public high school mentor activities for students with disabilities in Pennsylvania. This chapter included background information about the theoretical frameworks guiding this study. For this specific study, background information about peer mentor programs and activities that could influence mentors, and the recruitment and retention of high school male mentors was explored. The study provided data on the phenomenon of male mentors' real-world experiences. Data was obtained through interviews and reflective journal of the male mentors. Truths expressed in the voices of male mentors were affirmed by the interpretation of interviews and journal prompts. In this study, the problem was that fewer males than females participate in mentor activities; hence, it was necessary to explore the experiences of male mentors to better understand the recruitment and retention of those who participated in high school mentor activities (Barry, 2016; Kanchewa et al., 2014; Surdo, 2022c). This approach offered voice to the individuals engaged in high school mentoring activities through their role as peer mentors for students with disabilities.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Mentoring is known to foster individual growth and development among youth and adults. This study focused on high school male mentors who participate in mentor activities for peers with disabilities. A literature review was conducted to develop an understanding of mentor programs and the benefits/rewards, costs/challenges, and outcomes for individuals who participate in mentor activities. This chapter will review recent literature related to the topic of study. The first section explores social exchange theory as it relates to understanding the benefits/rewards, costs/challenges, and outcomes of mentors' experiences. The study concentrated on high school males' perceptions of serving as mentors for peers with disabilities to address the recruitment and retention of peer mentors. The study examined a synthesis of current literature related to mentor experiences linked to various populations, types of mentor programs, benefits/rewards, costs/challenges, and outcomes. The final theme focused on the literature and research for the topic. This study was designed to contribute to existing research, theory, and practice in the context of mentors.

Theoretical Framework

This literature review explored the phenomena that affect mentors' participation in mentoring programs to clarify many interrelated phenomena to elucidate key areas and learn from the meaning of research results (Check & Schutt, 2012). In addition to the personal costs, benefits, and outcomes for high school male mentors, this review spotlights the concepts, assumptions, and theoretical framework that supported the research. The theoretical framework enlightened researchers to the phenomena and provided insight (Maxwell, 2009) into the

perceived benefits, costs, and outcomes for high school male mentors who participate in mentor programs.

Homans (1950, 1958, 1961) derived social exchange theory from his observations of basic economic exchanges, leading to the theories of social exchange, social behavior, and equality. In examining social behavior as exchange, Homans (1961) defined social exchange as the exchange of activity (whether tangible or intangible, rewarding or costly) between at least two individuals. Homans's primary focus was the social behavior that emerged by reviewing various studies of either social interactions of mutual reinforcement or a lack of reinforcement. For example, during the 1920s, Mayo and Roethlisberger conducted studies of workers at the Hawthorne Electric Company plant, in which it was discovered that workers' performance depends on social issues and job satisfaction, which aligns with the benefits and costs of belonging to the group, resulting in the opportunity to be involved in decision making and continued employment (Trevion, 2009). Homans also did an ethnographic study of Boston's Italian immigrants and gangs (Whyte, 1943). He drew on the concept of equivalent exchange for individuals and groups through established friendships and found that leaving the relationships incurred negative impacts. In 1928–29, Raymond Firth conducted a year-long study of 1200 people from a primitive society in Tikopia, a small Polynesian island. The society was resistant to outside influences and had an underdeveloped economy. The results of this renowned study, published in 1936 as *We the Tikopia: A Sociological Study of Kinship in Primitive Polynesia*, suggest that the needs of human beings are influenced by observed activities (Firth,1936). A war-time industrial study of the Electrical Equipment Company that was conducted by anthropologists Conrad M. Arnseberg and Douglas McGregor (1942) included a series of ethnographic studies on social behavior, morale, and productivity.

Later, researcher Peter Blau (1964) expanded the social exchange paradigm utilizing the elements of benefits (or rewards), challenges (or costs), and outcomes accrued by both parties. Blau viewed social exchange as a process in social life that underlies relations between groups or individuals (Cook, 1987). According to Blau (1964), "Social exchange . . . refers to voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do bring from others." While there is an expectation for a return, Blau argued that social exchange is more likely to continue when the exact nature of the return is not defined in advance (Blau, 1986). He also suggested that social rewards and benefits depend on the personal relationships established between people. Several years later, researchers Foa and Foa (1974) expanded upon the tenets of social exchange theory. suggesting that the source of the benefits exchanged can be perceived to include love, status, information, and money as well as costs such as time and energy. Furthermore, they concur with Homans (1958) that outcomes can be observed as anything experienced or obtained once costs are subtracted from the benefits in the relationship (Foa & Foa, 1974).

It has been found that relationships may terminate due to a lack of reinforcement (Cook, 1987). According to SET, individuals enter relationships where they believe the rewards will be greater than the cost (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). The social exchange theory (SET) explains the intention to engage or remain engage or remain engaged in a relationship in terms of a favorable exchange of the costs and benefits from a sociological, economic, and psychological perspective. (Ensher & Murphy, 2011; Ensher et al., 2001; Homans, 1958; Thibaut & Kelley,1959). Foa and Foa (1974) share that an individual's perception of the cost to benefit ratio in a relationship is an indicator of establishing, prolonging, and dissolving a personal or group relationship.

After incorporating the data from the previously mentioned studies of small groups into his conceptual scheme, Homans noted some generalities about the mutual dependence of interactions and relationships taken from the empirical studies conducted by Arnesberg and McGregor (1942) and Firth (1936). He observed that the more often people interact with each other, the greater the probability that they will experience a sense of ease in one another's presence (Homans, 1950. Through the study of small groups, he developed a framework of elements of social behavior: interaction, sentiments, and activities that had to be considered regarding the internal and external systems of a group or individual.

Homans's (1958) key propositions framed social behavior in terms of rewards and punishments. The first proposition, the success proposition, asserts that behaviors or actions taken by humans are more likely to be repeated when that specific action is rewarded. The second proposition, the stimulus proposition, states that previously reinforced behaviors in similar situations are likely to be performed in similar cases. The value proposition, the third proposition, affirms that the action will be repeated if it proves to be more valuable than expected. Another proposition, the deprivation-satiation proposition affirms that the more often a person receives a reward, the less valuable the reward is for the person. Finally, the aggression-approval proposition contends that even if the actions do not produce the anticipated reward, the approving behavior may still develop when an unexpected reward occurs; hence, a fair rate of return aligns with the normative concept of a distributive justice dyadic exchange. The social exchange tenets are specific to behaviors, stimulus, personal value, approval rate, and rationality. The tenets impact an individual's decision to terminate or sustain the relationship.

Aligning social exchange theory with the study of male mentors provided a lens for understanding how male mentors weigh the potential benefits and risks of social relationships.

The theory also proposes that individuals are motivated by self-interest and will make choices that maximize personal rewards. When the risks outweigh the rewards, the mentors may terminate their mentoring relationships. Through the theoretical lens of the social exchange theory, this study's results could shed light on the experiences that impact male mentor participation and retention. Since social exchange theory aligns with the purpose of this study, it may assist with understanding social interactions in small groups and the rewards received relative to their costs and investments (Emerson, 1976), thus providing a framework to understand the recruitment and retention of male mentors. The present study investigated mentoring relationships from the perspective of social exchange since male high school mentors are largely ignored in the literature (Kanchewa et al., 2014). By hearing the experiences of male mentors, the data obtained from this study enriched the understanding of the known benefits, risks, and outcomes for male mentors. The significance of social exchange theory applied to understanding perceptions of male mentors can contribute to existing research, research theory, and practice in the context of mentoring to close the gap between male and female mentors so that males are no longer left without positive role models and support.

The most frequently cited theoretical framework described the mentoring paradigm as a social exchange (Ensher & Murphy, 1997, 2011). Theeboom (2020) and Doherty (2009) used the social exchange theory framework to help establish the significance of their studies. For this study, the tenets of the costs, benefits, and outcomes of the social exchange theory provided a greater understanding of the motivational factors for recruitment and retention of high school male mentors' participation in mentor activities with peers who have disabilities.

Social exchange theory indicates that motivation for interaction seeks rewards and avoids punishments and costs (Homans, 1961), which means that attitudes and behaviors are determined

by the benefits and rewards of interaction minus the challenges and costs of that interaction (Griffith et al., 2006). In terms of SET, individuals make two calculations: (a) the comparison level, which is a straightforward assessment of the cost of effort and resources expended against benefits received, and (b) the comparison level of alternatives, which is a more complex assessment of the cost-benefit ratios of maintaining relationships compared to available alternatives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). These calculations help people decide if they want to pursue and sustain a relationship. Overall, the theory assumes that relationships can be established, maintained, and dissolved based on the perception of the ratio of benefits to costs in the relationship (Ensher, 2011). Thus, outcomes can be observed as anything experienced or obtained once the costs are subtracted from the benefits in the relationship.

Figure 1

The Social Exchange Paradigm

| Benefits (Sources of exchange: Love, information, recognition, money, status, goods and services) | − | Costs (Sources of exchange: Time, energy, image) | → | Outcomes |

Note. Adapted from Homans (1961) and Foa & Foa (1974)

Theory Elements

Various researchers (Cook & Yamagishi, 1983; Homans, 1961; Mitchell, Cropanzana, & Quisenberry, 2012; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) have utilized the tenets of SET to support the concept of rewards, costs, and outcomes for individuals who continue or discontinue participation in a relationship. In thi s study the elements of the theory provide a framework to

establish a greater understanding of the motivational factors for recruitment and retention of high school male mentors' participation in mentor activities with peers who have disabilities.

Social Element

According to Thibaut and Kelley (1959), rewards can only be met through interaction with another person; hence, they are called social rewards. The value of a social reward can be weighed against the costs of a particular relationship. Rewards in social interactions include gratification, pleasure, satisfaction, and fulfillment of needs. The rewards may be either intrinsic (such as confirmation of one's value, respect, and acceptance) or extrinsic (factors that usually represent costs to the individual providing the rewards). Such rewards will be of greater value when a cost is what is expected or anticipated. Homans used the phrase "value of a reward" to emphasize the belief that rewards may have different values to individuals (i.e., what is valuable to one person is not valuable to another). In addition, the value of such rewards will fluctuate over time in various situations. In summary, Homans (1961) wrote, "A man emits a unit of activity; however, that unit is defined, and this unit is either reinforced or punished by one or more units of activity he receives from another man or by something he receives from the non-human environment" (p. 39).

Costs Element

Homans (1961) refers to costs as something of value given up, withdrawal of a reward, or punishment. An exchange may be in the form of money, time, energy, and skills. The time and energy that one may expend are affected by the importance. Just as rewards vary in value, so do costs. Likewise, the value of one's time varies depending on the demands. Blau (1964) noted that time spent in a relationship is a forfeit of an opportunity to spend time in another relationship

that could be more rewarding. Thus, according to the social exchange theory, the costs an individual is willing to expend in a relationship align with the reward profit.

Profit Element

Homans's (1961) economic formula (profit equals reward minus cost) applies to social exchanges. While the basic formula is intended for economics, profits affect decisions to remain in or discontinue interactions and relationships whether or not the benefits exceed the costs. The effect of benefits/profits on personal relationships is described by Levine, Kim, and Ferrara (2010): "People in relationships have a metaphorical spreadsheet in which relational credits and debits are tabulated, and future profits are forecasted. People are satisfied with their relationships when the rewards exceed the costs, and they continue in those relationships where investments lead to projected future profit."

Equity and Distributive Justice Element

While relationships are evaluated by the profits and gains, achieving a fair or an equitable trade can involve additional determining factors to continue or end the relationship. In relationships, equity is typically based on the ratio of rewards to costs for both individuals (Cook & Yamagishi, 1983). Ongoing relationships or social exchanges do not essentially need immediate return (Mitchell, Cropanzana, & Quisenberry, 2012). Instead, latitude is applied to the amount of time permitted for retrieval by the importance of the relationship and the significance of the cost for the participants. Similar to equity, distributive justice involves an outcome of exchange when individual rewards are proportionate to the costs (Homans, 1961). Homans suggests that when individuals do not feel that rewards are proportionate and fair, they may seek justice by becoming angry or attempting to avoid future relationships. Basically, the higher the investment, the greater the return (Homans, 1961).

Relationship Element

Social exchange theory is based on the establishment and retention of relationships. Mentoring is an intervention aimed at creating or facilitating a supportive relationship with a significant other (Garringer et al., 2016; Grima et al., 2014) and is frequently viewed through the lens of social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), which perceives the reciprocal relationship between mentors and mentees as a basis for exchanging things such as support, knowledge, and advice (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Mentoring can be understood through a social exchange theoretical construct in that mentors and mentees must discover mutual benefits and satisfaction for the relationship to continue (Ensher, 2001; Reddick et al., 2012; Spencer, 2020; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). It is essential for mentors to experience some benefit from the mentoring process for the relationship to become enduring and ultimately prosperous (Eby et al., 2010; Reddick et al., 2012; Spencer, 2020). Additionally, mentors desire benefits of personal satisfaction, recognition, or career rejuvenation (Hoffman et al., 2019). In the context of mentoring, mentors provide resources to mentees that may include personal connections, known skills, constructive feedback, or any number of instrumental or psychosocial dimensions (Ensher & Murphy, 2011). The mentee can provide resources to the mentor, including beneficial outcomes such as acknowledgment, viewpoints, or other aspects that may benefit the relationship (Grima et al., 2014; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

In summary, mentoring can be viewed through this theoretical lens given that "the existence of two people engaged in a 'give and take' relationship is a basic tenet defining mentoring and differentiating it from other types of relationships" (Eby et al., 2010, p. 94). The value, reward, or benefit a mentor receives may increase his self-esteem, his sense of accomplishment, or his access to additional networks of people. From a mentee's perspective,

the benefits could be related to academics and education, attitudes and motivation, social skills, interpersonal relationships, and increased psychological and emotional status. Through related literature and studies, potential benefits and costs associated with mentorship will be explored.

The social exchange theory connects to this study of male mentors who seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs in the relationships established with peers with disabilities. Similar findings from Carter et al. (2019) indicate that students with intellectual disabilities at the college level reveal strong interpersonal relationship modifications associated with the quality of the mentorship experience. Furthermore, solid interpersonal relationships are viewed as a preventative factor for academic and social failure (Carter et al., 2019). While understanding students with intellectual disabilities at the college level is important, this study will emphasize understanding mentor relationships at the high school level. Thus, the theory will increase understanding of social behavior as an exchange process, described as a beneficial experience when the costs are subtracted, resulting in an overall outcome from the relationship (Emerson, 1976). Mentors' outcomes can be observed as anything experienced or obtained once costs are subtracted from the benefits in the relationship.

Hoffman et al. (2019) used a case-study design and interviewed a peer athlete mentor who revealed themes related to personal benefits, the mentor-mentee relationship, and mentor identity. This qualitative study is intended to identify detailed information by gathering data from a larger number of high school mentor participants. Social exchange relationships are maintained as long as the benefits outweigh the costs perceived by those in the relationship (Doughtery et al., 2010; Homans, 1958; Thibault & Kelly, 1959). Another recent qualitative phenomenological study conducted by Dawe (2017) used social exchange theory as a foundation to describe how participation in formal mentoring programs for youth impacted the dynamics of

social exchange for Hispanic male mentors. Data and findings from the study gathered from the interviews of 14 Hispanic males concluded that the mentors established high expectations for themselves, provided positive social development, provided personal and professional development benefits. Previous mentoring experiences promoted increased participation, and shared Hispanic culture strengthened the mentoring relationships.

This qualitative study was meant to provide an understanding through the shared experiences of high school mentors by identifying themes related to benefits and costs. While Hallman and Zehrer (2019) recognized that volunteers' benefits, costs, and outcomes for nonprofit sports events are crucial for increasing volunteer engagement, this study added to an understanding of high school male mentors. Drawing from social exchange theory, this study analyzed mentors' perceived costs and benefits, adding to a deeper understanding of the importance of sustained relationships between male mentors and mentees.

Related Literature

Recent literature reviews have focused on mentor programs and the influences on social, emotional, behavioral, and intellectual development (Alper, 2017; Kram, 1983). Researchers, educational administrators, teachers, and business administrators have sought out the best practices and strategies to enhance learning and skill development in the educational and corporate worlds (Beltman et al., 2019; Haber-Curran et al., 2017; Kramer et al., 2018; Tench et al., 2016). Early on, Althouse and Steiner (1999) recognized that while many studies emphasized the mentee's perspectives, few studies considered the mentor's perspective. Extensive research on mentor programs confirmed that connecting mentor-educated adults or peers with mentees could add real-world experiences to their education and social learning experiences (Alper, 2017). For this to occur, an exploration of male mentors is essential to close

the gap between the number of male mentors and female mentors who participate in mentor activities with peers who have disabilities.

Mentoring

Mentoring is social interactions in which nonparental adults or older peers without advanced professional training provide guidance and other forms of support to youth for the purpose of benefiting one or more areas of their development (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). Mentors can serve as role models, share experiences, and establish relationships while helping to support youth in their academic, career, and psychosocial development and in their transition to adulthood. The focus of understanding mentoring has primarily been on the mentor's role in developing the relationship and the benefits for the mentee (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). Kram (2007) and Garringer et al. (2016) describe mentoring as a reciprocal relationship between individuals that develops through feedback from both individuals and produces outcomes established through the interactions and events shared. Outcomes of mentoring programs depend on the aims of the program; the relationship is generated by both parties and has outcomes for both parties. Such mentoring relationships can enhance social and emotional development. First, formal mentors can provide youth with experiences that allow mentees to escape from daily stress through companionship and pleasing activities. Second, mentors can assist youth with self-regulation of emotions by modeling appropriate communication and behaviors by providing opportunities to collaborate and process challenging experiences and interactions. Finally, a positive mentoring relationship can serve as an opportunity to transfer social experiences to other relationships and situations in mentees' lives (Rhodes et al., 2006). Such relationships can develop through formal, organized interactions or through informal, spontaneous collaborations that are not structured (Zachary, 2000 & Rhodes et al., 2006).

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring began in the early 1900s to address the societal need to support at-risk youth, to serve as a prevention strategy for behavioral challenges, and to promote positive relationships (Blakesless & Keller, 2012). Formal relations develop from organized activities that can occur between mentor and mentee (Zachary, 2000). For example, to support the growing number of children born in poverty, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America was developed. The program initially addressed the need to support juvenile boys who experienced trauma that may have occurred in their homes or communities (Barry, 2016).

Additionally, mentoring has assumed an increasingly important role in society across various settings. Whether a learner is a nurse (Kramer et al., 2018), college-aged student (Beltman et al., 2019; Carter et al., 2019), teacher (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011), or school-aged student (Alper, 2017; Garringer et al., 2016) the experience of having a mentor helps both professionals and youth transform their learning experiences. For example, nursing students who were mentored reported better academic progress, gained test-taking skills, felt successful, and improved their test grades (Hoffman et al., 2019). Mentors also expressed positive benefits related to increased confidence in their nursing skills and preparation for the national exam (Kramer et al., 2018). In addition, as noted by Ghosh and Reio (2013) and Hoffman et al. (2019), career benefits have occurred in the workforce since mentees exhibit greater job performance, employee satisfaction, and career success.

Youth Peer Mentoring

A youth peer mentor is typically an individual with greater life experience than the mentee; hence, the mentor can serve as an appropriate role model and provide guidance for the mentee. When students participate in mentor activities, the quality of the relationship is

important for the development of personal growth. To create a quality relationship, there must be

sufficient time to establish a level of trust and closeness between the mentor and mentee. The

peer mentor may serve as a "coach" who advocates for the mentee to improve academic,

vocational, social, emotional, and behavioral development (Bebko, 2016; MacCallum &

Beltman, 2003; Kram, 1983; Russell, 1999). Peer mentors exhibit psychosocial mentoring by

serving as role models, engaging in accepting behavior, providing personal support, and having

friendly social interactions (Kram, 1983; MacCallum & Beltman, 2003). A strong relationship

may develop when a mentee is paired with a dedicated and trustworthy mentor. The strength of

the relationship established is a gateway for mentors to positively impact mentees' social,

emotional, behavioral, and academic development (Rhodes et al., 2002).

Research studies showing the positive impact of mentoring include a meta-analysis of

youth mentoring programs conducted by DuBois et al. (2002) as well as national studies of the

Big Brothers Big Sisters community and school-based mentoring programs (Tierney, Baldwin-

Grossman & Resch, 1995., Herrera et al., (2007). The results of a randomized controlled study

by the national nonprofit organization Public/Private Ventures provided scientific evidence that

mentoring is beneficial for youth (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995). This study revealed that

youth who participated in mentoring experiences were 46% less likely to start using drugs, 27%

less likely to begin using alcohol, and 33% less likely to assault someone (Tierney, Grossman, &

Resch, 1995).

Types of Mentoring Programs

Organizations, places of employment, and educational institutions (e.g., schools and post-

secondary institutions) can establish mentor programs (Fisher et al., 2020). Formal youth

mentoring in the United States is widely prevalent and has experienced substantial growth over

the years (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Such program models vary in multiple dimensions,

including relationship format (e.g., one-to-one or group), participants (e.g., specific mentor or

youth populations), setting (e.g., community-based or school-based), purpose (e.g., prevention or

promotion), and anticipated contact (e.g., frequency and duration) (Karcher et al. 2006). Over the

past two decades, the number of formal mentoring relationships has risen substantially from

300,000 in 1999 to 4.5 million in 2014 (Garringer et al., 2016). Mentoring supports are utilized

to serve a wide variety of intended purposes, including rehabilitating of youth involved in the

justice system, promoting positive development, preparing for employment or college, and

assisting those involved in the educational systems (Fisher et al., 2020; Keller 2007). In

summary, Garringer et al. (2016) found that formal mentoring programs in the United States aim

to address life and social skills (54%), general youth development (51%), caring relationships

(44%), academic enrichment (37%), and career exploration (26%). In addition, peer mentors

reveal that positive perceptions of the benefits associated with participation in peer mentor

programs are essential for sustained involvement (Beltman et al., 2019; Kramer et al., 2018).

Cross-age Programs

Michael Karcher (2014) coined the term "cross-aged mentorship" to refer to a

relationship in which a high school-aged student is paired with an elementary- or middle-school-

aged student. In cross-age mentoring, a youth at least two years older and a mentee meet weekly

for a sustained time to engage in conversation, play, or curricula-structured activities. Such

activities establish a close relationship in which the mentee experiences empathy, praise, and

attention from the mentor. The primary intent is to build relationships rather than focus on skills

or knowledge gains (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). An estimated 25% of BBBS mentor

relationships are cross-age, and over 40% of school-based relationships are with high school-

aged students (Kramer, 2007). In addition, research results indicate that cross-age youth mentors meet more often with mentees than adults meet with youth mentees (Kramer, 2007). In addition, research suggests that there may be significant feelings of connectedness to school with cross-age mentor experiences (Garringer et al., 2016).

A study by Willis et al. (2012) used a qualitative approach to evaluate the implementation of cross-age peer mentoring. Mentees' and mentors' perceptions reveal that the length of the program had a positive impact on mentees' perceptions. For example, mentees had an initial sense of being stigmatized as a student needing help, but as time of involvement with mentors increased, they eventually reported that working with a mentor was fun, as well as they felt understood by a peer, resulting in a sense of attachment. A more recent evaluation of a teen mentor project, revealed that those who served as school-based cross-age peer mentors developed a sense of purpose, motivation, and belonging in the school and community settings (San Antonio, et al., 2020). Mentees specifically demonstrated improved attendance, as absenteeism declined by over 33% over a span of three consecutive years, while it increased in the overall student population. All mentoring programs face the reality that sometimes relationships do not work, or unexpected difficulties arise. The mentors in these hard situations shared a feeling of undesired obligation or even anguish in their mentoring role. At the same time, mentees expressed disappointment when their expectations were not met, such as when a mentor did not attend a scheduled event.

A few studies focused on the effects of cross-age peer mentoring in particular groups. For example, Johnson, Simon, and Mun (2014) found that graduation rates improved for Latino males who participated in peer mentor high school transition programs. St. Vil's (2018) study reveals benefits for mentors and mentees; however, it particularly found cross-age peer

mentoring to be a positive intervention for educationally disengaged students. Overall, the literature suggests that cross-age peer mentoring is an effective way to support students' sense of belonging (Garringer et al., 2016), to improve academic efforts (St. Vil, 2018), and to boost attendance (San Antonio et al., 2020).

School-based Programs

A school-based mentoring (SBM) program is a school-based intervention designed for at-risk students to improve academic performance, promote school connectedness and life satisfaction, and decrease disciplinary referrals (Carter et al., 2014). SBM programs were initially designed to overcome challenges facing community-based mentoring (CBM) programs (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). School-based peer mentoring is an intervention strategy that can provide social benefits for both older and younger students. Research suggests that SBM programs can serve as a protective factor in youths' social development (Karcher, 2009) by enhancing their connectedness to school (Garringer et al., 2016; Karcher, 2005) and family (Karcher, 2005; Schaeben, 2012). For decades, peer helping and tutoring programs have been popular in schools (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007; Garringer et al., 2016; Peers, 2017). These programs are often seen as methods to reach youth in a controlled environment that provide opportunities for educational, recreational, and social supports for students (Garringer & MacRae, 2008). Research suggests that youth who participate in school-based activities report an increased sense of school belonging and that improvement of peer bonds decreases the likelihood of truancy (Carter et al., 2014, Herrera et al., 2011). In addition, researchers argue that since mentoring experiences positively impact school attendance, mentoring is a viable strategy to enhance overall developmental growth for students (Asgari & Carter, 2016; Weiler et al., 2019).

Since most adolescents in North America attend school until at least age 16, school-based mentoring programs have great potential for fostering positive youth development (PYD). A systematic review of literature conducted by Curran and Wexler (2016) noted that values, perspectives, and behavior patterns that begin in adolescence can continue throughout a person's life. Over the years, many studies have focused on adolescent risk and prevention; however, PYD emphasizes proactive strategies. Adolescence is a particularly effective time to consider the influence of a person's context. During this developmental period the external environment can profoundly influence youth to develop their sense of identity through group affiliation (DuBois et al., 2014). Although positive interactions with family members and other adults are essential for healthy development, teens usually shift from family to peer networks (Douglas et al., 2018).

Typically, SBM programs involve weekly meetings in a supervised school setting. The school setting affords easier access to training, support, and supervision, all of which decrease costs associated with CBM programs (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). It is common for high school youth to mentor elementary children. In addition, high school students serve as mentors for newly enrolled or transitioning students. Another common practice involves mentors that volunteer for recreational activities (Karcher, 2007; Surdo 2022b). Some researchers believe that SBM can help the mentoring field provide supports for more youth and foster beneficial relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). For example, Athamanah et al. (2019) reviewed friendship development through peer mentoring for individuals with and without intellectual or developmental disabilities. It has been suggested that friendships for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities enhance community participation and improve quality of life. Although individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD) are increasingly participating in community-based settings, they still experience fewer opportunities to meet and

interact with individuals without disabilities (Hall, 2017). Only about 7% of individuals with IDD spend 40% of the school day in the general education classroom during the school years. The utilization of school-based mentors will promote friendship development in the school setting; hence, school-based programs are essential for social interaction among peers with and without disabilities (Athamanah et al., 2019).

Large-scale randomized controlled evaluations evaluated the effectiveness of SBM. Each of the large-scale studies focused on different goals for understanding SBM. For instance, Bernstein et al. (2009) examined the impact of providing funding to establish programs to support at-risk youth. While another study focused primarily on the effectiveness of the BBBS school-based model (Herrera et al., 2007). Finally, a third study focused on using SBM as a supplemental model for those at risk of academic underachievement (Karcher, 2008).

Berstein et al.'s (2009) national study followed 2,573 students for one school year in 32 programs to ascertain the extent to which funded SBM programs were effective intervention strategies. This rigorous assessment of the value of SBM across the United States revealed statistically significant favorable impacts of SBM on perceived scholastic efficacy, supportive relationships with adult relationships, future orientation, absenteeism, and truancy. Overall, some programs showed evidence of effectiveness, while others did not yield positive effects.

The Public/Private Venture Study conducted by Herrera et al. (2007) of the BBBS school-based mentor program followed 1,139 youth for one and a half school years from 10 BBBS programs nationwide. The results suggested that SBM programs significantly impact school-related outcomes of attitudes, performance, attendance, and behaviors. However, mentoring did not substantially affect non-school-related outcomes such as parent-child relationships and appropriate behaviors outside the school setting.

The Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE) students in San Antonio to determine whether SBM has effects beyond school-based services for students who receive support services, such as group counseling, tutoring, and enrichment activities (Karcher, 2008). The study followed 516 students (including more high-school-aged youth than the previously mentioned studies plus a sample of older students). The data revealed that providing youth with other supports resulted in significant impacts for young boys and teenage girls. However, the results were not promising for high school boys, particularly members of ethnic minority groups, which may reflect threats of stereotypes related to the stigma when interventions are viewed as mental health treatment.

In summary, the studies focused on understanding the impact of programs on those who are mentors. While evidence is presented regarding the importance of practices, mentor types, and youth characteristics, more research-based studies are needed to understand the practices, youth populations, grade levels, and youth characteristics to enhance program design and supports for youth. In addition, a study of male high school mentors' perceptions of participating in mentoring activities will increase understanding of peer mentoring.

Community-based Programs

A community-based mentoring program is a mentoring program designed for adults to serve as volunteer mentors for youth in the community. Such program activities typically occur in the community about once or twice per week (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). However, over the last thirty years, programs for high school students to serve in helping roles, such as peer mediators, tutors, and peer counselors, have gained or lost momentum depending on fluctuations in funding priorities (San Antonio et al., 2020).

Zarrett et al. (2009) explored the association between individuals who participate in CBM programs and positive youth development patterns. Findings indicate an increase in the number of positive, sustained relationships with mentors, life skills-building activities, and opportunities to experience valued family, school, and community endeavors. In addition, community-based mentoring experiences have been shown to improve behavioral, academic, social, and psychological outcomes among youth (Dubois et al., 2011; Raposa et al., 2019). Specifically, CBM study results are associated with decreased high-risk behaviors, including drug and alcohol use, violence, and delinquent behaviors (Talon et al., 2014), as well as improved academic outcomes, more consistent attendance, increased academic confidence, and better grades (Raposa et al., 2019). Although formal mentoring tends to be a time-limited relational intervention, CBM programs have the opportunity to enhance relationships outside the mentor-mentee dyad and encourage youth to be willing and able to become more connected in their communities (Keller et al., 2020b). These factors may extend the benefits of program participation well beyond the duration of the mentoring relationship.

Electronic-based Program

"E-mentoring," the merger of mentoring with forms of electronic communications (e.g., interactive websites, virtual environments, email, mobile apps, Skype video calls, Zoom meetings, and phone calls), links mentors and mentees independent of geography or scheduling restraints. The flexibility of scheduling and convenience of electronic peer mentoring is uniquely suited for those with restrictions, including transportation (e.g., dependent on others or accessible transportation services), scheduling conflicts, or limitations due to medical conditions (Schwartz, 2018).

Online mentoring can be an intervention strategy to meet the needs of isolated groups of youth to offset potential mentors' distance and to supplement face-to-face interactions between the mentor and mentee. It can be delivered asynchronously as emails, message boards, chats, or texts using computers or mobile devices. In addition, programs offer synchronous interactions at specific times. For example, Lindsay et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review of empirical studies that explored e-mentoring interventions for youth with disabilities. The review included studies that were conducted over 25 years. The results reveal a significant improvement in at least one of the following areas: career decision making, self-determination, self-advocacy, self-confidence, and social skills. This suggests that electronic mentoring is an effective mentoring format for children and youth with disabilities. In addition, the results reveal that e-mentoring is potentially helpful in improving accessibility and facilitating improved communication between mentors and mentees.

Peer-based Program

Peer-based mentoring can be voluntary and informal in nature or mandatory and formalized through participation in a peer mentoring program (Cavell et al., 2018). According to the U.S. Department of Education, one-third of all high schools in America provided mentoring to students to enhance academic and social needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). For this study, peer mentoring was defined as an organized one-on-one or group activity to help another younger or same-aged student. In addition, Carter et al. (2015) created a definition of peer mentoring that involves one or more peers without disabilities who provides academic and social support for peers who have disabilities. This definition aligns with the intention to understand the perceptions of male high school students who participate in mentor activities with peers who are involved in special education programs.

Peer mentoring programs are often characterized by career-related functions involving coaching and psychosocial mentoring functions involving role modeling for mentees (Kram, 1985). Currently, mentoring can also occur online via email, chat, or online learning environments (Leidenfrost et al., 2014). When Garringer et al. (2016) surveyed mentoring programs in the United States, the results revealed that the primary youth outcomes emphasized as program aims were life and social skills (54%), general youth development (51%), caring relationships (44%), academic enrichment (37%), and career exploration (26%). Douglas et al.'s (2018) literature review, which examined outcomes of peer-to-peer mentoring, highlighted that mentoring programs are an effective strategy for improving young people's well-being. The prevalence of positive outcomes suggests that peers influence young people's behaviors more than adults do. In addition, some researchers have concluded that interactions alone are not sufficient, but appropriate settings and structures for developing relationships are also a necessity (Fort et al., 2016).

Mentor Program Participants

It is suggested that elementary-level students benefit from mentor support because the younger population is more receptive to mentoring opportunities and because these students are often dealing with individual, home, or community circumstances that place them in at-risk situations (Rodríguez-Planas, 2014). There is some evidence that high school mentors are more effective mentors than younger mentors for their peers, which may indicate that high school mentors are developmentally more prepared to use good judgment, maintain boundaries, and be mature and trusted friends (Karcher, 2007). Although not equipped with the same breadth of life experiences and maturity as older mentors, youth mentors are more accessible to each other and serve as natural mentors (Coyne-Forsei & Nowicki, 2021).

According to Carter et al. (2015), peer mentoring, academic and social supports are provided by peers without disabilities for peers who have disabilities. This definition aligns with the study of male peer mentors for peers with disabilities; however, Schwartz and Kramer (2018) expand on the premise that peer mentoring may be an effective approach for fostering development for young adult mentors and mentees with developmental disabilities. The study reveals that peer mentors with developmental disabilities viewed themselves as professionals responsible for teaching and developing interpersonal relationships. The mentors in the study noted that they used a supportive interaction approach that consisted of flexibility, patience, peer mentoring scripts, recommendations, and supervision. Thus, with support and training, individuals with disabilities can successfully execute appropriate relational and instructional tasks required to serve as peer mentors.

Mentors

A common characteristic of mentors is the ability to commit based on their belief that they can positively impact the life of another (Rowley, 1999). Carl Rogers (1958) pointed out that a mentor needs to demonstrate empathy by accepting another person without making judgments and to have the ability to set aside personal beliefs and values. The mentor can accept the mentee as a person who has challenges to overcome and is able to deliver meaningful support. At the same time, Lasley (1996) reports that a crucial characteristic of mentors is the ability to communicate their belief that a person can overcome present challenges to accomplish personal growth. Another important characteristic is that mentors are comfortable sharing their own experiences, struggles, frustrations, and ways they successfully dealt with those situations.

Since most peer mentoring studies have focused on outcomes of mentees, Coyne-Foresi and Nowicki (2021) conducted a study to investigate youth mentors' roles in providing support

and companionship for younger peer mentees. These researchers reviewed the connections and relationships made through a peer mentoring program. Mentors shared experiences two to four years after mentoring and revealed improved communication skills and interpersonal relations with fellow mentors and school staff. The overall experiences and emotions during mentoring were primarily positive and could be long-standing and profound sources of connection and companionship (Beltman et al., 2019; Rhodes 2002; Spencer 2020). Such findings suggest that both mentors and mentees benefit from mentoring experiences.

Mentees: At-risk Youth

Characteristics of individuals who participate in mentor relations are frequently individuals who have been identified as at-risk youth due to home, school, and community challenges (Haft et al., 2019; Mallet, 2019). One-quarter of our national population comprises youth experiencing a multitude of stressors in their lives (Forum on Child Family Statistics, 2010). Children are experiencing significant stressors within the family unit. The 2007 Making a Difference in Schools survey revealed that of the approximate 1,139 youth in the sample 26% had parents who were divorced or separated, 46% had experienced the death of a loved one; 53% knew someone who was seriously ill; 19% had a parent who had lost his or her job (Public/Private Ventures, 2007). An extensive study of Big Brothers Big Sisters reported that of the 959 youth in the sample 28% had a family history of domestic violence, 11% experienced physical abuse, 21% stated they were emotionally abused, 7% experienced sexual abuse, and 40% had a family history of substance abuse (Tierney et al., 1995). These risk factors may negatively impact youth in various ways, including inadequate academic progress and social development*.*

In addition to coping with home stressors, children may also experience stressors at school. According to the Public/Private Ventures (2007) survey, teachers reported that over half

of the youth were performing below grade level in one or more subjects, and 41% of the students

reported that they had been absent, and 20% had been tardy in the past four weeks.

Youth that experience stressors both at home and at school as well as a lack of parental guidance

are particularly vulnerable to engaging in high-risk behaviors including smoking, substance

abuse, behavior problems in the community and school, and early sexual activity, resulting in

academic difficulties, including poor attendance, and dropping out of school (Eaton et al., 2010).

Thus, youth who demonstrate such behaviors are frequently recognized as potential mentee

candidates (DuBois & Karcher, 2014; Eby et al., 2008). Youth involved in the juvenile system

often face challenges (e.g., engaging in inappropriate behaviors and failure to establish

relationships) that negatively impact academic performance, rate of graduation, and employment

opportunities (Weiler et al., 2019). Many mentees are teens and young adults who lack

motivation, experience, and role models (Alper, 2017). Particular populations that are more

likely to become at-risk demonstrate a greater need for benefits from mentoring relationships.

These groups include youth in foster care, low-income youth, youth from single-parent homes,

children of veterans, youth who identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or

queer), children of incarcerated parents, immigrants or children of immigrants, and youth at risk

of dropping out of school as well as those involved in the criminal justice system (Bruce &

Brideland, 2014). An analysis of research studies indicates that mentoring programs are an

increasingly popular strategy for proactive interventions with at-risk youth. According to

Mentoring.org, at-risk students who are provided with supports from mentors are 55% more

likely to attend college, 78% more likely to volunteer regularly, 90% more likely to become

mentors, and 130% more likely to hold leadership positions compared to at-risk students who are

not provided with mentoring experiences (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). In addition, at-risk youth

are more likely to recall a time during their childhood when they wanted a mentor (29% of all youth compared to 37% of all at-risk youth (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014).

Both theory and research suggest that programs recruit the most "at-risk" youth and these youth are most likely to be referred by teachers based on the complexity of academic, social, and behavioral challenges. Those with serious needs may receive fewer benefits due to the complexity of their needs without additional efforts to recruit, train, and support mentors with resources that SBM programs can provide (Dubois & Karcher, 2014). It is recommended that professionals strive to transform students' lives through the implementation of mentoring programs (Alper, 2017; Mallet, 2019); hence, recruitment and retention of mentors is vital for the future of American youth.

Mentees: Youth with Special Needs

While the vast population of mentees is often identified as at-risk youth due to life circumstances and adjudicated youth, another common characteristic of mentees relates to youth with special needs (Carter et al., 2019; Fisher et al., 2020; Haft et al., 2019). Mentoring is one promising means that could help youth with disabilities by enhancing their inclusion in society. Mentors can serve as role models and share experiences while helping to support youth in their academic, career, and psychosocial development and in their transition to adulthood (DuBois & Karcher, 2014). Peer relationships are essential for students with a diagnosis of autism, intellectual disability, or other disabilities. In general, when interactions occur across the school day, students develop new skills, build camaraderie and social skills, and learn prevailing norms (Biggs & Carter, 2017). Mentoring shows promise as a potential intervention. Youth who have a diagnosed with learning disabilities (LD) or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) who have co-occurring socio-emotional and mental health challenges can benefit from program

interventions and trained mentors (Haft et al., 2019). Findings from student reports suggest that depression has been reduced by participating in mentor experiences (Haft et al., 2019), while students who have intellectual disabilities reveal strong interpersonal relationships related to the quality of mentorship experiences (Carter et al., 2019). Also, interpersonal relationships are viewed as preventative factors for academic and social failure and risk-taking behavior (Bexkens et al., 2018; Carter et al., 2019). Researchers have conducted studies to understand the influence of mentoring from the perspective of the mentees (Althouse & Steiner, 1999; Mallet, 2019). Recognizing the effects that high school mentors have on students with disabilities can reveal the benefits and critical factors of mentor relationships (Beltman et al., 2019; Haft et al., 2019 & Kram, 1985).

Intellectual Disabilities

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) defines intellectual development disabilities as neurodevelopmental disorders that begin in childhood and are characterized by intellectual challenges and difficulties in conceptual, social, and social practice areas of living. The previous terms "mental retardation" and "mentally retarded" were replaced on October 5, 2010, when President Obama signed the federal legislation known as "Rosa's Law," which replaced them in federal law with the term "individual with an intellectual disability" (Erica, 2018). Studies that affirm the strong influence peer relationships can have on students' lives and learning are especially important for students with intellectual disabilities (Carter et al., 2014; Kerch et al., 2013). Study results from Wagner et al. (2003) and Lipscomb et al. (2017) reveal that a lack of social relationships is more apparent when students reach the high school level, according to the parents of children diagnosed with intellectual disabilities or autism. Such results show that only

22% saw friends outside of school, 42% seldom or never received telephone calls from friends, and only 54% spent time together outside of school (Wagner et al., 2003). Only 29% of students with autism and 43% of students with intellectual disabilities visit with friends at least once per week (Lipscomb et al., 2017). These students tend to spend much of their school day interacting with paraprofessionals, special education teachers, and other adults (Carter, 2020). The published literature provides ample evidence that mentoring experiences through school-based interventions increased awareness, knowledge, interactions, and establishment of friendships (Carter et al., 2010 & Edwards, 2013).

An increased number of individuals with intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD) are attending post-secondary education programs; however, since students with disabilities are eligible for special education services beyond age 18, many remain in public secondary schools. As a result, fostering opportunities for social interactions in college or vocational education settings allows IDD students to have real-world experiences with same-age peers. A unique model of a school-to-work transition program encourages interactions through a combination of employment-academic activities in which same-age peers with and without disabilities learn, interact, and work together (Fisher et al., 2020). The program was designed to foster growth and positive attitudes, promote social engagement opportunities, and allow individuals with IDD to participate in the campus community with their peers. The intended goal was to establish a social connection and sense of belonging when transitioning from high school to the community/college environment (Fisher et al., 2020).

Behavioral Disabilities

Adolescent offender programs use mentor-based interventions to increase youth academic achievement, school attendance, and graduation rates (Weiler et al., 2019). Factors that

strengthen the impact of mentoring emphasize mentor attunement, the mentor's focus on academics, and juvenile offenders' demonstrated desire for academic supports (Weiler et al., 2019). Mentors' and mentees' attitudes toward the importance of school, attendance, academic self-efficacy, and the quality and rigor of mentoring practices all impact the effectiveness of mentoring interventions (Weiler et al., 2019). Emphasis on curriculum-based mentoring, leadership development, and student-based mentorship programs encourages a positive peer-to-peer climate, increased well-being and social confidence, and appropriate behaviors (Curran & Wexler, 2017). Mallet (2019) reveals that structure, support, and training are key aspects of assisting challenged youth, which provides a rationale for supporting the needs of mentors who participate in peer mentor programs.

Since juveniles often face the challenge of demonstrating appropriate behaviors, mentoring is frequently used strategy for enhancing academic success, graduation rates, and job performance while decreasing drug/alcohol use (Eby et al., 2008). As mentors strive to develop meaningful relationships, the desired outcome is to influence mentees to make sound decisions and to demonstrate alternative positive behaviors (Eby et al., 2008). When providing support for juvenile offenders, it is crucial to emphasize that values, perspectives, and behavioral patterns that begin in adolescents continue throughout their lives (Angus & Hughes, 2017). Mentors are expected to build meaningful relationships with mentees and influence them to make the right decisions to become productive young adults in society (Eby et al., 2008).

Programs that mentor youth in the juvenile system have personal and economic benefits, such as the annual cost of mentoring one juvenile is considerably lower than it costs to incarcerate one juvenile for a year. Surveying state expenditures of confinement in 46 states, the Justice Policy Institute found the average cost per youth was $407.58 per day or $148,767 per

year. Estimated costs of mentoring programs range from $1,007 to $2,313 per year per mentor, with a national average of $1,695 (Garringer et al., 2017). The cost savings are a better long-term investment, which justifies establishing mentoring programs to provide youth with support and appropriate role models (Garringer et al., 2017).

Peer mentor programs are interventions that result in increased youth academic achievement, school attendance, and graduation rates. It is vital that youth who demonstrate behavioral challenges are provided with the necessary support to graduate from high school. Based on recent data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021), youth that drop out of high school are nearly three times more likely to be unemployed. In addition, according to an Alliance for Excellent Education (2013) report, the nation could save as much as $18.5 billion in annual crime costs if graduation rates increased. In the United States, high school dropouts commit about 75% of crimes. These statistics are staggering and reveal that the nation would see a decrease in annual incidences of assault, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and burglary in addition to the cost savings. Mentoring programs are an intervention strategy that can benefit youth with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges as well as benefiting the nation.

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

The DSM-5 asserts that people diagnosed with ADHD show a persistent pattern of inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development. Individuals with ADHD frequently present deficits in the following executive function domains: problem-solving, planning, flexibility, orienting, response inhibition, sustained attention, and working memory. Although having friends is important for development throughout the lifespan, more than 50% of youth diagnosed with ADHD experience peer rejection (Mrug et al., 2012). They are also likely to have challenges establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal

relationships due to complexities with cooperative play, responding to social cues, and self-regulating, which puts them at risk of social isolation (Cordier et al., 2010).

Learning disabilities and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder are often accompanied by significant socio-emotional impairments and mental health challenges. In addition, such individuals may experience multiple disabilities. To clarify, a learning disability, as defined by the Disability Education Act, is a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language (spoken or written) that may manifest itself in an impaired ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematic calculations (DOE, 1995). Haft et al. (2019) studied the impact of near-peer mentoring programs to promote socio-emotional well-being for youth diagnosed with LD/ADHD. The study compared 51 youth who have a diagnosis of LD/ADHD and 81 youth without a diagnosis of LD/ADHD. Both groups were divided into a mentored group and non-mentored group. The results revealed that the mentored group showed significant improvement in scores for depression and self-esteem. While the control group of the non-mentored youth showed a significant decrease in self-esteem and interpersonal relations and increases in levels of depression. The group of mentored and non-mentored youth without a diagnosis of LD/ADHD remained stable. Such results suggest that mentoring can be a potential intervention for youth with a diagnosis of LD/ADHD.

Severe Disabilities

According to the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps (1991), persons with severe disabilities are individuals of all ages who require extensive ongoing support in more than one major life activity to participate in integrated community settings and to enjoy a quality of life that is available to citizens with fewer or no disabilities. Intellectual disability is regarded as a characteristic common to those with severe disabilities. In addition, medical conditions or

physical limitations can impact movement, vision, or hearing. Multiple studies have demonstrated that peer support is a practical and promising intervention for supporting students with severe disabilities. Peer intervention provide students with disabilities access to rich learning and social opportunities in regular classroom settings. Other benefits include the potential for growth in independence and improved in-class participation. As they spend less time interacting with adults, there is greater opportunity for social interactions with peers, allowing them to practice social and communication skills that can promote social relationships that contribute to a sense of belonging (Carter et al., 2011 & Vincent, 2015).

Promoting social inclusion in regular education classroom settings presents challenges due to a lack of significant transfer of social outcomes to other classrooms, in the hallways, in the cafeteria, or out in the community (Schaefer et al., 2017). Therefore, supports must be in place to enable students with severe disabilities to experience positive interactions with peers in various settings. A randomized control study evaluating the effects of peer support arrangements confirmed that students with severe disabilities involved in peer supports demonstrate significant gains in interactions with peers, social skills ratings, academic goal attainment, and academic effort (Carter et al., 2016). In addition, the treatment group had a significant reduction in the extent of adult supports needed. Finding and recruiting peer mentors who participate in various clubs and activities to participate in mentor activities may create additional opportunities for peer partners (Schaefer et al., 2017).

Benefits

Peer mentor programs influence academic achievement through appropriate role models, increased attendance, and educational supports (Asgari & Carter, 2016). Students who participate in peer mentoring strategies for intervention demonstrate increased academic performance which

enhances self-efficacy and social integration (Asgari & Carter, 2016; Angus and Hughes, 2017; Raposa et al., 2019). Examining the relationship between peer mentoring and academic performance uncovers a consistent improvement in academic accomplishments. Such results indicate a potential benefit of sustained contact with peer mentors as intervention strategies for enhancing academic performance (Asgari & Carter, 2016; Angus & Hughes, 2017; Raposa et al., 2019).

Peer relationships are equally important for students with autism or other intellectual or developmental disabilities. Throughout the school day, their interactions with typical peers are intended to develop new skills, encounter new perspectives, learn prevailing norms, and elevate future dreams (Biggs & Carter, 2017). Therefore, when attempting to make compatible matches with peers, it is imperative to consider personal traits such as empathy, physical capacity, and outgoingness. These traits, along with preferences such as interests, can influence the development of relationships (Herrera et al., 2000).

Mentor competence and commitment are defining characteristics for the quality of mentoring relationships (Mullen, 2007). Thus, mentors can help expand the social network by constructing close and supportive ties with others (Rhodes et al., 2006). Characteristics of essential elements of effective mentoring relationships include casual conversations, discussion of personal issues, and fun interactions in both formal and naturally forming relationships (Karcher & Nakkula, 2010). Other defining attributes include that the relationship is sustained over some time, takes place regularly, and fosters a level of trust (Rhodes 2005; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; DuBois & Karcher, 2014). When youth are in a relationship that lasts a year or longer, there is a greater chance that they will experience improvements in academic, psychological, social, and behavioral development (Rhodes & Roffman, 2003).

Benefits for Mentors

Researchers have found that some mentors experience satisfaction and a heightened sense of self-worth from passing on wisdom and knowledge to others as they seek ways to provide guidance, respect, and recognition from peers (Beltman & Schaeben, 2012; Kram, 1983, 1988). Supportive, healthy relationships between mentors and mentees provide a host of benefits for mentors, including increased feelings of self-empowerment, increased self-esteem, a sense of accomplishment, confidence in their abilities, and competence in their ability as peer mentors (Allen et al., 1997; Beltman & Kram, 1983; Schaeben, 2012). A qualitative study conducted by James et al. (2014) aimed to provide an initial in-depth look at young people's experiences. A semi-structured focus group was conducted with seven pupils aged 16–17 years in an English secondary school who provided peer mentors supports. The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (2011) found that more than three-quarters of peer mentors reported gaining confidence, 71% reported learning more about themselves, and 70% reported feeling better about themselves. In addition, Thompson and Smith (2011) found that mentors felt they learned how to better deal with difficult situations, developed communication and problem-solving skills, and increased their sense of confidence.

Peer mentors benefit from interacting with others during the activities and often building new relationships beyond their typical circle of friends (Garringer et al., 2008; Vincent, 2015). In addition, mentoring experiences enhanced their desire to serve as peer mentors and deepened their commitment to the inclusion of peers with disabilities (Hoffman et al., 2019; Sasorith, 2022; Vincent, 2015). When Coyne-Foresi and Nowicki (2021) examined 48 former seventh and eighth-grade mentors' perceptions of the connection and relationship developed through peer mentoring programs, the shared experiences reveal themes of perceived improvements in

communication skills, established relationships and made connections with mentees. Relationships and connections made with mentees, and improved relations with other mentors and teachers because of participation in mentor activities. A smaller, qualitative study on seven 16-year-old mentors also yielded positive findings. Several students reported a sense of responsibility and maturity because of being role models for younger students. In addition, the relationships improved their feelings of connectedness, helped them learn to address new challenges, and fostered personal growth (James et al., 2014).

Peer mentors indicate that being a part of a mentor program has given them a better understanding of individual differences and diversity. The mentors feel that they can relate better to same-age individuals with disabilities. Besides that, the peer mentors gain additional knowledge and awareness of people who have disabilities and feel that mentoring experiences improve their level of confidence to advocate for individuals with disabilities in the school, community, and work environments (Fisher et al., 2020). Specifically, peer mentors indicate increases in intrinsic motivation, confidence in interacting, and attitudes toward individuals with intellectual disabilities while shaping the nature of their relationships and future interactions (Fisher et al., 2020).

A recent literature review conducted by Douglas et al. (2018) reveals four vital outcomes for mentors who participated in peer-to-peer mentoring experiences. First, personal growth is reported as one of the most substantial reported outcomes, and all studies reported mentor-related psychosocial outcomes. Other outcomes include enhanced leadership, increased confidence, development of problem-solving and interpersonal skills. Five of the studies reviewed reported that shared experiences facilitated a sense of connection that provides self-management skills and increased confidence in offering mentees advice and guidance. Other study findings revealed

that mentors felt that they could make a difference, which was motivational and rewarding. For example, Karcher et al. (2010) found that mentors perceived being a friend (56%) as the most important goal, followed by enhancement of positive feelings about themselves (22%). Holt and Lopez (2014) reported that mentors were most rewarded by helping others, developing relationships, and seeing the growth of mentees.

Mentors also report that peer mentoring impacts their career interests, either confirming their chosen career interest or leading to a change in career goals towards professions working with individuals with disabilities (Beltman & Schaeben, 2012; Fisher et al., 2020). In addition, mentoring students with disabilities provides them with opportunities to explore interests that may align with future career choices and endeavors; hence, serving as a mentor offers experiences that can contribute to informed decision-making. Consequently, 20% of mentors constructed careers in the helping professions because of positive experiences serving as mentors (San Antonio et al., 2020). Overall, shared experiences from mentors suggest that mentoring programs can promote positive development in both mentees and mentors.

Benefits for Mentees

Most studies concentrate on outcomes and benefits of mentor programs for the mentee (Weiler et al., 2013), primarily the effects of peer relationships and altering one's behaviors. Youth who participate in peer mentor programs tend to establish better relationships with peers than adult mentors do (Douglas et al., 2018). Connectedness includes perceived caring, quality of and satisfaction with relationships, and a sense of belonging. When individuals experience social isolation involving a lack of interpersonal interaction and companionship (Hawthorne, 2006), resulting in the sense of loneliness, it can have adverse effects on physical and psychological well-being (Keller et al., 2020; Lacey et al. 2014). The immediate risks to one's well-being can

be associated with low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, abuse, and suicide attempts (Goldner & Scharf, 2014; Hall-Lande et al., 2007; Keller et al., 2020).

Mentoring has the potential to address social isolation experienced by youth, particularly those lacking positive relationships with adults. The defining feature of youth mentoring is the personal relationships between a youth and a caring, consistent person who offers companionship, support, and guidance (Keller et al., 2020; Lacey et al., 2014). Researchers (DuBois et al., 2002, 2011 & Keller et al., 2020) support that mentoring programs achieve positive effects across a range of social, emotional, and health outcomes for individuals who participate in mentoring experiences. The sense of "belonging" can generate positive outcomes related to student achievement (Karcher, 2009; Lacey et al., 2014). Therefore, it is recommended that a reasonable goal for youth mentor programs elevate new meaningful social connections, as well as strong and caring bonds to address social relationships, isolation, and loneliness as an important benefit of youth mentoring experiences (Goldner & Scharf, 2014; Keller et al., 2020). Social connectedness can contribute to school engagement, academic progress, sense of belonging, and overall well-being (Carter et al., 2014).

Improved relationships are particularly found among elementary-aged youth who may feel proud to have a mentor and thrive from the focused attention of an adult (Herrera et al., 2000). Adolescent youth who participate in mentoring programs typically display less frequent use of illegal drugs and alcohol, reduced school truancy, fewer unplanned pregnancies, and involvement in problem or high-risk behaviors (DuBois et al., 2002). Improved relationships are fostered through a sense of trust and improved communication (Dappen & Isernhagen, 2006; Jekielek et al., 2002). Many studies (DuBois et al., 2002: DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Garringer et al., 2008; Schaeben, 2012) found that youth who report having had a mentoring relationship

during adolescence demonstrate better outcomes in the areas of education and work (high-school graduation, enrollment in college, and employment). Particularly, findings from Sasorith (2022) revealed that male youth have significantly lower educational expectations and perceive themselves as less likely to attend college; therefore, it is vital to address the reduced number of male volunteers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016) to increase mentor participation and enhance academic progress.

While many young people benefit from mentoring relationships, the fact that more than one in three has never had a mentor demonstrates that we as a society leave mentoring relationships to chance. Young adults who are not connected with a mentor can cost society $93 billion annually in lost wages, taxes, and social services (Belfield et al., 2012). The National Mentoring Partnership survey results indicate that mentees want to serve as mentors, indicating both endorsements of mentoring and confirmation that mentees want to serve as contributors to the world around them. An overall percentage of 86% of youth and 85% of at-risk youth who were mentored report a desire to serve as mentors, revealing that nearly nine in ten youth who were mentored may eventually serve as mentors (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). After reviewing existing literature about the benefits of mentors' experiences and the multitude of benefits for mentees, it is important to continue exploring benefits for mentors to recruit and retain mentors.

Benefits of Relationships and Retention

Beltman et al. (2019) recognized that peer mentors' experiences and emotions during mentoring were primarily positive. When mentoring relationships go well, they can be long-lasting and profound sources of connection and companionship (Rhodes 2008; Spencer 2020). Attention to relationships alongside rigor is central to strong schooling for all students, particularly for individuals with disabilities. Peer mentoring has been used to foster mentees'

connectedness to school and facilitate a sense of belonging for youth who may feel marginalized in some way (Carter et al., 2014). Supportive and positive relationships can enhance involvement in school events, contribute to a sense of belonging, and extend beyond the classroom (Dubois & Karcher, 2014 & Kerch et al., 2013). Conversely, the absence of positive relationships can lead to loneliness, isolation, marginalization, and stigma (Kerch et al., 2013). More recent researchers (Rhodes & Roffman, 2003; Schaeben, 2012) note that relationships can positively influence a range of outcomes, such as enhancing health, well-being, peer and parental relationships, academic achievement, self-esteem, psychological, social, and behavioral development.

Challenges

Since mentors and mentees typically follow the "school hours" stipulated by the local district, the mentees' availability on campus outside of classroom hours is limited. Often, varying schedules do not provide ample time for peer mentors and their mentees to get together on their own in a more natural setting (Garringer et al., 2008). Also, difficulties with transportation can inhibit additional meetings (Fisher et al., 2020). While having some structured activities can help bring focus to the mentor and mentee and support the intended outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002), having too many structured, formal activities focused on academics can defeat developing relationships and reduce the effectiveness of the program. Mentors and mentees need time and freedom to form relationships by engaging in activities that are fun, creative, and social in nature (Garringer et al., 2008).

Challenges for Mentors

As with adult mentors, peer mentors can feel overwhelmed by the problems and demands of the mentees they are supporting. Some of the students whom mentors help have complex communication needs, challenging behaviors, or significant intellectual disabilities

(Carter, 2020). Other challenges include difficulty developing relationships with unmotivated mentees or mentees that demonstrate behavioral challenges (Holt & Lopez, 2014, James et al., 2014, Karcher et al., 2010). In addition, due to a lack of life experience and maturity, peer mentors may not know how to provide appropriate support to help mentees with complex needs (Garringer et al., 2008; James et al., 2014). Therefore, mentors who face these challenges need extra training on the role of a mentor, suggestions for being supportive to mentees, instruction on where to access help with problems outside their realm of experience, and ongoing supervision (Fisher et al., 2020; Garringer et al., 2008; James et al., 2014; Kohut et al., 2016).

Notably, high school-age mentors can be influential role models for younger students since they tend to look up to older peers; hence, this is a robust role for teenagers to fill. Mentees sometimes attempt to emulate a teenager's behaviors more than they would an adult mentor. However, there is always the danger of modeling negative behaviors and attitudes for mentees (Garringer et al., 2008). One may speculate that being a wise and trusted source of guidance may not be an easy role for a teenager serving as a mentor.

Challenges for Mentees

The social dynamics of peer relationships give mentors the ability to either positively impact or do harm to mentees. For example, it can be traumatic for a mentee when a mentor does not consistently attend or appears indifferent, resulting in a sense of rejection. Spencer et al. (2017) found that most mentees who experienced an unanticipated end to the relationship expressed psychological discomfort (e.g., sadness confusion, anger, or disappointment).

Mentees may not understand how a mentor can help them reach their goals, feel awkward or intimidated working with a slightly older student, or feel that a referral to the program is a form of punishment (Garringer et al., 2008). In addition, high school mentees may view the

presence of a mentor as embarrassing because of the perception that it could indicate to others that the individual needs support or is viewed as a problem (DuBois & Karcher, 2014, pp. 211).

Cannata et al. (2007) identified trust as a vital component for establishing a positive relationship, but learning to trust is a gradual progress, especially for youth who may have a history of negative experiences trusting others. Mentees cannot be expected to trust a mentor simply because they are participating in a mentoring program (Garringer et al., 2016; Cannata et al., 2007). Developing a friendship and trusting relationship requires skill and sustained time (Yelderman, 2013) since mentoring relationships can be temporarily awkward as the mentor and mentee struggle to forge a bond (Keller et al., 2020). Still, upon reaching this level, the relationship becomes beneficial for mentor and mentee.

Research revealed that exclusive reliance on paraprofessional support can have unintended consequences for students with disabilities (Carter et al., 2010; Giangreco et al., 2013; Vincent, 2015). Students had the lowest level of interaction with peers when provided with paraprofessionals. Although the supports are valuable for providing specially designed instruction in the regular setting, over-reliance can limit opportunities for friendships to develop, create unintended negative impacts, and impede naturally occurring interactions (Giangreco et al., 2013). In addition, overreliance on paraprofessionals can create physical isolation and limit the enhancement of independence (Vincent, 2015). Thus, peer supports can be a practical and promising alternative to exclusively relying on adults to assist students with disabilities. As mentors provide supports for students with disabilities, paraprofessionals or special educators shift to a more facilitative role by helping peers work together and learn from the general educator (Vincent, 2015).

Challenges with Relationships and Retention

Garringer et al. (2017) observed that mentor-mentee relationships typically end because of changes in the mentor's or mentee's life circumstances, conflicts in the mentoring relationship, unrealistic or unsatisfied expectations on the part of mentors, or lack of support from the youth's family. Furthermore, a significant number of formal mentoring relationships dissolve prematurely when the programs do not meet the individuals' expectations, potentially causing harm (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Even though theoretical models explicitly endorse the importance of one-on-one, face-to-face experiences that lead to mutuality, empathy, and trust (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006), the way some mentor-mentee relationships end replicates and reinforces the youth's negative experiences with social relationships (Spencer, 2020).

Challenges with Recruitment and Retention

Despite concerted outreach efforts over the past decade, recruiting enough volunteers to meet the demand for providing youth mentors remains a significant problem (Raposa et al., 2019). Garringer et al. (2017). National survey results identified mentor recruitment as the primary challenge for programs nationwide as they experience the impact of fewer mentors stepping up and donating their time. A helpful strategy for recruiting mentors is by word-of-mouth since many programs use existing mentors to recruit friends, family members, coworkers, and acquaintances. Because of personal contact with someone who already serves as a mentor, viable volunteers usually have a notion about the required commitment needed to be a productive mentor (Sipe, 2002).

A major concern reported is that mentoring commitments can be time-consuming (Kohut et al., 2016 & Leidenfrost et al., 2014). In a comprehensive report on high school-aged mentors,

Herrera et al. (2011) utilized data from their national study of BBBS school-based mentors, revealing that nearly 50% of the high-school mentors were in 11th grade, with 26% in 12th grade. Many upper-classman mentors reported that consistent attendance was a challenge for them. Inconsistent mentoring or a lack of follow-through from year to year, in many cases, can negatively impact a child's self-esteem (Karcher, 2005).

Specifically related to school-based mentoring, providing mentoring activities during the school day may carry the same risks that are associated with pullout programs, but it can be more detrimental since it is not an instructional intervention. Mentoring activities sometimes include academic interventions; however, the majority of time is spent in social conversations and playing indoor games (Herrera, 2007). As a result, mentored students who meet during the school day may receive less instructional time than their non-mentored peers. A reduction of instructional time suggests that participating in mentoring during the school day (outside of lunch or recess) may be particularly problematic for students who are already academically at-risk. One way mentor agencies and programs can work on this issue is by learning more about recruiting mentors and integrating this knowledge into program structures; to do this, they must understand the perceptions of male high school mentors.

Summary

Recent studies of peer mentor programs suggest that mentors' influence alters the behaviors, social interactions, and academic efforts of youth who participate in mentoring programs (Mallett, 2019). Participation in peer mentor programs can also serve as an effective strategy to provide interventions for youth (Douglas et al., 2018). By examining the research on peer mentor programs, educational administrators, teachers, health administrators, and youth

developmental leaders can improve curricula, health programs, youth services, behavior

interventions, and school culture.

Exploration of the findings from current research emphasizes what peer mentor programs

can do to enhance mentees' continued growth and development. However, little was understood

about the benefits to mentors who participate. By examining the influence on personal learning

(i.e., relational job learning and personal skill development), future endeavors (i.e., career

choices, community involvement, and volunteer activities), and relationships with individuals

with disabilities, program leaders can better understand the benefits for all individuals who

participate in peer mentoring programs. Through a better understanding of the male high school

mentors' views, program leaders can formulate strategies to improve recruitment and retention of

mentors to fulfill the current and future needs of youth who benefit from mentor relationships.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological qualitative study was to develop an understanding of the experiences of high school male mentors who participate in mentor activities for peers with disabilities. The intent was to produce a textual description of the experiences of male peer mentors who participate in mentorship activities before the resulting themes are identified and developed (Creswell, 2018). This chapter discusses the design, research questions, setting, and participants to establish the basis of the study. It will also consider procedural details, the role of the researcher, data collection, and analysis of methods for the establishment of a transcendental phenomenological research design. Lastly, an explanation of processes for ensuring trustworthiness and ethical consideration will be addressed.

Research Design

The study followed a transcendental phenomenological qualitative research design. The study was based on the exploration of Clark Moustakas's theoretical outlines, design and methodology that guided human science research (Moustakas,1994). According to Patton (2015), qualitative research entails data collected by means of fieldwork, interviews, observation, and document analysis. In addition, qualitative research provides rich descriptions of real-world phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Hence, a qualitative study of mentor perceptions can be based on careful, deep, and rich descriptions of the phenomenon, rather than the measurements, ratings, or scores used in quantitative studies (Bickman et al., 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

A qualitative research methodology was selected for this study because the purpose was to understand the motivational factors related to recruitment and retention of male high school mentors' who participate in mentor activities with peers who have disabilities. Since the research

questions were designed for narrative responses, qualitative research was the most fitting method for obtaining data aligned with the research questions (Patton, 2015). Few studies focus on mentors' perceptions, limiting practical understanding of the experiences of mentors who support students with disabilities through mentor activities; therefore, additional research was needed (Mallet, 2019). A fundamental goal of this approach was to arrive at a description of the nature of perceptions of male mentors who participated in mentor activities with peers who have disabilities.

According to Patton (2015), phenomenology assumes "that there is an essence or essences to shared experiences. These essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced" (p. 116). This approach engages participants to give personal accounts of lived experiences and the researcher uses an interpretation process to understand the meaning of the lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018, 2019). Husserl's approach is called "phenomenology" because it uses only data available to consciousness and is considered "transcendental" since it focuses on what can be discovered through reflections (Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenon under study was the experiences of male mentors who participated in mentor activities for peers with disabilities. As Moustakas (1994) affirmed, providing male mentors with a voice will establish a means to gain knowledge by developing a description of the essence of the experiences of participants; hence, using the reflections and voices of mentors revealed meaning and truth. The human science approach naturally fit with the purpose of this study because the personalization of one's expressed views is needed to understand the lived experiences.

A phenomenological approach allowed me to understand participants' lived experiences among human beings and provided an intimate connection with the phenomena being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gall et al., 2007; Patton, 2015). The phenomenological approach was used in this study to gain an understanding of the common meaning of mentors' perceptions of benefits, costs, and outcomes of serving as a mentor for peers with disabilities. The deep, rich information obtained from the interviews, reflective journals, and focus group discussions identified themes presenting a greater understanding of the phenomena (Gall et al., 2007).

A transcendental phenomenological approach applies the epoché process known to set aside prejudgments, preconceived ideas, and biases about the phenomenon and thus ensures that one is receptive to listening to the participants describe their experiences with an open sense of understanding (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The next step in this transcendental-phenomenological study required each reported experience of the phenomenon to be treated as a new experience, so the data derived was a true textual description of the meanings and essences of the perceptions of the peer mentors' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality, noema, and noesis are central concepts in phenomenology. Husserl (1931) explained noema as that which is experienced and noesis as the way in which it is experienced. Both concepts refer to meanings of an individual's experience (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, the imaginative variation process developed a structural essence of experiences to arrive at a textual-structural synthesis of the meaning and essence of the phenomenon of male mentor's perceptions of mentor activities with peers who have disabilities. In addition, this model required me to employ a process of self-reflection that enabled a true understanding of myself in the experience being investigated (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). For example, I have previously gained

views through experience as a sponsor of a peer mentor club; hence, the epoché process and self-reflection were necessary throughout the study.

The study combined the tenets of phenomenology and social exchange theory to reflect on the lived experiences. This phenomenological approach afforded the opportunity for interviews and deep analysis of the mentors' experiences. Van Kaam (1966) explained that information described by participants will produce the essence of a phenomenon. Through interviews, reflective journals, and focus group discussions, male mentors shared lived experiences that produced the essence of the peer mentoring phenomenon. By examining a specific group of male participants, the phenomenon of peer mentors' perceptions of experiences mentoring students with disabilities was explored. The participants, who were enrolled in high school, served as peer mentors during various activities with students who have disabilities. The mentors' perception of the shared experiences was based on the social and phenomenological approach that provided a means for the mentors to reflect on social development, perceptions, and reflections of shared experiences. The goal of this design is to provide a better understanding of male mentors' perceptions of the influences on volunteering and preservation of interest and participation. Educational administrators and mentor activity coordinators may utilize such information for decision-making related to the recruitment and enhancement of high school mentor programs for students with disabilities.

Research Questions

The questions provided an opportunity to encode and establish an approach to an inquiry regarding the human behavior of mentors' and their perceptions of their experiences. The questions were open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1997). The study included human science research questions that were vital components for

understanding the essences and meaning of the experiences by examining the qualitative factors of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994). The focus on describing the phenomenon was articulated in the following phenomenological research questions:

Central Research Question

How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe their experiences?

Sub-Question 1

How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any benefits related to participation in mentoring experiences?

Sub-Question 2

How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any challenges and costs related to participation in mentoring experiences?

Sub-Question 3

How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any outcomes related to participation in mentoring experiences?

Setting

The study focused on male peer mentors who participate in mentorship activities for high school students with disabilities across Pennsylvania. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms for the school districts, high schools, and participants. According to the Department of Education (2021), Pennsylvania's 500 school districts range from approximately 200 students to more than 140,000 students. The rationale for selecting a state geographic region of public high schools provided the opportunity to identify male mentors who participate in mentor activities for peers with disabilities. The pool of public high school settings identified varied in

geographical locations throughout the state including rural, suburban, and urban.

The settings varied depending on the school districts where participants attend school. The Department of Education (2021) reveals district population, location, economic status, and minority enrollment vary based on school districts. Five of the participants attend a public high school from a district that has seven schools with 5,275 students. The district is a large, suburban public school district with a minority enrollment at 10% with 20.1% of students being economically disadvantaged. Two participants are from a district that contains five schools with 3,378 students. It is classified as a midsized, suburban district. The minority enrollment is 20%, and 14.4% of the students are economically disadvantaged (Niche, 2021). In addition, two of the participants attend a district that has five schools with 4,556 students. The district is in a large suburban area. The district's minority enrollment is 30%, while 40.6% of its students are economically disadvantaged (Niche, 2021). One participant is from a district that has four schools with 2,2076 students. The district's minority enrollment is 20%, and 28.8% of its students are economically disadvantaged. It is a small, suburban/urban district (Niche, 2021). Two of the participants are from a district that has four schools with a student population of 2,407. It is classified as a suburban district. The minority enrollment is 10.2%, and 35.5% of the students are economically disadvantaged (Niche, 2021).

The sites are six public high schools across Pennsylvania. All these high schools include grade levels nine to twelve and have populations ranging from 510 to 1,1793 (National, 2020). The student population participating in special education programs ranged from 109 to 794 (National, 2020). The administrative system of all the schools is organized in the same fashion as many other systems with a superintendent, assistant superintendent(s), building principals, and building assistant principal(s). There is a slight variation between the high schools based on the

number of assistant superintendents and assistant principals; however, all schools are governed

by elected school boards. These schools provide opportunities for mentoring activities, but the

types of mentoring opportunities and the ways programs are conducted vary; however, all

districts offered mentoring experiences. In addition, the mentoring experiences created a

phenomenon to be studied to develop an understanding of the lived experiences.

Participants

A phenomenological research method required that the research participants who shared

experiences of the phenomenon were willing to participate in lengthy interviews, approved of

recordings, and granted permission to publish data obtained from the interviews in a dissertation

and other publications (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The researcher selected the

pool of potential participants for this investigation from the responding public high schools in

Pennsylvania. The sample consisted of a small group drawn from a larger population to which

the findings can be generalized (Patton, 2015). In addition, a smaller sample size allowed for the

obtaining of rich narrative details (Patton, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested a range of

10 to 25 individuals be included in a phenomenological study. For this phenomenological study,

criteria and purposeful sampling was used to select 12 participants. Purposeful sampling was

used for selecting people and sites to understand the phenomenon. It provided useful information

and the opportunity to learn about the phenomenon, and a voice for understanding experiences

(Crewell & Guetterman, 2019). Hence, purposeful sampling was the best fit for this study.

Currently enrolled male high school students aged 15 to 18 who participate in peer mentoring

activities were included in this study. The rationale for selecting high school age male mentors

was based on the previously cited definition of peer mentoring as "young people working with

others to help them learn and develop emotionally, socially, and academically so they can reach their full potential" (Cartwright, 2005, p. 45).

Purposeful sampling entails strategically selecting study participants who supply rich narrative information about experiences of the phenomena under examination to provide further insight rather than "empirical generalization" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015, p. 46). The criteria for selection from the target population was male high school students who served as peer mentors for at least one school year and participated in a minimum of three activities to ensure the potential for establishing mentor-mentee relationships. Mentors participate in various activities, such as serving as a motivational coach for Special Olympic athletes, school or community sponsored events, unified sport teams, field trips, or academic supports. High school male mentors were selected via purposeful sampling to obtain the in-depth narrative information needed to "learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 2015, p. 53). A questionnaire was created to assist with maximum variation sampling and identification of participants based on the shared phenomenon and selected sites (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Although all participants in this study experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994), there were variations in age, ethnicity, level of involvement, and experiences.

Using email addresses obtained from district websites, an email letter was sent to high school principals, to determine which school districts offered opportunities for students to serve as mentors for students with disabilities. Once schools were identified, permission from the school district, building principal, and mentor sponsor were obtained to ensure student rights of privacy and confidentiality were respected according to Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (Essex, 2019). To recruit potential participants, a letter requesting that the

participant questionnaire be distributed was sent to the building principal or person responsible for implementing mentor activities. The questionnaire contained the following questions: "Do you participate in mentoring activities with peers who have disabilities?" "How long have you participated as a mentor for peers who have disabilities?" "How many events or activities have you participated in as a mentor?" The questionnaire assisted with maximum variation sampling and identification of participants based on the shared phenomenon and characteristics of selected sites (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It was also used to gather participant demographics and general information.

The 12 high school male mentors selected met the following criteria: 15-21 years of age, currently enrolled in a public high school, residing in Pennsylvania, currently participating in mentor activities, having already participated in a minimum of three events/activities, willing to participate in a virtual or in-person interview, and available for validity procedures following the data collection process. Participants were compensated with a raffle ticket to be entered in a drawing for a $100.00 Amazon gift card upon their completion of the study.

Procedures

Once site permission was obtained, approval was secured from the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). Then a demographic questionnaire, individual interview questions, and reflective open-ended journal prompts were reviewed by an individual who has a PhD. Revisions were implemented based on feedback regarding the clarity of the interview questions to strengthen the validity of the instruments (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The questions were reviewed to refine the data collection plans, interview and focus group questions, reflection prompts, and logistics of the sites and time of the entire process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Next, the selected high schools were requested to engage high school male mentors in the study by means of a follow-up email letter that explained the study and requested that the building principal or person responsible for organizing mentoring activities to share an introductory letter about the study with male students who participated in peer mentor experiences (see Appendix B). A brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C) was shared via email. The questionnaire was utilized to help verify students' current grade, current age, years served as a peer mentor, previous participation in mentoring activities with peers who have disabilities at a high school in Pennsylvania. Once selected as a study participant based on the established criteria, each participant's parent or guardian signed an informed consent document before data collection began (see Appendix D). Participants also signed a written assent agreement since the age range was 15 to 21 (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). The consent form included information about participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time voluntarily, the purpose of the study, data collection procedures, level of confidentiality, any known risks associated with the study, and the expected benefits for the participants in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2021). Signed consent forms are stored in an electronic file. The peer mentors selected were interviewed in person, by telephone, or via virtual audio-visual conversations. Utilizing virtual synchronous online and audio- visual platforms provided participants with time and space flexibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research generally relies on in-depth data collection, known as triangulation, to obtain information from various methods and sources (Bickman et al., 2009). For phenomenological studies, sources can be multiple observations, interviews, audio-visual, documentation, and reports to explore a detailed understanding of participants' authentic lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Based on geographic proximity and schedule availability, participants were invited either

to meet at a mutually agreed-upon school office or to participate in an online video conference; both settings were conducive to private conversation and recorded interviews to gather data to develop an understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The face-to-face or virtual synchronous online sessions lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. Note-taking during the interviews and focus group discussions allowed the researcher to document nonverbal communication and to refine the interview questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).

The interview situation and questions were designed to make it more of a relaxed conversation to elicit open, honest responses from the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout the research process, bracketing was used to focus on the experiences explored as I outlined any bias and thoroughly explained any perceptions to negate prejudice (Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Throughout the entire study, I continually reassured the participants that confidentiality would always be honored (Bickman et al., 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The Researcher's Role

The researcher for a qualitative study is the main instrument that drives inquiry and data collection (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). For this research study, I served as the key human instrument, collecting data through in-depth interviews using open-ended questions and reflective journal prompts designed by me rather than questionnaires or instruments designed by other researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Subsequently, since I was the main instrument in this study, any potential bias was addressed to ensure a strong sense of validity (Creswell, 2013). The assumptions that I naturally brought to this study were strongly influenced by personal mentor interventions and direct experiences with peer mentors. However, I did not have any authority over the participants.

I shared a common bond with the participants since I am a special education teacher. During the early 20th century, a transition period occurred from educating students with disabilities in self-contained classes to inclusionary educational settings. In the early 1990's Pennsylvania was found the second lowest rate of inclusion of students with disabilities in the country. Although the law places responsibility for compliance with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) on the state, Pennsylvania did little to comply with the law. A lawsuit known as *Gaskin v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1994) mandated an increase in the amount of time children with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers. The law stated that students with disabilities should be educated the in the least restrictive educational setting. During this era, however, I recognized that many students with disabilities experienced exclusion by inclusion, meaning that they were in classrooms with non-disabled peers but were not included in school activities or provided the opportunity to form relationships with non-disabled peers. My focus as an educator was to develop social learning experiences that would enhance relationships between students who receive regular and special education supports. While I am familiar with the student population and have an interest in the dynamics of peers, personal involvement, and relationships with mentors, it was imperative that I maintain neutrality in any observations or judgments (Patton, 2015). Regarding neutrality, Patton (2015) also recommends strategies to address any bias that could occur including systematic data collection procedures, extensive training, use of triangulation methods, and external review.

My overall focus as an advocate for students with disabilities was to create and embrace opportunities for students with disabilities to be active participants in their high school community. I collaborated with another special education teacher to improve student inclusion and implemented a peer mentor club. At first, I was consumed with enhancing the benefits for

students with disabilities. While that remains a focus, I recognized after several years of serving

as a co-sponsor for the club that the number of male mentors was insufficient to provide all the

male students with disabilities with same-gender mentors. As a result, I suggested that greater

emphasis be placed on understanding male mentor experiences to increase male mentor

participation. I viewed the mentors as tools to enhance social interaction and a sense of

belonging for students with disabilities. Mentors were encouraged to demonstrate a Christian

worldview by treating others in need with kindness, respect, and support. Through my

involvement with the mentors and mentees, I experienced a transformation as I recognized the

need for increased emphasis on recruiting male mentors. My viewpoint changed how I

encouraged and demonstrated learning experiences for all students, by placing increased focus

on the benefits for mentees and mentors. Through the interactions, observations, and experiences

of serving as a sponsor for the peer mentor program, I was inspired to understand male mentors'

perceptions of benefits, challenges, and outcomes serving peers with disabilities; thus, that

became this research study's focus.

As an adult who had experienced childhood challenges resulting in a need for mentor

interventions, as an educator of students with disabilities, and as the sponsor of a peer mentor

program with a personal awareness of the disproportionate percentage of male volunteers, I

brought inherent biases and prejudgments with me to the study. I set these biases aside through

the epoché process (Moustakas, 1994). Since qualitative research was derived from first-person

reports of lived experiences, my role as the human instrument was to gather the essence of the

experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Given the potential for personal bias, I used co-researchers to

validate my interpretation of the data obtained from interviews. As a human instrument, I

conducted semi-structured interviews, facilitated with open-ended questions, reflective journals,

and analysis of data to develop an understanding of the influences of experiences of male mentors' recruitment and retention as high school youth who participated in mentor experiences with students with disabilities.

Data Collection

Data collection for the research study was primarily in the form of individual participant semi-structured interview comments and questions, reflective journals, and focus group discussions. As Patton (2015) has said, "We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe and to understand what we've observed" (p. 426). Gathering pertinent information for the study through multiple data collection methods and sources established an effective means of answering the research questions, following the general principle known as triangulation (Brickman et al., 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2019). By gathering data from 12 to 15 participants and from various measures, I was able to confirm the validity of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used multiple measures to develop evidence and strengthen the construct validity. In addition, the epoché process was vital through all stages of data collection to ensure that I was receptive and freely listened with a sense of understanding as research participants described their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). During the data collection process, I completed a reflective field journal (see Appendix E) as the basis for the epoché, ensuring that prejudgments, bias, and preconceived ideas were set aside (Moustakas, 1994). Completing a reflective field journal allowed me to reflect on and thoughtfully analyze the research experiences, my relationship with the participants, and the data collected (Moustakas, 1994).

Interviews

Van Manen (1997) described interviews as an essential means for exploring experiences

and gathering narrative data; hence, interviews are a best practice form of data collection for this study. As Creswell (2013) stated, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions about the meaning of lived experiences are the most effective data collection method for conducting a phenomenological study. As recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018), interview questions were created after reviewing the literature and the problem statement and were guided by the theoretical framework. To fit the framework, wording of the questions needed to be clear, concise, open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional in order to elicit comprehensive responses from the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I collected the qualitative data by conducting semi-structured individual interviews in person or via a synchronized electronic teleconference.

To avoid distractions or interruptions, the interviews were conducted in a mutually agreeable location, such as a conference room in a high school or public library. Participants were informed that the interview was electronically recorded via a computer and a backup cell phone memo recorder. A predetermined interview guide facilitated a smooth progression through the interview process, with broad questions were designed to obtain rich, deep descriptions of the mentors' experiences. The interview began with a social conversation starter intended to enhance the level of comfort. Also, I took notes on paper during the interviews to document any attitudes, gestures or behaviors not captured on the audio recording. As recommended by Check and Schutt (2012), throughout the study I made frequent notes to identify important statements and proposed ways to code the data.

The interviews utilized a predetermined interview script in which each participant was asked the same questions in the same order (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). The strengths of this format were that it allowed study participants to address the same questions, thus facilitating organization and analysis of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). As Patton (2015)

recommended, probing questions were developed to enhance the interview process and obtain additional details. I used open-ended questions to elicit extensive responses when I asked participants about their experiences regarding perceived influences while serving as mentors for students with disabilities. Using a semi-structured interview format allowed the participants to share their experiences in their own words while also emphasizing the research questions (van Manen, 1997). A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix F) included open-ended questions that provided an opportunity for participants to explain their opinions, feelings, perceptions, and knowledge (Check & Schutt, 2012). Hence, participants provided more comprehensive, honest responses compared to using a narrative or case study approach that is narrow in scope due to focus on a single individual or bounded system (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Individual interviews were audio recorded via multiple devices to ensure accuracy, and I also took notes during the interview (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The standardized open-ended interview questions included the following:

Standardized Open-ended Interview Questions

1. Please describe yourself, your current grade, and how often you participate in mentor activities.

2. How long have you participated as a mentor for students with disabilities?

3. Why did you decide to participate in mentor activities?

4. How do you define your role as a peer mentor?

5. How would you explain any benefits from serving as a peer mentor?

6. How would you describe activities you most enjoy participating in as a mentor?

7. How would you describe an example of a mentoring experience that would be most memorable?

8. How would you explain any challenges of serving as a mentor?

9. What would be an example of something you may have learned from participating as a mentor?

10. How would you explain an example of a mentor experience that may have impacted your attitude toward peers with disabilities?

11. How would you explain the outcome of experiences from serving as a mentor?

12. How would you describe your reason for continued participation in mentor activities?

13. How do you think your current mentoring experience may impact your participation to be an adult mentor?

14. How do you expect your experiences to impact you over the next several years?

15. We covered much information in our conversation, and I appreciate the time you have given to this. One final question, what would be the most significant experience about being a mentor that you would like to share?

The purpose of these questions was to obtain detailed descriptions of the mentors' experiences serving as mentors for peers with disabilities. Interview Questions 1–4 addressed the central question: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe their experiences? I included these questions to obtain valuable insight into the lived experiences and to serve as knowledge questions (Check & Schutt, 2012) to gather basic information about the participant, his personal involvement, and his reason for becoming a peer mentor. I intended for these questions to be relatively simple and began with a social conversation aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere so that I would be able to develop rapport with the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Interview Questions 5–7 address Sub-Question 1: How do high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any benefits of participating in mentoring experiences? Question 7 was designed so participants could express benefits or costs based on experiences serving as a peer mentor. Homans's social exchange theory specifically frames such questions regarding experiences that mentors view as benefits or costs of serving as mentors (Emerson, 1976). Social exchange theory is based on the idea that people seek to maximize rewards and minimize costs in each social relationship (Emerson, 1976).

Interview Questions 8 address Sub-question 2; How do high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any challenges and costs related to participation in mentoring experiences? Questions 7 and 8 aligned with the SET concept that the exchange of benefits and costs results in an outcome (Emerson, 1976). The outcome of experiences according to SET impacts the individual's decision to sustain or discontinue the relationship; hence, understanding the cost and challenges for male mentors was essential for addressing the need for male mentors.

Interview Questions 9–14 address Sub-question 3: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any outcomes related to participation in mentoring experiences? The outcomes were related to learned, transformative experiences and the status of relationships. Such outcomes will have an impact on the recruitment and retention of mentors.

These interview questions allowed the participants to reflect on the phenomenon of mentor experiences, benefits, costs, and outcomes of serving as mentors for peers with disabilities. Homans's social exchange theory included current or future interactions and benefits in a group or individual relationship; hence, the questions addressed future cost-benefits analysis that influence a personal decision to continue with the relationship (Emerson, 1976). Question 15 was designed to give the participant a further opportunity to express further thoughts or valuable

insights about their experiences (Patton, 2015). Throughout the interviews, I adjusted the

questions as needed to elicit additional information based on the data shared by the participants.

All the interview questions were developed to guide the exploration into the lived experiences of

peer mentors who participated in mentor activities for students with disabilities.

Reflective Journal Prompt

Following the one-to-one interviews, participants were asked to complete a one-time

reflective journaling prompt to describe personal reflections on past experiences of serving as

mentors and mentoring experiences believed to influence their decision to serve as mentors for

peers with disabilities. Each participant was emailed the following specifically designed open-

ended reflective journal prompt requesting a narrative written or video recording response (two-

minute minimum): "Communicate a deeper exploration of your experiences as a male peer

mentor for students with disabilities. Be sure to expand upon prior or current experiences that

you believe contribute to your decision to participate as a peer mentor for students with

disabilities." The use of this instrument provided participants with an opportunity to privately

reflect and expand on any ideas related to their perception of experiences that may have

contributed to their desire to serve as mentors as well as continued participation (see Appendix

G). This form of data collection was an acceptable and valid means to collect rich, qualitative

data that contributed to valid information about the phenomenon being studied (Hayman et al.,

2012). Participants were informed that all responses were confidential and were therefore asked

to use pseudonyms for schools, districts, and persons. Once the journal entries were transcribed,

the coding and categorization process was a component of the data collection for this study.

Focus Group

The use of a focus group provided an opportunity for me to interact with three to four

participants in a group with the intent of expanding on shared information. Participants were

selected based on the depth of the information provided in the interview, identified common

themes, or outlier experiences that needed to be explored in greater depth. The group format

allowed me to interact with multiple participants simultaneously, which was especially useful for

analyzing complex, multi-layered concepts from the participants' perspectives (Creswell & Poth,

2018). The focus group questions were semi-structured and open-ended (See appendix H) using

a format adapted from Moustakas (1994). The focus group interview guide was revised based on

the depth, outlier experiences, and common themes identified through the interview and

reflective journaling.

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Interview Questions

1. Please introduce yourself to the group and provide a brief introduction of your

   mentoring experiences and how long you have participated as a mentor.

2. What influenced you to participate as a mentor?

3. What were your expectations when you volunteered to serve as a mentor?

4. What do you think is the greatest benefit of participating as a mentor?

5. What do you think is the biggest deterrent for other males to serve as mentors?

6. What would you do to encourage others to serve as mentors?

7. What are program key weaknesses?

8. What are the programs key strengths?

9. What positive experiences or outcomes have you experienced serving as a mentor?

10. Describe how your opinion of serving as a mentor changed over the past year or so.

Question 1 was used as an opening question to create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere

between group participants and me; participants were provided with an opportunity to relax to

ensure that they would provide deep, enriched responses (Conwell and Poth, 2013). Questions 2

and 3 were more descriptive in nature and allowed participants to explain their experiences and

perceived influences in greater detail. Questions 4 and 5 aligned with social exchange theory, so

that participants could discuss any benefits or costs based on their experiences as peer mentors

(Emerson, 1976). Question 6 allowed the participants to give insight about ideas that might

enhance recruitment of other males to participate in mentor activities. Questions 7 and 8

provided mentors the opportunity to explore and expand on the strengths and weaknesses of the

mentoring activities, so that they could provide depth to the benefits and costs associated with

those experiences. Finally, Questions 9 and 10 encouraged mentors to reflect on the outcomes of

their experiences as they may influence continued and/or future participation as mentors. In

addition, the focus group discussion led to a conversation among the participants about why they

believed other males don't participate in mentoring peers with disabilities. Exploration of mentor

experiences provided a better understanding of the recruitment and retention of male mentors

who participated in mentor activities with peers that have disabilities (Barry, 2016; Kanchewa et

al., 2014; Mentoring, 2018).

Data Analysis

This qualitative study employed inductive analysis, the most used method of analysis in

qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). As explained by Patton

(2015), inductive analysis consists of "discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's

data" (p. 542). It is important to note that qualitative research design is significantly different

from a quantitative approach since the data collection process is fluid (i.e., I was able to modify

the instrument as new patterns and themes emerged for further exploration) (Patton, 2015). A

vital component that guided the data analysis for this phenomenological study was bracketing

my assumptions throughout the entire data collection process. The assumptions related to

making personal mentor interventions, forming a peer mentor club, identifying the meaning of

the information, and developing common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1997).

The data also served as a verification of the shared phenomenon of mentoring peers with

disabilities. The initial step of data analysis began when I transcribed the interviews and studied

the data through the methods and procedures of phenomenal analysis (Creswell, 2017; Creswell

& Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994), which was vital to ensure that the data was interpreted

accurately. Phenomenal analysis also provided for quality checks (McMillan & Schumacher,

2010; Patton, 2015). The horizontalizing of data ensured that stated topics and questions were

viewed of equal value and encouraged the full expression of experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Verbatim transcripts of interviews, reflective journal responses, and focus group discussions

were combined into a single document and analyzed to determine the significant invariant

patterns and components that point to unique qualities identified in the shared experiences

(Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1997). Once this was completed, ATLAS.ti software was

employed to organize codes and themes, and data analysis was conducted. The software

systematically stored and analyzed the data collected through interviews and reflective

journaling. Transcription facilitated further analysis and permanent records of the interviews.

Editing was monitored so it did not censor ideas and information. Since the transcripts could not

reflect the entire character of the interview; hence, nonverbal communication and gestures were

documented through notetaking by the researcher (Bickman et al., 20019). Participants served

as co-researchers through an opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy. Next,

participants were sent via email a follow-up reflective prompt, which all participants completed

in writing and returned. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the electronic responses

provided participants with an opportunity for deeper reflection and created a non-threatening and comfortable environment. Throughout the data collection process, I kept a journal of reflective thoughts to bracket out bias.

In the coding and categorization themes were identified to describe the phenomenon experienced (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The initial codes were generated with the research questions serving as the primary guides. The coding was reviewed to identify essential ideas and information relevant to the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Identifying information and refining categories were necessary throughout the study, so a matrix was used to condense the data into simple categories and facilitate a multi-dimensional summary of data and themes (Check & Schutt, 2012). The data was analyzed via informed judgment to identify major and minor themes expressed by study participants (Patton, 2015). I reviewed the data on multiple occasions to identify themes and interpret the phenomenon's essence (van Manen, 1997). In accordance with Moustakas' (1994), once the meaning units were identified, they were clustered into common categories or themes. Through repeated review of data, significant and frequent statements were highlighted to identify the themes or meaning units and essences of the phenomenon that can be established (Moustakas, 1994). Through data collection this study provided "a composite description of the essence of the experience for all the individuals" (Creswell, 2017, p.75).

Following the individual interviews and the reflective journaling, I conducted a focus group delving into the mentors' experiences to allow for triangulation of the data. Four participants who provided the most enriching information were selected based on reflective journal responses that were explored further. The focus group provided an opportunity for the best information (Creswell, 2019).

The phenomenology approach used the data to describe the "essence" of the experience (i.e., to explain the phenomenon of mentoring experiences). Whereas a ground theory attempts to advance a theory, ethnography focuses on culture-sharing in groups, and a case study is intended to focus on central features; therefore, a phenomenology approach was the appropriate research method to advance knowledge and contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon of male mentors who served as mentors for peers who have disabilities.

Individual interviews were transcribed verbatim to prepare for data analysis. The interview transcriptions were completed by listening to the audio files to ensure accurate words. Also, to avoid misrepresentations of content, participants reviewed the transcript for accuracy (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell recommends securely storing data and information, removing identification factors, and accurately editing participants' interview transcripts to ensure the utmost level of confidentiality (2017). Participants were made aware of confidentiality of all information shared and informed that they could terminate the interview process or decline to answer any questions at any time

Trustworthiness

Validation strategies increase credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability to increase trustworthiness (Lincoln & Gruba,1985). Transcendental qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth textual description and understanding to explore the lived experiences that reveal themes toward understanding the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994). Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend the triangulation method to strengthen the trustworthiness of a study. This study implemented triangulation by utilizing one-on-one interviews, reflective journal responses, and focus group discussions to obtain data about male mentors' experiences. Participants were provided with the opportunity to review transcriptions, interpretations, and

findings to ensure the trustworthiness of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, any personal perspectives, experiences, or biases were bracketed out (Creswell, 2013). To ensure the epoché process throughout the study, any personal beliefs, prejudgments, knowledge, opinions, and experiences were set aside to separate them from the research findings (Moustakas, 1994).

Credibility

Credibility in a qualitative research study is defined as communicating data findings to achieve confidence a complete understanding of the participants' lived experiences and in the conclusions drawn (Patton, 2015). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that triangulation enables use of multiple sources of data collection to provide validating evidence for the study. This study included three methods of gathering data-interviews, reflective journaling, and a focus group. The credibility of this study was increased by the use of triangulation and member verification of information obtained. Member verification occurred when participants were provided an opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy. The utilization of interviews, reflective journals, and a focus group ensured that the study was accurate since multiple sources of information and individual processes lead to increased credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability

In qualitative research, transferability is described as repeating the research and applying findings to other sites and people (Barusch et al., 2011). One "strategy to establish transferability is to provide a dense description of the population studied by providing descriptions of demographics and geographic boundaries of the study" (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). This study strengthened transferability by providing pertinent details about the sampling, participants, settings, and interview questions. The selection of the participants was explained, and a thick description of the study was provided so future researchers will be able to complete similar studies. Since the participants and settings differ, the study cannot be identically replicated. The

study can be transferred to another setting if researchers use "shared characteristics" to develop another study (Creswell, 2013, p.252); hence, the use of maximum variation and utilization of multiple schools in the study may be replicated with male mentors with similar characteristics who participate in other public high schools.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability was described by Thomas and Magilvy (2011) as the researcher's decisions, a process to reveal findings that is consistently related to the dependability of the qualitative research. By providing thorough methodological descriptions of the procedures, dependability was increased so that other researchers can reproduce the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To enhance the dependability of this study, the design and methods were described, including pertinent details about the sample, setting, and data collection. For example, all interview questions were included and guided by the literature review, theoretical framework, and purpose statement. An audit trail and documentation were maintained to record and justify decisions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The interviews were audiotaped using multiple devices and transcribed verbatim to ensure data reporting accuracy as did member checking and participant feedback from two participants who reviewed the research for accuracy of description, themes, and interpretations. All these factors increased dependability. If the study were to be reproduced, future researchers would have access to follow-up questions and comments.

Finally, in qualitative research, confirmability should be established once credibility, dependability, and transferability are assured. Conformability is described as a reflexivity of personal thoughts and reflections of participants' responses; a sense of trust established toward the findings (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Along with audit trails and reviews of data collection

for accuracy, reflexivity was a key strategy in obtaining confirmability. Hence, the researcher's

notes and reflections following each interview were included in the audit trail.

Ethical Considerations

An important ethical and legal requirement of youth research includes the child's

agreement to participate in the study. Ethical considerations also include approval by the IRB

and the school districts as well as informed consent from the participants before this study began.

Participants were well informed of the nature and purpose of the study. The study's voluntary

nature and their right to discontinue participation in the study were explained before informed

consent forms were signed. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms for the county,

school districts, high schools, and participants' identities. All electronic data were securely

stored in a password-protected file backed up with an external hard drive. Printed copies, notes,

and contact information were stored in a locked file cabinet. The data collected was maintained

in a secure setting and will be destroyed three years following publication. Participants were

compensated for participating in this study with entrance in a raffle to win a $100.00 Amazon

gift card. Utilization of the gift card raffle was used since virtual interviews occurred due to

COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and guidelines that limited person-to-person interview

sessions.

<div align="center">

Summary

</div>

A phenomenological qualitative research study was selected to answer the research

questions through the shared phenomenon of peer mentors' experiences participating in mentor

activities for students with disabilities. The focus of the study was to develop an understanding

of male mentors' experiences as mentors for peers with disabilities in relation to the recruitment

and retention of volunteers. Use of a questionnaire, semi-structured interview, reflective journals,

data collection, and analysis of the data was used to identify the essence of the phenomenon. Trustworthiness was addressed through the establishment of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Lastly, ethical considerations were addressed by implementing strategies to ensure confidentiality, to secure data collection, to balance the power, and to provide appropriate compensation.

This transcendental phenomenological qualitative design was the best fit for this study to explore mentors' perceptions of mentor activities with peers who have disabilities. In contrast, a narrative study focusing on a single individual and his life history (Creswell & Poth, 2018) would have limited the scope of lived experiences to establish themes and essence connected to understanding recruitment and retention of mentors.

Qualitative research generally relies on in-depth data collected by various methods and from various sources—a general principle known as triangulation (Maxwell, 2009). Such sources can be through multiple observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, documentation, and reports to explore a detailed understanding of participants' authentic lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Face-to-face or simultaneous virtual interviews and recorded interviews were used to gather data to develop an understanding of the phenomenon. Throughout the research process, bracketing was used to focus on the experiences explored and exclusion of any bias was ensured by thoroughly explaining any perceptions to negate prejudice (Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and took place through synchronized virtual meetings that were audio recorded. The phenomenological approach provided the opportunity for deep, rich responses.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences related to recruitment and retention of high school males who participated in mentoring activities with peers with disabilities. A transcendental approach to the study allowed male mentors to reflect on the benefits, challenges, and outcomes experienced while living through a shared phenomenon. This chapter summarizes information about the participants, the study results, the themes, and the responses to the research questions.

This study was grounded in a central research question and three sub-questions.

CRQ1: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe their experiences?

SQ1: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any benefits related to participation in mentoring experiences?

SQ2: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any challenges and costs related to participation in mentoring experiences?

SQ3: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any outcomes related to participation in mentoring experiences?

All participants completed a demographic form to ensure that all criteria for the study were met. Twelve mentor participants were chosen to be interviewed in a one-on-one session. Due to travel restrictions, the focus group session, and interviews for eight of the participants were conducted via the Google Meets electronic platform. The other four participants were interviewed in a quiet room at their high school. The interviews and the focus group session were

audio recorded with voice-to-memo apps on a computer with a cell phone as a backup. I

transcribed the uploaded audio files with the assistance of voice-to-text software.

I transcribed and coded the audio material with ATLAS.it. I identified four themes during

data analysis: personal growth, personal challenges, mindset, and life decisions. This chapter

provides a detailed narrative of the descriptive voices of the participants, a results section

including discussion of theme development, research question responses, and a concluding

summary.

Participants

DuBois and Karcher (2014) described mentoring as social interactions in which

nonparental adults or older peers without advanced professional training provided guidance and

other forms of support to youth with the intent to benefit one or more areas of their development.

Reflecting on this shared mentoring phenomenon was the core of this phenomenological

investigation. The 12 participants are high school males who experienced the same phenomenon

serving as mentors. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that triangulation involves the use of

multiple sources of data to provide validating evidence for a study. This study utilized three

methods of gathering data-interviews, reflective journaling, and a focus group. All the

participants identified themselves as White males who participated as mentors for peers with

disabilities at public high schools in Pennsylvania. Table 2 describes these individuals using

pseudonyms.

Table 2

Participant Data

Name	Ethnicity	Age	Grade	Years Mentoring
Bill	White	17	12	6
Bob	White	18	12	4
Colby	White	16	10	2
Dan	White	16	11	2
Ezekiel	White	18	12	4
Franklin	White	16	11	4
Herman	White	16	11	1
Luke	White	17	11	1
Mark	White	16	11	2
Matthew	White	15	9	1
Pat	White	15	9	1
T.J.	White	17	12	4

The participants attended public high schools and participated in a minimum of three mentoring activities. They were from varying cultural backgrounds, a variety of school districts (urban, suburban, and rural), and different socioeconomic statuses. Before the one-on-one interview, a paper or electronic copy of the consent form was signed and collected from each participant. All 12 participants agreed to be interviewed and audio recorded. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Throughout this process, participants reviewed the transcriptions to provide feedback to ensure the accuracy of individual interviews and focus group transcriptions. The following comprehensive profile of each participant includes information about his background and experiences in mentoring plus individual perspectives on experiences supported by quotes and summaries. Pseudonyms were assigned in alphabetical order to protect the participants' privacy, maintain confidentiality, and ensure anonymity.

Bill

Bill is a 12th-grade student who attends a suburban high school. Bill had experience as a lifelong mentor for his older brother, who has multiple disabilities. In addition, Bill's other experiences of mentoring with peers with disabilities began when he was in eighth grade. When asked how long he had served as a mentor, Bill said, "I have been working as a mentor my entire life since I have an older brother with a disability. I help my brother maneuver around at home due to his physical and visual limitations."

At school, Bill serves as the mentor club president. He organizes community events and school trips and assists students in the classroom. In addition, he participates in adaptive baseball, unified track, unified bocci, Special Olympics and expressed that he enjoys encouraging the athletes to develop a sense of competition through sports.

Bob

Bob is a 12th grader who has participated in mentoring activities for four years. He currently serves on the executive board for a Best Buddy program. In addition, he engages in various activities ranging from Special Olympics, All-Star Volleyball, unified bocci, and virtual games. Bob shared that for years he dealt with being bullied by his peers. Through participation

in mentoring activities, he has had the opportunity to be himself, to laugh, to make personal connections, and to be happy.

Colby

Colby is a tenth grader who attends a high school in a suburban location. He has a younger brother diagnosed with Down Syndrome and feels that having a sibling with a disability has provided him with a lifetime of mentoring experiences. He shared that participating in mentor activities gives him the opportunity to enjoy time spent with his brother and his friends. His lifetime goal is to end the exclusion of individuals with disabilities. It is also important for him to serve as a mentor for his friends, so they learn to accept others without judging. He expressed that he loves to participate in Special Olympics because he is surrounded by positive energy from the athletes, coaches, families, and volunteers. Colby shared, "It is like Christmas morning!"

Dan

Dan is an 11th grader who participates in an organized school-based mentor club for peers with disabilities. In addition, Dan volunteers to participate in social activities with peers who have disabilities. Such activities include community events, Special Olympics, and organized social events. Dan was a bit shy during the interview and appeared to struggle answering questions with complete thoughts about his experiences other than helping others and himself to achieve a level of happiness. He shared that as a mentor, he provided opportunities for peers with disabilities to feel happy and expressed internal satisfaction about helping others. He described his role as a mentor this way: "I'm here to help others have fun and to be happy."

Ezekiel

Ezekiel is a mentor for peers with disabilities in a physical education class. During the interview, he expressed that he could relate to peers with disabilities, given his birth history of having significant brain injury that could have resulted in multiple disabilities. In addition, he participated in the Young Marine Corps mentoring program. Ezekiel volunteered for any military activities that contributed to veterans, which led to his interest in helping others. Ezekiel demonstrated the most significant change in attitude towards working with peers with disabilities.

Franklin

Franklin volunteers to participate in school and community events for students with disabilities. As a 12th grade student, he participates in unified track, Special Olympics, community events and serves as a school lunch buddy. Being an avid golfer and hockey player, Franklin enjoys the opportunity to participate in sports-oriented activities with peers who have disabilities. Franklin equally views his teammates and peers with disabilities as his buddies. He shared that he believed that his responsibility as a mentor included making himself available to serve as a companion and friend and providing his mentee with a sense of belonging. Franklin shared a most memorable event serving as a mentor:

> I remember when someone was sitting alone. It was at lunch, and it really hit me. I thought that I can't watch this happen and not do anything about it. So, I had to sit with him because I don't know what he is going through. I learned that doing little things can really make a person's day and really, really help them.

Herman

Herman is an 11th grader who attends a small school in a suburban/urban

setting. He participates in an elective class titled Everyday Skills of Life. As a part of the school curriculum, the course is designed to enhance daily living, social, and academic skills with the assistance of peer mentors. He explained that he enjoyed cooking, cleaning, sewing, and sign language and liked to learn side-by-side with peers with disabilities. Herman expressed pride when he talked about how the peers with disabilities were happy to see him and wanted to hang out with him. He seemed proud of the relationships that were formed.

Luke

Luke, an 11th grader who attends a suburban school, has an older brother diagnosed with Down's Syndrome. While Luke expressed an interest in serving as a mentor for peers with disabilities, he explained how his brother served as a mentor for him:

> I think my brother has always served as a mentor for me. He has been able to overcome a lot of challenges in life. He is a very independent 30-year-old and is a hard worker. He works two jobs and basically lives his own life.

Luke participates as a mentor primarily through a unified bocci team. He also attended a Special Olympics polar plunge and shopping trips with peers with disabilities. As a varsity baseball player, Luke emphasizes working as a team. While he has a busy schedule, he continues to participate as a mentor because he is committed to the mentees and the bocci team. He values the time spent with the bocci team members and realizes that it is not about him, but all about them.

Mark

Mark is an 11th grader who describes himself as hard-working and academically gifted. He participates in an organized school-based program titled Best Buddies. Last year, he had limited involvement with peers with disabilities due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Now he

regularly assists students with academics and attends club meetings and holiday parties. In addition, he socializes with his mentee when playing volleyball and floor hockey. Mark believes that he needs to improve people's views by spreading awareness and kindness as a mentor.

Matthew

Matthew is a high school freshman and has the least amount of experience as a mentor in a school-based program. He has an older brother with a disability and participates in various mentoring activities supporting him in the home, community, and school settings. He believes that while serving as a mentor for individuals with disabilities, his interactions benefit the mentee and provide valuable incidental learning for other mentors and individuals observing. He likes to participate in more hands-on activities such as swimming and cooking since they are visual and easier for the mentees to remember. Matthew is the only participant who expressed a desire to pursue a career working with individuals with disabilities.

Pat

Pat is a ninth grader who participated in an organized school-based mentor club for peers with disabiliti3es, volunteered to participate in community charity events and school activities. As a mentor, Pat felt like he developed a greater understanding of communicating and interacting with peers who have various disabilities. Before serving as a mentor, he had limited knowledge about disabilities since his only exposure to individuals who have disabilities came from spending time with a younger cousin who had a diagnosis of autism.

T.J.

T.J. is a 12th grader who serves as a one-on-one mentor for a peer who is a member of the band drum line. He serves as a daily mentor for his mentee. They spend most of their time

together on the drumline, eating lunch together, sending daily emails, and playing Minecraft. T.J. views his mentee as family (i.e., like a brother).

Results

The three research questions guiding this study formed the foundation for the data collection and data analysis processes. First, the data analysis process revealed the significant themes from the data obtained from the three data collection opportunities. The significant themes that emerged from this investigation were personal growth, personal challenges, mindset, and life decisions. The following section explains theme development and supporting evidence for each theme.

Theme Development

The data collection process began with a semi-structured interview with each of the 12 participants. The individual interviews included 15 questions that were grounded in the literature. The first four questions were general background questions that attempt to establish rapport with the participants and provide a basic concept of the participants' experiences. Questions 5–7 related to the various benefits that participants experienced by serving as peer mentors. While Question 8 helped explore the participants' experiences with challenges associated with serving as a mentor, Questions 9–14 assessed the perceptions of participants' outcomes and future expectations based on experience gained by participating as mentors for peers with disabilities. The final question provided an opportunity for participants to expand on their experiences. Eight interviews were conducted virtually through Google Meets, and four interviews took place in person. The interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcribed documents were shared electronically with the

participants for verification and participants did not identify any errors or the necessity for changes.

Participants who attended the focus group provided additional data through 10 questions and reciprocal conversations. Four participants were selected based on their ability to demonstrate depth and rich responses to questions. At a mutually agreeable time the 60-minute focus group session was scheduled virtually through Google Meets. Participation in the focus group allowed the mentors to expand on other participants' comments and experiences. The session was audio-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed by participants.

ATLAS.ti software was used to code the data using an open coding method. Once codes were identified, they were grouped and classified through horizontalization and clusters of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Codes were based on the total number of references and participant references. During the grouping process, themes began to emerge. According to the established research questions, the themes were classified into four categories (Table 2). Unless otherwise noted, the depth shared for each theme was derived from the interviews and reflective journal responses from the participants.

Table 2

Theme Development

Open codes	Number of open code appearances across data sets	Themes	Subthemes
Having fun	14	Personal growth	Internal gratification relationships
Helping others	16		
Happiness	13		
Patience	5		
Communicate	4		
Confidence	3		
Mentor learn skills	7		
Connections	23		
Friendships	11		
Sports/activities	16		
Time together	3		
Communication	2	Personal challenges	Reactions of others
Patience	3		
Expectations	3		
Time management	8		
Negative interactions	3		
Judgments	2		
Mentee behaviors	8		
Disabilities	8	Mindset	Becoming a better person
Impact on the world	4		
Personal struggles	5		
Future involvement	2	Life decisions	
Relationships	4		
Careers	2		
Adult mentors	2		
Retention	3		

Personal Growth

Throughout the discussions, the participants shared personal growth experiences as they

interacted and participated in activities with peers with disabilities. This theme was created by

clustering the codes for having fun, helping others, happiness, patience, communication,

confidence, learning skills, making connections, friendships, sports/activities, and time spent together. The mentors shared their experiences related to patience as an element of personal growth for them. Luke reflected on his personal growth through the interview when he shared that he learned to be more patient with others: "The buddies demand a lot of attention and like to talk a lot. They will talk your ear off, so I had to learn how to be more patient with them." Luke also shared that he was able to develop greater patience, which carried over to his relationships with baseball team members and others in his life. T.J. expanded on the need for patience when he shared that he had to be extra patient with his mentee:

It is definitely a lot. Sometimes he gets a little crazy. I am like basically his big brother or parent at this point. I have a lot of responsibilities. I gotta keep myself in check sometimes, 'cause he can get a little repetitive. But I just gotta remember and repeat to myself that he is different, but it's OK.

It seems that Ezekiel attributes enhancement of patience to his experiences as a mentor:

Now, I do what we call Partners PE or Best Buddies program. It has really opened my eyes. I've definitely become more patient with people. Not just with those with special needs or certain disabilities. It has greatly improved my patience and understanding that even if you weren't on the spectrum of a certain type. It may take you 510 times to learn a certain task, and I've just learned to be OK with that, and I've learned to be a lot more patient with none of those that I've come in contact with.

Franklin concurred that being patient is essential for being a mentor. He classified patience as probably the most important thing in several aspects of life, especially while being a mentor.

The development of patience was often shared by participants that viewed enhancement of their communication skills as a benefit since working with mentees requires patience as well

as clear communication skills. Mentors expressed that serving as a mentor increased their confidence in speaking and socializing with others. For example, many of the mentor activities took place in group settings. The interactions between mentors and mentees, mentees and mentees, or mentors and mentors happened as students interacted during sports, social events, and club meetings. Bob expressed that he was bullied before serving as a mentor, so he did not want to interact or talk with his peers. He reported that once he established relationships with other mentors and mentees, he looked forward to socializing with them. Also, Luke shared that learning to work with a diverse population taught him how to handle different life situations. Besides that, getting out of his comfort zone forced him to adapt and communicate with individuals who have different personalities.

In addition, Dan previously viewed talking with others as something that made him feel uncomfortable and led to his hesitation in speaking and interacting with others. Over the past several years, though, Dan developed better communication skills with mentors and mentees. Now he looks forward to talking with everyone. For Dan, enhanced communication skills were an aspect of personal growth that increased his ability to interact with others. While Nick expressed that he had to learn how to communicate with peers with disabilities when he was trying to teach them a new skill, he said,

> Sometimes, I need to learn from the other buddies before I can show them how to do something. It is hard sometimes, but I have to keep doing it over and over and telling them how to do it until they get it.

So, Nick improved his ability to communicate effectively and in various ways.

Another benefit for the mentors was learning new skills. Such as mentoring activities included learning to cook, clean, learning sign language, and playing bocci were skills mentors

developed as they supported mentees. Herman reported that he liked learning skills side by side with the mentees. Dan and Pat learned how to make tie-die T-shirts and no-sew blankets. While these skills were external in nature, mentors also developed internal skills and character qualities such as communication skills, patience, understanding others, confidence, and compassion. By the same token, Luke and Bob elaborated on "life lessons" as skills they learned. The sharing of increased understanding of others took place in various ways. For example, Pat learned about disabilities beyond the knowledge that he had developed from having a strong relationship with a younger cousin who had a diagnosis of autism. He shared that he experienced an increased awareness of individuals who had disabilities.

Internal Gratification

This section explained the experiences of internal gratification for mentors. The experiences of internal gratification associated with serving as a mentor occurred in various ways for the mentors. Participants shared a form of internal gratification from helping others, particularly individuals with disabilities. Bill explained that helping others is a benefit for him:

> The benefits I get from it are that you got a lot more friends. You get a lot more activities that you can do with them. You just go home happy with the fact that you just helped make someone's day.

Bill and Mark frequently mentioned that helping others made them feel good. They enjoyed watching peers who have a disability having fun and found it important to make others happy. Colby now has a lifetime dream to help individuals who have disabilities, so the idea of serving as a mentor aligns with his personal goal to help others. His passion for helping others was apparent:

Me as a person, I would consider myself fortunate to help people that aren't in a situation

as some of us are. Some of us are very lucky and some of the advantages that we get over

other people. But some aren't and I am helping someone that is less advantageous than I

am, because I grew up very privileged. I am very thankful for that but just helping people

makes me feel really good. Ya know with all the hate that is going around in the world

right now, that is what you need. The more good you put out there, the more good that is

going to come out as a result. So that is why I thought of including myself in these

programs and helping these kids.

Another participant discussed his reason for participating as a mentor to help others and

considers his own challenges to be assets for helping others. For example, Mark mentioned that

he enjoyed helping others several times and even referred to it as doing good deeds. He further

disclosed that he thought that his own battles influenced his sympathy and empathy towards

others who struggle. He believed that more teens faced mental health challenges and insecurities

due to the pandemic; he did not want people to go through difficulties similar to his, so he served

as a mentor for others.

Bill provided clarity and an excellent summary of the theme of internal gratification:

The experience for me has been everything for me. It's created enough memories. It's

created enough laughs and smiles to make me feel like my high school career was a

success. It was something I could look back on it and know what I did that right? I gave it

my best. That's what I enjoy the most. I'm grateful I took that opportunity when I did.

Participants often described having fun as a benefit and provided a rational for remaining

as a mentor. For example, when asked to describe his reason for continued participation in

mentor activities, Luke simply responded, "There is no reason to stop. It is an enjoyable part of

my life." Comparably, Bob revealed, "Being a part of the Best Buddies program is a highlight of my high school career and it makes me happy." Similarly, Dan repeatedly referred to the fun he experiences as a mentor. Given the opportunity to reflect on his experiences, Matthew viewed having fun as a source of bonding between the mentor and mentees:

> Socially, when I get together to work with people with disabilities, especially like Special Olympics, it is a time that I am happy because I can see all the athletes happy. For example, when I serve as a mentor in the Peer Mentor and Buddy Club, we are laughing. It is fun for me and them. The opportunity and creation of laughter is a bond that leads to friendships. This is very important because it demonstrates to others that you are willing to help and have fun with people with disabilities.

Participation in sports events such as Special Olympics, unified bocci, unified track, All-Star Volleyball as well as informal sports activities such as kickball were frequently mentioned when participants mentioned having the most fun. Throughout his interview, Mark referenced having fun multiple times. He believed all the activities were fun but mentioned sports events as the activity that he thought was the most fun.

Many of the mentors expressed a feeling of happiness while interacting with a mentee. Bob, for example, experienced happiness following his morning interactions with peers who had disabilities. Even when he started his day off with a negative mindset, he seemed happy once he had spent time with them. He shared that the experiences with peers with disabilities helped him fix his day, created a better mindset toward life, and gave him a jump start. He remembered that not everyone had it as good as he did, so he was extremely grateful. In addition, Bob previously shared that he had experienced bullying and described serving as a mentor as a positive experience for him. He sincerely expressed, "The experience for me has been everything for me.

It's created enough memories. It's created enough laughs and smiles to make me feel like my high school career was a success."

Eleven of the twelve participants agreed that the most memorable and enjoyable experiences developed from serving as a coach or participant in sports events. Serving as a coach for the Special Olympics was the most frequent sports event mentioned. Other sporting events included unified bocci, All-Star Volleyball, bowling, and unified track. Colby referred to his experience serving as a coach for Special Olympics. He viewed it as most enjoyable hands-down because all the athletes, coaches, families, and volunteers shared a common goal to motivate and encourage the athletes to do their very best and demonstrate good sportsmanship. He stated, "There is so much positive energy in the stadium. I love the Special Olympics." Another popular sport was unified track, which three of the mentors participated in. Bill shared:

> It was my freshman year, and we had our athletes running a 400, so doing the whole way around the track. As they were running around, we had people stationed periodically around the track to cheer them on, to get them motivated, to get them going. So, I fully think that made them run so much faster. It was so exciting when they finished.

Other memorable activities included hands-on activities and interactions between the mentor and mentee. The mentors enjoyed working side-by-side with the mentees and worked collaboratively while taking part in conversations and laughter. Pat explained the joy of participating in a community holiday parade:

> My favorite was the Light Up the Night Parade because we were all together and people were on the side as we were singing carols. The peer buddies were excited to be there and liked waving to the crowd. It was an inclusive moment, where everybody was in the same

space, and we were all having fun. At that point, you won't see them as kids with

disabilities. You just see them as people who are part of a special event.

Another event that five mentors enjoyed was playing bingo. Each mentor enjoyed the

camaraderie developed as they cheered each other on in hopes of winning. It was a group activity

that created a sense of competition, connection, and the development of friendships.

The theme of personal gratification aligns with the benefits for mentors to remain as

mentors for peers with disabilities. The mentors also received internal benefits when they

experienced gratification from helping others, having fun, and feeling happy from serving as

mentors.

Relationships

Mentors shared that they established relationships with the mentees. I believe that T.J.

and his mentee have the strongest relationships. T.J. clearly describes the special connection

between them:

> We just had an instant bonding in drumline. We were always together. We were always
>
> hanging out. I just really like seeing him. Get to know each other and just have the sense
>
> of normalcy in his life because I don't know what happened in his previous 13 or 14
>
> years. I'm just happy that this year, that he's really bonding with everyone, and everyone
>
> loves it. Like this is his family.

Bill, Colby, and Ezekiel expressed that sporting events provided them with an

opportunity to develop friendships and make connections with mentees while participating in

sporting events. Colby described Special Olympics:

> So, you are surrounded by positive energy and positive friends. I have made so many
>
> friends off the Special Olympics because there is a shared connection with them. There is

always a connection there because everyone is cheerful joyful. It is like Christmas, but it

is Special Olympics. It is like a holiday that you really love. So, you go there and have a

grand time.

Previously Ezekiel had been highly reluctant to participate in physical education class

with peers who have disabilities, but as time went on, he expressed that he had fun and

demonstrated making connections with peers with disabilities. For example, he said of his

mentee:

He's pretty cool. He also is kind of out there like John and just very outspoken. He just

doesn't stop. So, I think that's very fun. Like I am walking to the gym, and it'll be like he

looks over at me and says, "Yo, Ezekiel." I say, "Yo, what's up, Tray?" He will give me a

handshake, hug me, or do whatever. I don't have that with any other kids, but I do feel

like I do have a presence in some of their lives**.**

Mentors also explained that those friendships and more profound connections were made

when they could simply talk and spend time together. They described situations that were less

structured and without time restraints. For example, Bob mentioned participating in the Special

Olympics polar plunge and referred to it as a "bombing [sic] experience" and elaborated on the

time they were just gathered around taking pictures, talking, and laughing as they enjoyed the

events of the day. Mark described a situation when he and his buddies had a conversation and

laughed. He shared that he enjoyed hearing the laughter among the group. The researcher

suspects that Mark might have felt a sense of connection. Indeed, he affirmed that laughing and

talking with the "kids" gave him a meaningful connection to them. Mentors found personal one-

on-one time to be significant when they could socialize without any scheduled interruptions and

opportunities to connect through informal conversations and laughter. Each experience fostered a sense of bonding and connection between the mentors and mentees.

The mentors considered establishment of friendships as a benefit and a reason to continue serving as mentors. Pat said that he continued to participate because he wanted to make new friends. He did not know all the members and saw the club as an opportunity to form better friendships with peers with disabilities and members. T.J. and Bob described their mentees as probably the biggest inspiration in their lives and considered them to be their best friends. Bob seemed anxious during the interview process when he talked about moving onto college and leaving his best friend. While he was confident that his mentee had an excellent support system and established relationships with others, he appeared genuinely sad about the transition period. In like manner, T.J. expressed that his mentee had equally helped him grow as a person, coupled with the anticipation that their relationship would continue for a lifetime.

Personal Challenges

This section explains the personal challenges of male mentors. The theme was created by clustering the subthemes of communication, patience, and expectations of mentors. Communication with peers with disabilities was noted as a challenge for Bill, Mark, Herman, Matthew, and Pat. Bill experienced challenges when teaching peers with disabilities a new skill. In the situations shared, mentors experienced frustration because they did not know how to help the mentees understand or complete the task at hand. Herman explained that he used a sense of humor and tried to make it fun, so the mentee would keep trying. All mentors shared that they respected the mentees for putting forth consistent effort and not giving up. Finding ways to communicate and provide explanations that are understood by the mentees was a common challenge for the mentors.

They expressed that teaching, explaining, or communicating a skill was challenging when peers did not comprehend or complete the task. Pat explained,

When I am working with one of the buddies, I get worried that I can't explain something to them, and then they won't do it. I don't want to tell them they are doing something wrong or hurt their feelings. I am afraid to say something that will make them upset.

Matthew also shared that when he is at home or attending school-based mentoring events with his brother, he tends to have a hard time getting him to understand how to do things. For example, he said, "I can get frustrated when I can't tell if my brother just doesn't want to do something or if he doesn't understand what I am trying to tell him."

As previously mentioned, mentors expressed that the development of patience had been one aspect of their personal growth. On the other hand, several of the mentors expressed frustration due to a need for increased patience and understanding. Mark mentioned that it could be hard to foster connections with others who do not have the same interests or capabilities that you do, requiring patience while getting to know and understand the other person. Franklin and T.J. shared a similar belief that challenges were to be overcome and presented as opportunities to grow. Franklin acknowledged that he became frustrated and not always patient but concluded that challenges would always be a part of our lives and needed to be worked around. He offered a solution of simply doing the task with his mentee. Finding a way to motivate them was a challenge too.

Three of the mentors expressed that their expectations created challenges, such as the excessive attention that mentees gave them. However, these mentors noted the excessive attention as a challenge but noted that they have all developed patience in dealing with the mentees' undue attention and social demands. For example, while T.J. referred to his mentee as a

best friend, he recognized that a close relationship came from a strong social influence. Serving

as a role model for his mentee, required T.J. to keep himself in check since he was viewed as a

role model. T.J. did not want to set a poor example for his mentee.

For the most part, the mentors did not express overt challenges with time management;

however, Dan and Bill mentioned the concern of managing extracurricular activities, sports,

homework, a part-time job, and family time. In addition, there were times that Dan needed to

miss mentor activities due to other commitments, which created internal conflict:

> I feel bad when I need to miss a peer buddy event. Like I have to go to track practice, or I
>
> might not make the team. I try to stay as long as I can, but then sometimes I have to leave
>
> for practice or work.

Dan appeared to be sincerely upset when he missed out on participating in the events and

spending time with peers who have disabilities. Luke's biggest challenge was juggling time for

studies, baseball, and mentoring activities. Like other mentors, Franklin was engaged in sports,

so he had a lot of responsibilities. However, he tried to balance sports and his social life. He

considered spending time with his buddies outside of school equally important. Franklin shared

that he reflected on the importance of serving as a mentor and determined that it was a priority

too. Colby had a significant commitment to the varsity volleyball team. As a result, he elected to

forgo an opportunity to serve as a club officer so he could manage both. Reducing his time

commitment allowed him to meet his commitment to serve as a mentor and be on the volleyball.

Finally, Bill expressed a level of frustration when he would miss out on events with family and

friends due to commitments to the mentor club. Spending time participating in mentoring

activities and time with family were equally important to him. He took his role as a mentor and

club president seriously and felt obligated to attend all events. Dan also felt torn between coming

to events and meetings when his family had something special planned. Utilization of time management skills was identified as a theme since the mentors often had to decide whether to continue serving as mentors or sever the relationships.

Reactions of Others

Pat, Bill, and Ezekiel expressed frustration due to teacher interactions with the mentees. It was apparent that they felt that the teacher appeared frustrated by something the mentee could not control. For example, Colby seemed to be frustrated when he talked about the way some teachers interact with peers with disabilities:

> I see a lot of people, sometimes teachers, get frustrated with these kids. Just looking at that, I mean everyone is different. You can get frustrated, but you can't get mad at someone that can't control something that they were just born with it. Especially when it is not really affecting your life. That challenge and that struggle. I really look at that and wonder, "Why would you do that? Why would you get mad at this person because they can't control what they are doing?" I feel sympathy for that person.

All participants expressed that each situation could have been handled more effectively with greater explanations and patience from the adults. Ezekiel took it upon himself to provide the mentee with an opportunity to understand the consequences of the behaviors. As they established a connection, Ezekiel frequently recognized that the peer's disability impeded his ability to comprehend the entire situation, so he would offer extra support for his friend.

Bill, and Franklin experienced conflict with other friends when they spent time with peers with disabilities rather than time with them. They expressed that negative comments and questioning occurred when they elected to have lunch with peers with disabilities. Both

explained that some people passed judgment when they ate lunch with their mentees. Franklin recalled this incident:

> I remember when someone was sitting alone. It was at lunch, and it really hit me. I thought that I can't watch this and not do anything about it. I think that really is the perspective, not only people with disabilities, but just people in general. You don't know what they are going through, and just by doing those little things can really make their day and really, really help them.

Despite questions coming from their peers, Bill and Franklin have no intention of not spending time with peers with disabilities.

Mindset

This section explains the mindsets that the mentors had. The mindset theme was created by clustering the codes of disabilities, impact on the world, and the mentor's personal struggles. The mindset theme considered the mentors' set of beliefs that influences how they may think, feel, and behave in a given situation. For Alex, Mark, Ezekiel, and Luke, their participation as mentors impacted their attitudes toward peers with disabilities. Initially, Mark expressed that a challenge would be fostering connections with someone who was not like himself and may not have the same capabilities. However, later he shared that a most memorable experience was when he and a group of buddies were having a conversation and laughing. He stated, "I liked hearing that." It appeared that he was able to make a connection. He also shared, "I learned that they are independent from their disabilities. They're not just a disability."

Pat and Luke shared a common change in mindset related to understanding various disabilities. Their interactions with family members limited their understanding and awareness of individuals with different learning styles, communication, and social skills. Without participating

as mentor for peers with disabilities, their perceptions and knowledge were limited, which impeded their ability to comprehend individual needs to make connections. Ezekiel seemed to be the participant who experienced a significant change in attitude regarding assisting individuals with disabilities. While he expressed pleasure in serving as a mentor for young marines, he equated working with peers who have disabilities as being a caregiver. It was with great resistance that Ezekiel participated in a Partners PE class. Due to a scheduling conflict, Ezekiel reluctantly agreed to serve as a mentor in Partners PE. He adamantly expressed a lack of desire to participate as a mentor, but his experience revealed a mindset transformation:

> I told my school counselor that I was perfectly fine taking a physical education class, but I would not take the Partners PE. Personally, I did not think that I would work well with people who are typically in that environment. I did not view myself as a caregiver, and it would be more responsibility than I could handle. I further explained that I didn't want to take the class and was not the type of person to be in that class. So, I went to the class dragging my feet, gritting my teeth, and thinking that I didn't want to be there. So fast forward, I felt like I could tolerate it. A year later, I am ecstatic to stay in this class and look forward to seeing everyone.

 He eventually connected with peers who had disabilities and expressed enjoyment in being in the class. Overall, Ezekiel believed that the positive experiences outweighed the negative experiences by nine to one. Bob believed that having served as a mentor, he would be able to respond to challenges positively. He expressed that one's determination and attitude can impact the world:

> Some kids have not been dealt the best hand metaphorically, but they never give up. It may not be easy for them, but they don't complain and are persistent. There will be many

challenges going through life, but the more people complain, the less they tend to accomplish. So, we need to watch and learn from them. They just embrace the challenge, work around it, and adapt. They do this every day. I think the world as it is now needs people that focus on overcoming challenges and remaining positive.

Mark articulated that he believed his continuing as a mentor was essential for improving people's views about individuals with disabilities. He thought that spreading awareness and kindness were vital since those with disabilities are all unique, special individuals. Colby was passionate about making the world a better place by spreading kindness and instilling in others that judging and excluding individuals with disabilities is a societal problem that needs to be overcome. He wants to open special needs communities all over the world. His goal is to ensure that individuals with disabilities are treated with equal respect, kindness, and inclusion.

In addition, Mark, Bob, and Ezekiel touched on personal challenges related to mental health concerns. Each of the participants expressed a change in mindset related to anxiety, confidence, a sense of belonging, and overall happiness. In addition, Mark expanded on the fact that his own challenges allowed him to better understand challenges that mentees go through.

Better Person

Five of the mentors, Pat, Dan, Mark, Franklin, and T.J., each reported that serving as a mentor made him a "better person." They described common characteristics of being a "better person" as improved patience and understanding, helping others who were less fortunate, and accepting individual differences. Franklin believed that his overall experiences as a mentor made him a better person: "So, I think the more that I do them, the better I'll become." He also shared in the reflective journal prompt:

My experiences as a peer mentor for students with disabilities have helped me to grow in personal and social ways. Being able to work with special needs students is a privilege. It's important to look back on experiences I've had to help me grow and become the best person I can be. For example, working with the students has helped me to be more patient and caring. These students have become an awesome part of my life and have made me a better person.

In addition, T.J. sounded sincere, when he said, "Yeah, I'm personal benefit for me just in general; it just makes me a way better person. It's really just shined the light on me that I can help these people. Then if I can, I should."

Life Decisions

This section explains the decisions that mentors made based on experiences. The theme of decisions was created by clustering relationships, careers, adult mentors, and retention. T.J. discussed the strong relationship between him and his buddy; he referred to him as a family member, like a big brother. T.J. also viewed his buddy as his best friend and hoped they would remain lifelong friends. He expressed concern that his buddy would miss him when he graduated. He already planned to continue the relationship via telephone contacts, texting, and gaming. In summary, T.J. said, "It's funny to think that he was giving me help just as much as I gave it to him." He thought of his mentee as the brother that he never had. In addition, he said he had grown into a more responsible and respectful adult. He believed that it would not have happened without the relationship he established with his mentee.

Mentors shared that they would utilize skills learned from serving as mentors in future employment, college, and life in general. Serving as mentors influenced career decisions for Bob and Matthew. While Bob's true passion was to become a sports announcer, he mentioned that

multiple sources expressed that he was better suited to work supporting individuals with

disabilities. For example, Bob explained that if he decided to change his major in college, his

career backup plan would involve working in the field of supporting individuals with disabilities.

Matthew related to Bob's interest in obtaining a career supporting individuals with disabilities.

As a freshman, Matthew was beginning to explore career options and planned to pursue career

paths that would focus on learning life skills. Ezekiel anticipated that application of the

knowledge gained about individuals with disabilities would assist him in a career as an

emergency responder. He believed that he would be better equipped to communicate and

approach people with disabilities, so that he wouldn't frighten or upset them. Mark thought that

the traits of patience, empathy, and compassion fostered through mentoring experiences would

be an asset for him throughout his life.

When asked if they would continue to serve as mentors in the future, Pat and Matthew

said that they would continue to mentor because they liked to help people and wanted to change

the mindset of others toward individuals with disabilities. Bill also shared, "The easy answer for

being a mentor would be because of my brother. To expand on that seeing how my brother has

been helped, I want to pay it forward." Bill is expanding on paying it forward because he

witnesses his older brother participating in community activities with his mentors. He went on to

say, "I want to make sure everyone has a positive experience being mentored." In addition, Pat

shared that his purpose as a mentor was to help future mentors benefit from what he has learned.

He shared that he would help the new mentors become better mentors as long as he was in high

school.

Mark and Luke expressed how they felt their experiences may impact their future. Mark

referred to developing traits of empathy and compassion for peers with disabilities, which he

anticipates will be utilized when he attends college, and befriending and helping individuals with disabilities. He stated, "I definitely want to help people someway, somehow." Luke's current mentoring experiences impacted his desire to serve as an adult mentor. He did not foresee himself in a career related to individuals with disabilities but mentioned that he would be prepared for a situation if life brings one his way. He anticipates serving as a mentor in some capacity as a college student.

Research Questions Responses

Male mentors for peers with disabilities shared insightful experiences related to participating in mentoring activities, especially the benefits and challenges. In addition, they expressed their thoughts about present and future outcomes that resulted from their experiences. The interviews, focus group session, and reflective journal prompts yielded many interesting responses to the research questions. Furthermore, the high school male mentor participants shared in their own voices about the experiences necessary to better understand the retention and recruitment of male mentors.

Central Research Question

The central research question was **"How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe their experiences?"** The theme of personal growth addressed this issue, while the subtheme internal gratification dealt with the central research question. The mentors contributed to the answer to the central question. They described the experiences as fun, an opportunity to help others, and a way to develop friendships. All these qualities assisted them in serving as mentors for peers with disabilities.

However, mentors also contributed to answering the central question when they described the personal challenges they encountered serving as mentors for peers with disabilities. Personal

challenges included the ability to communicate with peers effectively, a need for patience, time management, and reactions of others. Despite the unique challenges, these male mentors remained dedicated and supportive to peers with disabilities.

Sub-Question 1

Sub-Question 1 (How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any benefits related to participation in mentoring experiences?) was addressed in the themes concerning the benefits and continued desire to continue as a mentor.

The participants expressed personal growth through the development of patience with others. During the interview, Luke shared that serving as a mentor improved his patience with others. He said, "I learned patience because they like to talk a lot and will talk your ear off, but I learned to listen. This carried over to my baseball teammates. I am a more patient person in a lot of ways." The participants also gained communication skills. Dan shared that mentoring experiences helped him overcome personal challenges in interacting with others, making friends, and having confidence:

> I am a shy person and have a hard time talking to people. My sister told me that I would have a lot of fun if I joined the Peer Mentor and Buddy Club. So, I did. I like talking with all the buddies and seeing them happy. I feel bad when can't come to see everyone and have fun.

Another benefit participants described was making connections with others and developing friendships. Several participants developed friendships and an appreciation for the time spent with mentees. For example, when asked about his role as a mentor, Ezekiel shared,

I think that more than anything, it is just being a friend and being there for them

whenever they need me. For them, having a mentor is someone to lean on, to bounce

their thoughts off. So, I think that's something that all special needs kids should have.

While Ezekiel pointed out the need for friendships, Bob went as far as to share that his best

friendships were formed with peers with disabilities and other mentors. The solid friendship

between T.J. and his mentee developed through spending a lot of time together as members of

the band, eating lunch together, and socializing outside the school setting. While T.J. prepares

for college, he and his mentee have developed a plan for maintaining their friendship through

planned visits, daily emails, and playing video games. Despite the challenge that T.J. previously

expressed, he shared that he continues to participate as a mentor because of this friendship: "I

continue to participate because it just makes him super happy. I think it's super fun. I think it's

great though I would say he's one of my best friends this year."

Several of the mentors shared that their experiences and connections were limited to few

people who have disabilities and developed greater connections. For Pat, the mentoring

relationships expanded through social events and casual conversations that took place during the

activities. He shared how he wanted to make connections with others by joining the mentor club:

I was listening to the school announcements against the exclusion of people with

disabilities. While it sparked my interest to help put an end to exclusion, I also saw it as

an opportunity for everyone to make new friends. I felt like we need to bring everybody

together. Sometimes people think they are okay separated because they aren't like

everyone else. But they are, and we need to get to know them and make connections.

The participants also gained an understanding of individual differences of others as Pat

shared during the interview, "I now know about other disabilities and not everyone that has a

disability reacts to things the same way my cousin does." In addition, Matthew expressed that he

has a greater understanding of others who have disabilities since he had previously spent time

only with his brother, "Now I know that everyone is different." Pat described his most

memorable activity as a participant in the holiday parade:

> The kids were excited to be there, singing and waving to the crowd. It was an inclusive
>
> moment where everyone was in the same space having fun. During moments like that,
>
> you don't see them as kids who have disabilities but simply as people.

Sub-Question 2

Sub-question 2 was "How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities

describe any challenges and costs related to participation in mentoring experiences?" The themes

of personal challenges and reactions of others encompass the challenges and costs that mentors

experience. The participants addressed challenges when extra patience was required and when

trying to communicate with mentees in a way that the mentees were able to be successful in

following the directions to complete a task. Peer pressure and concerns related to the opinions of

their classmates can be a challenge for teenagers. Hence, participants reflected on peers judging

them for spending time with individuals who have disabilities. They also mentioned that when

their peers judge people who have disabilities or when they are judged for spending time with

their buddies, they try to seize the moment to enlighten them to the accept all individuals. In

addition, mentors found it equally challenging when teachers demonstrated frustration with

students who have disabilities. Finally, time management was something that a few mentors

viewed as challenging; however, they were able to maintain their participation in mentoring

activities by juggling their schedules and setting priorities.

Sub-Question 3

In relation to Sub-question 3 (How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any outcomes related to participation in mentoring experiences?), the mentors felt that they would be able to utilize experiences such as enhanced communication, greater awareness of disabilities, and improved patience in their daily life and future employment or college endeavors. The greatest outcome for the mentors was the development of friendships and connections with mentees and mentors.

<div align="center">

Summary

</div>

This phenomenological study aimed to describe the experiences of high school mentors who participated in mentoring activities for peers with disabilities. This chapter presented the results of the data analysis for this study. The overview included descriptions of the participants, themes, subthemes, and responses to the research questions. The individual profiles and themes produced a transcendental phenomenological description of the findings of Chapter 4. The themes developed from the study were personal growth, personal challenges, mindset, and life decisions. The subthemes developed from the study were internal gratification, relationships, reactions of others, and becoming a better person. The resulting qualitative narratives described the essence of the phenomenon of male mentoring. The descriptive themes answered the research questions.

Twelve high school male mentors were involved in this study. The mentors ranged in age from 15 to 18 years old. All the participants were currently attending a public high school and served as mentors for peers with disabilities. They all had at least one year of mentoring experience, but four of the participants served as lifelong mentors for their siblings who had disabilities. In the school-based setting participants had served as mentors for peers with

disabilities for one to eight years including experiences from upper elementary and middle school years.

Four themes and four subthemes emerged from the data analysis. The themes were personal growth, personal challenges, mindset, and life decisions. The theme of personal growth of mentors included the subthemes of internal gratification and relationships. Mentors were able to experience positive interactions participating in mentor activities and internal satisfaction while having fun and helping others, resulting in happiness. Personal challenges for the mentors included the subtheme of reactions of others. Mentors were faced with challenges when faced with the need to clearly communicate expectations to the mentees. In doing so, mentors often felt frustrated when faced with situations that required enhanced patience for mentees to complete the tasks or self-regulate their behaviors. Mentors found it difficult when teachers or peers had negative or insensitive reactions towards peers with disabilities. The mindset of mentors expanded their ability to understand the needs and characteristics of disabilities. In addition, those that were hesitant to participate in mentoring activities showed improvement in accepting individuals who have differences. Many mentors were adamant that serving as mentors made them better persons due to increased empathy, patience, and the overall experience of helping others. The skills that mentors developed as an outcome of serving as mentors can be utilized later in daily life, employment, college endeavors, and career decisions.

The central research question involved understanding the experiences of male mentors who participate in mentoring activities with peers who have disabilities. The participants shared experiences of helping others, enjoyment of spending time with mentees, memorable experiences and friendships, internal gratification, positive mindsets, becoming a better person, and applying valuable experiences to life decisions. They also shared experiences of communicating, patience,

time management, and adverse reactions towards peers with disabilities as challenges. Sub-question 1 specifically dealt with how the mentors perceived benefits from the experiences. One mentor described the benefits of mentoring as, "Best experience of my high school years," and many mentors resonated with this comment. Sub-question 2 dealt with the challenges and costs endured by the mentors. While challenges were typically related to personal struggles as the mentors communicated with mentees, another challenge was in the subtheme of reactions of others, peers, and teachers toward the mentees. Time management was a challenge for some mentors, but the establishment of priorities minimized it as an obstacle for continued participation. Sub-question 3 dealt with the outcomes for mentors that aligned with a mindset and life decisions. The mentors experienced benefits, challenges, and outcomes because of continued participation as mentors for peers with disabilities.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Overview

Numerous studies relate to mentoring; however, research about the recruitment and retention of high school male mentors is limited (Bottomley et al., 2015; Haft et al., 2019; Hawkins et al., 2015; Surdo, 2022c). There is no study designed to understand those who participate with peers who have disabilities; therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study is designed to investigate the lived experiences of male mentors who participate in mentoring activities with peers who have disabilities. This chapter presents the results of the participants' descriptive voices used to explain how the findings of this study support the literature framework in Chapter 2 and the findings in Chapter 3. Finally, this chapter provides an explanation to summarize findings, discussion, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This section compares the findings from the current study to previous theoretical and empirical research noted in Chapter 2. The theoretical framework that formed the basis for this study included social exchange theory (SET), which addresses the benefits and challenges/costs leading to the outcomes of a relationship. Homans (1961) defined social exchange as the exchange of activity (whether tangible or intangible and rewarding or costly) between at least two individuals. Homans's primary focus was the social behavior that emerged due to social interactions of mutual reinforcement or a lack of reinforcement. SET helped develop an understanding of social behaviors as an exchange process, described as anything experienced as a benefit after the costs are subtracted, resulting in an overall outcome from the relationship (Emerson, 1976).

Interpretation of Findings

This section explores the summary of thematic findings and the following interpretations of findings: personal growth, personal challenges, mindset, and future decisions. In addition, mentors expressed benefits that exceeded the challenges as the rationale for continuing to serve as mentors for peers with disabilities. As Ezekiel explained, "The positive outweighs the negative nine to one, so I'd say the negative are minimal."

Summary of Thematic Findings

The experiences of 12 high school male mentors who participated in mentoring activities with peers with disabilities were shared in a one-on-one interview, reflective journaling, and a focus group. Each participant's lived experiences reveal the phenomenon being studied, male mentors' experiences from the data sources. From the study, a range of experiences revealed by the mentors' explained the benefits, costs, and outcomes of the experiences. Some mentors found their experiences beneficial to internal gratification, personal growth, relationships, memorable experiences, and recruitment. The challenges and costs presented were personal in nature, time management, and reactions of others. Finally, mentors explained that the mentoring experiences revealed outcomes related to mindset and life decisions.

The summary of findings concisely answers the following research questions. The central question guided the analysis: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe their experiences? The study's findings answered the research questions through the emergence of five themes.

The participants' voices answered Sub-question 1: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any benefits related to participation in mentoring experiences? The mentors provided a detailed description of the benefits of mentoring peer with disabilities

through the interviews and reflective journal prompts. In the findings, participants disclosed personal growth as a primary benefit. Personal growth included enhancement of communication skills and patience. A subtheme of internal gratification was a component of personal growth for the mentors. Internal gratification was primarily composed of having fun, helping others, and happiness. Mentors described the second subtheme of relationships as the experiences of making connections and friendships with the mentees and other mentors. Finally, the participants emphasized that memorable experiences occurred through organized sports, other activities, and spending quality time together. These experiences added an element that fostered the benefits for mentors.

As the participants described challenges, they provided a greater understanding of Sub-question 2: How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any challenges and costs related to participation in mentoring experiences? In the findings, the theme of personal challenges and a subtheme of reactions of others revealed answers for this question. While patience was a characteristic of personal growth, it was also identified as a challenge for mentors. As mentors were faced with situations that tested their patience, their perseverance enhanced their ability to be patient with mentees. In the meantime, the mentors expressed a degree of frustration. Typically, mentors shared that trying to communicate clearly with mentees in a way that helped them understand and complete a task created a need for patience. Mentors expanded on the theme of reactions of others as they provided depth to the challenges that occurred when they attempted to communicate in a way that mentees understood to be successful. On several occasions, the challenges of patience and communication went hand in hand while mentors expressed personal challenges. Another finding of this study was that the need for time management surfaced as mentors faced internal conflict in choosing whether to

attend events that conflicted with mentoring activities. Finally, the subtheme of reactions of others presented another challenge for the mentors. Adolescence can be a time when relationships and acceptance of peers can be an important aspect of personal development (Laureen &Veenstra, 2021). Hence, mentors expressed challenges they faced when peers made negative comments and judged them for spending time with peers with disabilities. While the mentors mentioned their frustration, the individuals in this study persevered despite peer pressures and remained as mentors. Mentors also expressed that they found it challenging when teachers or paraprofessionals interacted with a peer with disabilities in a way that they perceived as unfavorable. The challenges these mentors experienced did not outweigh the positive aspects of serving as mentors for peers with disabilities.

The findings revealed the central themes of mindset and decisions as core responses to Sub-question 3. Events that mentors experienced generated a mindset of greater understanding toward individuals with disabilities. This transformation may have enhanced mentors' desire to have a positive impact on the world. Maintaining relationships with mentees was the primary subtheme under the category of decisions.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The theoretical framework that provided the foundation for this study was necessary to understand the outcomes of mentors' experiences. The theory used was Homans's (1958) social exchange theory, which was the foundation for measuring the benefits, costs, and outcomes of the mentors' experiences. Thus, social exchange theory helped to understand social behavior as an exchange process, describing anything experienced as a benefit after the costs are subtracted as an overall outcome of the relationship (Emerson, 1976; Smith & Hamon, 2012). When the

benefits outweigh the costs, individuals will likely continue in the relationship (Stutzer & Frey, 2010; Theeboom, 2020).

This study contributes to the validity of the social exchange theory by expanding the utilization to the field of education since it is commonly used to understand employee relationships and work production in the economic and business fields (Hoffman et al., 2019; Kramer et al., 2018; Kucuk, 2020). Unlike previous studies, this study focused on mentors' experiences serving as mentors for peers with disabilities and the benefits and challenges that determined the retention of the participants. Mentors in this study frequently described internal gratification, personal growth, and the development of relationships equivalent to the benefits of Homans's social exchange theory. However, I believe that because the mentors did not identify significant challenges, the benefits outweighed the costs; hence, they continued to serve as mentors. I also think that connections and relationships mentors established with mentees and with other mentors were vital factors in the decision-making process for participants to remain as mentors.

This study confirms that people will assess the benefits and costs to determine the outcomes. In mentorships, relationships are formed between the mentors and mentees. Mentors described the development of friendships that were like family members. For example, Ezekiel expressed that his mentee is like the brother that he doesn't have. Social exchange theory supports that when relationships are formed between individuals, employers, and various groups (Hoffman et al., 2019; Kramer et al., 2018; Kucuk, 2020), the decision to remain in the relationship is based on the benefits compared to costs; hence, this study demonstrates that mentors' experiences provided them with benefits such as personal growth, internal gratification,

and significant relationships. The benefits for all mentors exceeded the challenges or costs, so they continued to serve as mentors.

Mentoring programs and community agencies strive to increase male mentors' successful recruitment and retention (Bottomley et al., 2015; Haft et al., 2019; Hoffman et al., 2019; Surdo, 2022c). The results from this study provide a better understanding of what inspires and concerns mentors; hence, such findings may provide program organizers with strategies to improve recruitment and approaches that may lead to the longevity of mentors' participation. An additional finding from this study clearly addresses the recruitment of male mentors. One common influence discovered from speaking with the participants was how they became interested in serving as a mentor. Seven of the ten participants were influenced by a close relative with a disability (e.g., a brother or cousin). Having a sibling with a disability became an apparent influence for male mentors. Another interesting finding was the impact on one young man whose sisters shared their positive mentoring experiences with their brother. In addition, mentors were influenced by family members and friends who worked with individuals who have disabilities. Developing an understanding of retention of mentors for peers with disabilities was essential to address the disproportionately number of males compared to females who serve as mentors. Many participants decided to serve as mentors for peers with disabilities because their siblings served as mentors. Participants were inspired to serve as mentors based on shared experiences, recommendations, and the level of passion their brothers or sisters demonstrated about their role serving as mentors. So, when the participants entered high school, they joined mentoring activities such as unified sports teams, mentoring clubs, or curriculum-based classes. In all instances, their female siblings or female relatives shared experiences and exposed them to activities with individuals who had disabilities; hence, they planted the seed to participate.

Finally, participants were inspired to serve as mentors by individuals with disabilities, friends, siblings, and through enrollment in high school classes.

The findings of this study support the assumption that mentoring experiences are built from experiences that provide mentors with personal gratification and make connections with mentees (Stutzer & Frey, 2010; Theeboom, 2020). For mentors to sustain relationships with mentees, the benefits experienced outweigh the challenges and costs. In addition, a relationship built on positive experiences promotes mentoring experiences (Sasorith, 2022; Stutzer & Frey, 2010; and Theeboom, 2020).

Empirical research presented in Chapter 2 described the benefits for mentees, emphasizing the relationships that result in positive results for individuals with disabilities (Haft et al., 2019). This study added depth to the understanding of the benefits from the mentors' perspective, specifically positive outcomes such as internal gratification, relationships, personal growth, recruitment, and memorable experiences. From the opposing angle of mentors' negative experiences, the study added depth to understanding experiences that presented challenges or resulted in costs for the mentors. Such findings provide optimistic outcomes that may lead to retention and compensation of male mentors. Empirical research presented in Chapter 2 described programs that supported mentoring for individuals with disabilities resulting in positive outcomes for mentors and mentees (Douglas et al. 2018; Mentor, 2012). A review of incidents that created a connection and bond between mentors and mentees affirmed the importance of cultivating relationships, so that mentors will continue to serve as role models for peers with disabilities.

This study aligns with previous research showing that mentors' positive experiences that outweigh the challenges/cost are a contributing factor for the retention of peer mentors (Eby et

al., 2010; Hoffman et al., 2019; Reddick et al., 2012; Spencer, 2020; Stutzer & Frey, 2010; Theebom, 2020). In addition, findings of this study will benefit the enhancement of education and mentor programs, designed to enrich peers' social, emotional, and behavioral development. Various researchers (Ensher & Murphy, 2011; Douglas et al. 2018) suggest that peers significantly impact other teenagers' behaviors more than adults do. Such information about mentors' motivational factors and concerns may provide program organizers with strategies to create, organize, or improve programs to enhance recruitment and approaches that may lead to longevity of mentor participation.

This study has revealed how educational studies align with social exchange theory to provide a foundation for exploring and adding to the future research of mentors, teacher mentors, mentor-mentee relationships, and retention of mentors. While this study focuses on understanding mentor retention, the findings can be applied to developing an understanding of the retention of teachers. However, it has diverged from the previous research that explored the benefits from the mentees' perspective (Beltman et al., 2019; Haft et al., 2019) since this study focused on the perceptions of mentors.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study's primary limitations included the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the school years of 2020, 2021, and 2022. For example, the geographical setting had to be expanded throughout the state of Pennsylvania to identify districts that were willing and able to identify participants for the study. Limitations were due to the COVID-19 pandemic and frequent mandates implemented by the Centers for Disease Control. School districts across the nation experienced changing instructional formats, such as asynchronous, synchronous, or hybrid models. Additional limitations across various districts and counties included frequent school

closures due to heightened COVID cases, lack of technology, and teacher absences. In addition, administrators, teachers, and students were obliged to develop new methods for instruction and learning. The ongoing challenges resulted in a lack of responses from administrators to my requests to identify schools that provide mentoring activities for individuals with disabilities. Several building administrators shared that the teachers and students were already overextended, and they could not approve any additional tasks. In March 2020, during the beginning of this country's COVID-19 pandemic, much of the United States declared a stay-at-home emergency order in which social distancing was required except for those in the same household (Galea & Abdalla, 2020). The frequent changes made it difficult for club sponsors to recruit mentors since students were required to have a social distance of three to six feet, and some districts were required to cancel all sports and extracurricular activities. Unfortunately, many mentoring programs dissolved or were temporarily inactive.

Another limitation to the study included the inability to conduct the research for seven participants in person. Fortunately, many in that age group are familiar with modern technology and responded well to using a digital platform to conduct the interviews. I chose the Google Meet platform because it was user-friendly for the participants since many school districts use the same or similar media for synchronous instruction.

Due to a lack of district responses from building and district administrators, only five public high schools agreed to identify participants; hence, participants were primarily from western Pennsylvania. All participants were White and attended suburban area high schools. The study did not include a diverse population or a wide geographic distribution of high schools. Eleven of the participants lived in Western Pennsylvania, with nine of these being in the same county. One participant would be considered an outlier since the school location is in northern

Pennsylvania. In addition, the nationwide problem of a disproportionately lower number of males than females participating in mentoring activities is evident through the identification of eligible participants for this study. Three building principals shared that they had mentor programs and offered opportunities for peer mentors; however, all the participants were female.

Another limitation was the reliance on self-reporting and the subjectivity of participants' responses. Data were obtained through interviews, reflective journal responses, and focus group discussion. I had to rely on trusting the participants to share accurate information not impeded by personal bias, but this limitation was minimized by participants' review of the transcribed interviews and the use of data triangulation.

This study has several delimitations, which are purposeful decisions that I made concerning collecting data for the purposes of the study. The first delimitation was the focus on experiences of high school male mentors of peers with disabilities. Inclusion in the sample was limited to mentors who served as mentors for peers with disabilities who had participated in a minimum of three events and were students in public high schools in Pennsylvania. These delimitations were intended to ensure that data collected would provide results aligned with a transcendental phenomenological design. The second delimitation was associated with my decision to conduct a qualitative study aligned with transcendental phenomenology. Data collection was limited to the lived experiences of the 12 participants. The depth and amount of data obtained from these participants produced thematic saturation; however, studying the phenomenon from a limited sample may have resulted in a gap in the collected data. The third delimitation of the study was the choice of Pennsylvania as the specific area to conduct the study. Pennsylvania offered an appropriate setting for the study because there are over 500 school districts in diverse geographic settings, with diverse student populations from various

socioeconomic statuses. Selection of school settings presented a delimitation that cannot be generalized to community settings that offer mentoring programs. The fourth delimitation of the study was the choice to study only the perceptions of male mentors between the age of 15 and 21, excluding any insights from younger or older males who mentor peers with disabilities. Finally, the selection of mentors for peers with disabilities limits the findings of mentors in schools or community settings between typical mentors and mentees.

Recommendations for Future Research

Upon review the findings, implications, and limitations of this study, it is evident that additional research gaps still exist. However, researchers may want to consider these recommendations for future research in the future. Further studies may help administrators and sponsors of mentor programs gain new insight into methods. For example, additional research may help stakeholders weigh different perspectives on the issues of mentoring relationships. In addition, it is recommended that the study be replicated in other states, cities, and rural areas. Specifically, youth in rural populations have been forgotten (Barry & Pollack, 2022). Further research conducted in additional geographical locations will help verify the accuracy of this study. Results from repeating this study across the state with equal representation of geographical areas would be more representative of a larger population and could be used to inform decision-makers. Participants from varying backgrounds could bring valuable perspectives to the shared phenomenon of mentoring peers with disabilities. Below is a set of recommendations and suggestions for future research.

A research gap exists regarding mentors engaging with different age groups of peers with disabilities. It is recommended that a follow-up study focuses on mentors' perceptions of various ages and levels of education. Since this study included youth 15–18 years of age, a study of

younger or older participants would provide a deeper understanding of various age groups. The social and emotional developmental levels may present different benefits, costs, and outcomes. In addition, mentors' perceptions may present various responses based on educational levels (e.g., elementary versus college).

Future research may expand knowledge of social exchange theory. For example, it is recommended that a study be conducted to explore the experiences of male mentors that did not participate or did not continue to participate in mentor activities. Additional findings may produce a greater understanding of the cost, benefits, and outcomes concerning the retention and recruitment of peer mentors. This may also reveal more profound insight into the application of exchange theory. While this study focused on males, it is recommended that a study be conducted to explore female mentors' experiences in an attempt to increase understanding of retention and recruitment of mentors, given the disproportionate number of females to male mentors.

This study did not include diversity in population; hence, the study of diverse populations may benefit Black and Latino youth (de los Reyes, 2021; Sanchez, 2016). For example, mentoring that promotes Black boys' racial identity may lead to positive effects in other aspects of their lives (Sanchez, 2016). This process may be prompted by connecting Black and Latino male youth with mentors who have shared life experiences; engaging Black and Latino men as mentors can be useful. It should be noted that research to confirm the possible merits of this strategy is largely lacking, which supports the need for future research.

COVID-19 presented challenges for the recruitment and retention of mentors. According to high school administrators, the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on mentor programs. Unfortunately, many mentor programs dissolved due to limited enrollment or

activities were cancelled because of state or district mandates. On the other hand, some programs

created innovative activates requiring minimal to no person-to-person interactions. For example,

a participant shared that virtual bingo and karaoke activities were fun since the mentors and

mentees could interact socially. A study of programs that withstood the challenges of COVID-19

would provide a deeper understanding of the recruitment and retention of mentors.

Virtual mentoring during the COVID-19 pandemic has capitalized on increased options

for video conferencing, allowing mentors to be accessible to mentees amid restrictions on

in-person social activities. Mentors explained the examples of virtual mentoring; hence, future

research of e-mentoring will add to a better understanding of options for individuals with

physical, transportation, and rural limitations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to develop an

understanding of the experiences of high school males who participate in mentor activities with

peers who have disabilities. The theoretical framework of this study was Homans's (1958) social

exchange theory. The development of a thick, rich description of the experiences of high school

male mentors for peers with disabilities in Pennsylvania has expanded the understanding of

benefits and costs impacting retention and recruitment of male mentos. This phenomenological

study provided mentors with a voice for an underrepresented group of remarkable male youth.

Evaluation of the data collected revealed four themes and four subthemes. The themes were

personal growth, personal challenges, mindset, and future decisions. The subthemes were

internal gratification, relationships, reactions of others, and becoming a better person. Male

mentors reported that they gain internal gratification by investing time in relationships with peers

who have disabilities. In addition, they volunteer countless hours throughout their busy

adolescent lives to support others. This willingness to establish relationships has produced

numerous experiences that outweigh any negative or challenging experiences; these amazing

high schoolers continue to devote time and energy to peers with disabilities. Constructive

outcomes may lead to a resolution for disproportionate females to males resulting in a lack of

male mentors. In addition, it may demonstrate strategies led by well-informed leaders and

demonstrate approaches that meet the mentoring demands in schools and communities across the

nation.

References

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2013). *Saving futures, saving dollars: The impact of education on crime reduction and earnings*. https://all4ed.org/press/crime-rates-linked-to-educational-attainment-new-alliance-report-finds/

Alper, P. (2017). *Teach to work: How a mentor, a mentee, and a project can close the skills gap in America*. Taylor and Francis. https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/teach-to-work-patricia-alper/1124243946

Althamanah, L. S., Josol, C. K., Ayeh, D., Fisher, M. H., & Sung, C. (2019). Friendships and promoting friendship development through peer mentoring for individuals with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities. *International Review of Research in Developmental Disabilities, 57,* 1–48. https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.irrdd.2019.06.009

Althouse, L., Stritter, F., & Steiner, B. (1999). Attitudes and approaches of influential role models in clinical education. *Advances in Health Sciences Education, 4*(2), 111–122. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1009768526142

American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596

Angus, R., & Hughes, T. (2017, January 1). School climate, connectedness and academic achievement: examining positive impacts from high school mentoring services. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research, 4*, 69–84. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1144782.pdf

Armbrecht, T., Fruhling, Z., Gunn, J., Stephens, D., & York, P., (2020, March 10). U.S. education spending trends over 10 years. *Resilient Educator.* https://resilienteducator.com/news/10-year-spending-trends-in-u-s-education/

Aschenbrener, C., & Johnson, S. (2017). Educationally-based, culturally-sensitive, theory-driven

    mentorship intervention with at-risk Native American youth in South Dakota: A narrative

    review. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 26*(1), 14–27.

    https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3209&context=doctoral

Asgari, S., & Carter, F. (2016). Peer mentors can improve academic performance: A quasi-

    experimental study of peer mentorship in introductory courses. *Teaching of*

    Psychology, 43(2), 131–135. https://doi.org/10.1177/0098628316636288

Bang, H., & Won, D., & Kim, Y. (2009). Motivations, commitment, and intentions to continue

    volunteering for sporting events. *Event Management, 13*, 69–81.

    https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2009-19392-00110.3727/152599509789686317

Baker, D. B., & McGuire, C. P. (2005). Mentoring in historical perspective. In D. L. DuBois &

    M. J. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (pp. 14–29).

    http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4135/9781412996907

Barry, J. E.(2016). *Big Brothers Big Sisters of America*. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America -

    Youth Mentoring. https://www.bbbs.org/

Barry, J. E., & Pollack, D. (2022). Forgotten youth: The need for youth mentoring in rural

    populations. *Health & Social Work, 47*(1). https://doi.org/10.1093/hsw/hlac005

Bebko, J. (2016). Overview and evaluation of a mentorship program for university students with

    ASD. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, *31*(1), 27–36.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1088357615583465

Beltman, S., Helker, K., & Fischer, S. (2019). 'I really enjoy it': Emotional engagement of

    university peer mentors. *International Journal of Emotional Education, 11*(2), 50–70.

    https://doaj.org/article/21bbdc2804a245bda3efdb20cff74b13

Beltman, S., & Schaeben, M. (2012). Institution-wide peer mentoring: Benefits for mentors. *International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education, 3,* 33–44. https://doi.org/10.5204/intjfyhe. v3i2.124

Bexkens, A., Huizenga, H. M., Neville, D. A., D'Escury-Koenigs, A. L., Bredman, J. C., Wagemaker, E., & Molen, M. W. (2018). Peer-influence on risk-taking in male adolescents with mild to borderline intellectual disabilities and/or behavior disorders. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 47*(3), 543–555. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10802-018-0448-0

Biggs, E. E., Carter, E. W. (2017). Supporting the social lives of students with intellectual disability. In Wehmeyer, M. L., Shogren, K. A. (Eds.), *Handbook of research-based practices for educating students with intellectual disability* (pp. 235–254).https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4324/9781315736198

Blakeslee, J. E., & Keller, T. E. (2012). Building the youth mentoring knowledge base: Publishing trends and co-authorship networks. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *40*(7), 845–859. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jcop.21494

Blau, P. (1964). Power and exchange in social life. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203792643

Boswell, J., & Irby, B. J. (2016). Editorial. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 24*(2), 89–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2016.1206688

Bottomley, L. & Cravens, J. (2015). *Innovative Recruitment Creative Strategies for Finding Long-Term Mentors). Part of the Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series*. https://www.mentoring.org/resource/innovative-recruitment-creative-strategies-for-finding-long-term-mentors/

Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Title of webpage. https://www.usa.gov/federal-agencies/bureau-of-labor-statistics

Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016, February 25). *Volunteering in the United States – 2015* [news release]. https://www.bls.gov

Butcher, S. H., & Lang, A. (1890) *The Odyssey of Homer Done into English Prose*, Macmillan. https://www.amazon.com/Odyssey-Homer-English-prose

Cannata, A., Garringer, M., Rummell, C., Arevalo, E., & Jucovy, L. (2007). Training new mentors. The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence and the National Mentoring Center at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/abstractdb/AbstractDBDetails.aspx?id=251388

Carter, E. (2020). From barriers to belonging: Promoting inclusion and relationships through the Peer to Peer Program. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *52*(6), 426–434. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059920906519

Carter, E. (2021). A systematic review of how peer-mediated interventions impact students without disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 43*(1), 40–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932521989414

Carter, E., Gustafson, J., Mackay, M., Martin, K., Parsley, M., Graves, J., & Cayton, J. (2019). Motivations and expectations of peer mentors within inclusive higher education programs for students with intellectual disability. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 42*(3), 168–178. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/2165143418779989?journalCode=cdeb

Carter, E. W., Moss, C. K., Asmus, J., Fesperman, E., Cooney, M., Brock, M. E., ... & Vincent, L. B. (2015). Promoting inclusion, social connections, and learning through peer support arrangements. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *48*(1), 9–18.

Carter, E. W., Sisco, L. G., Lane, K. L. (2011). Paraprofessional perspectives on promoting self-determination among elementary and secondary students with severe disabilities. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 36*, 1–10. https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.2511/rpsd.36.1-2.1

Cartwright, N. (2005). Setting up and sustaining peer support systems in a range of schools over 20 years. *Pastoral Care in Education, 23*(2), 45–50. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0264-3944.2005.00332.x

Cavell, T., DuBois, D., Karcher, M., Keller, T., & Rhodes, J. (2009). Policy brief: strengthening mentoring opportunities for at-risk youth. National Mentoring Center. https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1079&context=socwork_fac

Check, J. W., & Schutt, R. K. (2012). The role of educational theory. In *Research Methods in Education* (p. 34). Sage Publications.

Cordier R., Bundy A., Hocking C., & Einfeld S. (2010) Empathy in the play of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health, 30*(3):122–132. https://doi.org/10.3928/15394492-20090518-02

Cook, K.S. (Ed.). (1987). *Social exchange theory*. Sage.

Cook, K. S. & Yamagishi, T. (1983). Social determinants of equity judgments: The problem of multidimensional input. In D. M. Messick & K. S. Cook (Eds.) *Equity theory: Psychological and sociological perspectives* (pp. 95–126): Praeger Publishers.

Coyne-Foresi, M., & Nowicki, E. (2021). Building connections and relationships at school: Youth reflect on mentoring their younger peers. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 41*(2), 332–362. https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431620912472

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/283906211.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, B. J. (2021). Considering preliminary elements. In *30 essential skills for the qualitative researcher* (pp.52–53). Sage Publications. https://books.google.com/books?id=kvXbDwAAQBAJ&dq=creswell+book+consent+for+minors&lr=

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.

Creswell W., & Poth N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.

Curran, T., & Wexler, L. (2017). School-based positive youth development: A systematic review of the literature. *Journal of School Health, 87*(1), 71–80. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27917486/

de los Reyes, W., Sánchez, B., Polo, A., Quiroz, A., Thursby, K., O'Donnell, A., & Monjaras-Gaytan, L. Y. (2021). Mentoring Latinx children and adolescents: A systematic review. *Adolescent Research Review*, *7*(1), 79–99. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-021-00156-3

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Sage.

Department of Education. (2021). *Public schools.* Retrieved February 5, 2022, from https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/Pages/Public-Schools.aspx

Doherty, A. (2009). The volunteer legacy of a major sport event. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events, 1*(3), 185–207. https://doi.org/10.1080/19407960903204356

Douglas, L., Jackson, D., Woods, C., & Usher, K. (2018). Reported outcomes for young people who mentor their peers: A literature review. *Mental Health Practice, 21*(9), 35–45. https://rune.une.edu.au/web/handle/1959.11/27903

DuBois, D. L., Holloway, B. E., Valentine, J. C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30*(2), 157–198. https://web-b-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=f8dac793-dce5-4215-9209-6ff5a9bcff3f%40sessionmgr101#

DuBois, D. L., & Karcher, M. J. (2014). Youth mentoring in the 21st century: Progress and prospects. In D. L. Dubois & M. J. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (2nd ed., pp. 525–534). Sage Publications. https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/handbook-of-youth-mentoring/book234516

DuBois, D. L., Karcher, M. J., Birman, D., & Morland, L. (2014). Youth in foster care. In *Handbook of youth mentoring* (2nd ed., p. 344). Sage.

DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 12*(2), 57–91. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23074587

DuBois, D. L., & Silverthorn, N. (2005). Natural mentoring relationships and adolescent health: Evidence from a national study. *American Journal of Public Health, 95*(3), 518–524. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1449212/

Eby, L. T., Butts, M. M., Durley, J., & Ragins, B. R. (2010). Are bad experiences stronger than good ones in mentoring relationships? Evidence from the protégé and mentor perspective. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *77*(1), 81–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.02.010

Eby, L. T., Durley, J. R., Evans, S. C., & Ragins, B. R. (2008). Mentors' perceptions of negative mentoring experiences: Scale development and nomological validation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *93*(2), 358–373. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.93.2.358

Ehrich, L. C., Hansford, B., & Tennent, L. (2003). Educational mentoring: Is it worth the effort? *Education Research and Perspectives, 30*(1), 42. https://eprints.qut.edu.au/2259/

Ensher, E. A., & Murphy, S. E. (1997). Effects of race, gender, perceived similarity, and contact on mentor relationships. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 50*(3), 460–481. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S000187919691547X?via%3Dihub

Ensher, E. A., Thomas, C., & Murphy, S. E. (2001). Comparison of traditional, step-ahead, and peer mentoring on protégés' support, satisfaction, and perceptions of career success: A social exchange perspective. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *15*(3), 419–438. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25092732

Essex, N. L. (2019). National security and school safety. In *School law and the public schools: A practical guide for educational leaders* (6th ed., pp. 102–103). Pearson. https://www.pearson.com/us/higher-education/...

Farley, J., Gibbons, M., & Cihak, D. (2014). Peer mentors in a post-secondary education program for students with intellectual disabilities. *College Student Journal, 48,* 651–660. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1095429

Firth, Raymond. (1936). *We, the Tikopia*: Allen & Unwin.

Fisher, M., Athamanah, L., Sung, C., & Josol, C. (2020). Applying the self-determination theory to develop a school-to-work peer mentoring programme to promote social inclusion. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities: JARID*, *33*(2), 296–309. https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12673

Foa, U. G., & Foa, E. B. (1974). *Societal structures of the mind*. Thomas. https://www.worldcat.org/title/societal-structures-of-the-mind/oclc/650626

Forbes, E., & Dahl, R. (2010). Pubertal development and behavior: Hormonal activation of social and motivational tendencies. *Brain and Cognition.*, *72*(1), 66–72. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19942334/

Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2006). *Educational research: An introduction* (8th ed.). Allyn & Bacon. https://www.pearson.com/us/higher-education/...

Galea, S., & Abdalla, S. M. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment, and civil unrest: underlying deep racial and socioeconomic divides. *JAMA, 324*(3), 227–228.

Garringer, M., & MacRae, P. (2008). *Building effective peer mentoring programs in schools: An introduction guide*, Mentoring Resource Center. https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/building-effective-peer-mentoring-programs-intro-guide.pdf

Garringer, M., McQuillin, S., & McDaniel, H. (2017). Examining youth mentoring services across America: Findings from the 2016 National Mentoring Program survey. MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.18166.70728

García, E., & Weiss, E. (2019, March 26). *The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought: The first report in 'The Perfect Storm in the Teacher Labor Market' series*. Economic Policy Institute. https://www.epi.org/publication/the-teacher-shortage-is-real-large-and-growing-and-worse-than-we-thought-the-first-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/

Gaskin v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (1994). Public Interest Law Center. https://www.pubintlaw.org/cases-and-projects/gaskin-v-commonwealth/

Ghosh, R., & Reio, T. (2013). Career benefits associated with mentoring for mentors: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 83,*106–116. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2013.03.011

Giangreco, M. F., Suter, J. C., Hurley, S. M. (2013). Revisiting personnel utilization in inclusion-oriented schools. *Journal of Special Education, 47*, 121–132.

Gibson, D. E. (2004), Role models in career development: new directions for theory and research*, Journal of Vocational Behavior, 65*(1), 134–156. http://audreymurrell.com/images/PDFs/The_Gendered_Nature_of_Role_Model_Status.pdf

Goldner, L., & Scharf, M. (2014). Attachment security, the quality of the mentoring relationship and protégés' adjustment. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, *35*(4), 267–279. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-014-0349-0

Griffin, M, Wendel, K., Day, T., & McMillan, E. (2016). Developing peer supports for college students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability, 29,* 263–269. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1123801.pdf

Griffore, R., (2012, September 12). [Review of] Hamon, R. R., & Smith, S.R., *Exploring family theories* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press. 400 pp. (paperback). *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, *41*(1), 102–104. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1552-3934.2012.02131.x

Haber-Curran, P., Everman, D., & Martinez, M. A. (2017). Mentors' personal growth and development in a college access mentorship program. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 25*(4), 485–503. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2017.1403558

Haft, S. L., Chen, T., Leblanc, C., Tencza, F., & Hoeft, F. (2019). Impact of mentoring on socio-emotional and mental health outcomes of youth with learning disabilities and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 24*(4), 318–328. https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12331

Hall, S.A. (2017), Community involvement of young adults with intellectual disabilities: Their experiences and perspectives on inclusion. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disability*, *30,* 859–871. https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12276

Hall-Lande, J. A., Eisenberg, M. E., Christenson, L. S., & Neumark-Sztainer, D. (2007). Social isolation, psychological health, and protective factors in adolescence. *Adolescence, 42*(166), 265–286. https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1016/j.cpr.2006.04.002

Hallmann, K., & Zehrer, A. (2019). Volunteers' perceived costs and benefits: The impact of context and their influence on volunteers' satisfaction and behavioral intentions. *Event Management, 23*(1), 11–26. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599518X15403853721411

Hawkins, S., Trudeau, J., Williams, J., & Hendrix, J. (2015). *Insights into recruiting male mentors: Motivations, concerns, and the role of payment* (Project No. 2009-JU-FX-0012) [Grant] Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.
https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/grants/251465.pdf

Hawthorne, G. (2006). Measuring social isolation in older adults: Development and initial validation of the friendship scale. *Social Indicators Research.*, *77*(3), 521–548.
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-005-7746-y

Herrera, C., Grossman, J. B., Kauh, T. J., & McMaken, J. (2011). Mentoring in schools: An impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters school-based mentoring. *Child Development, 82*, 346–361

Herrrera, C. L., Sipe, W. S., McClanahan, W. S., Arbreton, A. J., & Pepper, S. K., (2000). *Mentoring school-age children: Relationship development in community-based and school-based programs*. Public/Private Ventures and the National Mentoring Partnership.https://www.academia.edu/67451138/Mentoring_School_Age_Children_Relationship_Development_in_Community_based_and_School_b_based_Programs

Hochman, J. M., Carter, E. W., Bottema-Beutel, K., Harvey, M. N., & Gustafson, J. R. (2015). Efficacy of peer networks to increase social connections among high school students with and without autism. *Exceptional Children, 82*, 96–116.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402915585482

Hoffmann, M., Loughead, T., & Caron, J. (2019). Mentoring identity and the motivation to mentor: A case study of an exemplary peer athlete mentor. *Sport Psychologist*, *33*(1), 52–63.
https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2018-0020

Holt, L., Lopez, M. (2014). Characteristics and correlates of supportive peer mentoring: A mixed methods study. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnerships in Learning. 22*(5), 415–432. https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2014.983326

Homans, G. (1950). *The Human Group*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Homans, G. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology, 63*(6), 597–606. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2772990

Homans, G. (1961). Social behavior: Its Elementary Forms, Harcourt Brace & World, Inc.

Horsburgh, J., & Ippolito, K. (2018). A skill to be worked at: Using social learning theory to explore the process of learning from role models in clinical settings. *BMC Medical Education 18,* 156. https://bmcmededuc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12909-018-1251-x

Houlston, C., Smith, P., & Jessel, J. (2009) Investigating the extent and use of peer initiatives in English schools. *Educational Psychology, 29*(3), 325–344. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01443410902926751

Ingersoll, R., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, *81*(2), 201–233. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311403323

Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. (2011). *The Science of Adolescent Risk-Taking: Workshop Report.* National Academies Press. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK53418/

Irby, B. J., & Boswell, J. (2016). Historical print context of the term, "mentoring." *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 24*(1), 1–7. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13611267.2016.1170556

James, A., Smith, P., Radford, L. (2014) Becoming grown-ups: A qualitative study of the experiences of peer mentors. *Pastoral Care in Education, 32*(2), 104–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2014.893008

Jekielek, S., Moore, K. A., & Hair, E. C. (2002). *Mentoring programs and youth development: A Synthesis.* Child Trends, Inc. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED465457.pdf

Kanchewa, S. S., Rhodes, J. E., Schwartz, S. E., & Olsho, L. E. (2014). An investigation of same-versus cross-gender matching for boys in formal school-based mentoring programs. *Applied Developmental Science*, *18*(1), 31–45. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10888691.2014.876251

Karcher, M., & Nakkula, M. (2010). Youth mentoring with a balanced focus, shared purpose, and collaborative interactions. *New Directions for Youth Development*, *126*, 13–32. https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.347

Karcher, M., Davidson, A., Rhodes, J., et al. (2010). Pygmalion in the program: The role of teenage peer mentors' attitudes in shaping their mentees' outcomes. *Applied Developmental Science, 14*(4), 212–227. https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2010.516188

Keller, T. E., Perry, M., & Spencer, R. (2020). Reducing social isolation through formal youth mentoring: Opportunities and potential pitfalls. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *48*(1), 35–45. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-019-00727-x

Kersh, J., Corona, L., & Siperstein, G. (2013). Social well-being and friendship of people with intellectual disability. In M. Wehmeyer (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of positive psychology and disability* (pp. 60–81). Oxford University Press.

Knowles, C. & Parsons, C. (2009*).* Evaluating a formalised peer mentoring programme: Student voice and impact audit. *Pastoral Care in Education*, *27*(3), 205–218. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02643940903133888

Kohut, S., Stinson, J., Ruskin, D., et al (2016). iPeer2Peer program: a pilot feasibility study in adolescents with chronic pain. *Pain, 157*(5), 1146–1155. https://doi.org/10.1097/j.pain.0000000000000496

Kram, K. E. (1983). Phases of the mentor relationship. *Academy of Management Journal*, *26*(4), 608–625. https://www.jstor.org/stable/255910?seq=1

Kram, K. E. (1985). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. Glenview, Ill: Scott, Foresman. http://liberty.summon.serialssolutions.com

Kramer, D., Hillman, S. M., & Zavala, M. (2018). Developing a culture of caring and support through a peer mentorship program. *Journal of Nursing Education, 57*(7), 430–435. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29958314/

Kucuk B. (2022). Work flow experience in the light of leader-member exchange and person-job fit theories. *Psychological Reports*, *125*(1), 464–497. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294120981927

Lacey, R., Kumari, M., & Bartley, M. (2014). Social isolation in childhood and adult inflammation: Evidence from the National Child Development Study. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, *50*, 85–94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2014.08.007

Lasley, T. (1996). Mentors: They simply believe. *Peabody Journal of Education, 71*(1), 64–70. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1492553

Laursen, B., & Veenstra, R. (2021). Toward understanding the functions of peer influence: A summary and synthesis of recent empirical research. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *31*(4), 889–907. https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12606

Leidenfrost, B., Strassnig, B., Schütz, M., Carbon, C., Schabmann, A. (2014). Impact of peer mentoring on mentee academic performance: Is any mentoring style better than no

mentoring at all? *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 26,* 102–111. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317185424

Levine, T. R., & Kim, S. (2010). Social exchange, uncertainty, and communication content as factors impacting the relational outcomes of betrayal. *Human Communication 13*, 303–318.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lindsay, S., Kolne, K., & Cagliostro, E. (2018). Electronic mentoring programs and interventions for children and youth with disabilities: Systematic review. *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting*, *1*(2), e11679. https://doi.org/10.2196/11679

MacCallum, J., & Beltman, S. (2003). Bridges and barriers in Australia's youth mentoring programs. *Global perspective on mentoring: Transforming contexts, communities, and cultures* (pp. 73–103). IAP-Information Age Publishing. https://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/9469

Mallett, A. S. (2019). *Mentors' perceptions of mentorship programs' influence on African-American youth identity development* [Unpublished master's thesis]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. http://liberty.summon.serialssolutions.com/

Maxwell, J. (2009). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. Rog (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods* (pp. 214–253). Sage. https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/23772_Ch7.pdf

McKimm, J., Jollie, C., & Hatter, M. (2007). Mentoring: Theory and practice. NHSE. https://www.scirp.org/reference/ReferencesPapers.aspx?ReferenceID=1779083

McMillan, J., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Pearson. https://www.pearson.com/us/higher-education/program/Mc-Millan-Research-in-Education-Evidence-Based-Inquiry-7th-Edition/PGM153294.html

MENTOR. (2006a). *Mentoring in America 2005: A snapshot of the current state of mentoring*. https://teammates.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Mentoring-In-America-2005.pdf

MENTOR. (2006b). The national agenda for action: How to close America's mentoring gap. http://www.michigan.gov/documents/nationalagenda_157944_7.pdf

Mentor's 2017 national mentoring summit. Opportunity Nation. (2017, February 9). https://opportunitynation.org/latest-news/mentors-2017-national-mentoring-summit/

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation. (2011). *National peer mentoring anti-bullying pilot 2008–10: A report setting out the main findings from the national peer mentoring anti-bullying pilot 2008–10.* http://www.mandbf.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Peer-Mentoring-Anti-Bullying-Pilot-Manual.pdf

Mitchell, M. S., Cropanzana, R. S., & Quisenberry, D. M. (2012). Social exchange theory, exchange resources, and interpersonal relationships: A modest resolution of theoretical difficulties. In K. Törnblom & A. Kazemi (Eds.), *Handbook of social resource theory: Theoretical extensions, empirical insights, and social applications* (pp. 99–118.) Springer.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Sage. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1996-97117-000

National Service (n.d.). *Mentoring fact sheet.* http://www.nationalservice.org/

National School Lunch Program Reports. (2020, April).

https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/Food-

Nutrition/reports/Pages/National-School-Lunch-Program-Reports.aspx

Niche. (2021). Find the school that fits you best. Retrieved February 5, 2022, from

https://www.niche.com/?ref=k12

O'Donnell, J., Michalak, E. A., & Ames, E. B. (1997). Inner-city youths helping children: After-

school programs to promote bonding and reduce risk. *Children & Schools, 19*(4), 231–241.

doi:10.1093/cs/19.4.231.

O'Hara, D. (2011). The impact of peer mentoring on pupils' emotional literacy competencies.

Educational Psychology in Practice, 27(3), 271–291.

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02667363.2011.603533

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2018). *Mentoring*.

https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/programs/mehttps://www.mentoring.org/mentoring

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (4th ed.). Sage.

https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/qualitative.

Raley, K. (2016). Implementation and generalization of peer support arrangements for students

with severe disabilities in inclusive classrooms. *Journal of Special Education.*, *49*(4),

221–232. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466915594368

Raposa, E. B., Dietz, N., & Rhodes, J. E. (2017). Trends in volunteer mentoring in the United

States: Analysis of a decade of census survey data. *American Journal of Community

Psychology, 1*, 1–12. https://www.rhodeslab.org/trends-in-volunteer-mentoring-in-the-

united-states-analysis-of-a-decade-of-census-survey-data/

Raposa, E., Rhodes, J., Stams, G., Card, N., Burton, S., Schwartz, S., . . . Hussain, S. (2019). The

effects of youth mentoring programs: A meta-analysis of outcome studies. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 48*(3), 423–443. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30661211/

Raabe, B, & Beehr, T. (2003). Formal mentoring versus supervisor and coworker relationships: Differences in perceptions and impact. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *24*(3), 271–293. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.193

Reddick, R. J., Griffin, K. A., Cherwitz, R. A., Cerda-Prazak, A. A., & Bruch, N. (2012). What you get when you give: How graduate students benefit from serving as mentors. *Journal of Faculty Development, 26*(1), 37. https://diversity.utexas.edu/2012/12/17/researchers-publish-articles-on-ddce-intellectual-entrepreneurship-pre-graduate-school-internships/

Rhodes, J. E. (2005). A model of youth mentoring. In D. L. Dubois & M. J. Karcher (Eds.) *Handbook of youth mentoring* (pp. 30–43). Sage. http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781412976664

Rhodes, J. E., & DuBois, D. L. (2006). Understanding and facilitating the youth mentoring movement. *SRCD Social Policy Report, 20*(3), 3–20. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521751

Rhodes, J., & DuBois, D. (2008). Mentoring relationships and programs for youth. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 17*(4), 254–258. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2008.00585.x

Rhodes J. E., Roffman J. G. (2003) *Nonparental adults as asset builders in the lives of youth*. In R. M. Lerner & P. L. Benson (Eds.), *Developmental assets and asset-building communities: The Search Institute Series on developmentally attentive community and society* (Vol 1). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-0091-9_8

Rogers, C. R. (1983). *Freedom to learn for the '80s*, Merrill. www.sciepub.com/reference/80952

Rogers, C. (1958). The characteristics of a helping relationship. *Personnel and Guidance Journal, 37*, 6–16. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/j.2164-4918.1958.tb01147.x

Rowley, J. B. (1999). The good mentor. *Educational Leadership*, *56*(8), 20–22. https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/224850832?accountid=12085

Russell, J. (1999). Newcomer socialization and stress: Formal peer relationships as a source of support. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *54*(3), 453–470. https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1998.1674

Sabatelli, R. M., & Shehan, C. L. (1993). *Exchange and resource theories.* In P. G. Boss, W. J. Doherty, et al. (Eds.), *Sourcebook of family theories and methods* (pp. 385–413). Plenum Press. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-85764-0_16

Sánchez, B. (2016, August). *Mentoring for Black male youth.* National Mentoring Resource Center. https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/BlackMales_Population_Review.pdf

Sasorith, M. (2022). *Mentoring impact. connect with a young person*. MENTOR. https://www.mentoring.org/mentoring-impact/

Schaefer, J. M., Cannella-Malone, H. I., Brock, M. E. (2017). Effects of peer support arrangements across instructional formats and environments for students with severe disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education, 39*(1), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932517727865

School & College Legal Services of California (2014, November 15). Term "Mental Retardation" Changed to "Intellectual Disability" (K–12). https://sclscal.org/term-mental-retardation-changed-to-intellectual-disability-k-12/

Schwartz, A. E., & Kramer, J. M. (2018). "I just had to be flexible and show good patience":

    Management of interaction approaches to enact mentoring roles by peer mentors with

    developmental disabilities. *Disability and Rehabilitation, 40*(20), 2364–2371.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2017.1334835

Smith, A., Prendeville, P., Kinsella, W., (2018). Using preferred interests to model social skills

    in a peer-mentored environment for students with special educational

    needs. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 22*(8), 921–935.

    https://doiorg.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1080/13603116.2017.1412516

Spencer, R. (2020). Reducing social isolation through formal youth mentoring: Opportunities

    and potential pitfalls. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, *48*(1), 35–45.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-019-00727-x

Spencer, R., Basualdo-Delmonico, A., Walsh, J., & Drew, A. L. (2017). Breaking up is hard to

    do: A qualitative interview study of how and why youth mentoring relationships end.

    Youth & Society, 49(4), 438–460. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X14535416.

Spencer, J. E., Keller, T. E., Liang, B., & Noam, G. (2006). A model for the influence of

    mentoring relationships on youth development. *Journal of Community Psychology, 34*(6),

    691–707. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20124

Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. Guilford Press.

Storebø, O. J., Skoog, M., Damm, D., Thomsen, P. H., Simonsen, E., & Gluud C. (2011,

    December 7). Social skills training for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in

    children aged 5 to 18 years. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews,*

    12CD008223. http://doi.org/ 10.1002/14651858.CD008223.pub2

Stutzer, A., & Frey, B. (2010). Happiness: A new approach in economics. *CESifo DICE Report, 8*(4), 3–7. https://www.ifo.de/en/publikationen/2010/article.

St. Vil, C., & Angel, A. (2018). A study of a cross-age peer mentoring program on educationally disconnected young adults. *Social Work*, *63*(4), 327–336. https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swy033

Surdo, J. (2022). *Growing insights and innovations: A research agenda for the Modern Youth Mentoring Movement*. MENTOR. https://www.mentoring.org/resource/growing-insights-and-innovations-a-research-agenda-for-the-modern-youth-mentoring-movement/

Surdo, J. (2022). *Starting a youth mentoring program: 1 introduction & setting the stage*. MENTOR. https://www.mentoring.org/resource/introduction-setting-the-stage/

Surdo, J. (2022). *Starting a youth mentoring program: 3 recruitment*. MENTOR. https://www.mentoring.org/resource/recruitment

Tanaka, G., & Reid, K. (1997). *Educational Leadership, 55*(2), 29–31. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ552002

Theeboom, M. (2020). Negotiating costs and benefits among 2008 Olympic volunteers: A social exchange perspective. *Event Management.*, *24*(4), 499–513. https://doi.org/10.3727/152599519X15506259856129

Thibault, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. John Wiley & Sons. https://archive.org/details/socialpsychology00thib

Thomas, E., & Magilvy, J. K. (2011). Qualitative rigor or research validity in qualitative research. *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, *16*(2), 151–155. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6155.2011.00283.x

Tierney, J., Grossman, J., & Resch, N. (1995). Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers Big Sisters. Public/Private Ventures.

Topping, K. J. (1996). The effectiveness of peer tutoring in further and higher education: A typology and review of the literature. *Higher Education, 32*(3), 321–345. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00138870https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00138870

Treviño, A. J. (2009). George C. Homans, the human group and elementary social behaviour. *The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education*. infed.org. www.infed.org/thinkers/george_homans.htm

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts. (2019). https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/westmorelandcountypennsylvania

Van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Althouse Press. https://archive.org/details/socialpsychology00thib

Varenhorst, B. (1983). *Real friends: Becoming the friend you'd like to have*. Harper & Row. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0042085991026003002

Vincent, L. (2015). Promoting inclusion, social connections, and learning through peer support arrangements. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *48*(1), 9–18. https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059915594784 https://doi.org/10.1177/0040059915594784

Weiler, M., Chesmore, A., Pryce, J., Haddock, A., & Rhodes, T. (2019). Mentor response to youth academic support-seeking behavior: Does attunement matter? *Youth & Society*, *51*(4), 548–569. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X17697235

Weinberger, S. G. (2005). *Mentoring a movement: My personal journey*. (n.p.)

Whyte, W. F. (1943) *Street corner society: The social structure of an Italian slum*. University of Chicago Press.

Willis, P., Bland, R., Manka, L., & Craft, C. (2012). The ABC of peer mentoring—what secondary students have to say about cross-age peer mentoring in a regional Australian school, *Educational Research and Evaluation, 18*(2), 173–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2011.650920

Yelderman, L. A. (2013*). Mentoring programs in juvenile treatment drug courts: Understanding the difficulties of applying best practices* [Doctoral dissertation, Prairie View A&M University]. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317284140

APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

September 24, 2021

Elaine King
Jessica Talada

Re: IRB Approval - IRB-FY21-22-82 RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF MALE HIGH SCHOOL PEER MENTORS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Dear Elaine King, Jessica Talada,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB). This approval is extended to you for one year from the following date: September 24, 2021. If you need to make changes to the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit a modification to the IRB. Modifications can be completed through your Cayuse IRB account.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX B

Introduction Letter

Dear Invitee,

My name is Elaine King. I am a doctoral candidate enrolled in Liberty University Doctor of

Educational Leadership Program. I am kindly requesting your participation in a doctoral research

study that I am conducting titled: Recruitment and Retention of Male High School Peer Mentors.

The intention is to develop an understanding of the factors that influence high school male

mentors to participate and sustain involvement as a mentor for students with disabilities. The

study involves completing basic demographic information and participation in an interview.

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The

study is completely anonymous; therefore, it does not require you to provide your name or any

other identifying information. If you would like to participate in the study, please read the

Informed Consent letter below. To begin the study, click the survey link at the end. Your

participation in the research will be of great importance to assist in developing an understanding

of male mentors' experiences in an attempt to close the disproportionate gap between male and

female mentors.

Thank you for your time and participation.

Sincerely,

Elaine A. King, M.Ed,

Doctoral Student Liberty University

APPENDIX C

Demographic Questionnaire

Questions:

1. Date

2. Name

3. Email address

4. Grade level

5. Age

6. How long have you participate in peer mentor activities for students with disabilities?

7. What type of activities have you participated in as a mentor?

APPENDIX D

Informed Assent Consent Form

Recruitment and Retention of Male High School Peer Mentors:
A Phenomenological Study

Elaine A. King
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study to describe the experiences of peer mentoring students with disabilities while you were in high school for mentors in ███████████ Pennsylvania. You were selected as a possible participant because you participated as a mentor for students with disabilities. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

My name is Elaine King, a doctoral student in the School of Education at Liberty University, and I will be conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of mentors who participated as peer mentors for students with disabilities in ███████████, Pennsylvania. The study is designed to answer the following research questions:

Question 1. *How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe their experiences?*
Question 2. *How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any benefits related to participation in mentoring experiences?*
Question 3. *How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any challenges and/or costs related to participation in mentoring experiences?*
Question 4. *How do male high school mentors of students with disabilities describe any outcomes related to participation in mentoring experiences?*

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
1. Take a brief questionnaire, consisting of 8 questions. The questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes.
2. Participate in semi-structured individual interview that will be audio recorded. The interview should take about one hour.
3. Participate in a focus group interview that will be audio recorded. This interview will take about 60-90 minutes.
4. Complete a reflection journal activity. This writing activity will take about 30 minutes and will be typed electronically or scanned and sent through email.
5. Review individual and focus group interviews, and themes to check written transcriptions of what was said during the interviews and provide feedback. This will take about one hour.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. As a mandated reporter, if information shared mandated reporting requirements the researcher has a responsibility to report child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include practical opportunities to influence the future experiences mentoring others. Giving voice to mentors may help to provide greater understanding of how mentoring experiences influence mentors and mentees. Findings may also cause other mentoring methods, creation of mentor programs

Compensation: Participants will be offered compensation for participating in this study. If desired by the participant, the investigator will pay for a meal/snack and/or drink for the participant during the individual and focus group interview. Participants will be entered in a drawing for a $100.00 gift card.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that I might publish, I will remove any type of information that could identify you. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.
• Participants will be assigned a pseudonym for this study. Interviews will take place in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
• Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted
• Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
• Interviews and focus group interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
• I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or your school. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Elaine King. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at ▮

████████ and/or email at ████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. _____

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to stop.

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally, and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

_____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Signature of Witness   Date

APPENDIX E

RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIVE JOURNAL

Description: After event throughout the qualitative research process, I will review my bracketing notes and make reflective journal entries in this Word document to provide me with awareness of my own biases and opportunity to remain reflective of the participants' perspectives.

Data Collection Method: One-on-One Interviews
Researcher's Activity: Bracketing
Reflective Journal Entry: (Provide entry following interviews and notation of ability to set aside personal opinions needed when using a transcendental study.)

Data Collection Method: Focus Group Discussion
Researcher's Activity: Bracketing
Reflective Journal Entry: (Provide entry following focus group discussions and notation of ability to set aside personal comments and opinions. Reflect and note participant responses to assess for saturation.)

Data Collection Method: Participant Journals
Researcher's Activity: Bracketing
Reflective Journal Entry: (Provide reflective notes on the Reflective Journal Prompts and set aside personal opinions.)

Data Analysis: Coding
Researcher's Activity: Bracketing
Reflective Journal Entry: (I will print out all the transcriptions of the collected data and read through each sentence, to identify codes that describe the participants experiences that participated in mentor activities.)

Data Analysis: Axial Coding
Researcher's Activity: Bracketing
Reflective Journal Entry: (After reviewing the codes that will be developed from the open coding process, categories will be developed to describe the participants' experiences that participated in mentor activities.)

Data Analysis: Theme Development
Researcher's Activity: Bracketing
Reflective Journal Entry: (After reviewing the categories, themes will be identified to describe the participants' experiences that participated in mentor activities.)

APPENDIX F

Individual Participant Interview Guide

Date: _____

Time: _____

Location: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Questions:

1. Please describe yourself, your current grade and how often you participate in mentor activities.

2. How long have you participated as a mentor for students with disabilities?

3. Why did you decide to participate in mentor activities?

4. How do you define your role as a peer mentor?

5. How would you explain any benefits from serving as a peer mentor?

6. How would you explain any challenges from serving as a mentor?

7. How would you describe activities that you most enjoy participating in as a mentor?

8. How would you describe an example of a mentoring experience that would be most memorable?

9. What would be an example of something that you may have learned from participating as a mentor?

10. How would you explain an example of a mentor experience that may have impacted your attitude towards peers with disabilities?

11. How would you explain the outcome of experiences of serving as a mentor?

12. How would you describe your reason for continued participation in mentor activities?

13. How do you think your current mentoring experience may impact your participation to be an adult mentor?

14. How do you expect your experiences to impact you over the next several years?

15. We covered a lot of information in our conversation, and I so appreciate the time you have given to this. One final question, is there anything else significant about your experience as a mentor that you would like to share?

APPENDIX G

Reflective Journaling Prompt

Date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Interviewee: _____

Prompt:

Communicate a deeper exploration of your experiences as a peer mentor for students with

disabilities. Share and expand upon any personal and social development, beliefs, values,

relationships, and life decision transformation that you have experienced. In your response, to

ensure confidentiality please use pseudonyms to identify specific schools, districts, or persons.

APPENDIX H

Focus Group Questions

Participants: **Date:** _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Interview Questions:

1. Please introduce yourself to the group and provide a brief introduction of your

    mentoring experiences and how long you have participated as a mentor.

2. What influenced you to participate as a mentor?

3. What were your expectations when you volunteered to serve as a mentor?

4. What do you think is the greatest benefit of participating as a mentor?

5. What do you think is the biggest deterrent for other males to serve as mentors?

6. What would you do to encourage others to serve as mentors?

7. What are program key weaknesses?

8. What are the programs key strengths?

9. What positive experiences or outcomes have you experienced serving as a mentor?

10. Describe how your opinion of serving as a mentor changed over the past year or so.

Figure 1

The Social Exchange Paradigm

Note. Adapted from Homans (1961) and Foa & Foa (1974)

Figure 2

Defining Mentoring

Mentoring is a one-to-one, non-judgemental relationship in which an individual voluntarily gives time to support and encourage another. This is typically developed at a time of transition in the mentee's life, and lasts for a significant and sustained period of time. (Active Community Unit, Home Office, 2011. quoted in O'Hara, 2011, p. 273)

Mentoring is an encouraging and supportive one-to-one relationship with a more experienced worker....in a joint area of interest. (Topping, 2005, p. 632)

Peer tutoring describes when an individual from a similar social group assists another member of the same social group in teaching and learning (Topping, 1996)

Defining Peer Mentoring

Peer support involves young people working with others to help them learn and develop emotionally, socially and academically so they can reach their full potential (Cartwright, 2005, p. 45)

Peer mentoring is a mentoring approach whereby a relationship is formed between a peer mentor who acts as a role model to another pupil (usually younger) who is in need of support and guidance (Houlston et al., 2009, p. 328)