

Mentoring and At-Risk Adolescent Girls: A Phenomenological Investigation

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## Mentoring and At-Risk Adolescent Girls: A Phenomenological Investigation

*“Just as we are learning to value and conserve the air we breathe, the water we drink, the energy we use, we must learn to value and conserve our capacity for nurture. Otherwise, in the name of human potential, we will slowly but surely erode the source of our humanity”* (Heffner, 1996).

### Context

As a nation striving to compete in today’s global economic community, the value of human capital is even more recognized (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). Therefore, society and educators have embraced the expectation that “every child will succeed.” Developing in the nation’s youth the necessary attitudes, efforts, and conceptions of self to build success as students and later as adults continues to challenge educators. Faced with historic and existing societal challenges, educators seek solutions beyond the classroom doors.

One of the celebrated panaceas has been the ever-growing number of mentorship programs. Historically, youth mentorship programs were designed to support, counsel and encourage high school youth in pursuit of a college education, direct them toward a career field, or to counsel troubled or delinquent youth into a more socially acceptable life-style (Lee & Cramond, 1999; Royse, 1998; Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995). Although the focus of contemporary mentorship programs has a variety of objectives, the primary goal is to assist the youth of today toward becoming productive and successful citizens.

### Literature Review

#### *Introduction*

Greek mythology introduces mentoring as a model to foster in youth the skills necessary to succeed. Mentors have served throughout history as surrogate parents,

molding youth into successful adulthood. Today mentoring serves as a method of intervention and prevention. Mentoring programs have increased with a focus on building positive relationships between adult role models and young people in an effort to foster social competencies, promote academic motivation, and build a positive image of a possible self (Lee & Cramond, 1999; Tierney, et al., 1995).

### *Social Capital Theory*

Coleman's (1988) theory of social capital in the creation of human capital serves as the theoretical underpinning for this study. The term human capital was originally presented by economist T.W. Schultz (1961) who defined the concept as the enhancement of the individual's ability to produce through education or training. Coleman (1988, 1990) furthered the concept of human capital through broadening its scope to include social and interpersonal skill development and interrelating the concept of social capital as a catalyst for building human capital.

Coleman (1988, 1990) broadened the theory by defining social capital by its function and relation to human capital. He viewed social capital as a variety of different entities that facilitate action, including the interactions of individuals, the sharing of resources, and the combining of resources which make possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be possible in its absence (Coleman, 1988). Forms of social capital include the existence of obligation, expectation, trust, information sharing, norms, relations, and the extent of the obligation in an individual or group (Coleman, 1988). Therefore, Coleman's theory on the function of social capital in building human capital serves as the theoretical foundation for mentoring programs and this study.

*Social Capital and Self-Efficacy*

The correlation between supportive social relationships and the development of successful individuals is at the core of Coleman's (1988, 1990) theory of social capital. He proposes that social capital builds human capital. Human capital is defined as the resources derived from educational attainment (1988). According to theory, lack of parental interactions due to single-parent households and dual-parents working outside the home diminishes social capital, compromising the building of human capital (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Therefore, mentoring, as a form of social capital, is a supportive interaction which fosters the development of human capital. Providing adult/nurturing individuals within the context of a supportive environment is at the heart of mentorship and the goal to build the social competencies that formulate a successful future among mentees. The perception is these relationships will foster positive change; however, there is little research to assess the impact of these programs on adolescent girls.

Studies of the impact of mentorship related to social and academic factors have demonstrated mixed outcomes. Studies with select populations of at-risk minority males have resulted in insignificant differences related to self-esteem, attitudes toward drugs and alcohol, school absences, and disciplinary infractions (Royse, 1998). Other longitudinal studies with students from the ages of 10 to 16 and 13 to 18 demonstrated increased attendance, greater academic performance, increased applications to colleges, and less participation in high-risk behaviors (Johnson, 1998; Tierney, et al., 1995). The attributing factors to success were well-run, carefully-monitored programs with clear objectives (Grossman, 1999).

Tierney, et al. (1995) conducted a national impact study of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program with the largest proportion of the 959 subjects representing ages 10-16. The study explored the following: antisocial behavior, academics, relationships, self-concept, and social and cultural enrichment. Results indicated positive impacts in all the areas explored. Additionally, other studies focusing on mentoring elementary age students provided little formative data; but survey results indicated the building of positive relationships (Arwood, Jolivette & Massey, 2000; Terry, 1999).

Research examining the impact of young girls indicates mentoring relationships yielded enhanced feelings toward the relationship, a greater valuing of the relationship, enhanced identification with the other, and the building of affection (Lucas, 1999) and positive self concept (Ryan & Olasov, 2000). As a select population, the impact of mentorship with adolescent girls has yet to be explored as related to the building of the self-concepts that attribute to a positive future self.

The relationship between how individuals think about their potential and their future constitutes the theory of possible selves (Markus & Nuris, 1986). An adolescent's self-knowledge and beliefs in possible selves in the present and future correlated to academic achievement, risk-taking behaviors, planning, career aspirations, and relationships (Anderman, Hicks & Machr, 1994; Anderman, Anderman & Hicks, 1998; Garcia & Pintrich, 1995; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). Therefore, positive self-efficacy and future selves form the theoretical underpinnings and the foundation for developing in youth the conception of self to build successful students and successful adults. The challenge is how to provide for those students who lack the role models in their homes

necessary for development. There is often a lack of support due to the societal challenges that face many low income and minority families.

The turbulence and the risk factors associated with adolescence can be life altering and impact engagement in behaviors resulting in either positive or negative self-perceptions and become determiners of present or future successes (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). Bandura (1977, 1989) proposed that the development of self-efficacy, the beliefs about one's capabilities to organize actions, exerts control over one's performance and achievement of one's goals in a given situation, and results in positive performance outcomes. Therefore, developing within the adolescent perseverance to achieve goals by attaining perceived competence, control, willpower, and positive expectancies, has resulted in a positive effect on future success (Bandura, et al., 2001).

Adolescents' perceptions of future career aspirations have also been linked to efficacy; influencing the types of careers they believe they are capable of pursuing (Bandura, et al., 2001; Wahl & Blackhurst, 2000). Additionally, the theory of possible selves is the relationship between how individuals think about their potential and their future, linking cognition and motivation (Markus & Nuris, 1986). This theory furthers the relationship between self-knowledge and the beliefs in possible selves in the present and future, to academic achievement, risk-taking behaviors, planning, career aspirations, and relationships (Anderman, Anderman & Griesinger, 1999; Anderman, et al., 1998; Garcia & Pintrich, 1995; Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). Therefore, adolescents' self-efficacy and their perceptions of their future have a direct relationship on academic performance and ability to grow and cope in this continually-evolving world.

### *Risk Factors*

Currently, the most prominent risk factors threatening the health and education of adolescent girls are depression, delinquency, substance abuse, and pregnancy (AAUW, 1998). Adolescent girls who are from ethno-racial minority backgrounds are at high-risk for dropping out of school, with Black female students at an even higher rate than their male counterparts (NCES, 2001). Girls who drop out are less likely to return and complete school (NCES, 2001). Although teen pregnancy rates have steadily declined, the estimated teen pregnancy rate among teens (15-19 years old) is 98.7 per 1000 girls (CDC, 2000). Risk factors related to academic achievement among female students include the socioeconomic level of the family and the education level of the parents as well as the traditional roles of females that are espoused and expected in the cultural home setting, promoting the idea of family and home over achievement (Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Kao & Thompson, 2003). These social factors and cultural ideals are difficult to oppose, and schools have made little effort to counter this, focusing attention instead on male students who exhibit more overt behaviors.

### *The Role of Mentorship*

As a method of early intervention and prevention, the numbers of mentorship programs have numerically increased (Sipe, 1996). The goal of mentorship is to build positive relationships with adult role models in an effort to foster social competencies, promote academic motivation, and build a positive image of self (Lee & Cramond, 1999; Tierney, et al., 1995). The perception of these nurturing adult/child relationships has been that they will foster positive change; however, there is little research to assess the impact of these programs. The primary focus of research is on the impact on academic progress,

attendance, and pro-social behaviors. There exist few empirical studies on at-risk adolescent females.

Research has demonstrated the significance self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible selves have on the development of a positive vision of the future (Bandura, et al., 2001; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Limited research has indicated there were gender differences in belief in possible selves with adolescent girls yielding higher correlations with relationships rather than occupational future (Knox, Funk, Elliot & Bush, 2000).

The relationship between self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible selves has been associated with the successful vision of the future. How these aspects of self-knowledge are impacted by disadvantaged at-risk adolescent girls' participation in a formal mentoring relationship has not been explored.

Society demands increased competencies among future citizens to compete in the global marketplace. Because of increases in standards-based education, the expectation that "every student will succeed," and the drive to consistently reduce dropout rates, avenues of community support must be explored. As school-based mentorship programs are increasing, the impact on instructional time warrants additional studies. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the phenomena that exists between the mentoring relationship and the development of self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible selves in high-risk adolescent female mentees.

## Methods

### *Philosophical Paradigm*

As we began this journey we hoped to develop an understanding of the constructs held by the mentees, at-risk adolescent girls, and their mentors. In doing this, we focused



on consensus and remaining open to new interpretations as data are compiled over time and as new themes emerged. By focusing on the frame for inquiry and the purpose of the study, we framed this work in the research paradigm of constructivism (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998).

The goal of constructivism is to understand the complex world of experiences as interpreted from those most intimately involved in the experience. It was important to understand the meaning of what we were hearing from an emic point of view. Thus, we sought to develop, understand, and define the experiences we were exploring from the participants' points of reference, leading to "Verstehen ...the meaning of the social phenomena" (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998, p. 223). We took our cues from Denzin and Lincoln (1998) and viewed Verstehen as a process to make sense of or interpret the everyday world and to form meanings and relevant structures from observing how people live, behave, and think within the world.

Ontologically, the constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist construct. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), "realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple intangible constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature, and dependent for their form and content in the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (p. 206). With this in mind, we sought to recognize that the realities of the participants, our own realities, and the realities of the reader/audience might color the interpretation of the study (Creswell, 1998).

Epistemologically, the constructivist paradigm reflects a transactional and subjectivist perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). We have tried to minimize distance and "objective separateness" in the pursuit of knowledge (Creswell, 1998). As

researchers, we know that we are interactively linked with the participants; thus, our findings were literally created as the study proceeded (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998).

emphasis of the constructivist is through the social construction of knowledge.

Methodologically, as constructivists, we employed hermeneutical and dialectical techniques and interchanges (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998). Through our interactions with the participants, dialectical interchanges resulted in a construct of social reality (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998). Through our use of the inductive method of clustering participants' statements regarding the phenomena, a descriptive narrative emerged. The end result of this work was the formulation of a consensus construction, one which is more sophisticated and informed than the hypothesis we had initially proposed (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998).

The postmodern philosophies of interpretive interactionism and hermeneutics served to support the primary methodological framework for the study. Postmodernism is characterized by various interrelated characteristics that parallel the thinking of the empirical social researchers focusing on changing the ways of thinking rather than on calling for action based upon these changes (Creswell, 1998). Interpretive interactionism employs a descriptive realistic picture of the participants in a clear contextual frame, without an over-emphasis on theorizing and actions of the lived experience (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998). Denzin further states that interpretive interactionism requires engagement in cultural criticism of how the participants connect their lived experiences to the cultural representation of those experiences (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The philosophical correlate of hermeneutics, as defined by Slife and Williams (1995), is "to study meaningful human phenomena on the basis of practical

understanding, suggesting that understanding human actions is similar to understanding written text and the interpretation is fundamental to both” (p. 230). Philosophical hermeneutics as employed in this study is concerned with the fact of human existence and the condition of existence or being in the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

#### *Rationale for Research Methodology*

A phenomenological study explores the structures of the consciousness of the lived experiences of several individuals about a phenomenon in order to derive meaning from experiences (Creswell, 2002). Through the building of conceptual themes, an understanding of the essence of the experience is portrayed (Creswell, 2002). The phenomenological tradition and constructivist paradigm are historic in the fields of social science and psychology (Creswell, 1998); therefore, they are compatible with significant research in the field of education and on adolescents. Giorgi (1985) interprets a phenomenological study as researching the phenomenon of learning by going back to the everyday world where people lived through the experience.

#### *Role of the Researchers*

Our primary task was to conduct a study we hoped would benefit humankind. In doing this, we employed strict adherence to ethical considerations. The philosophical paradigm of constructivism and the phenomenological research methodology served as frameworks as data were gathered and analyzed; we took careful steps to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Participants were high-risk adolescent females; therefore, strict adherence to purpose, methods, and ethical issues was paramount.

To address our own preconceptions which might have compromised the integrity of the study, we emphasized the use of bracketing or epoche to develop universal

structures based on experience (Moustakas, 1994). This phenomenological principle ensured that the essence of the experiences was not biased by our preconceptions.

We used a modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological data analysis as presented by Moustakas (1994). This included developing an understanding and reconstruction of the constructs initially held by us and the participants with the objective of building meaning, while maintaining openness toward new interpretations. Discerning reality is the primary objective for building knowledge and understanding (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

#### *Data Generation*

*Participants.* This study included a purposeful sample of two sets of participants: at-risk adolescent girls, the mentee participants, and their adult mentors. The Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program of Greater Miami-Dade County is a mentoring program with historic merit (Public/Private Ventures, 2002). This program served as the catalyst for identifying both the mentees and their mentors as potential participants for the study. The mentee and mentor participants were initially contacted by the agency and were requested to participate in the study. We established interview times through follow up telephone contact.

Mentee criteria for participation included: coming from a high-risk background (low socio-economic, single parent household, abusive family, minority status), in high school or having graduated from high school (17 years of age or older), and having been engaged in a formal mentoring relationship for three to five years. Mentor criteria for participation included: participating in the formal intake process, meeting with the mentee on a regular basis (averaging a minimum of two times per month), and having

been engaged in a formal mentoring relationship for three to five years with the same mentee. The proposed number of mentee/mentor pairs for this study was ten, but only six pairs were included in the study. The Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program provided eight pairs, one of the pairs did not respond, and the other pair did not meet criteria for this study.

*Instruments.* We used four instruments: two demographic surveys and two interview protocols. These instruments were developed to answer the central research question: Can a mentoring relationship which constitutes social capital, develop self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible selves, which then constitutes human capital, in high-risk adolescent female mentees? We developed the protocols based on the literature on mentoring and the under girding theories of self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible selves.

We used the Mentee Background Survey (Appendix A) to collect general background information from the mentees. The instrument provided general demographic and mentoring information which augmented and was compared to interview responses. We used the Mentor Background Survey (Appendix B) to collect similar demographic and mentoring information from the corresponding point of view of the mentor.

The interview protocols, Mentee Interview Questions (Appendix C) and the Mentor Interview Questions (Appendix D) were developed from the literature about mentoring, self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible selves. The question format began with introductory and less probing questions to develop rapport with participants (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The inquiry focus of the open-ended questions explored the nurturing nature of the mentoring relationship; the impact of the mentoring relationship in the mentee's life; the feelings of self-efficacy, the goals and aspirations of the individual;

and the feelings of a positive future possible self. The questions from the mentee and mentor interview protocols were interrelated and designed to explore the essence of the mentoring relationship from the two different points of view. The questions for the mentors were designed to compare and confirm the mentees' self perceptions on the aforementioned factors.

#### *Data Collection and Processing*

Phenomenological research predominately employs long interviews to collect data on the topic in question. We used semi-structured interviews and an interactive process with open-ended questions to elicit responses (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose, according to the constructivist paradigm, was to build understanding and the reconstruction of the constructs held by the participants, focusing on consensus while remaining open to new interpretations as data are compiled over time and new themes emerge in accordance with paralleling the phenomenological tradition (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

*Interview process.* We designed the research questions central to this study in order to explore the meaning of the experience from the participants' perspectives (Berg, 2000; Creswell, 1998). We used the open-ended questions in semi-structured individual interviews with both the mentees and their mentors (Berg, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). We conducted the interviews at mutually agreed upon times and locations to ensure privacy. The naturalistic methodological procedures and epistemological assumptions framing this study required researchers to minimize objective separateness.

*Data record keeping.* We collected data from multiple sources, both primary and secondary. The primary data sources for this study included the participants' responses to

open-ended questions posed in one-on-one semi-structured individual interviews (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). We recorded the interviews on audiotapes and then transcribed verbatim (Berg, 2001).

Secondary data were collected from the demographic surveys completed by the participants and the researchers' notes. Additionally, the researchers maintained a log of daily activities to reference activities, ensure continuity, and assist in the decision-making procedures regarding revisions and modifications (Berg, 2001; Silverman, 2000).

### *Data Analysis*

The general process of data analysis as outlined by Creswell (1998) initiates with the original protocols being divided into statements or "horizontalization." Next the information was compiled into clusters of meanings which were expressed in psychological and phenomenological concepts. Lastly, these clusters were linked together to form a general description of the experience, "including the textual description of the 'what' was experienced and a structural description of how it was experienced" (p. 55). We used self-reflection to promote research credibility and confirmability (Creswell, 1998; Milinki, 1999).

We used certain procedures to analyze the data including listening to the verbatim transcripts of the audiotapes, organizing data, and analyzing data using manual coding procedures, as outlined by Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen. This method ensured rigor by providing consistency in coding and schemes (Creswell, 2002; Silverman, 2000; Moustakas, 1994).

We analyzed the transcripts by using a modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of phenomenological data analysis as outlined by Moustakas (1994). The

procedural steps presented in the order of analysis are as follows:

- Consider each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience.
- Record all relevant statements.
- List each non-repetitive, non-overlapping statement. These are the invariant horizons or meaning units of the experience (formulating meanings).
- Relate and cluster the invariant meaning units into themes.
- Synthesize the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience. Include verbatim examples.
- Reflect on your own textural description. Through imaginative variation, construct a description of the structures of the experience.
- Construct a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience.
- Then from the individual textural-structural descriptions of all experiences, construct a composite textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience, integrating all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience representing the group as a whole (pp. 121-122).

We included multiple levels of content analysis -- an analysis of mentee responses, an analysis of mentor responses, and an analysis comparing and contrasting the mentee's responses to their respective mentor's responses. We



collected secondary data using the demographic surveys completed by the participants at the point of consent and interview notes. Additionally, we maintained logs of daily activities to reference activities, ensure continuity, and assist in the decision-making procedures regarding revisions and modifications (Berg, 2001; Silverman, 2000).

During analysis, we extracted significant statements and eliminated duplicate statements. We presented significant statements in tables under the themes that most represent participants' perceptions of the mentoring relationship (Creswell, 1998). This design assisted in formulating the emerging themes. Congruent to the premise of phenomenological studies, the constructivist paradigm is based upon emerging constructs (Denzin, & Lincoln, 1998).

#### *Steps to Ensure Trustworthiness*

Credibility is establishing confidence in the truth of the findings within the context of the study (Krefting, 1991). This study employed a method for data analysis proposed by Moustakas, incorporating the reflexivity of the researcher and participant feedback to promote credibility (Creswell, 1998; Milinki, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas, (1994) states that the phenomenologist is most interested in the meaning of the experience for self and then uses others to provide intersubjectivite validity, paralleling credibility. Moustakas, (1994) includes a process for participant feedback and notes the existence of discrepancies. The discrepancies may be noted between various clusters; some themes may flatly contradict other ones or may appear unrelated. Through the adherence to the philosophical constructs innate in the methodology, the researchers remained open to unexpected information. Further, the multiple levels of content analysis used in this study also enhanced the credibility by affording triangulation of the data. The

use of triangulation, the method of structural coherence, and the reflexivity of the researchers enhanced the credibility of the study.

The extent of the representiveness of the participants for a particular group establishes a possible case for transferability (Krefting, 1991). This study included a purposeful sample of adolescent females who have participated in a mentoring relationship. We selected a diverse group of mentees from the population provided by Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Additionally, the dense description of the mentees and mentors provided through the established methodology supported the transferability of this study. However, ultimately transferability is determined by the reader.

Dependability is the consistency of the findings (Krefting, 1991). We hoped to enhance dependability by dense description of the research methods, adding to the rigor of the study (Silverman, 2000). The researchers also employed triangulation of the data and peer examination as means to ensure dependability. We hoped self-reflection and triangulation of multiple data sources and multiple theoretical perspectives would promote confirmability (Creswell, 1998; Milinki, 1999).

## Findings

### *Introduction*

This study explored the relationship between at-risk female adolescents' participation in a mentoring relationship and the fostering of self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible selves. For the purposes of this paper, we include a description and outline of the demographics of the mentees and an analysis of mentees' descriptions of their experiences participating in a mentoring relationship.

*Description of the Participants*

The six mentee participants were in senior high school or had graduated from high school. Participants were purposefully selected to represent various characteristics associated with high-risk factors found in adolescents. Mentees were all young women from modest backgrounds. Of the population, one was White, from an Italian-American background, two were Black, African-Americans, two were twins who were Multi-racial, from a Trinidadian-American background, and one was Hispanic, from a Columbian-American background. Of the six young women, one had graduated from high school. The others were currently in senior high school preparing for college. Three of the mentees were 18 years old, and the other three were 17 years-old. Only one of the mentees came from an intact family (both parents living in the household). Two of the mentees were not living with either parents, one was in the custody of her grandmother, the other in the custody of a guardian as both parents are deceased.

All of the mentors were in a mentoring relationship with the current mentee for at least three years, and some relationships extended as long as eight years. In the beginning of the mentoring relationship, mentees met on average with their mentors about twice a month or more frequently. Mentees admit that now they are finding it difficult to schedule time as they have become more involved with other activities; thus, they spend more time communicating on the telephone and via e-mail. Even though the formal mentoring relationship with Big Brothers/Big Sisters ends at age 18, all of these pairs are committed to remaining in the relationship. Surnames of mentees and mentors were replaced with the word "Mentee" or "Mentor" as well as other individuals referred to by the participants, such as Guardian and Social Worker in order to maintain confidentiality.

Following the interviews, we analyzed the data, and themes emerged from the transcripts. Four hundred twenty-two significant statements were extracted from the six mentee transcripts. Any point of view that was repeated within the significant statements or common between or among them was included for endorsement. These mentee significant statements (Appendix E) were comprised of both partial and complete statements, consistent with the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen methodology as cited in Moustakas (1994).

Next, the statements were clustered into the invariant meaning experiences formulating meaning units. Through the process of manual coding of the significant statements, 43 formulated meanings units emerged. Each of the formulated meanings was followed by a numeric reference corresponding to the significant statements. Some of the significant statements were interpreted into more than one formulated meaning. The participants were mailed a copy of their significant statements and corresponding formulated meanings for confirmation.

Formulated meanings were sorted into groups representing four major themes. A complete listing of the major themes and the sub-themes is included in Appendix E. The themes and sub-themes numbered consecutively and referenced with a numeric reference to the significant statement which serves as an audit trail.

To ensure accuracy, any formulated meaning unit in the theme, but not validated in the transcript was reexamined, as was any formulated meaning unit proposed in the transcript and not represented in the theme cluster. Formulated meanings were reviewed by a peer colleague who has served as a community-based mental health counselor and who has had extensive experience working with Big Brothers/Big Sisters school-based

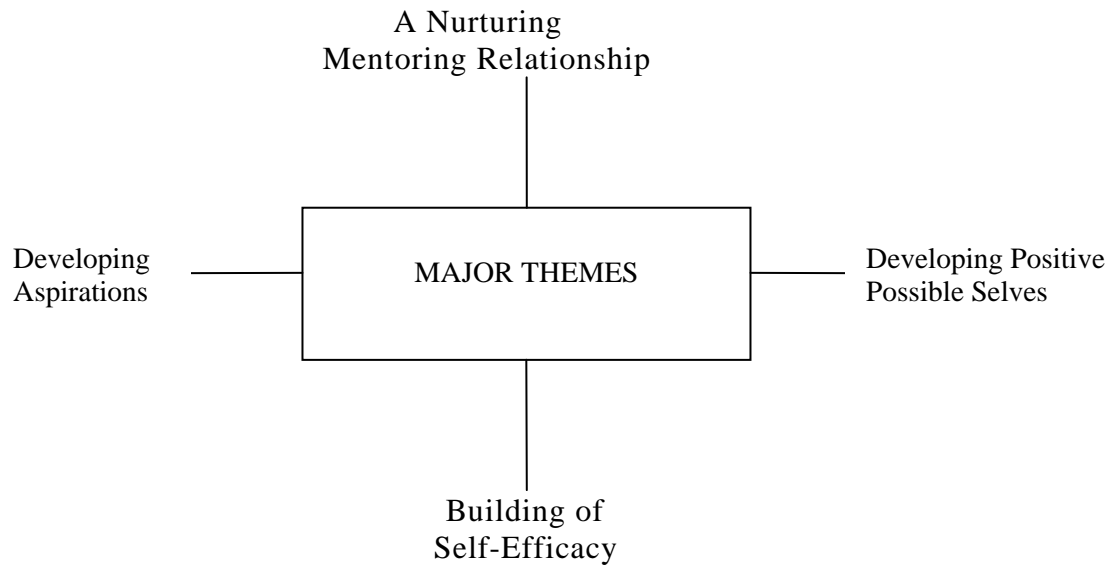
programs. To confirm any doubts about the meaning of any statements, we corroborated the meaning with the participants to ensure the intent was not misrepresented. With the exception of one statement, all meanings were accepted as correct.

#### *Overview of Major Mentee Themes*

Four themes emerged from the mentee interviews: perceptions of a nurturing mentoring relationship; the building of self-efficacy; the development of aspirations; and the building of positive current and future possible selves. These themes represented how the mentees perceived their personal development as a result of their participation in the mentoring relationship (see Figure 1).

The mentees discussed the significant value the mentoring relationship played in shaping their lives. They enjoyed the open communication, being listened to, the ability to freely share the most intimate details of their lives, and receiving mature and thoughtful advice when it was sought. They recognized the significance of their mentors serving as role models for educational and career goals. Mentoring relationships that are built on trust demonstrate the fuel to change lives. The investment of time and the sharing of talent and of oneself helps to build the human capital that sustains a family, a community, and a nation.

Figure 1. Structural Description of the Mentee Major Themes

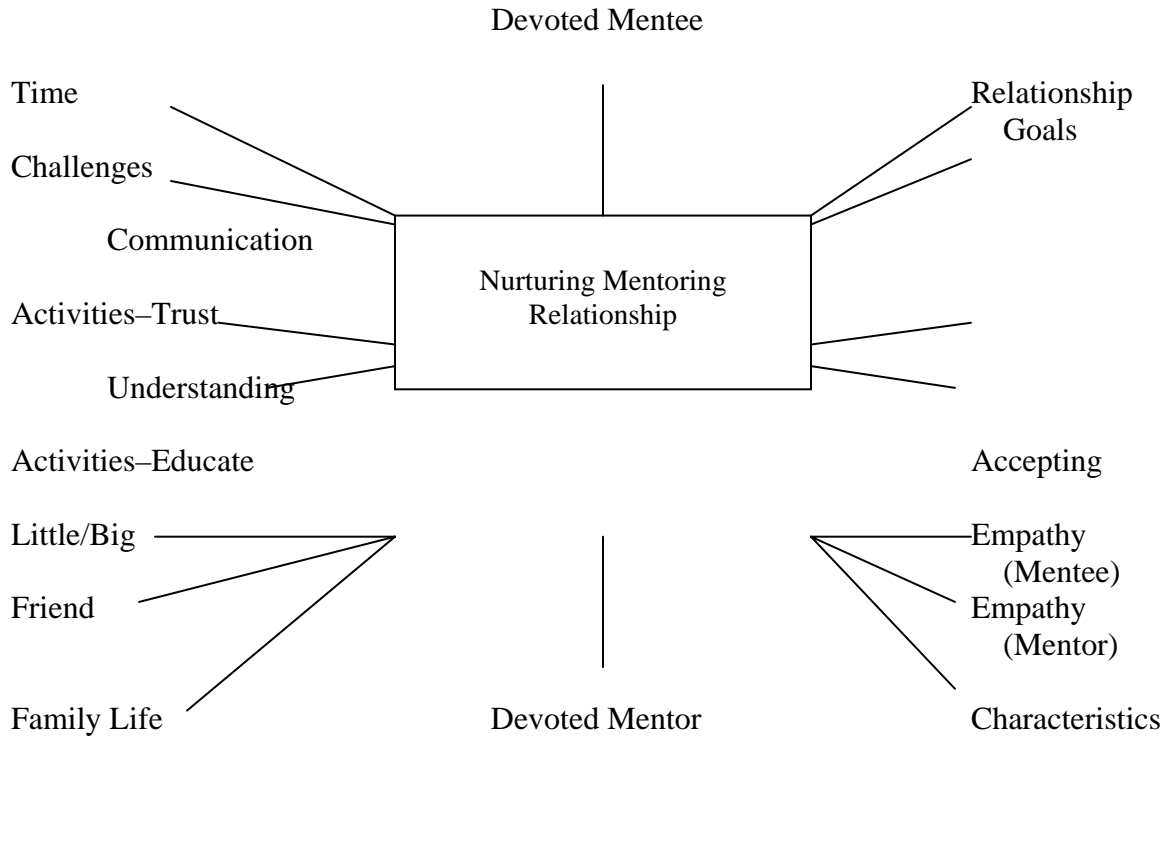



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*Mentee Major Theme 1: A Nurturing Mentoring Relationship*

This theme represented those factors and characteristics in the mentoring relationship that foster a person-to-person relationship, one which builds personal competencies and life-skills. The sub-themes that supported the major theme of a nurturing mentoring relationship were relationship goals, the little sister/big sister bond, personal characteristics of the mentor, time invested in the relationship, challenges to the relationship, activities that build trust, activities that educate, mutual sharing of family life, understanding, friendship, acceptance, empathy, and devotion (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Structural Description of Mentee Major Theme 1: A Nurturing Mentoring Relationship



The mentees had preconceived ideas of what they wanted in a mentoring relationship. They expressed the need for a mature friend, someone to talk to, and a supportive figure to provide guidance other than a parent. As an example, one mentee expressed her beliefs:

The mentoring relationship has meant to me a time where I could be with people, where I could be with someone who would talk to me not so much as a parent but more as a friend, but still as an authority figure and just guide me at times when I would need it.

Coming from a single-parent household, this mentee cherished the idea of having another person fill the role of a missing parent: “When Mentor came into my life, it was like I had another extra parent that was really close to me.”

Another frequently-expressed desire of mentees, particularly those who were an only child, was to have a big sister. These mentees found companionship and someone they could share the intimate details of their lives. For example, one mentee revealed: “She’s really like my big sister now, she gives me advice, she talks to me, I can tell her just about anything. The little secrets she is going to keep in confidence.” Another mentee expressed a similar belief:

The mentoring relationship was really important, because I did not have any brothers or sisters and wanted someone I could talk to about anything. Mentor always treated me like her little sister. Whenever we would go out, mentor would tell people that I was her little sister, so it was really nice.

To build a bond, it takes that special person. Big Brothers/Big Sisters prides itself on the use of social workers to identify characteristics that will foster compatible matches. They also support the relationships, especially in the formative stage. Some of the personal characteristics of mentors who have successfully maintained these nurturing relationships were perceived by their mentees’ as outgoing, caring, friendly, and supportive. One mentee said, “My mentor is very, very sweet and very understanding and she’s very caring; she likes to talk about issues a lot. She’s very how should I say, she’s a very good hearted person.”

Another mentee expressed a characteristic she admired in her mentor which was that she accepted her without judgment: “One of the most significant characteristics about



my mentor is that she's independent and not judgmental, and that's what I admire about her the most."

Also noted by one mentee was the optimistic and positive nature of her mentor: "Some special characteristics about my mentor are that she has a good personality, she's pretty, she's successful, she's an attorney, and she doesn't let things get to her; she's optimistic."

All of the mentees were dedicated to the investment of time. The individual mentoring relationships were stated to have been intact from three years to the longest eight years. Even when the relationship exceeded the mentee's 18th birthday, the end of a Big Brothers/Big Sisters formal relationship, the pair remained committed to the relationship. The mentees expressed that although there were challenges to maintaining the same level of time commitment because they were more involved with social activities as they entered adolescence, the commitment to the relationship was important in their lives. They expressed they were still committed to meeting at least once a month, if not more frequently. As methods of keeping in touch, they often talked on the telephone or corresponded via e-mail. For example: "We'll since I moved, we don't live as close as we used to, but we still like talk on the phone and we still do things, just not as often." As articulated by another mentee, her mentor uses on-line communication to support and keep in touch. "If I see her on-line she'll be like have you finished your homework, you know are you supposed to be on the computer?"

The most frequently expressed challenge regarding the mentees meeting their mentors on a regular basis was their busy schedules. As the mentees have grown, so have

the opportunities for them to participate in other activities. This mentee describes the challenge:

The challenge is that we both are busy, and find it difficult to schedule outings. Since Mentor has a baby now, she is a little busy and since I got in high school, I've been a little bit busy, but we still do it.

The commitment to the relationship has been fostered over time and through the participation in activities that are mutually enjoyed. The mentees expressed that a variety of activities fostered a time to be together to talk and to build a trusting bond. One mentee stated, "Going to the beach was fun, mentor would take me to the beach and it was just fun because we both would talk and would get a tan. It is just stupid little things like that I liked." Another mentee enjoyed going out to eat and the diversity of activities that she participated in with her mentor:

We both like to go to the beach. We go to museums. We try to go to games that Big Brothers and Big Sisters have. We try to do the things that they have at the Museum of Science. We go different places on our own, out to eat. So it's like really we try to make new things and experience new things in order to just have a chance to re-talk it or re-adventure it.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters sponsors activities and events to provide mentees with the opportunity to experience community, cultural, and educational events that are not within the framework of their family lives. By broadening their experiences, mentees have the opportunity to grow socially and culturally. These opportunities and others provided by the mentors not only provided a forum for discussion, but also an opportunity to broaden the mentees' life-skills. As an example, a mentee expressed: "We

do a lot of things like a lot of cultural activities like go to plays about history and we would go to Big Brothers/Big Sisters sponsored activities...” Another mentee echoed the experiential enrichment provided by her mentor:

We also engaged in a lot of activities that Big Brothers and Big Sisters planned for the Bigs and Littles. She taught me how to belly dance, and she even bought me a DVD, you know one of the exercise belly dancing videos. She gives me new experiences to try new things that I really enjoy like the belly dancing, going out to places. She’s very enriching.

Experiencing different foods provided a mentee an opportunity to broaden her understanding of other cultures:

We’ve gone to restaurants. She’s taken me to a lot of like restaurants. Before I did not know much about Japanese food, so she has taken me to a few Japanese restaurants and thanks to her, I love Sushi now.

The mentees enjoyed activities that enhanced their academic skills, so in addition to going to bookstores, their mentor also took advantage of the opportunities to visit the Miami Science Museum, a partner with Big Brothers/Big Sisters. One mentee stated

When I first met her, I will never forget it she brought me a book called *Clueless* because she thought I liked to read. We do really different things. We went to the Museum of Science, and she would play with everything; she was just like a big old kid. We go to the book store. We always go to the book store when she has to study, or I have to study, or when it is just a slow day, and we don’t know what we want to do. We just go to the bookstore and spend hours in there. We find a table; she goes and finds her different books. I go find my different books.

Another mentee also participated in similar experiences with her mentor:

We've gone to book stores, and she's given me books that she thought I might like. Sometimes we joined in the Miami Science Museum program, a special program there, and we would go there to do activities and have fun. It was a really nice.

Mentees also enjoyed participating in activities that afforded them the opportunity to meet and feel a part of the mentor's family, as well as the mentor participating in the mentees' family events. These reciprocal opportunities to participate in family life fostered not only friendship, but also acceptance and devotion. One said, "Mentor came to my elementary graduation: it was like mentor was really a part of the main events in my life."

Holidays also provided a forum for mentees to participate in their mentor's family activities. For example, one mentee commented, "I went to two Thanksgivings with her family, and Christmas with her, and they had a Fourth of July cookout with a lot of family and stuff like that." Another mentee also articulated the importance of feeling a part of her mentor's family:

I liked when we went with her little cousin ice-skating. When we would go to the beach, we bring her sister and some of her friends. I like these [activities] because I get more involved with her life, then mentor gets involved with mine, and then we bring them both together.

The mentees also stated that they appreciated having someone who they believed would accept them for who they are and understand them. As one mentee indicated, "Mentor knows that I'm a teenager because mentor's kind of young. Mentor knows what

I'm like. Sometimes my mom wouldn't understand some things, but Mentor would always understand"

Another mentee valued the honest nature and open communication she had with her mentor. She said, "Mentor won't try to sugar coat things; she'll get right down there and talk about them, and help me out with things." This honest communication was also appreciated by another mentee who remarked

The mentoring relationship has changed because in the beginning you're cautious of what to say to one another, you don't know whether I'd offend you, if I say this or whether I could just come out and say it. It's like now we could just say things to each other. We try to basically be honest all the time which is a real good thing.

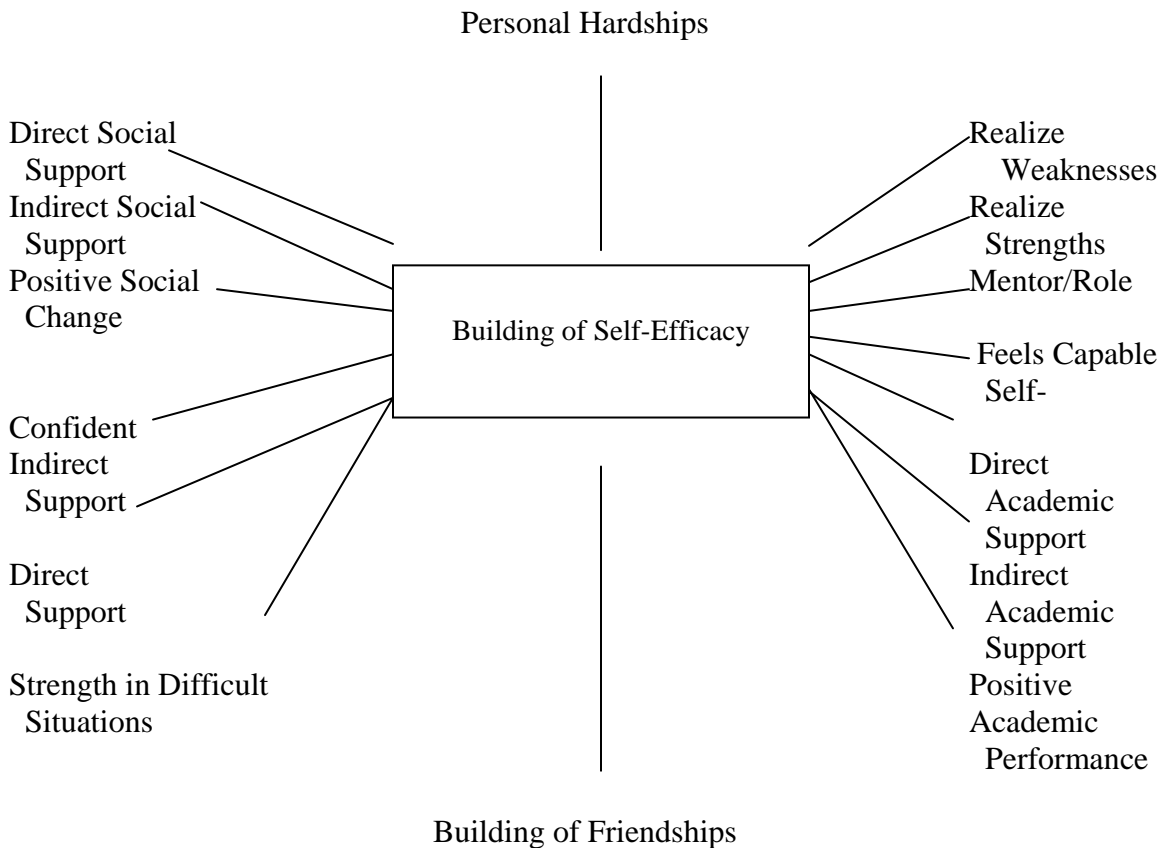
Through the sharing of time, mutually enjoyable activities, and conversation, mentees felt that their relationships included acceptance, open communication, understanding, empathy, and a devotion to a mutually supportive relationship. One mentee indicated that the empathy shown by her mentor far exceeded what one would expect, thus demonstrating that mentors were not just there to have fun with their mentees, but they were there for all of life's challenges and experiences:

She would take my mom to the hospital. There was a time that she took me to the hospital. She would always tell me you know things are going to be okay. She was always concerned what was going to happen to me. She was always there. The day that my mom died, Mentor came, and Mentor was by my side. At the funeral, she was there. She's been there for me. Mentor would say, "I don't want to lose you as a little sister, and you know I'm always going to be there."

*Mentee Major Theme 2: Building of Self-Efficacy*

The sub-themes that emerged as being inherent to the major theme of building self-efficacy were the ability to persevere in spite of hardships, the recognition of strengths and weaknesses, the feelings of academic success, the feelings of social confidence and well-being, the ability to foster friendships, the ability to perform in difficult situations, the belief in one's own capabilities, the mentors serving as role models, and mentors providing direct and indirect support (see Figure 3).

*Figure 3. Structural Description of Mentee Major Theme 2: Building of Self-Efficacy*



Self-efficacy is developed by personal experiences. The mentees each had to overcome hardships in their lives. Often having to deal with hardships has been shown to

diminish self-efficacy. Divorce, the death of parents, and the loss of custodial rights left five of the six mentee participants in households that did not have two parents to influence and support the building of life skills needed for future success. Those who lived in a single-parent or guardian households had parents who sometimes had to work more than one job to provide for the family. These factors affected the development of social and technical skills needed in life. Mentees painted a verbal picture of the realities of their lives.

Three of the six mentees were the only child and expressed the desire to have someone else in their lives, a big sister. A mentee stated, "My mother told me about the program, and since she knew I was an only child and I would get lonely sometimes." Another mentee living with an elderly grandmother had limited experiences:

I did not get a chance to go places and have someone to talk to all the time. My grandmother [guardian since birth/ parents lost custody at birth and were not in her early life] was there, but we could not go places, because she did not have a car, and she was older.

A third mentee who also grew up as an only child with elderly parents described her situation:

My mom started getting sick after my dad died, and I was just 11. So I started doing the household things. I started learning how to cook, I did the grocery shopping. I paid the bills. I did like all these things by bus or by walking. My aunt, she is not really my aunt, but I call her that (her guardian), she was the one who put me in Big Brothers and Big Sisters. She signed me up, so I got to meet Mentor, and Mentor would take me out. Then after my mom started getting real

sick, and she passed away. So my aunt, she kind of adopted me [after mom passed away]. But, Mentor was always with me. She was just like my big sister, she would just comfort me, and she was always there for me.

Divorce and parents working two jobs can leave parents with little time to communicate with their children and provide the social experiences they would want for them. A mentee explained how much the mentoring relationship means to her: “It [mentoring relationship] means a lot to me because I only have a mom.” The turmoil in a single-parent household can also leave a child feeling lost and alone. A mentee explained

Oh they [my family] were busy; they did not have a lot of time for me. My parents were not together. My older sisters, they were busy with school, they were into things and stuff like that. My two sisters that were living with us at that time, and they did not too much get along. If I was to talk to one of them, it was like I was choosing sides and betraying the other. It was pretty tough.

The mentee’s twin further defined the turmoil and loneliness she felt in her family:

In my family I would always get into arguments with my mom, and it was sometimes lonely and, during the summer when all my friends were going out and I just had nothing to do. But, after I met Mentor, I stopped being outside [restricted to the front porch] and I spent most of the time with her. If we got into arguments I would see things from her [mother’s] point of view, and she would see things from mine. I would get into arguments with my mom and my older sisters a lot.

The historic intent of mentorship is to help young people to become productive and successful citizens for the future. These mentor role models influenced the



development of their mentees socially, emotionally, and academically. They served as role models for the building of friendships. The mentors influenced their mentees, fostering more confident and self-assured young women who could develop and execute plans. The mentees expressed the distinct difference these professional women made in their lives.

The building of social skills is important for feelings of confidence and capability. The mentees expressed how their mentors helped them to be able to interact with others and communicate more effectively. One mentee described how her mentor supported the development of her social confidence:

If I ever met somebody new, I would say hello, I would just be quiet and not say too much, and I would just look at them and just look and look around. But now [after meeting Mentor], I could just say hello, ask them how you doing and basically could start a conversation, like how are you doing, how was your day, and just find something that's common that we could work with.

The building of social confidence was echoed by another mentee:

Before when I met a new person I would be like shy, wouldn't say anything the other person would have to like talk to me to get me to say things, but after I met my mentor it was like I was trying to get to know them before they try to get to know me. Mentor helped me by basically by introducing me to some of her co-workers and stuff like that and just basically being there for me when I needed somebody to be there and taking me out and stuff like that.

Mentees also expressed that they had gained confidence in their abilities to meet challenging situations. They expressed their mentors had developed in them the confidence and ability to manage difficult situations. As an example, one mentee said

Before if I had a challenging situation, I wouldn't let anybody, anybody know. I would just try to find the easy way out. But since I met my mentor, I know I have people I can turn to if I need help. I can plan what to do, and I face them instead of trying to find the easy way out.

Another mentee indicated that her mentor served as a role model for using resources to develop and implement plans in difficult situations:

Before I had my mentor and I came into a difficult situation, I would always just do stuff off the top of my head and later on regret what I did, or regret what I said, or regret the whole situation. But now I have her to talk to, I also have different people to talk to, so now I just think about it, get some advice and then whatever my actions lead to, that is what I do. My mentor taught me that.

Changing high schools can be very difficult for an adolescent. One mentee noted how she was supported by her mentor; therefore, she had the confidence to find positives in a difficult situation. She recognized the experience as an opportunity for growth and how it would enhance her capabilities for future success:

I like try to like look at the positive in things. Like switching schools, I did not want to switch schools, and then like there was no choice. I was getting really bad grades in my other school. Mentor and I talked about it. It was like you know what, it was a new start, and I would meet new friends. Now it is okay, but I really did not want to do it.

Academics were also an important building block for current successes and the future successes of these young women. Mentors inspired and supported their mentees directly and indirectly. A mentee stated, “She’s offered help [academically]. She has helped me because I’ve taken my homework to her house sometimes. We’ve looked over it together, and she helped me study for tests.” Another mentee also received tutoring for a specific area she found difficult, mathematics:

I didn’t really have good grades. Math, I’m really bad at it. Then seeing her [mentor] do good in school made me want to change. So I did, and I started making good grades. Mentor tutored me so that helped. I felt good [to be attaining academic success].

The feeling of receiving academic support that inspired better performance was also echoed by a third mentee:

I did okay in school before I met Mentor. I would definitely say that Mentor’s very concerned with my school work. I always try to work very hard and keep my grades up high for not only my parents, but so Mentor also could be proud of me too.

The building of positive friendships was important. In the collaborative world of today, networking and cooperative working skills are paramount. For adolescents living in high-risk communities, the friends they have can either put them at greater risk or provide a supportive network. One mentee discussed how the mentoring experience has impacted her relationships: “It [the mentoring relationship] made me a better friend to my friends. It [the relationship] made me have a better relationship with my sister and brother.” Another mentee used her mentor as a role model to select her own friends,

noting, “I see the friends that Mentor has, and I see the person that she is, and that’s the type that I want to associate myself with.”

The mentees expressed that their feelings of self-confidence were related to their participation in the relationship with their mentor. They recognized that the relationship fostered a belief in their own capabilities, that they could execute their plans and desired actions in social situations, as well as in difficult situations. They also realized this was related to their own academic achievement.

One mentee noted how her mentor encouraged her to meet academic or personal commitments. She learned to develop and execute her plans:

Yes, mentor doesn’t like me to procrastinate. She pushes me to do what I have to do at the time that I have to do it. Mentor just tells me you know mentee time to start working, time to take on the problem. I’ll be like okay, alright. I’m not too enthusiastic, but I figure it out. I get to it and get it done.

This mentee believed her enhanced self-efficacy was derived from the relationship with her mentor. Her mentor indirectly influenced her future plans and elevated her goals.

Before I used to try and try to make my mom proud. I also used to have low self-esteem. Now with hanging out with her [mentor], and being with her and the person that she is, it kind of made me want work hard and attain and set higher goals for myself. I am confident now that I know I can achieve; that I didn’t know before.

Self-efficacy is having the confidence to reach for a dream that has been well planned. The next mentee was in the pre-nursing program at her high school. She had the

confidence and capability to develop her plans for her future based on her current educational status:

Mentor wants me always to reach for the best, not settle for something less.

Between Mentor and my mom, they always motivate me just to keep going because it's like I deserve more, and I need go for it. I will start nursing program for the first two years at Miami-Dade and then a forensics pathologist. I am just waiting to start nursing and just when I get settled in, that's when I am going to apply to a school that has the best forensics pathologist program. I would go anywhere in the world for that, because that's my goal.

### *Mentee Major Theme 3: Developing Aspirations*

The sub-themes under the major theme of developing aspirations focused on the role of the mentor serving as a role model, providing indirect or direct support in career and academic goal setting, as well as setting life's goals in general ( see Figure 4).

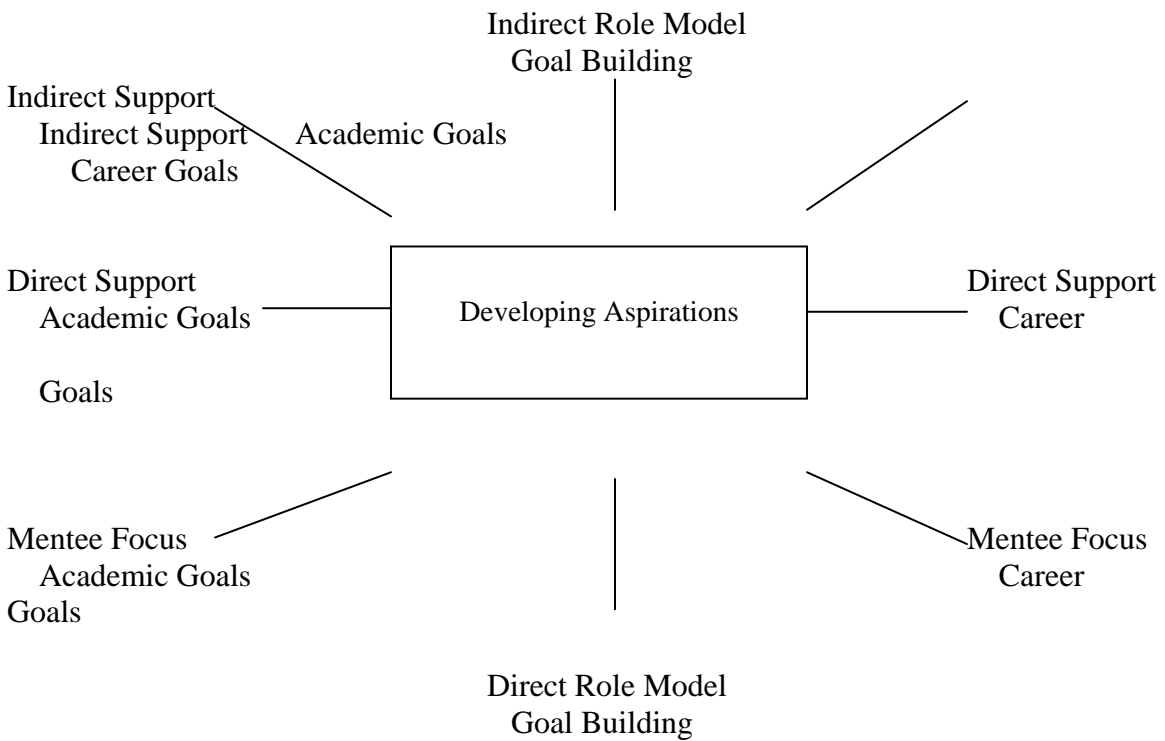
The choices the mentees make during these formative years of their lives shape their futures. Many of these young women lacked the guidance or perseverance to capitalize on the educational resources available to secure their futures. The mentors provided the support to encourage mentees to seek all that they could garner from their educational institutions and the community.

The mentees' academic aspirations were influenced by their mentors who supported and modeled educational aspirations. Mentees attributed the building of a strong desire to achieve to their mentors. Thus, mentees have expressed that by their mentors fostering a close, trusting, and nurturing relationship, their mentors played a

significant role in the academic choices they made and are making. For example, one mentee stated

Mentor likes my accomplishments. I admire her because Mentor has good grades. I didn't really have good grades and then seeing her do good in school made me want to change. So I did, and I started making good grades. Mentor tutored me, so that helped.

Figure 4. Structural Description of Mentee Major Theme 3: Developing Aspirations



Monitoring the academic achievement of mentees by their mentors also inspired and motivated the mentees to achieve at higher levels. One mentee explained

She does get me to study a lot more -- like she pushes me to study, and it inspires me do better in school. She just tells me, you know are you supposed to be on the computer. Like if I see her on-line she'll be like have you finished your homework, you know are you supposed to be on the computer.

The interest and monitoring of current academic achievement is echoed by another mentee:

I would definitely say that Mentor's very concerned with my school work. I would always try to work very hard and keep my grades up high for not only my parents, but so Mentor also could be proud of me, too.

The mentees expressed that the guidance they received from the mentors was instrumental in supporting and molding their higher educational choices. The college choices they are making now will form the paths to meeting their career aspirations. Two of the mentees stated that they had defined their career goals early in life, while the other four realized their goals in high school. Society can look forward to several of these young women joining the medical field as five of the six mentees are pursuing a medical career. The mentees perceived the support they received from their mentors was not forced, but rather a natural aspect of the supportive relationship. One mentee noted She wanted to attend the same university as her mentor. This mentee expressed the feeling of receiving a natural indirect support from her mentor as related to her pursuit of higher education and career choices:

When I graduate from high school I would like to go to Miami-Dade in the nursing program, and I want to be an R.N. Mentor really didn't really force me to any of my career goals she wanted me to be what I wanted.

Realizing the need to establish goals that are congruent with one's interests is important. This mentee did not need to be told; she recognized that her mentor works hard at her job because her mentor was passionate about what she does each day. Her mentor helped her identify colleges and potential scholarships that will afford her to make her dream a reality:

Before I thought about Criminal Law like my Big [Sister], but I really am looking into medicine now. I am looking at going to Florida State, University of Miami, or FIU. I am interested in Anatomy and Physiology and Biology. She [mentor] has talked to me about going to college and finding the right college and scholarships so I can go to medical school. It [the relationship] made me realize that when I look at Mentor, she is very much into her career [an attorney], and I always admired that, and I always want to be like that. Knowing mentor is what contributed to me in making my decision that I want to become a doctor.

Recognizing from her mentor, there was more to a career than just a job, this mentee has been motivated to look at the pursuit of satisfaction in the career she chooses:

My career goals have changed; in the past I had wanted to become a teacher or a veterinarian. My goals have changed; now that I see that Mentor is happy in a job that she's in, and it really made me stop and think what I really want to do. Now I want to become like a doctor or a pediatrician. Because it is like I said in mentor's career environment, some people have careers that they hate to get up in the morning and go to their job and she is very optimistic about her job. I realize that if I want to be like her, happy like her in her job, I need to pick something that makes me happy like she did.



One mentor provided strong advice to motivate her mentee to apply and go to college. Her mentor has taught her how to develop the plan necessary to move forward; she must now execute the plan. A recent change in family dynamics put her plans on hold, but she was determined to move forward, and her mentor was vigilant in her support and motivation:

Mentor keeps pushing me to go through what I have to do. Go to any kind of college, go to any kind of school, just get in there, put my foot in the door. That's what mentor says. Mentor and I would talk about what I had to do next, then next to get where I was going. At one point I wanted to be a teacher like her [mentor], but as I went to high school in the medical magnet, now I want to be a pediatrician. I will be just like a teacher also because I'll be taking care of someone as well.

It appeared helpful to have a mentor who was affiliated with a university. This mentee received direct guidance in college preparation to assist her in fulfilling her career aspirations:

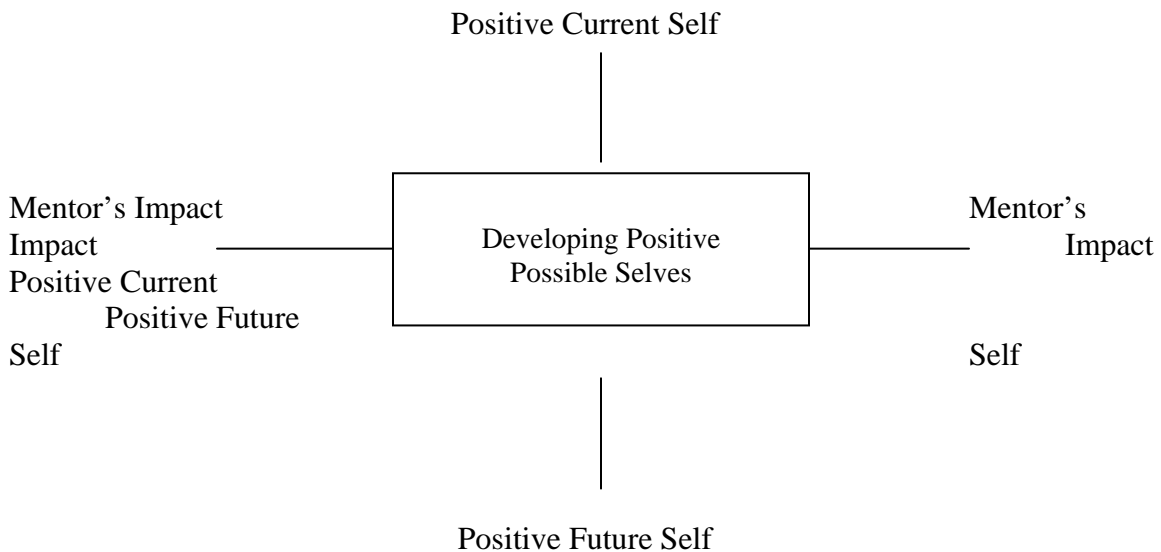
She is she's involved [in my future plans] a lot, once in a while, we'd be talking and like so you know you're starting to get near the end of high school, what are your plans. I talk to mentor about colleges you know ones that I am interested in, and she'll tell me, "Oh I've heard of a good college that you might like for this thing." I'm considering the California Institute of the Arts or possibly New World College which I think is linked to Miami-Dade, maybe FIU, maybe UM, and there is one school in New York that I can't recall the name of it, but I am sort of interested into looking into these schools. She teaches at a college. I definitely

want to be an actress. An actress, a singer, a writer, an anime artist, an anime is a type of Japanese cartooning and uh a fashion designer. She's just making me want it more, it's like she makes me believe in myself and what I want. She inspires me to work harder for what I want to do.

*Mentee Major Theme 4: Developing Positive Possible Selves*

The theme of developing positive possible selves included the sub-themes of: positive current self, positive future self, mentors impact on current self, and mentors impact on future self (see Figure 5). This construct was represented by the mentees' statements regarding their present and their future significant hopes and fears; this self-knowledge represented their fantasies, fears, goals, and the threats to achieving their goals.

*Figure 5.* Structural Description of Mentee Major Theme 4: Developing Positive Possible Selves



The feelings of the positive self have been fostered by the role the mentors have played in the mentees' lives. The mentees made no significant statements indicating they were experiencing any negative beliefs regarding their current or future selves. They expressed a clear understanding of their weaknesses as individuals, but expressed viable solutions or strategies to remediate. The mentees expressed the major roles their mentors played in their positive current self-concept and their hopes and belief in their abilities to accomplish future plans for their lives. As an example, one mentee stated:

Mentor wants me always to reach for the best, not settle for something less. When I graduate, I am hopeful I will have my nursing assistant license [from] the Magnet program at Northwest. I've been there since 9<sup>th</sup> grade. [Mentor has influenced career choice] in an indirect way. She helped me basically to let me know that don't let anyone tell you what you want to do or influence what you want to do, just going out and trying something....

With determination, this next mentee expressed her belief that she will become a successful pediatrician. Her mentor encouraged and motivated her to move forward to pursue her career goals. She stated that she believed she would be a successful pediatrician in the future, thus exemplifying a positive possible future self:

Mentor is a friend I can talk too. I want to be a pediatrician. Mentor told me to keep going on and doing what I need to do, and I'll get there to be a pediatrician. Mentor helps; she prays through it. I will get there. Mentor keeps pushing me to go through what I have to do....I believe I will be a successful pediatrician.

Reaching for her goals early in life has made another creative mentee a determined young woman. She has planned to pursue multiple careers in the future. She has already begun

an acting career. Her mentor assisted her in participating in a video documentary on teen dating. She feels positive about her current abilities and uses them as a springboard for future goals, hopes, and dreams:

I've always known that I wanted be this [an actress, a singer, a writer, an anime artist, an anime is a type of Japanese cartooning and a fashion designer] thing since 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Mentor's just making me want it more; it's like she makes me believe in myself and what I want. I am still with my same dreams. She's just enhanced those, and she talks to me about them, she gives me opportunities to achieve those dreams. For example, the video, I get connections, mentor finds out about an audition for something, she'll always e-mail it to me immediately.

Establishing a timeframe for life's transitions is important, particularly for adolescents in low socioeconomic settings. One mentee indicated that she wishes to serve as a mentor in the future, giving back to someone what she has received. She sees herself as capable, driven to meet goals and perceives herself to have a positive future:

The mentoring relationship has changed my desires to meet goals because now I am more determined to reach the goals that I set in myself. [Goals] To become a mentor when I am 18 or of age and to go to college, go to medical school, and become a doctor. I want to have a family and a successful marriage. That's how Mentor did hers [career then family]. Mentor has told me and made me realize I can become what I want, and that is important to be happy with what you want and to get an education first.

Another mentee has a positive future in sight. She echoes the positive feelings for her future plans:

I believe I can become the doctor I want to be and just basically become successful. I'll probably be head of all the doctors one day. My career goals are to be become a pediatrician. After I finish graduating from high school, I plan to go to a 4-year university and then to med school. My mentor has influenced my career goals because before I wanted to be a teacher and when she took me to her job she has basically opened my eyes to different careers that I can be if I wanted to be. When the Bigs had to take the Littles to work, and I went and I saw that there are more careers than teachers and stuff like that, careers that are more interesting.

The change in living situations for one mentee, who was from an environment where she was supporting an elderly and dying parent, to a more stable household influenced her feelings of self. She perceived the current living situation as more normal and was adjusting to the change. Her mentor was instrumental in serving as a bridge between the two lives. She expressed a positive current self and a positive possible self, a future nurse:

So it's [my life] like I'm kind of normal now, and Mentor helped. I know I will graduate from school and become a nurse and help kids some day. I want to get married and have a family. My mentor is a big part of my life, without her helping me get good grades and supporting me, my future plans would not be possible.

#### Limitations/Strengths/Implications/Conclusions

One intent of this research study was to expand the knowledge base within the education profession. In light of the lack of literature on the phenomena existing between mentoring relationships and the development of self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible

selves in high-risk adolescent female mentees, this study has provided much-needed information in the field of sociology and for training and development in mentoring programs.

Congruent with the literature, the mentoring relationships in the current study had positive effects on the self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible future selves of adolescent girls. The quality of the mentoring program played a significant role in the outcomes. Further, the emphasis on the importance of the commitment of quality time together, both long-term and the dedication to regular contact, helped to build nurturing relationships that fostered the academic, social, and emotional skill development in the mentees, thus building human capital (Putnam, 1993, 2000). The building of self-efficacy was evidenced by the mentees' expressed statements of enhanced confidence and their capability to develop and execute plans which were reinforced by their mentors.

The mentees all perceived themselves as positive current selves and viewed themselves as successful in the future. Their possible future selves were linked to their feelings of self-efficacy and defined career aspirations. The mentees in this study evidenced positive self-efficacy, aspirations, and possible selves. Their mentors were the catalysts for social capital, and the mentees are the human capital that will sustain their futures.

The findings in this study substantiated the value of mentoring programs in the building of those social constructs that foster successful future citizens. The prescreening and support provided by the Big Brothers/Big Sisters was instrumental in building the relationships and keeping the mentors informed of opportunities for participation in community activities. The support information and the program focus on younger

clientele which may be demographically appropriate, but this does not support the developmental needs of the older adolescents. As mentees come closer to graduation, the program should seek to build community ties with institutions that provide postsecondary/college preparation and are cognizant of college preparation activities. Social workers need to link students and their mentors to organizations and information that will better prepare some of the students at greater risk to meet the challenges of Scholastic Aptitude Tests, to find scholarships, to complete college applications, and to notify them of college fairs or job fairs. Thus, they will be better prepared to compete. Research has indicated that at-risk adolescents and their families are less likely to capitalize on the resources available for higher education and postsecondary opportunities. Mentors can serve to support their mentees' futures.

The community-based programs would also benefit from receiving more information on school programs and resources that can support mentees. Too often at-risk mentees do not realize the resources available to them in their own schools. They do not have parents who have the time, the information, or the experience to encourage children to seek the information available to enhance their academic performance or secure their future plans. Not intending to usurp the parental role, mentors who are so inclined, can augment the parental support if Big Brothers/Big Sisters provides the mentors with the information on available school resources. By working together with the schools, the mentees could be better prepared to meet the challenges of today and for the future.

It is important that school-site counselors and administrators are made aware of the benefits of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Program. It is essential to recognize among the myriad of community programs, the benefits of mentoring. Therefore, it is necessary

to provide information on the mentoring process and outline the characteristics of children who most benefit from the program. The literature suggests that it is crucial to foster relationships early in the child's life; however, sometimes the discussed program is not the best choice for children with severe emotional problems. This study should not stand alone, but instead serve as a springboard for future research.

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Middle  
School \_\_\_\_\_

High School \_\_\_\_\_

College/Present  
Career \_\_\_\_\_

5. Length of time you were in a mentoring relationship \_\_\_\_\_

6. Length of time you were in your final mentoring relationship / or is it still continuing?  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. The name of you mentor(s) \_\_\_\_\_

8. How often did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_ Where did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What did you like the best about participating in a mentoring program?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. What were some of the personal challenges you faced in developing your mentoring relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. What were some of the challenges you faced in participating in your mentoring relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. What were some of the challenges you faced in maintaining your mentoring relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Appendix B

MENTOR BACKGROUND SURVEY

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First)
  2. Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street) (City) (Zip Code)
  3. Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_ Home Language \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
If foreign born, how long have you lived in the U.S.A. \_\_\_\_\_
  4. How many mentoring relationship have you participated in? \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Length of time you were in the mentoring relationship with  
\_\_\_\_\_ / or is it still continuing? \_\_\_\_\_
  6. How often did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_ Where did you meet? \_\_\_\_\_
  7. What did you like the best about participating in a mentoring program?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  8. What were some of the personal challenges you faced in developing your mentoring relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  9. What were some of the personal challenges you faced in participating in your mentoring relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  10. What were some of the personal challenges you faced I maintaining your mentoring relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_
-

Appendix C

MENTEE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview will initiate with social greetings and expressed appreciation for the participant's participation in the study. Background information will be confirmed and augmented if the researcher deems necessary.

1. What has the mentoring relationship meant to you?
2. Who was your mentor? What were his/ her characteristics?
3. What types of activities did you engage in?
4. Which activities were your favorites? Why?
5. What was your childhood like before the mentoring relationship developed?
  - a. At home – your family life
  - b. At school
  - c. With friends
6. Did the mentoring relationship change over the years? Please explain.
7. How has mentoring made a difference in your life?
8. What do you believe are your strengths?
9. What do you believe are your weaknesses?
10. What are your strongest characteristics as a person?
11. How do you handle unexpected challenges (difficult situations)?
12. How do you feel when you encounter a new person?
13. Tell me about your friends and the quality of your friendships?
14. What are your career goals?
15. How has your mentor impacted these goals?
16. What do you believe you can or will do in the future?
17. In your opinion, did the relationship change your belief in your own capabilities?  
Please explain.
18. In your opinion, did the relationship change your desire to meet goals? Please explain.
19. In your opinion, did the relationship change your ideas of what you might become, what one would like to become? Please explain.

Appendix D

MENTOR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview will initiate with social greetings and expressed appreciation for the participant's participation in the study. Background information will be confirmed and augmented if the researcher deems necessary.

1. What has the mentoring relationship meant to you?
2. How did you perceive your role as a mentor? Did it change over time? Please explain.
3. What were your goals for the relationship? Did they change over time? Please explain.
4. What types of activities did you engage in and who initiated them? Did that change over time?
5. What was the mentee like (characteristics: personal, behavioral, academic) when you began the mentoring relationship?
6. Did she change over the years? Please explain.
7. What do you believe are her greatest strengths?
8. What do you believe are her most prominent weaknesses?
9. How does she conduct herself when encountering new people or difficult situations?
10. What are her plans for the future?
11. Have you played a role in developing her future her plans? If so what role have you played?
12. What do you believe the future will hold for her?
13. In your opinion, did the relationship build:
  - a. Self-efficacy (belief in their own capabilities)
  - b. Aspirations (strong desire to meet goals)
  - c. Possible selves (idea of what she might become, what one would like to become)

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 Appendix E
 

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 Mentee Theme Clusters and Sub-Themes Aggregated From Formulated Meanings
 

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 A. *The Building of a Nurturing Mentoring Relationship*

1. Time commitment [2, 3, 95, 96, 176, 177, 235, 236, 317, 318, 369, 370, 372, 380]
2. Challenges to the relationship [4, 97, 178, 319, 371]
3. Activities that built the relationship [11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 105, 107, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 180, 181, 182, 184, 185, 186, 242, 243, 247, 248, 323, 324, 325, 327, 328, 329, 374, 376]
4. Activities that developed social/educational/cultural goals [22, 23, 24, 35, 106, 107, 108, 110, 181, 185, 231, 244, 245, 246, 259, 260, 328, 374, 375]
5. I'm like her little sister/she's like my big sister [6, 8, 9, 20, 29, 80, 189, 232, 256, 363, 422]
6. Mentor as a friend [20, 21, 35, 80, 211, 363, 366]
7. Mentor devoted to mentee [5, 25, 26, 31, 34, 48, 85, 86, 98, 225, 302, 304, 366, 367, 368]
8. Mentee devoted to mentor [32, 199, 220, 233, 234, 237, 346, 381, 387, 388, 389, 390]
9. Goals for the relationship [1, 93, 94, 133, 175, 240, 241, 255, 256, 257, 316, 381]
10. Open communication [20, 33, 74, 101, 120, 121, 124, 195, 211, 256, 336, 341, 373]
11. Mentor's understanding [12, 13, 196, 254, 341, 376, 389, 404]
12. Mentor's accepting [14, 122, 133, 363, 373]
13. Mutual engagement in family life [26, 57, 98, 99, 112, 113, 114, 199, 220, 326, 328, 376, 389, 404]
14. Mentor's empathetic [27, 337, 389]
15. Mentee's empathetic [199, 220, 338, 389]
16. Personal characteristics of mentor [7, 82, 103, 104, 179, 238, 239, 303, 305, 320, 373]

 B. *The Building of Self-Efficacy*

1. Mentee's self-realization of weaknesses [28, 44, 78, 50, 51, 54, 142, 204, 249, 252, 269, 270, 271, 333, 345, 384, 396]
2. Mentee's self-realization of strengths [42, 45, 53, 117, 201, 202, 205, 266, 267, 268, 272, 276, 334, 343, 344, 346, 382, 395, 397]
3. Mentee's personal hardships [46, 47, 93, 115, 116, 187, 188, 237, 321, 330, 331, 332, 377, 378, 379]
4. Mentor serving as role model [37, 43, 64, 100, 168, 197, 214, 340, 341, 391]
5. Feelings of self-confidence / belief in capabilities [69, 70, 71, 76, 84, 122, 135, 147, 164, 219, 220, 301, 302, 307, 358, 359, 360, 416, 417, 418]
6. Mentor directly building academic success [39, 126, 127, 128, 221, 222, 223, 261, 262, 263, 265, 364]
7. Mentor indirectly building academic success [36, 37, 43, 83, 125, 127, 128, 129, 130, 143, 198, 203, 261, 264, 3 at three]
8. Mentee's positive changed academic performance [38, 40, 125, 202, 208, 261,

- 340, 363, 416]
9. Mentor directly building success in social situations [30, 57, 79, 81, 84, 134, 140, 141, 164, 208, 278, 337, 342, 349, 380, 401, 402, 404, 405]
  10. Mentor indirectly building success in social situations [69, 102, 144, 149, 163, 198, 203, 250, 253, 277, 335, 348, 385, 386, 387, 400, 403, 408]
  11. Mentee's changed/modified positively social behaviors [49, 70, 79, 84, 131, 132, 134, 140, 144, 148, 202, 208, 250, 252, 279, 336, 339, 348, 385, 399]
  12. Mentor directly building a success in difficult situations [30, 57, 79, 145, 275, 399]
  13. Mentor indirectly building success in difficult situations [69, 81, 84, 145, 206, 219, 220, 274, 347]
  14. Mentee's strength resulting from the relationship in difficult situations [55, 48, 145, 207, 275, 279, 347, 398, 399]
  15. Building of friendships [58, 56, 55, 59, 60, 61, 78, 118, 119, 150, 151, 193, 194, 209, 210, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 350, 351, 406, 407]
- C. The Development of Aspirations*
1. Role model (indirect) support for goal building [10, 64, 73, 168, 224, 307, 308]
  2. Mentor directly supporting goal building [71, 73, 135, 146, 147, 215, 225, 258]
  3. Mentor's indirect support in academic goals [18, 36, 37, 41, 43, 66, 77, 125, 216, 227, 261, 264, 311, 383]
  4. Mentor's direct support in academic goals [39, 83, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 143, 172, 191, 192, 221, 222, 223, 228, 230, 262, 263, 265, 312, 315, 364]
  5. Mentee more focused on academic goals [38, 40, 125, 155, 162, 170, 226, 229, 261, 314, 363, 416]
  6. Mentor's indirect support in career goals [72, 100, 156, 157, 160, 166, 167, 200, 220, 292, 293, 298, 299, 309, 310, 360, 361, 391, 393, 394, 411, 413]
  7. Mentor's direct support in career goals [63, 159, 213, 294, 295, 296, 297, 313, 342, 348, 354, 355, 356]
  8. Mentee's focused on career goals [62, 67, 68, 152, 153, 154, 161, 169, 212, 290, 291, 300, 306, 353, 392, 394, 409, 410, 412, 418, 419]
- D. The Building of Possible Selves*
1. Positive current self [49, 55, 70, 76, 87, 117, 136, 137, 138, 139, 190, 199, 201, 202, 266, 267, 268, 276, 341, 343, 344, 365, 387, 400]
  2. Mentor's impact on positive current self [10, 52, 75, 91, 92, 163, 197, 198, 220, 299, 301, 302, 307, 304, 305, 308, 341, 389, 401, 402, 403, 405, 408]
  3. Positive future self [68, 88, 89, 161, 162, 172, 217, 218, 300, 309, 353, 360, 392, 412, 414, 415, 416, 419]
  4. Mentor's impact on positive future self [71, 90, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 171, 216, 219, 308, 309, 312, 315, 354, 420, 421]