

MENTORING MALE FOSTER YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

Risk factors present in a foster youth's home life, foster care placements, and adolescence may lead to several negative experiences, such as homelessness, high school dropout, emotional and behavioural issues, and social skill deficits, among others (Barth, 2000; Courtney et al., 2001, Marquis & Flynn, 2009). Youth who are transitioning out of foster care are exposed to many risk factors which put them at greater risk of facing destructive outcomes. Despite this risk, emancipating foster youth are underrepresented in current literature. The majority of literature demonstrated that mentorship encourages positive experiences for at-risk youth (Ahrens et al., 2008; Keating, Tomishima et al., 2002; Osterling & Hines, 2006), while a minority of research observed the potential negative impact of mentorship (Karcher, 2005). This conflict indicates that research must go beyond identifying outcomes and examine the process by which mentorship occurs and exerts an influence. In addition, mentorship research was often limited to quantitative studies, Big Brothers Big Sisters programs in the United States, female samples, and reporting mentorship outcomes, rather than the process of affecting mentees. The current study addressed these limitations and examined the influence of mentorship on male youth who were transitioning out of foster care.

A Glaserian approach to grounded theory was used to guide this study and analyze the data, albeit with necessary deviations from traditional grounded theory methodology. Three mentors and three mentees completed 10 semi-structured interviews aimed at exploring mentorship experiences. Participant responses demonstrated that mentorship was an important influential factor in the lives of mentees. A descriptive mentorship model emerged from the data and featured three influencing aspects of mentorship: mentee, mentor, and program characteristics. These characteristics impacted the relationship between mentors and mentees, and also, the mentee's capacity for personal growth, which subsequently lead to positive or negative consequences. All findings are represented by means of a descriptive mentorship model. The most prominent implication of this research relates to the development of successful mentorship programs and ultimately, the promotion of positive experiences for transitioning male foster youth. Future research and mentorship programming would benefit from further construction and verification of mentorship models.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Adolescence can be a difficult and confusing phase of life. Youth today are faced with numerous stressors unique to their developmental stage and to their being raised in a contemporary society. Some of these stressors are body image issues, sexuality concerns, online dating and bullying, parental divorce, and poverty. Exposure to large amounts of stress put these youth at an increased risk for enduring a host of harmful experiences related to psychopathology, behavioural issues, promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse, school dropout, violence, delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and suicide (Aronowitz, 2005; Bowman, 1994; Kleinke, 2002; Ralph, 1989; Smith et al., 2006). Indeed, as many as 15% to 30% of school-aged youth are at-risk of such negative experiences in their present and future lives (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1995; Schonher-Reichl, 2000).

Through my recent vocational placements working with at-risk youth populations, I have heard the accounts of adolescents whose stressful experiences go beyond that of a normal age-related peer. The adolescents that are of particular interest to me are a subclass of at-risk youth, known as foster youth and specifically, those who are transitioning out of the foster care system due to their age. Foster youth who are emancipating from foster care are at an added risk of enduring negative experiences because they face the stressors associated with being an adolescent and growing up in foster care, combined with achieving adult independence. Indeed, I was a firsthand witness to the struggles and successes of these youth as they fought to overcome hardship and adversity. I am amazed at the strength and bravery they exhibited while maintaining resilience, despite their personal tragedies and damaging circumstances.

Regardless of this strength, the hardships that face them, and their increased vulnerability to negative experiences later on in life, transitioning foster youth are relatively ignored in existing research. Negative experiences of youth emancipating from foster care can be traumatic and harmful to their development. The tendency towards transmitting intergenerational trauma can have a direct effect on these youth and an indirect effect on their families. In order to prevent these detrimental outcomes, I believe that research should focus on foster youth and the prevention of potentially damaging experiences. There is a particular need for assisting these youth in overcoming adversity (Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1991).

Before these youth can be directed towards favourable experiences, it is important to understand the conditions that influence the experiences of youth. Transitioning foster youth can

be influenced by a variety of media including music, religion, nature, their environment, and their social networks. Mentors are one of the groups who may potentially influence transitioning foster youth within their social network. The relationship between youth and a caring adult (mentor) is known as mentorship and is the most commonly reported predictor of the young person having positive experiences, despite being exposed to risk factors (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). However, a dearth of literature examines the impact of mentorship on foster youth, and even less research focuses on how the specific mechanisms of mentorship operate among this group. The majority of existing studies were limited because they focused on: quantitative analyses (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Moseley & Davies, 2008), were restricted to geographical areas (Ahrens, DuBois, Richardson, Fan, & Lozano, 2008; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes, Haight, & Briggs, 1999), investigated particular mentorship programs (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Rhodes et al., 1999; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001; Turner & Scherman, 1996), featured female participants (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006), and identified only those mentorship processes which promoted positive experiences (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999). Furthermore, there was a lack of any pre-existing model of mentorship processes for transitioning foster youth.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the present study was to gain in-depth information on how mentorship influences male youth who were transitioning out of foster care. Obtaining such information ameliorated the limitations of existing literature and thus, contributed to understanding mentorship among that population. Furthermore, developing a mentorship model may provide a framework for constructing and implementing effective mentorship programs with transitioning male foster youth, thereby, increasing the capacity to positively influence these youth. Hence, creating a descriptive model of how mentorship influences emancipating male foster youth became a secondary purpose of the present investigation. The current research also uncovered novel research trajectories in which specific mentorship models could be devised for females or other target groups. Such findings could be compared and contrasted to the model developed for the current study, thereby helping to expand its generalizability and to help begin to create a formal theory.

Research Questions

In order to better understand the process of how mentorship exerts its influence on the target population, I posed two research questions:

1. Does mentorship influence transitioning male foster youth?
2. How does mentorship influence transitioning male foster youth?

I developed the first research question to determine whether or not mentorship was a valuable process worthy of further examination. If mentorship did not hold value among participants, there would be no phenomenon worthy of studying. I used the second research question to extract information regarding the process of mentorship. Due to the open nature of this question, I gave participants the opportunity to direct the research within particular boundaries (i.e., the influence of mentorship on a chosen group).

I then designed the current study to accommodate the two research objectives and I addressed the aforementioned limitations and subsequent research questions. In this study, I used qualitative inquiry and in-depth interviews to explore a range of mentorship experiences of emancipating male foster youth and their mentors. I recruited participants from John Howard Society (JHS), a Canadian mentorship program that is distinct from Big Brothers Big Sisters. I interpreted the data they provided using a symbolic interaction epistemology and an adapted version of Glaserian grounded theory analysis. I also created a model of mentorship for transitioning male foster youth based on the information acquired from this investigation.

Definition of Terms

I provided a list of pertinent terms and their definitions to assist the reader in understanding the concepts that are frequently referred to in more detail throughout this study.

At-risk youth: Youth considered vulnerable to enduring experiences that are self-damaging (Smith et al., 2006).

Foster youth: Youth associated with a children's aid society and who received services from this organization, or who live at an agency approved placement (Stein, Evans, Mazumdar, & Rae-Grant, 1996). Additionally, they are a type of at-risk youth who typically encounter a unique assortment of risk factors. These risk factors increase their vulnerability of enduring several negative experiences (Greenson & Bowen, 2008).

Mentors: Experienced individuals who provide guidance, instruction, and encouragement for those who are less experienced (Rhodes, 1994).

Mentees: Youth who receive mentoring assistance from an older, more experienced individual (i.e., mentor; Rhodes, 1994).

Mentorship: The relationship between an experienced adult (mentor) and an unrelated, less experienced youth (i.e., mentee; Rhodes, 1994). This relationship exists with the intent of providing guidance, instruction, and encouragement for the mentees (Rhodes, 1994).

Risk factors: Stressors which increase an individual's vulnerability to having negative experiences throughout their lives. Examples of stressors faced by youth may include intellectual challenges, parental divorce, bullying, and loss (Aronowitz, 2005; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Kleinke, 2002; Schoner-Reichl, 2000). The more risk factors that one is exposed to, the more likely it is that they will experience numerous negative experiences (Rutter, 1980; Schoner-Reichl, 2000).

Transitioning Foster Youth: Youth who have reached or are approaching the age of 16, at which time they may leave the foster care system. These youth face a number of stressors as they struggle to move from foster care to independent living.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter was to critically examine existing mentorship literature regarding transitioning foster youth. Since little information is available on the mentoring relationships among the target population, I present details on at-risk groups in general before discussing foster youth. I highlight the shortcomings inherent in mentorship research and relate them back to the present investigation. I conclude with a discussion on how this study addressed such limitations and describe how mentorship influenced emancipating male foster youth.

At-Risk Youth

Adolescence can be a particularly confusing time in one's life. It is the developmental phase in which Erikson (1968) suggested that youth begin to formulate and make sense of their own identities. The process of negotiating their identity can be an incredibly distressing event and put adolescents into crisis until they can fully develop and accept their individualized identity. This identity crisis can take extra time to overcome and often extends into early adulthood (Arnett, 2000). This is not the only stress-inducing crisis that adolescents endure throughout this stage of life. Every day, youth are faced with a number of stressors including those that are personal (e.g., intellectual challenges, psychopathology) or related to family (e.g., parental divorce, low socioeconomic status, mentally ill parent), school (i.e., lack of teacher support), social-cultural factors (e.g., stereotypes, lack of culture), peers (e.g., rejection, bullying), and social and community issues (e.g., lack of community support; Aronowitz, 2005; Kleinke, 2002; Schoner-Reichl, 2000).

Exposure to stressors or risk factors has been associated with vulnerability to several negative experiences such as psychopathology, behaviour problems, promiscuity, drug and alcohol abuse, school dropout, violence, delinquency, teenage pregnancy, and suicide (Aronowitz, 2005; Bowman, 1994; Kleinke, 2002; Ralph, 1989; Smith et al., 2006). Considering consequences as severe as violence and suicide, society should address the relationship between risk factors and the experiences of youth as a significant and urgent matter.

Research on at-risk youth has investigated the use of risk factors in identifying those who are vulnerable to negative experiences. Youth who endure one or more risk factors are generally classified as at-risk of encountering these experiences (Schoner-Reichl, 2000). Research has suggested that the more risk factors one is exposed to, the more negative experiences individuals will be subjected to (Rutter, 1980; Schoner-Reichl, 2000). This phenomenon can be further

described on a continuum ranging from low to high risk (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 1998). At the low end of the risk continuum, youth possess one risk factor that can lead to a single negative outcome. On the high end of the risk continuum, youth may experience a number of risk factors that increases the chance of experiencing multiple negative experiences (Schoner-Reichl, 2000). Indeed, Rutter (1980) demonstrated that exposure to two or four risk factors increased the likelihood of experiencing negative experiences four- or ten-fold, respectively.

Foster Youth

Foster youth are a unique at-risk population in that they share a distinct collection of risk factors that place them at the high end of the risk continuum. These risk factors stem from their home life, before they were taken into care, and continue to follow them throughout their involvement in the foster care system. Prior to becoming a foster youth, many of these adolescents were exposed to unstable homes and relationships, maltreatment (i.e., neglect, abandonment, physical or sexual abuse), and parental substance abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, and incarceration (Courtney, Piliavin, Grogan-Kaylor, & Nesmith, 2001; Greenson & Bowen, 2008). Once they entered into foster care, many of these youth continued to endure such harmful risk factors as maltreatment, disruptions in social supports and foster care placements, having a diminished sense of belonging, and many losses pertaining to friends, family, and schools (Greenson & Bowen, 2008). A Canadian study by Marquis and Flynn (2009) revealed that as a result of these risk factors, foster youth presented with significant problematic behaviours and social skill deficits. According to Stein and colleagues (1996), the estimated prevalence of emotional and behavioural problems in Canadian foster youth had reached 80% in the 1990s, which was higher than that of the general population and continuing to rise.

Once foster youth reach the age of 16, they may emancipate from foster care and transition to independent living (Stein et al., 1996). These emancipating foster youth may endure more risk factors associated with normal developmental transitions in combination with personal and environmental transitions that include becoming independent and seeking employment and housing (Greenson & Bowen, 2008). Thus, it is clear that foster youth, especially those who are transitioning out of foster care, face many factors that put them at risk of developing a high number of negative experiences. Research indicates that transitioning foster youth are vulnerable to high school dropout, physical and mental health issues, substance abuse, employment

difficulties, homelessness, early pregnancy and parenting, reliance on social services, physical and sexual victimization, mental health concerns, and delinquency (Barth, 1990; Barth & Jonson-Reid, 2000; Courtney et al., 2001; Marquis & Flynn, 2009).

With the risk of enduring many of these destructive experiences, emancipating foster youth may experience more difficulty in overcoming adversity than other at-risk groups (Greenson & Bowen, 2008). Despite the added risk factors and the resulting negative consequences that follow foster youth, this group tends to be ignored in research, especially once they transition out of foster care (Osterling & Hines, 2006). Due to the further risk of being a foster youth emancipating from foster care, and also due to the limited knowledge base available for this particular group, one realizes that the factors affecting transitioning foster youth require further research.

Mentorship

Decades of research has focused on the negative aspects of risk, including identifying youth at-risk, the underlying stressors that put children in this position, and the damaging experiences associated with this status (Aronowitz, 2005; Bowman, 1994; Kleinke, 2002; Ralph, 1989; Rutter, 1980; Schonert-Reichl, 2000). However, there has been a recent trend towards research on the factors that contribute to positive experiences for at-risk populations, including foster youth, regardless of the risk factors they possess (Aronowitz, 2005; Donnon & Hammond, 2007; Schoon & Bynner, 2003; Ungar, 2006). Many researchers insist that mentorship accounts for the positive experiences of at-risk youth (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Mentorship is the association between an experienced adult (mentor) and an unrelated, less experienced individual (mentee) with the intent of providing guidance, instruction, and encouragement for the mentee (Rhodes, 1994).

Mentors can either be natural or programmatic. Natural mentors are those caring individuals whom mentees come across in their daily lives, and can include, but are not limited to, teachers, employers, neighbours, coaches, and religious affiliates. In contrast, programmatic mentors are associated with an official program and are assigned to work with particular mentees (Greenson & Bowen, 2008). Mentorship research has focused on both natural and programmatic mentor relationships with youth either at-risk or not at-risk; and the results suggest greater benefits associated with the at-risk youth population (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper,

2002; Rhodes, 1994). Thus, mentorship among this group has become a popular research trajectory (DuBois et al., 2002).

Mentorship Outcomes

The majority of literature indicated that mentorship is expected to promote positive experiences for at-risk youth (Ahrens et al., 2008; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002; Rhodes et al., 1999). Despite their placement at the high risk end of the risk continuum and the negative consequences associated with this placement, less mentorship research has specifically focused on mentoring foster youth. In one study, Ahrens and colleagues (2008) found that when compared to a baseline measure, natural mentors helped mentees to increase psychological well-being and physical health and decrease sexually transmitted diseases and physical fighting. Additionally, programmatic mentorship has been associated with gains in mentee social skills (Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999), trust towards adults, peer social supports, self-esteem (Rhodes et al., 1999), emotional expression, skills for daily living, happiness, and physical health (Osterling & Hines, 2006). Since there is scant mentorship research focusing on this population, further research is needed to explore the effects of mentorship on foster youth.

While existing mentorship research pertaining to foster youth indicated that mentorship facilitates positive experiences for this group (Ahrens et al., 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999), a small percentage of mentorship research revealed no effect on such experiences for at-risk youth (Abbott, Meredith, Self-Kelly, & Davis, 1997; McPartland & Nettles, 1991) or that the effect size was modest at best (DuBois et al., 2002). In 2005, Karcher further explored the process of mentorship and found that inconsistent mentoring lead to negative experiences, including decreased self-esteem and reduced behavioural competence on the behalf of the mentored at-risk youth. These findings suggest that particular aspects of mentorship may facilitate positive outcomes, while others may be neutral or may even promote negative experiences.

Underlying moderators of mentorship may account for the variation in mentorship outcomes. Moderators suggested include the duration of mentorship, relationship closeness, participation in educational and cultural activities, consistency in contact (DuBois & Neville, 1997), connectedness (Karcher, 2005), and mentor attitude and satisfaction (Moseley & Davies, 2008). These moderating factors may be manipulated such that they impact the outcome of

mentorship and as a result, account for negative outcomes. Since failed mentor relationships can have a detrimental reverse effect on at-risk youth (Karcher, 2005; Rhodes, 1994), society should conduct mentorship research to investigate the detailed processes of mentorship and thus, foster the development of efficient mentorship programs. This research may help the system to create more effective mentorship programs and may increase the capability to facilitate positive outcomes for at-risk youth.

Mentorship Processes

I found only two studies that have explored the process of mentorship with foster youth, one of which focused on youth who were transitioning out of foster care. Osterling and Hines' (2006) study employed semi-structured interviews and focus groups with mentors and their transitioning foster youth mentees. Although the specific mechanisms of mentorship that promoted positive experiences were not the focal point of their research, Osterling and Hines (2006) found that the quality of the relationship between the mentors and their mentees served as a buffer for foster youth mentees, such that they did not experience negative experiences. More specifically, they found that mentees valued the support, encouragement, and consistency offered by mentors, and also mentors placed importance on the establishment of rapport and trust between the mentor and mentee. Additionally, Greenson and Bowen (2008) utilized a grounded theory methodology and semi-structured interviews with foster youth mentees to tease apart the aspects of mentorship that were effective for facilitating positive experiences in female foster youth of colour. Similar to Osterling and Hines (2006), Greenson and Bowen (2008) found that the quality of the mentor and mentee relationship was an important buffer against negative experiences for mentees. The authors stated that this relationship must have trust, love, and caring; and that it should mimic a supportive parent and child relationship.

Although they identified several effective mechanisms of mentorship, these researchers ignored a critical component which was related to those mechanisms of mentorship that were ineffective or promote negative outcomes. In order to create effective mentorship programs, organizations must know how to lead mentees towards positive experiences, as well as to lead them away from negative ones. Thus, future research should investigate this phenomenon to better understand how mentorship operates. In addition, bringing these mentorship processes together in a succinct model could benefit mentorship programs by providing a basis for program

development and amelioration. With such advantages from an informative model, future mentorship research should consider this method of communicating results.

Limitations of Mentorship Research

Quantitative Research

Much mentorship research with at-risk youth has relied on quantitative methodology (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Moseley & Davies, 2008). Reliance on this methodology is limiting in that the research must focus on deductive reasoning, closed-question data collection, and creating evidence for existing theories. In addition, qualitative studies may not accurately depict processes that change over time, space, and population. Since mentorship can be relatively subjective, it is vulnerable to such change; thus, a more descriptive and flexible research format may be required to examine this phenomenon.

In addition, the complex nature of mentorship (DuBois et al., 2002) may necessitate the use of more comprehensive and exploratory research methods. It is in these circumstances, contending with such complexities, where qualitative inquiry may be more valuable. Indeed, qualitative methodology may better suit the phenomenon of interest because it promotes the use of in-depth data collection and more flexible methods of describing and understanding processes and experiences. To compliment the quantitative methods of inquiry utilized in extant mentorship research, I believe employing qualitative methods to explore the concept of mentorship would be advantageous.

Location of Study

Of the research that has been conducted, much has been done in the United States (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenon & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999). When studies focus on one region, one may be unclear as to whether or not their findings extend beyond that region. It may be that the influence of mentorship associated with these studies is a reflection of specific geographical locations and their corresponding cultural dispersion and general way of life. Considering that Canada may differ from the United States based on these characteristics, disparities may exist in the way mentorship influences Canadians and Americans. Conducting mentorship research within a Canadian context would provide another venue by which data between the two countries could be compared and to determine if the generalizations are valid.

Mentorship Programs

Many studies have also been limited to mentorship through Big Brother Big Sister Programs (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Rhodes et al, 1999; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001; Turner & Scherman, 1996). The documented effects of mentorship may be dependent upon the Big Brother Big Sister program, rather than by the processes of mentorship, itself. Perhaps the mentorship offered by the Big Brother Big Sister program operates in a different manner than mentorship within other programs. As a result, it may be beneficial to specifically examine programmatic effects of mentorship and explore alternative mentorship programs to Big Brother Big Sisters. The information obtained from such an investigation would have the potential to compliment or to elucidate pre-existing resilience research.

Mentorship Participants

Little mentorship literature has been dedicated to the experiences and mentorship processes for foster youth and even less so to those who are emancipating from foster care. With the increased potential for harmful experiences among transitioning foster youth, I believe that mentorship research could examine this sample when exploring appropriate intervention and treatment opportunities.

Mentorship research has also focused on a large proportion of female participants in comparison to their male counterparts (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006). Studies by Ahrens and colleagues (2008) and Osterling and Hines (2006) used samples, the majority of which were female, while the sample used by Greenson and Bowen (2008) was limited to females. This prevalence of female samples may account for unbalanced results in the previous mentorship literature. Indeed, the mechanisms of mentorship and mentorship outcomes that emerged from these studies may more accurately reflect female mentees rather than male mentees. Examining males may provide new information, supplemental to that which is currently available.

Presented Results

In addition, mentorship research with foster youth tended to present the effective aspects of mentorship, often ignoring aspects that have been ineffective (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999). Since mentorship can sometimes have a negative reverse effect on youth (Karcher, 2005; Rhodes, 1994), some aspects of mentorship may not be effective for promoting positive experiences. The identification of such

ineffective features and their subsequent elimination from mentorship processes may support the construction of more efficient mentorship programs.

The relevant literature that I reviewed seemed to lack visual models of how mentorship operated among the emancipating foster youth population. Utilizing an adapted grounded theory approach to analysis and data representation in the present study, I was able to create an emerging model. Providing a mentorship model that is descriptive, yet concise and easy to interpret may clarify or add to previous research and may assist in eventually managing and developing more efficient mentorship programs. Researchers may consider my preliminary model of mentorship processes as a means to increase its utility and thus, raise implications for enhancing mentorship programs and helping the foster youth who will benefit from such programs.

The Current Study

The purpose of the current study was to add to the limited knowledge base regarding the complex influence of mentorship on transitioning male foster youth and to create a preliminary descriptive model of this process. Consequently, the following research questions were posed:

1. Does mentorship influence transitioning male foster youth?
2. How does mentorship influence transitioning male foster youth?

In order to ensure that the experience of mentorship was as fully and accurately represented as possible in this study, I addressed several of the aforementioned limitations. I used qualitative methods of inquiry to compliment the quantitative results in previous literature. I augmented the narrow geographical and program perspectives of this research by recruiting participants from the John Howard Society (JHS) of Saskatoon, Canada. With regards to participant selection, I recruited male transitioning foster youth for this study to portray populations that had not been adequately represented in prior research. In addition, in the present study I captured the processes that lead to both positive and negative experiences. I analyzed and represented the data using an adapted version of Glaserian grounded theory that allowed for the construction of a mentorship model. The model format serves as a descriptive, yet succinct tool that may be utilized to create effective mentorship programming. Moreover, in contributing to the development of successful mentorship programs, this model may grant more foster youth the opportunity to overcome adversity.

Summary

Even though transitioning foster youth have an elevated number of risk factors, they are not adequately represented within the research literature. Despite these risk factors, mentorship has the ability to influence transitioning foster youth, with a majority of research demonstrating positive outcomes. Much of the research on mentorship has been limited to quantitative methodology and particular locations (e.g., United States), mentorship programs (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters), participants (e.g., at-risk youth and female samples), and presentation of results (e.g., positive outcomes of mentorship and no comprehensive mentorship model). To better understand mentorship and determine what is required of successful mentorship programs, research must address these limitations and delve further into the processes of this phenomenon. In the current study I addressed the aforementioned limitations. I utilized qualitative methods of inquiry adapted from a Glaserian grounded theory approach to examine the process of mentorship among a Canadian sample of transitioning male foster youth from John Howard Society. The pathways towards both positive and negative outcomes of mentorship were identified and described. Finally, I presented the final results as a descriptive mentorship model.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS

I designed the present study to better understand how mentorship influences youth who were emancipating from foster care, and to develop a preliminary model describing this practice. In chapter 3, I describe this research process. Discussions regarding the epistemology of the study and application of qualitative and Glaserian grounded theory methodology are detailed. As well, I outline sampling procedures of the present study and describe the participants who were recruited. I outline the procedures utilized, focusing on how I recruited participants, obtained consent, employed semi-structured interviews, debriefed participants, transcribed the data, and incorporated my own internal voice. I conclude the chapter with a description of my data analysis and specifically, grounded theory analysis, followed by discussions of my commitment to rigor and credibility.

Epistemology: Symbolic Interaction

Epistemology is the philosophy behind how one gains knowledge (Ponterotto, 2005). Ponterotto (2005) described epistemology as being concerned with the relationship between the researcher and participants during the data gathering process. I believe that it is appropriate to gather the majority of the data from recruited participants, but not to rule out the researcher as a participant and interpreter. The investigator may offer necessary insight that changes the outcome of a study; thus, research should include the examiner's own thoughts and ideas. Although, I believe that researchers should be included as a data source, I do not think that they should completely immerse themselves in the world of their participants. In the case of the present study, if I pretended to know what the at-risk youth were going through I may have appeared to be disrespectful and patronizing. Even though I had experienced mentorship and working with at-risk youth, I did not endure everything that the target at-risk youth mentees have. Therefore, I cannot equate my experiences to those of the target population. Rather, I could only begin understand and attempt to adequately capture their hardship.

As an interpreter of participants' accounts of mentorship, I conducted the current study from a symbolic interactionist epistemology. Blumer (1969) coined the term symbolic interaction to describe human behaviour. From a symbolic interactionist perspective, one's behaviour is based on three premises: (a) one's reaction towards situations, events, and objects are based on the meanings that one attributes to them, (b) such meanings are constructed from social interactions with others, and (c) meanings are modified through one's specific

interpretation of these social interactions (Blumer, 1969). That is, human behaviour is based on meanings derived from social interactions that are subject to individual interpretation. Symbolic interactionists place more importance on one's meaning as opposed to one's literal actions (Blumer, 1969). Therefore, researchers who hold a symbolic interactionist epistemology set out to examine the process of creating meaning and definitions about the world and one's self.

Consistent with my symbolic interactionist perspective, I explored how foster youth make sense of the mentorship process and its consequences. I examined mentorship in hopes of discovering how foster youth mentees derive meaning from their social interactions with mentors. I also considered how mentors made sense of the mentorship process. The difference between how mentees and mentors view mentorship may help to explain the distinction between running an effective or ineffective program. Hence, understanding the intersection of these meanings may contribute to the development of more efficient programming that would increase the capacity to facilitate positive experiences for foster youth.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative inquiry is a unique way of approaching research characterized by open data collection. This data collection allows researchers to obtain rich, in-depth descriptions of a phenomenon that may not be attainable using quantitative methods (Richards & Morse, 2007). Given the relatively subjective nature of qualitative inquiry, this research approach has the ability to detect the meaning that one actually intends to provide (e.g., sarcasm, participant's true response). Intended meanings may grant a more personal approach to data generation that allows participants to feel more comfortable revealing sensitive information (Richards & Morse, 2007). Since at-risk youth tend to live in environments that are not conducive to discussing private issues (Galbavy, 2004), this personal approach to data collection may encourage respondents to provide more details and sensitive information than would a formal test or detached survey. Qualitative inquiry can also be used to elucidate existing quantitative theories and endeavor to access information that is complex, rare, or non-existent (Richards & Morse, 2007), such as the experiences and processes of mentorship among foster youth. Therefore, I utilized qualitative inquiry was utilized to seek greater insight into the experiences of at-risk foster youth.

Grounded Theory Methodology

In this study, I explored the experiences and processes of mentorship among foster youth using a qualitative approach known as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I considered

other methodologies including utilizing case study and participatory action research (PAR). Although case study methodology would have allowed me to investigate the complex nature of mentorship in an intimate manner (Baxter & Jack, 2008), it lacked the rigorous appeal of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The participant empowerment that accompanied PAR also made this methodology an attractive choice for the current subject matter; however, the transient nature of the population involved would have made PAR difficult to complete (Kidd & Kral, 2005). Ultimately, I chose grounded theory because it satisfied the research objectives and offered a more rigorous and directive way of collecting and analyzing data.

I also used grounded theory as a methodology in the interest of developing a model that reflected a process of change over time (Richards & Morse, 2007). Since mentorship literature fails to delve deep into understanding the processes that lead mentees to positive and negative experiences over the course of mentorship (DuBois et al., 2002), I felt that the need for a mentorship model coincided with grounded theory methodology. As well, developing a model using grounded theory seemed most appropriate when little to no data existed about the topic or when a new perspective was required to approach existing data (Stern, 1980). Indeed, the present study satisfied both conditions in that little was known about mentorship among transitioning foster youth, and that previous literature was limited, necessitating a new perspective in order to capture detailed dimensions of foster youth mentorship. With these benefits in mind, I used grounded theory to direct the examination of experiences and processes of mentorship among emancipating foster youth.

Many versions of grounded theory exist, with the two most prominent approaches being defined by Glaser (1978) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). Strauss and Corbin's (1990) version of grounded theory emphasized the use of systematic analysis; however, they also proposed a coding paradigm in an attempt to fit data to a particular model. Although this type of coding has benefits in that it provided specific direction to help researchers manage large amounts of data, I felt that it could limit and potentially force the data into an inadequate model. Similar to Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory (1990), Glaser (1987) encouraged the use of systematic coding procedures. In contrast to Strauss and Corbin (1990), however, Glaser's (1978) version of grounded theory allowed the data to emerge and formulate categories without pre-determined restrictions. For this reason, I chose to employ Glaserian grounded theory within the present study.

Glaserian grounded theory was consistent with a symbolic interactionist epistemology in that it is used to explore individual meanings construed by mentors and mentees. This process was done within the current study by coding and recoding or modifying meanings pertaining to the mentorship process. The main assumption of grounded theory was that it relies on theoretical sensitivity to develop a model or theory that emerges from the data (Richards & Morse, 2007). Theoretical sensitivity refers to the ability to understand participants and to detect subtle meanings inherent in the data. Glaser (1998) stressed that there are two main components manifested in this assumption that contribute specifically to the Glaserian approach to grounded theory: (a) the participants' true meaning will be accurately reflected in the final theory and (b) the theory will not be forced into pre-formed paradigms, but will emerge from the data (Glaser, 1998). My role in the current investigation was to gather and organize these meanings such that they could be easily interpreted by mentorship programmers and other key players.

Grounded theory was developed as an inductive research method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The procedure begins by gathering small bits of information that contain individual meanings. Through a process of constant comparisons between gradually accumulating groupings, concepts, and categories, this information develops into an overarching theory with an emphasis on social construction and interaction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Indeed, the purpose of the grounded theory process is not to confirm an existing theory, but instead, to use the categories that emerge from the data to construct a new theory or model (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Ultimately, grounded theory assisted me in translating mentor and mentee experiences into a succinct, yet descriptive model of mentorship.

This methodological framework was based on the assumption that the collection of data will determine the trajectory of subsequent data collection. Therefore, the researcher analyzes data as they become available and then allows the results to dictate what data are collected next (Glaser, 1998). This notion of data collection is called theoretical sampling, and it often takes the form of revising interview guides or adding diverse sources of data to ensure that the data are understood on an in-depth level (e.g., more participants or a different method of data collection; Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). Grounded theory methodology employs the use of theoretical sampling to reach saturation, that is, the researcher continues to gather data until no new information is obtained (Glaser, 1978; Wertz, 2005). Once the researcher feels that the categories are no longer being filled and participants or data sources are not providing new

information, the study has reached theoretical saturation. At this point, data collection may cease and theoretical sampling is considered complete.

I intended to stay true to Glaserian grounded theory; however, there were some aspects of this methodology that did not translate well into practice. Indeed, these conflicts caused me to use an adapted version of grounded theory based on the previously devised framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Glaser, 1998), but with some deviations. These deviations from Glaserian grounded theory methodology must be noted and explained. In order to allow results to emerge from the data and to minimize the influence of preconceived notions, grounded theory methodology proposes that researchers choose a topic and examine it, uninfluenced by any previous research and expectations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data are expected to reveal the direction of the research, thus ensuring that findings are emergent and entirely based on the meanings contrived by participants. However, conducting the present study as part of my Master's thesis meant that forgoing a literature review and eliminating the use of presuppositions in the form of guiding research questions was not an option for me. Doing so would violate the intended process of developing a research project and proposal. Thus, for the purpose of this study I was obligated to generate a literature review and two guiding research questions.

In addition, Glaserian grounded theory promotes the use of theoretical saturation where data collection continues until no new data can be generated. Although I attempted to employ theoretical saturation, it was not achieved. My data appeared to approach saturation as no new categories were formed following the final interview, however, it was missing valuable information from participants who failed to attend second interviews. Therefore, I cannot claim that the information obtained was exhaustive and saturated the concept of mentorship. I believe nonetheless, that my data remains valid since it was gathered from the recommended amount of resources required by Sandelowski (1995) and since the information obtained ended up surpassing that which was expected.

Despite these deviations from grounded theory methodology, I believed that the study produced an emergent mentorship model, as free from bias as possible, given the requirements of an academic thesis and my failed attempt to reach theoretical saturation. Since mentorship literature demonstrated a lack of data regarding mentorship processes among the target group, little was known about this phenomenon at the time of this study. Therefore, the likelihood of my previous knowledge biasing the development of the mentorship model was low.

I believed that it was impossible to enter into research with no preconceived thoughts and ideas. Glaser eventually agreed with this concept and suggested that researchers needed to attempt to limit the amount of preconceived notions accompanying their research (Glaser, 1978). Therefore, I set out to identify and address these potential issues of bias, rather than choose a different methodology that did not fit the purpose of the current study. I took several precautions to account for my biases and potential biases in the study design. First, I used detailed memo writing to record my thoughts and ideas about the data as they were being analyzed. I compared these memos with the data to ensure that the emerging categories matched the ideas of participants, rather than my own thoughts. Second, I based the present study on two open-ended and equivocal research questions that encouraged participant interpretation, and allowed respondents more freedom to direct the research. With these precautions in place, I endeavored to seek validity in my study.

Recruitment

Sampling

I employed two sampling procedures, critical case, and theoretical sampling. First, I recruited participants using purposeful critical case sampling, that is the sample represented mentors and foster youth mentees that were not extreme cases or typical of all mentors or foster youth groups, but were instead chosen based on particular criteria (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Patton, 2002). Second, I gathered participants using theoretical sampling consistent with grounded theory (Glaser, 1978). Sampling of this group continued until no new information was being obtained, and until the categories that emerged from the data were satisfied (Wertz, 2005). New categories and concepts were emerging following data collection from the first sample: thus, there was not sufficient data for model development. I had to take a second sample and conduct a second interview to increase the amount of data collected. Both of these procedures were necessary to attempt saturation and to satisfy the theoretical sampling component of grounded theory.

The two groups of respondents involved in the present study fit several criteria that I set to address limitations in the literature. Inclusion criteria for the mentees were that they be male youth who were transitioning out of foster care and involved in John Howard Society (JHS) mentorship programming. The inclusion criteria for mentors were that they must be affiliated with JHS and a foster youth mentee from JHS. I did not limit my recruitment to mentorship pairs

(i.e., mentors and their corresponding mentees); however, given that a mentee may have had more than one mentor and that mentors had more than one mentee, I expected that these pairs were reflected in the final group of participants.

Participants

All participants were recruited from a Canadian division of the JHS located in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. JHS is a non-profit organization that aims to assist in the reformation and reintegration of those who have become disengaged from society, namely those who have been in trouble with the law or have been raised in foster care. Mentorship is one of the components of JHS programs. There are two programs that focus on mentorship while providing housing for male youth emancipating from foster care, JHS group-homes, and supported independent living. The goal of these programs is to utilize mentoring relationships in reintegrating the youth into society.

One group-home holds six beds for youth who were between the ages of 16-21 and who were in the process of transitioning from foster care to independent living. A mentor lived in the home with the youth, thus providing mentorship on a continuing basis. Another mentor engaged in shift work and visited the mentees during their shifts. The supported independent living program also provided housing and mentors for transitioning foster youth. These youth lived by themselves or with roommates in apartments and were assisted by two mentors. It is the youth and mentors associated with these two programs who were the target of my research.

I recruited a total of seven males from JHS and I asked them to complete two interviews about their experience with mentorship. I gathered four participants (i.e., three mentors and one mentee) from the group-home during the first round of sampling. I later recruited three participants (i.e., one mentor and two mentees) from the supported independent living program during the second round of sampling. Participant recruitment and maintenance was made difficult by the transience of JHS mentees and mentors. One participant withdrew because they were no longer involved with JHS. Any information provided by this participant was destroyed and was not included in the analysis. Contact was lost with two informants and as a result, a second interview was not conducted. Since they did not withdraw from the study, the information provided during their first interviews was included in the data analysis. The information included in the study was provided by 6 participants over the course of 10 interviews. Sandelowski (1995) indicated that having 10 sources of data, such as interviews, is

sufficient when utilizing critical case sampling. However, Sandelowski also noted that the quality of sources was more important than the number. Thus, the current study had the minimum amount of sources which met this criterion for obtaining valuable information, provided that the data gathered was of high quality.

Three of the final participants were youth mentees ranging in age from 19-20 ($M = 19.3$ years old). Of these participants, one had finished high school and two were enrolled in grade twelve. Aboriginal ancestry was common to all of the mentees, with one of them reporting that he was Métis. All of the mentees held foster care status with social services that supported their involvement in JHS's residential care program. I did not know how long they had been a part of the foster care system. A JHS group home housed one of the youth, while the other two youth occupied independent supported living apartments. At the time of the first interview, the mentees reported that they had maintained these placements from 1 to 18 months ($M = 18$ months). Due to their age and the lack of support provided by the foster care system into young adulthood, all of the mentees were in the process of transitioning to full independence. Two of the youth did not complete a second interview because one had changed placements and the other had not attended the meeting.

The remaining four participants were adult male mentors between the ages of 25 to 28 ($M = 26.3$ years old). A mentor recruit agreed to take part in the study; however, he had to withdraw after he changed careers. Demographic data and any other information collected from this person was not included in any of my data descriptions or analysis. For the remainder of this document, data regarding mentors were based on the perspectives of three participants. Two of the mentors obtained relevant post-secondary certificates and one mentor was in the process of earning a university degree in a social science field. Two respondents reported their ethnic background to be Caucasian, and a third did not answer this question. JHS employed all of the mentors for 6 to 45 months ($M = 23.7$ months) as reported at the time of their first interview. These men possessed differing professional titles; however, mentoring remained a common element in their positions. One mentor lived in the same home as the youth mentees, while the other mentors engaged in shift work. Two of the mentors worked with one of the mentees recruited for the study. The third mentor was associated with the two remaining youth participants.

Procedure

Participant Recruitment

I first approached the JHS director to acquire consent in order to access their mentors and mentees (ages 18-21) who were transitioning out of foster care. A copy of this consent form is in Appendix A. This proved to be a difficult task as the director of JHS changed three times over the course of my data collection. Each new director was informed about the study and permission to approach the sample was re-requested and obtained.

Meetings were regularly held at the JHS house that included both the mentors and their mentees. I informally presented information about the research and expectations for participation at one of these meetings. I also explained that participation was not required and that choosing not to participate would not negatively impact anyone's lives, relationships, or treatment at the houses. Four potential participants were in attendance, including three mentors and one mentee. At the end of the meeting, I offered an information package consisting of a contact card and an invitation letter that included my e-mail address and phone number in case any questions arose. Copies of the contact card and invitation letter are found in Appendices B and C, respectively. All of these participants chose to forgo anonymity and joined the study immediately after the information session was complete.

I employed theoretical sampling which required me to seek a second sample and second interview. An amendment was made to the original ethics application, allowing me to obtain another participant sample. The final three participants made up the sample and were associated with the supported independent living program. I recruited these participants after they heard about the study from the youth and adults associated with JHS and expressed interest in participating. I approached these respondents and informed them about the study. All three of these participants joined the investigation and agreed to take part in two interviews.

To show appreciation for mentor and mentee participation, I put the names of all informants in a draw to win two free movie tickets. This benefit was made clear during my presentation in the group home and later discussions with those associated with the supported independent living program. Since this reward was small, I had no concern that the prize caused coercion within the sample.

Obtaining Consent

Once potential participants (N = 6) had indicated interest in the study, I scheduled individual interviews. Upon the first interview, I gave participants a paper copy of the consent form, found in Appendix D. The consent form included my contact information, a statement of the purpose and procedures, a warning about the use of a digital recorder, and the known risks of the study. This form also highlighted information about confidentiality and notified participants about their right to withdraw from the investigation at any time, without penalty. Following my verbal description of this content, I made myself available to answer any further questions that participants may have had before encouraging them to finish reading and sign the consent form.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Grounded theory offered no specific rules for data collection (Stern, 1980); however, semi-structured interviews have been suggested (Glaser, 2002) and used with previous grounded theory research (Greenson & Bowen, 2008). Thus, mentor and mentee data was collected utilizing individual informal semi-structured interviews. Based on previous research, I estimated that interviews would last for approximately 45 minutes. However, with a semi-structured format, I did not have full control over the time limit for each interview. The actual interviews ranged from approximately 30 minutes to 2 hours long. Interviews with mentors lasted longer than those with mentees. The interviews took place in the JHS meeting room after work hours. This room was separate from participants' homes and JHS offices that afforded participants a sense of privacy; however, the meeting room was still located in the same public building as JHS where mentors and mentees had frequented. That venue helped to produce a relaxing and familiar atmosphere. In addition, the room featured padded chairs, natural light, and a table, all of which added to a comfortable interview setting.

I asked each participant to complete two interviews. I began the first interview with consent as previously mentioned, followed by questions related to demographic information, the positive and negative experiences of mentorship, and the specific effective or ineffective aspects of mentorship that led to such experiences. A copy of the initial interview guide is in Appendix E. The demographic information I requested allowed for a smooth, rapport-building introduction to the interview, and included questions about the participant's age, ethnicity, and highest level of education received. In order to encourage the participants to think and talk about mentorship, I primed participants for five minutes by starting with general open-ended inquiries about the

topic, including, “Describe a typical day with your mentor for me” and “what kinds of activities did you do with your mentor?” (Turner, Forester, Mulhern, & Crisp, 2005). Following this introduction, I asked participants to provide rich descriptions of their experiences and the process of mentorship. I used specific probes based on previous mentorship literature to stimulate conversation. I also used less specific probes such as “can you tell me more about that?” (Marshall, Young, & Tilton-Weaver, 2008, p. 549) to encourage elaboration.

I did not field test the interview guide on youth mentees because I did not have access to this population, other than those who were recruited for the purpose of this study. Instead, I field tested the interview guide on an adult mentor. As a result, some wording issues were clarified and altered to be congruent with mentee education levels. A number of additional generic probes were also identified and included in the revised interview guide. The questions presented in the field guide appear to elicit the type of answers I intended. Thus, I did not reformat these questions, but simply clarified them. The mentor further reported that she was very interested in completing the interview and that she felt her motivation increase as she was asked additional questions.

The first interview failed to provide enough data for theoretical saturation because new categories and concepts continued to emerge, necessitating a larger data set. I employed theoretical sampling in two ways to ensure that the participants had shared all available information regarding their mentorship experiences. First, I added a second sample to the study and second, I conducted an additional semi-structured interview. Two mentee participants did not complete a second interview because they had either separated themselves from the mentorship program or did not attend a second meeting. I used the data from the initial interviews to create a mentorship model. I provide more details regarding the mentorship model and its development in the following sections of this chapter. This model was presented to participants in the second interview. I then asked informants to member check the model for descriptive and theoretical validity (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), thereby adding to and clarifying the contents of the model. An interview guide for the second meeting is in Appendix F.

By the end of the second interview for all participants, the data were no longer producing new categories or properties. Although the number of data sources may have been relatively low to reach saturation, the quality of the information provided was greater than I expected, yielding a

large amount of data. As a result, I concluded that the data collected was sufficient to produce meaningful results, thus data collection ceased (Sandelowski,1995).

Since developing rapport takes time, participants may not have revealed all details of their mentorship experience during the first meeting. However, as I became familiar with participants, they seemed to share more information and details, some of which were sensitive. Moreover, because mentorship was ongoing throughout my research, participants may have identified new information to share as it emerged. Multiple interviews allowed for participants to grapple with specific questions and give more in-depth answers during subsequent interviews. All of this data may have been lost if participants were only interviewed one time.

Debriefing

I verbally debriefed each participant upon completion of their interview; thus no formal debriefing form was required. I reminded participants that in the event that negative thoughts or feelings arose out of my research, they could utilize their usual supports and discuss these issues with their employer, mentors, or social worker. They were also reminded of my contact information in case they had additional questions or concerns. Debriefing with participants at the end of each interview was an excellent approach to transitioning out of the research relationship and encouraging healthy ways of coping with this transition. During this time, I felt that I was able to end the relationship in a healthy manner and to direct participants to seek available social supports if required. Ultimately, the entire debriefing process defined my relationship with the participants and gave closure to the research process.

Materials

I recorded participant responses throughout the interviews using a digital recorder which was small, noiseless, and not likely to be physically disruptive throughout the interview. I placed the recorder on a table between the participant and myself for the duration of the interview. The recorder was turned on when I began collecting demographic information, and was turned off when the participant finished answering all of the questions outlined by the interview guide. I notified each participant about the use of the recorder in an attempt to decrease any anxiety pertaining to the recording process. The digital recording device automatically labeled each recording with a number (i.e., numbers one through ten), allowing the information received to remain anonymous, yet organized.

All data were stored in the form of audio recordings and electronic transcripts on the University of Saskatchewan's storage database. I stored the contact information used to communicate with participants about further interviews and consent forms in a secure and locked filing cabinet in my home during the data analysis stage. Ultimately, all data will be stored by my supervisor at the University of Saskatchewan for five years after the completion of the study. These data will be destroyed after the five years are complete.

Transcription

I conducted transcription in a discreet room with a private computer to ensure confidentiality. All participant responses throughout the first interview were transcribed utilizing denaturalized transcription. This type of transcription bypasses the technical linguistic features of data and focuses on the depiction of substance or meaning in the participant's conversation, which was the target of this research (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). In mentee and mentor transcripts, I replaced the names of mentors and mentees with pseudonyms, "my mentor" or "my mentee" as applicable, to protect confidentiality. I checked transcripts for accuracy against digital voice recordings. Since the target population could be transient, the current study did not require transcripts to be verified by participants. I stored all transcripts in the form of electronic data on the University of Saskatchewan's secure storage database. Excerpts from these transcripts are presented in this document as evidence for the identification of categories pertaining to mentorship processes and experiences.

I recorded, but not transcribed responses during second interviews. I did not transcribe these responses because they were not the main sources of data, but rather were supplementary to member checks that clarified the data that had already been collected. I did however, keep notes to allow for better navigation through the material and the development of memos used in the analysis. Quotes from these interviews were obtained from the audio recordings. I present pertinent quotes that assisted in clarifying or verifying the study's findings later in this document.

Researcher's Internal Voice

An assumption specific to the Glaserian approach to grounded theory was that all data are useful (Glaser, 1998; 2002). From this perspective, all sources of information should be considered, including the researcher's own thoughts and experiences, but not without provisions (Glaser, 1998). Preconceived biases about a particular phenomenon or participants deserve acknowledgement in research. I believed that a researcher's biases can influence not only what

projects they choose to explore, but also how they collect and interpret data (Ponterotto, 2005). Every researcher is subject to biases whether they are intended or not. Hence examiners should be accountable and take steps to reduce the effects of such biases. In the context of the present research, my knowledge base was biased by my own experience of mentorship and managing at-risk youth. However, my experience was not exhaustive, representing all at-risk youth and mentoring relationships. Thus, I had to realize that not everyone would benefit from mentorship, or that the effects of mentorship may not be similar to the effects that I had previously encountered. Since everyone constructs their own reality, my mentorship experience and that which has been presented in the literature may contain different elements.

Glaser (1998) stated that the researcher should not focus on their own mentorship experiences and work or delve too deep within the literature to explain and predict the final results of a proposed study before the data is analyzed. Instead, Glaser (1998) suggested that these pieces of data be used strategically by being introduced during the data analysis stage to provide amplification and to generate greater insight (Glaser, 1998). To address such biases, I outlined my concerns in memos throughout the research process and compared them to the categories derived from the participants. My goal was to capitalize on my unique insight that I already possessed, and also, to consider and maintain that others may have had a different reality regarding mentorship than the one that I had constructed for myself.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously to fit with grounded theory methodology. I collected, transcribed, and analyzed my data concurrently to determine whether or not further theoretical sampling or alterations to interview guides were required. Transcripts were entered into an NVIVO 9 software program for organizational and flexibility purposes. I then coded the transcripts line by line to ensure that data were not missed. In order to make certain that the data were coded correctly, I inspected them a second time and re-coded them as necessary. My method for developing these codes and the remainder of my analysis followed Glaser's version of grounded theory.

A tentative form of a descriptive model depicting how mentorship influences transitioning male foster youth emerged from the first interview data. I presented this model and visual figures pertaining to core categories to participants during a second interview for the purpose of clarification and validation of the data. I incorporated the responses from this interview into the

overall design and structure of the preliminary mentorship model. Analysis continued beyond the second interview as I attempted to make sense of the meanings put forth by participants. At times, I attempted to disengage from data analysis and return to it with a clear mind, thereby, facilitating the emergence of categories and concepts, rather than forcing them under a goal of completing data analysis quickly.

Grounded Theory Analysis

Grounded theory required that data collection not be separate from analysis, but that data be continually analyzed as they are gathered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In keeping with a Glaserian approach to grounded theory analysis, data were interpreted as they were collected, and not all at once at the end of data collection. As soon as the initial interview was completed, I transcribed the responses and began analyzing the data while simultaneously conducting further interviews. I later brought back to participants the information obtained for further clarification and description. In doing so, I was able to identify and ameliorate potential issues within my research such as gathering a second sample and clarifying the meaning of mentorship. However, this process was problematic because the sample population was transient and second interviews were difficult to obtain.

I kept and consulted memos throughout the data collection and analysis process. I carried a paper and pen with me to record memos whenever necessary. Memos were used to capture my prior inclinations about mentorship among at-risk youth. I then compared these memos with participant responses to determine whether or not the emerging data stemmed from participants or myself. When the memos were not consistent with the information brought forth by the participants, I was better able to isolate my ideas and examine their affect on data collection and analysis. In this manner, I used the memos as a guide to ensure that I was accurately representing the sample. For example, based on my experience with working with at-risk youth, I felt that matching mentor and mentee ethnicity may play a role in influencing the youth. However, when this issue did not immediately present itself, I had to make sure that I was not actively searching for this feature to the detriment of other data or implying during data collection that this phenomenon should be an influencing element of mentorship. Identifying and creating a memo about this preconceived notion ensured that my interpretations of the data remained grounded in participant responses as much as possible. I also used memos to record potential ideas about

links and definitions among data, which became particularly important throughout the coding and model development process.

As I collected data, I analyzed them using two coding techniques: (a) a simple technique where data was separated into groups and (b) a substantive technique where data was open or selectively coded to determine their fit for particular categories (Glaser, 1998). My data analysis began with open-ended data obtained from mentor and mentee transcripts. I simply coded the information provided in transcripts and separated them into groups. I gave code names to words, sentences, and paragraphs. These code names were short descriptions of the phenomenon. For example, one of my initial codes in the current study was anger issues. When a participant mentioned how anger issues affected mentorship outcomes, I added the word, sentence, or paragraph underneath this code. The goal was not to immediately define the code, but rather to describe it and organize the data for further analysis. Once codes were established, I used memos to define my ideas, and the perimeters of the groups or codes. If I felt that two groups were connected or separated by particular features, I recorded this fact in a memo. Utilizing memos made it easier for me to compare new groups or codes to my own ideas and to determine whether or not data belonged under the current group or code or warranted a new one.

Following my formation of the data groups, I constantly compared each piece of data to subsequent codes or groups in search of similarities and differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These similarities and differences defined specific concepts. The concepts reflected the basic premise and components making up a particular code or group. Several codes could be grouped together based on a particular concept, that is a set of similarities or differences. For example, pertinent characteristics (e.g., being positive, approachable, and trustworthy) may be grouped together based on two concepts: they each reflect personality characteristics and are influential features of mentors.

The data was then substantively coded to determine fit for defined concepts. I amalgamated some codes and groups while separating others. I combined similar concepts to generate larger categories and core categories that made up an overarching theory (Glaser, 1998). In the case of the aforementioned example, the codes labelled being positive, approachable, and trustworthy were linked because of their concepts. I organized these characteristics under a core category, mentor characteristics, and a sub-category, personality characteristics, based on the concepts that had previously been defined. All groups, codes, concepts, and categories were

compared to one another as the data were collected and analyzed as to determine the best placement for that information. As the data were coded, I compared the codes to groups and concepts and placed under the appropriate categories. Placing a code under a particular category did not guarantee a fixed position. Once more was known about this code and others were developed, there was potential for movement between codes or amalgamation and separation of codes. I carried on with this process well into the writing and editing stage as time away from the data yielded new ideas, clarity, and deeper reflection on the data.

I continued to generate new categories from the original data sample following the first interviews, thus, indicating that more information regarding the experiences of mentorship among emancipating male foster youth was available. As a result, I used theoretical sampling to take a secondary sample. I analyzed these data as the second set of participants were interviewed. I visually represented these data in a descriptive model of how mentorship influences transitioning male foster youth. Participants were invited to review the model and make changes as necessary. I included their responses were included as a data source, and I added them to the analysis as I conducted the interviews.

Following the 10th interview, the data were no longer creating new categories or altering the latest draft of the mentorship model. At the time, I thought that the lack of new categories or revisions to the presented model meant that the data had reached saturation and it's collection was halted. It appears that upon further inspection, this data only approached saturation as it failed to represent those mentees who did not return for a second interview. Nonetheless, the data that was collected appeared to be of high quality and volume and fulfilled the recommended amount of sources for critical case sampling (Sandelowski,1995), therefore, I was satisfied that enough information had been obtained to generate a tentative theory. The theory derived from the data was compared to my memos at every coding, conceptual, and categorical stage to arrive at a substantive theory of mentorship. A substantive theory represents the data from a particular group and is not intended to be generalized to all cases of mentorship (Glaser, 1998). I reflected the preliminary mentorship theory in a descriptive visual model, illustrating how mentorship influenced transitioning male foster youth. I present this visual model later in this thesis.

Ensuring Rigor and Credibility

The issue of relevance ensures that interpretations must accurately represent the data (Hall & Callery, 2001). When one is interpreting the words and meanings of participants, subjectivity

is always present (Richards & Morse, 2007). Subjectivity can be positive in that it may reveal information that participants were trying to reveal, but did not literally do so. However, subjectivity is often seen as a weakness in research because there is potential for inaccuracy in the interpretation of the meanings put forth by participants (Richards & Morse, 2007). Considering this issue, I used member checking to validate participant responses. I presented my interpretations to participants in the form of a descriptive model. Participants were given the chance to verify the accuracy of my interpretations. This process ensured that the study's model attempted to rigorously reflect what the participants intended to reveal.

Plausibility is another issue of rigor that necessitates that the final theory must fit what is happening in reality (Hall & Callery, 2001). If the theory is too rigid or forced from the data, it may not reflect actual occurrences. Thus, modifications may have to be made to ensure that the theory is accurate. To produce a model that is credible and not forced, I continuously collected data over a number of interviews and constantly compared these data to other data sets, my memos, and the extant literature. I applied modifications to categories and concepts as a result of these comparisons. As well, my data analysis took place over the course of six months rather than a few weeks, thereby, helping to decrease the chances of being pressured to complete data analysis too quickly and inadvertently forcing data. In employing these provisions, I increased the expectation that the developed theory is rigorous and plausible.

Providing enough information so that the study could be replicated is an issue of rigor known as reproducibility (Hall & Callery, 2001). Often studies fail to outline their epistemology and other philosophical underpinnings (Greenson & Bowen, 2008) which makes it difficult to understand from which perspective a study was conducted; and furthermore, how the researchers arrived at their stated concepts and categories. For this reason, I clearly outlined my philosophical and epistemological beliefs in an attempt to increase reproducibility. As well, I noted the deviations from grounded theory methodology, to be transparent, and to give other researchers the opportunity to replicate the findings by utilizing the same adherence to this methodology.

Theoretical sensitivity can be enhanced to ensure that every aspect of a theory is fully developed and defined, and thus, increasing the credibility of the resulting grounded theory. This can be done throughout the research process by using the researcher's personal experience with a phenomenon, and by comparing analyzed data to extant literature. Indeed, my familiarity with

at-risk youth and mentorship made me sensitive to issues pertaining to being at-risk and to the process of mentoring. Therefore, I may have been better able to understand the meanings and processes shared by participants in the present study than other researchers who lacked familiarity with the aforementioned qualities.

Achieving theoretical sensitivity can also be sought by periodically distancing one's self from the research to determine whether or not one's interpretations fit the information provided by participants (Glaser, 1998). I allowed much time for data analysis with the intent on dissociating from the data when it became overwhelming and returning to it later with a fresh perspective (Glaser, 1998). Using these strategies for enhancing theoretical sensitivity provides for the researcher's interpretations of the data to be more accurate and complete, and therefore, credible.

As well, since low self esteem tends to be an issue faced by many at-risk youth, the possibility exists that this population downplayed their successes. Therefore, to help increase the rigor of research aimed at assessing the experiences of foster youth, it is imperative that data pertaining to successful positive experiences be gathered from a number of significant sources. Extant literature often fails to explore multiple perspectives (Donnon & Hammond, 2007; Greenon & Bowen, 2008; Tiet et al., 1998), increasing the chance that previous examinations do not capture the entire process of mentorship and its influence. As a result, I gathered data from multiple perspectives, both mentees and mentors. Obtaining information from two data sources helped decrease participant bias and helped increased the likelihood of capturing a holistic version of mentorship.

Finally, I believed that the tentative mentorship model is presented in a rigorous and credible manner. To demonstrate that the theory has been developed with validity, I represent it in a visual diagram format for this document. In order to display such a figure that can be interpreted and used by the interested parties, all concepts and categories must be well defined and exclusive (Glaser, 1998). As well, in representing the findings in a step-by-step diagram format, the audience is able to see the inductive path I took to construct a potential theory. I believe that introducing the present study's findings in a visual model increases its validity and reproducibility, and ultimately strengthens the rigour and credibility of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The intent of this study was to discover the process by which mentorship influences male foster youth who were transitioning out of the foster care system and to create a model depicting this practice. I collected data from 6 male participants (3 transitioning foster youth and 3 mentors) over the course of 10 interviews. As I gathered the data I analyzed it using an adapted Glaserian approach to grounded theory that involves constant comparisons and theoretical sampling. My goal was that this analysis would highlight the importance of mentorship for the target group and would facilitate the emergence of three core categories and one theoretical model that would help explain the influence of mentorship on transitioning male foster youth. I created separate textual descriptions and figures to demonstrate how three main aspects of mentorship (i.e., mentee characteristics, mentor characteristics, and characteristics of the John Howard Society (JHS) Mentorship Program) influenced the mentees. To connect the main aspects of mentorship and provide a holistic depiction of the study's results, I devised a descriptive mentorship model. I used quotes and interview summaries to provide supportive evidence for the model. Inconsequential noises and speech patterns were omitted from quotes to improve clarity and readability of my thesis. I identified all participants by pseudonyms to maintain privacy and confidentiality.

The Value of Mentorship

The mentorship model and its core categories are based on the premise that mentorship has an influence on transitioning male foster youth. My study showed that mentorship was important to all participants. Witnessing the positive impact of mentorship in their own lives or the lives around them allowed participants to believe in mentorship and to find value in it. One participant reflected on his experience:

As a child I've seen the influence that positive role models can have on someone's life, including my own. I've had a lot of really good mentors and role models in my life that helped me a lot, so I see the advantages of mentorship and I consider them very highly.

A mentor agreed with this statement and in reference to his own mentorship, he stated, "having that experience also gave me a lot more appreciation for what I am doing as a mentor because I've seen how much value it has for me." Both of these informants

placed importance on mentorship because of their personal experiences as members of a productive mentoring relationship. The significance of the mentoring process among participants increased its potential for influence among them.

Several informants placed personal value on mentorship and sought it out in every aspect of their lives. One participant credited his mentorship with helping him to stay away from negative activities. He explained, “if I didn’t have [mentorship]... I wouldn’t be in school right now or I’d still be living on the streets, doing bad things.” While having a mentor was a crucial influential factor in the life of this youth, other participants felt that they had less of a reliance on mentorship over time, and that it was one of many influences in their lives. One mentee shared, “to begin with it was really important” and “it helped me a lot.” However, over time, that youth’s perception of mentorship changed. He explained, “I became more independent as a youth [and] I’m not really dependent on John Howard anymore.” Although mentorship had once been a vital component of his life, he felt that as the influx of gains tapered off, his mentorship had hit a plateau and was no longer necessary.

Regardless of the intensity of its impact, it appeared that mentorship was important to all of the participants, and that this phenomenon did influence the experiences of male foster youth as they were transitioning out of the foster care system. Knowing that mentorship was valuable to these participants allowed me to explore the impact of mentoring relationships in greater detail. In the remainder of this chapter I focus on how these details emerged from the data collected.

Modelling Mentorship

Even though the perspectives and backgrounds of each participant were unique, there were many commonalities among their experiences with mentorship. As part of grounded theory analysis, I identified these commonalities and pertinent mentorship experiences, gave them codes names, and separated them into groups. I used constant internal comparison with all of these groups to ensure that existing codes and any newly emergent information obtained was entered into the appropriate group, and also to ensure that these groups remained distinct from one another. I then combined or separated these groups to create concepts that were further organized under larger, overarching categories.

Three main aspects of mentorship emerged as core categories explaining how mentorship influences transitioning male foster youth. These aspects were: mentee characteristics, mentor characteristics, and characteristics of the JHS Mentorship Program. I individually highlighted the core categories through textual descriptions that are rich in detail, and which explore the concepts and groups that make up the overall category. In the text, I offer a guide that explains how the target aspect of mentorship influenced transitioning male foster youth. Each description features a supplemental figure intended to synthesize the data I collected. Following these descriptions, I present a preliminary model to bring together all of the categories to provide an initial understanding of mentorship processes.

Mentee Characteristics

Grouped together, mentee characteristics became one of the main aspects of the mentorship process that appeared to influence the target population. One mentor confirmed the importance of this aspect and noted that mentorship “is the right program for the right kids.” He felt that a youth must possess a number of qualities in order to promote positive experiences. This mentor felt that mentees who lacked such characteristics could face negative experiences with mentorship, and also that this group may be able to find more success with a different risk intervention. The mentee characteristics that emerged from the data were: the mentees’ willingness to address their issues, their motivations, and their cognitive abilities, see Figure 4.1. I described each of these characteristics based on how it affects the mentor and mentee relationship and the mentee’s capacity for making positive changes. I also reviewed the consequences of this process.

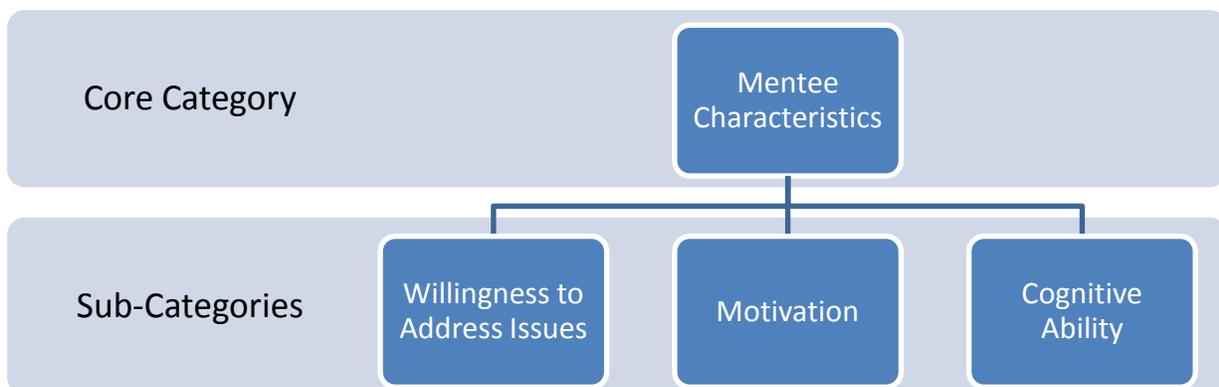


Figure 4.1 Mentee Characteristics

Willingness to address issues. Mentees' willingness to focus on and cope with their issues influences their mentoring relationship and its consequences. Mentees often come into care with a number of personal, familial, and situational issues that hinder their capability for adaptive coping and problem solving. Youth must address and manage these issues in order to promote their personal success. Participants reported that mentorship had the greatest positive influence when mentees were willing to work towards addressing problematic behaviours and stabilizing their mental health. A youth does not have to successfully manage their issues before they can benefit from a mentoring relationship; but rather, the mentee must be willing to engage in management work on a regular basis. One mentee shared his struggle in this area:

I never really saw myself as being ready for the program . . . there's a lot that came at me at the beginning, so, I know I wasn't ready for it . . . I wasn't confident when I got in the program. I was scared. I was mad.

Even though the youth had many issues when he entered mentorship, he was willing to challenge them and to search for healthy solutions with the help of his mentors. One mentor elaborated on this process:

[Mentees are] not asked to do a whole lot as long as they keep moving forward and if they do fall then they're given ample opportunities to pick themselves up and dust themselves off . . . they don't get written off right away.

Minor regression in behaviour is accommodated by the mentoring relationship and even expected when mentees make changes in his life. Youth may have difficulties in making positive changes and decisions and may exhibit temporary problematic behaviour in reaction to these difficulties. Such interruptions in forward progress are anticipated and addressed as they are presented. It is not a requirement that the mentee be able to continually manage their issues without any regression. As long as the mentee is willing, there is opportunity for change.

Taking responsibility for their own actions and learning how to manage problematic patterns of behaviour impacted the mentees' relationship with their mentor and increased the mentee's capacity for making positive changes. For example, one of the mentees in the study had issues with anger. When he got angry, he reported, "I won't do nothing," including engaging and communicating with his mentors. The youth's rejection of the mentor was destructive to the

relationship. Without the presence of a meaningful relationship, the mentor had no influence over the youth and mentorship could not continue. In contrast, if this youth were to take responsibility for his anger, and to work towards managing it, the relationship would have potential to be salvaged. The mentee described this process:

I'll reflect on it myself first. If I strongly feel like I'm in the [wrong] . . . then hopefully I'll not stay mad all day . . . by that time I'm calm and think to myself, 'man I was a prick, why was I like that?'. And then, my mentor comes in. He explains it and he tells me how he felt . . . and then we get along.

Initially, the mentee's anger interfered with his mentoring relationship in that he would not engage with his mentor. However, after he addressed this issue and actively initiated making a positive change in his attitude and emotions, he was able to restore communication and be a productive member of the mentorship process. Failing to manage one's problematic behaviour, including irrational expressions of anger, presented a barrier to mentorship and had to be addressed in order to allow the relationship to flourish.

Accepting responsibility for his behaviours and taking action enabled this youth to feel more empowered and in control of his life. In addition, he learned new ways of coping that he could practice in order to invoke positive changes on his own. A youth must not only know that they have problematic behaviour, but they must also be willing to accept responsibility and to address the issue. In doing so, mentees increase their own capacity to make positive and healthy choices and to avoid negative experiences. One mentor explained that ideally, the youth would understand that "this is something they should be thinking about doing themselves, without anyone telling them." Taking responsibility for their actions and choosing to make healthy changes on their own are skills that continue to help these mentees when their mentor is not present and their mentorship is complete.

Many respondents mentioned how mental health issues such as depression and addictions could influence the mentorship process. A youth's mental health may affect their capacity to work with a mentor, develop insight, stay positive and motivated, and achieve stability. One mentee described his experience with depression:

I didn't care at all . . . I didn't have motivation . . . no confidence . . . I got angry a lot. It interfered with school, friends . . . I couldn't communicate . . . I quit doing my chores and everyday tasks . . . I started doubting myself.

The described mental state posed barriers to mentorship in which the participant was not capable of maintaining a meaningful mentoring relationship or making healthy decisions. A mentor noted that because of his struggles with mental health issues, the mentee may have difficulty viewing the world in the same manner as his mentor (i.e., similar values and ideas, thought patterns, frustration thresholds). In such cases, the mentee's mental illness may cause problems with cognitive distortion and relationship development. "They will be in constant conflict with the mentor's view . . . [and] they're going to feel like they're just being attacked regularly," he explained. "I could use all of my skills and strategies to the best of my ability, but there may be things in the way of . . . dealing with whatever he's got going on." With a lack of communication and a tendency towards anger, a mentee in this situation could have difficulty learning from his mentor and trusting that they were capable of positive achievement. One mentee referred to his depression and recalled, "I probably would have been lost if I didn't [get help]." After this informant took steps towards improving his mental health and sought outside support, he was able to engage in the JHS program and begin to make positive choices. When he was aware of his own mental status and the symptoms of depression, the mentee was better able to manage his own mental health and the negative consequences that were associated with it. The informant's willingness to address his own mental health issues preserved his relationship with his mentor and enhanced his capacity for personal growth.

Motivation. The mentee's motivation towards making changes and completing the work necessary to follow through with those changes influences his future consequences. Without motivation, individuals experience difficulty in engaging in challenging activities. A mentor described how unmotivated youth may, for example, end up playing video games rather than going to school or finding bugs in their bed because they did not clean up after themselves. In addition, a mentee's motivation has the power to affect the mentoring relationship. Finding out what motivates youth provides an opportunity for the mentors and mentees to communicate about issues using concepts that the youth will understand (e.g., using basketball terms to discuss finances). Relating challenges and explanations to such motivations helps youth to better comprehend complex issues and become interested in making changes.

Participants identified a number of specific motivations. One mentor felt that youth were motivated to find success by past experiences. He explained that mentees would “flourish a lot more because they understand where they’ve been and where they want to go.” His perspective assumed that youth learn from their past experiences and that they can use this knowledge to seek more positive opportunities and to stop themselves from returning to risky lifestyles. A mentee confirmed this idea when he revealed that he was motivated by his past negative experiences to get help in improving his lifestyle. He stated, “I wanted to change so bad, so I just decided to change. [I] just had enough of living like that.” Another youth shared that he was also motivated by past experiences, but more specifically, the past experiences of his mentors. He explained:

They tell me stories about their pasts. You think you have it rough sometimes. You get knocked down, it’s like it’s the end. Then you hear about people’s stories and how they get back up and it just makes you want to go again. You feel that drive and it’s really changed my perspective a lot on the way I do things now.

Both of these youth were motivated by the past that helped them to strengthen the bond with their mentor, thus increasing the likelihood that the youth would be influenced by them. In addition, they were also able to use their motivation to make positive changes including abstaining from risky lifestyle choices and embracing resilience.

One youth recognized that he was motivated by the investment that the mentors had made in him. He felt that as long as the mentors were willing to put effort into his success, he would be willing to do the same. The mentee stated, “I’m not going to make them do all the work to it and just laze around and do nothing.” Another mentee experienced being both motivated and demotivated by his mentor’s investment in him. He described how previous mentors lacked interest in him. As a result, he struggled with a depressed mood and eventually refused to work with them. The youth was not only motivated by the fact that his mentors were interested in him, but also that they worked with him even when it was not required of them. He was more positive towards his new mentors and stated that he was motivated to work with them because they were:

. . . willing to take time out of their day, sometimes when they’re not working, to come and see [him] . . . they might not be working but they know that they’re only one I really have to talk to, so they’ll come in and make an exception, so that’s what’s really good.

The mentors' investment in this youth allowed him to place more trust in his mentors and to establish a productive mentoring relationship.

Another source of motivation identified by participants was the mentee's pride in their environment. A mentor discussed how taking pride in one's environment can motivate a mentee, stating that "they feel like they have a lot more to lose if they mess it up because they know they have a good thing going for them." A second mentor also stated:

Materialistic things should not matter, but at the end of the day, these kids will be driven by [that] . . . They're getting an opportunity to know what's it's like to have a safe home, have food on the table, a roof over their head, clothes on their back, and be able to watch TV when they want and not have to worry about being abused by somebody because they're watching the wrong show. It comes down to those simple things we take for granted . . . A lot of these kids come to us with nothing and when they leave . . . it's not that they have a bunch of materialistic things, but they have this sense of self worth that they can [get things too]. They are worth everything that they are going to get now and . . . they can have it. It's not that they'll never have it . . . They don't think that they are always going to be behind the eight ball for the rest of their lives. They don't see themselves as the people who are going to be the have nots. They say . . . 'one day we can have this life for ourselves and get it for ourselves'.

This mentor felt that his mentees developed an improved self-image by obtaining quality and popular items in a socially appropriate manner. A positive self-image is important to their motivation in that it makes the youth more likely to continue working towards their goals despite difficulties they may be having at the time. Ultimately, having an optimal level of self-confidence enables the youth to make healthy changes and to strive towards positive outcomes throughout their lives.

JHS provides a home environment for these youth where material items, cleanliness, and overall surroundings and atmosphere can be controlled; and there is also opportunity for mentees to take pride in environments and materials external to their personal residence and programming. In this light, one mentor stated, "the guys see us driving vehicles, nicer vehicles and they see us having things . . . and, and it's like that little bit of . . . you work hard [and] these

are the things you can have.” The mentees may also take pride in the environments where they engage in activities with their mentors (e.g., camping in scenic areas, going to a restaurant). Feeling as though they belong in that environment and deserve to be there may invoke an appreciation for these environments and a desire to achieve what is required to gain access to such environments in the future.

The discovery of what motivates individuals to make changes can be complicated as motivations vary with altering life circumstances. The participants discussed the impact of mental illness and outside influences and how these issues have caused mentees to re-evaluate their previous motivations or abandon them all together. A mentor discussed one youth whose motivation’s changed after his immediate necessities were provided and his life was no longer in constant crisis. He explained:

They do really well before they come in because they’re fighting for their lives . . . they’re fighting for a place to sleep, they’re couch hopping. One kid was going to school on a regular basis just because it was the only place he could get food and could bathe . . . and then all of a sudden he moves into our house and he’s like “I got everything I’ve ever wanted” and “I don’t have any motivation to work anymore.”

In this case, it was important for the mentor to help the youth discover alternative motivations. Without a specific motivation to succeed and to seek constructive outcomes, the youth may struggle and lack the capacity to make the changes necessary to bring about positive experiences.

Mentors discussed the difficulties in identifying motivational inspirations or connecting with youth when the mentor could not appreciate their motivations. For one mentor in particular, not being able to connect with a mentee’s motivation was distressing. He stated:

I pride myself on being able to build relationships with people, but I couldn’t find what motivated them, other than video games, and I just couldn’t go there . . . There’s that link that we couldn’t figure out how to get through, that I’ll let you come this far but I’m not gonna give you the secret that’s gonna break this thing wide open to allow you to influence me in a way that’s gonna make me wanna go to school, make me wanna get up in the morning and do something productive or make me put out job applications . . . We got to the point where he would talk

about it and he would say he wanted to do it, but we could never get to the point where he could put the rubber to the road, where he would [become] . . . motivated to do more than talk about it.

Although it was difficult for him, the mentor admitted that “sometimes it doesn’t matter what you do, sometimes you’re not going to get through.” As a result of all of his efforts and lack of success, the mentor’s ability to help the mentee seek a more positive lifestyle involved more than a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations on the behalf of the mentee. The balance between these two types of motivation could be different depending on the youth and his needs. In this specific case, a greater degree of intrinsic motivation was required to bring about positive change.

Cognitive ability. One mentor indicated that mentee cognitive ability had a significant impact on how mentorship affected the individual. He noted that mentees with perceived high cognitive functioning generally responded well to mentorship efforts and that these youth often went on to make beneficial and long-term changes in their lives. In contrast, mentees with perceived low cognitive functioning seemed to take longer to experience the benefits of mentorship. According to the mentor, youth with a cognitive impairment frequently required more time and effort to understand how mentoring could help them. The informant recalled how creating an influential relationship was complicated with youth who had cognitive impairments because these youth regularly had difficulty developing an appropriate level of insight, and therefore required more traditionally paternal direction and less guidance. The mentor shared a figurative example:

when you see them standing on the edge of a cliff because they don’t have the insight to know that if they jump it’s going to end very badly, I’m not going to stand there and give them the choices . . . no, I’m probably going to grab them by the hand and say ‘this is not something you wanna do right now’.

This type of direction does not allow for mentee autonomy or the ability to practice an adaptive form of decision making. It also complicates the mentoring interaction by creating hierarchy within the relational structure whereby the mentor is more of an intimidating authority figure, rather than a caring guide. If the rapport between a mentor and mentee is tarnished by this

difficulty, the result may be a lack of positive influence or even a negative influence over that youth.

In some cases, it seemed that the mentorship program could not accommodate youth whose cognitive functioning was so low that their capacity for insight and negotiating change was deemed insufficient for mentorship. In those cases, an outside referral or added community resources may have proved beneficial to supplement the mentorship process. I also noted that although this observation had merit, the mentor's views were subjective interpretations of mentee cognitive functioning and that none of the mentees he referred to had any cognitive testing as a part of this research.

Mentor Characteristics

Mentor characteristics were another aspect of mentorship that participants identified as influencing mentee experiences. As was the case for mentees, mentors must also possess certain qualities in order to facilitate the positive experiences of transitioning male foster youth. These qualities included specific abilities and personal attributes that worked to influence mentees by impacting upon their interactions and their capacity to make changes. See Figure 4.2. In doing so, the mentee is exposed to several positive and negative experiences.

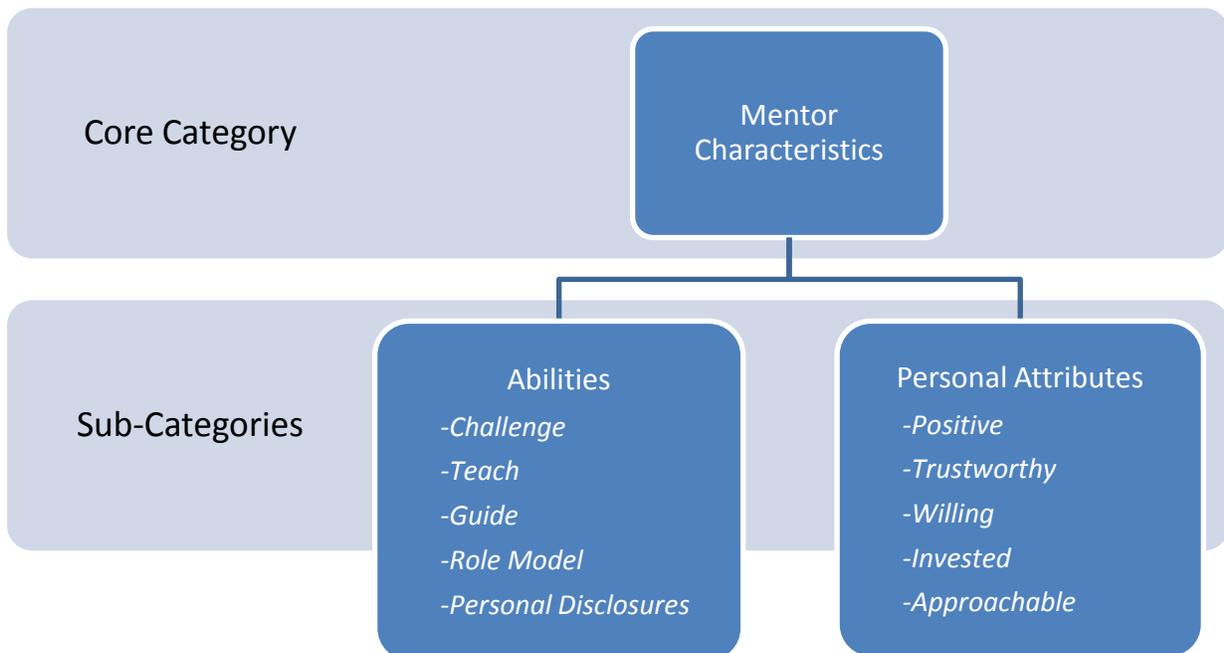


Figure 4. 2 Mentor Characteristics

One youth noted that although these mentor characteristics were important, “it’s not like they need to be perfect in every way.” He also shared, “I didn’t need someone with all of these attributes to help me.” However, the youth admitted that some attributes were more beneficial to him than others. One mentee highlighted the difficulty in finding the perfect mentor with such qualities, while another suggested that even if such a mentor did exist, the mentor could not exhibit these features in a flawless manner. Issues would arise in the way a mentor expressed each characteristic, specifically in the timing or application of his abilities and personal qualities. He explained, “None of us can do it right all the time and if they can, then I’d like to see what their secret is cause I’ve tried and I never get it right all the time.” Indeed, the mentoring relationship could be damaged if a characteristic was displayed at an inappropriate time or situation (e.g., being positive and making jokes when a youth was angry), a mentor relied on one characteristic in excess (e.g., being overly positive), or a mentor’s characteristics did not match up with the youth’s needs (e.g., the youth required a mentor who was knowledgeable about electronics, however, the mentor had no interest in this). It seemed that how the characteristics were used was more important to youth experiences than simply possessing the characteristic. Thus, I recognized that the mentor characteristics discussed herein were not an absolute requirement for inciting positive consequences of mentorship, nor were they the only qualities important to mentorship success. However, the traits presented here emerged repeatedly from the data, indicating the centrality of their role in mentoring the target population.

Abilities. The participants identified a number of abilities that were required of mentors in order to influence transitioning foster youth, such as challenging, guiding, displaying competences in pertinent areas, making appropriate disclosures, and promoting independence. It was not necessary that a mentor had all of these abilities; rather it was more important that the mentor was able to utilize their abilities in ways that were intentional and appropriate for the mentee and the situation. A mentor reported that “understanding what you’re doing, when you’re doing it” is very important because “a lot of people have the skills . . . but they can also be used in a negative way . . . when they don’t know what to do with it.” Each mentee may place a unique value on differing mentor abilities. For example, one of the youth found that having a trustworthy mentor who had been in similar life situations had more of an impact on him than any other ability or personal attribute of the mentor. When it comes to influencing youth, it

appeared that there was a preference among mentees towards mentors with a general set of abilities that could be used efficiently.

Challenge. Participants reported that challenging youth to keep trying or to attempt to complete new or difficult activities were helpful for fostering positive experiences. A mentor described challenging mentees as “try [ing] to get them out of their element [to] try something new.” “I’m constantly looking to help them raise their own bar . . . to hold themselves to a higher standard, whatever that may be, but it has to be higher than before,” a mentor shared. A goal in challenging youth was to highlight their problematic cognitions and behaviours and to assist them in taking a different perspective. A mentor found that a key to properly challenging youth was that it must not be forced, but that “there’s ways of doing it where the . . . the kid’s have the final say.” This empowering challenge allowed youth to feel an adequate level of pressure, while at the same time offering them a degree of autonomy and control over their own choices.

The mentor also cautioned that mentees must complete the assignment in order to benefit from the work. He noted “sometimes they want you to do stuff for them and . . . you’re not supposed to do that . . . and I think they might find that frustrating.” Some specific challenges identified included, “play[ing] different sports, . . . [practicing good] sportsmanship, teamwork, and . . . face[ing] a fear.” All of these objectives were designed to help mentees learn how to manage their behaviours and emotions, and to develop and enhance their coping skills such that they were better prepared to deal with challenges they may face in the future.

One youth expressed how mentors’ challenges helped him to stay in school. He admitted that he would have dropped out of school if the mentors had not encouraged him to continue. The youth described his mentors as having the “ability to push people to do their best at everything.” When he felt like giving up on his education, his mentors were able to help him think about school in a positive way and see it as a stepping stone to a better future.

Challenging mentees also had the potential to negatively influence them. A mentor reported that “every time we have to challenge a kid . . . you burn some rapport, so it makes it harder for them to sometimes save face with the mentor.” He suggested that mentors need to learn how to balance challenging the youth with developing a relationship. Challenging someone before the relationship is strong enough to withstand a loss of rapport could cause a mentorship breakdown where the challenges must be reduced and the relationship must be rebuilt before the mentee withdraws from mentorship all together.

The mentor recognized that having unreasonable expectations may also negatively impact a mentee, stating, “maybe it just looks impossible to them and it doesn’t matter what I say to them . . . it looks impossible.” He described a youth facing a fear of heights and how a reasonable assignment would mean “not asking them to jump into the water . . . off the seven meter [diving board], but at least walk to the edge or get close.” The objective was to be achievable, “but . . . it can’t be the bare minimum either,” a mentor emphasized. Indeed, challenging a mentee to make changes that were too large or too small for them could cause the mentee to stop progressing, negatively impact their self-confidence, or damage the mentoring relationship.

Teach. The mentor’s ability to teach was also important to helping mentees change their behaviours and emotions. One mentor described that teaching the youth involved “educat[ing] them and help[ing] them make the right decisions.” Teaching areas that participants deemed significant were the use of skills for adaptive coping and living, gaining and sustaining employment, conflict management, making healthy choices, household duties, managing finances, playing sports, understanding current events, forming relationships, and engaging in various therapeutic activities (e.g., sports, exercising, teamwork, etc.). Mentors need to display knowledge of concepts in these areas in order to educate the mentees about them. Being able to provide information about relevant topics increases a mentee’s respect for the mentor, serves as a source for bonding, and helps mentees to make healthy, well-informed decisions.

The information mentors provide must be free from biases in that it should include different perspectives beyond the view supported by the mentor. A mentor referred to a situation where he had to give information on pregnancy options. Based on his religion, current lifestyle, and family background, he knew the decision that would be right for him; however, he presented every option to his mentee, playing down his personal bias. With this information, the mentee was able to make an informed decision that best fit his situation, rather than feel forced to make a decision without having knowledge of the available options. Forcing uninformed decisions could have produced mentor resentment, thus damaging the mentoring relationship and negating any mentorship success.

It was difficult for mentors to watch their mentees make lifestyle choices that conflicted with their own. As a result, mentors were concerned that they would inadvertently transfer their own values onto a mentee. To combat this potentially harmful influence, one mentor noted that

“you need to know yourself” and that by knowing one’s own biases and triggers, one could better pass on non-biased information to the youth. The mentor described the ability to “know yourself” as an on-going process, whereby mentors continuously held themselves in perspective and verified the origins of their own emotions, reactions, and core values. He felt that by becoming aware of what his biases were and where they originated, he could consciously prevent them from interfering with the mentoring relationship.

The mentor further recognized that when teaching mentees, the information taught must focus on society’s core values rather than on one’s own individual values. He worried that that he may have been teaching mentees the wrong information, and he posed the question, “am I teaching them stuff that is going to help them move forward or is going to hold them back?”. The mentor specified:

As a mentor . . . I shouldn’t be teaching them about my values. I need to be teaching them about what the world has to say about that and helping them see things in a way that’s gonna help them move forward.

Another mentor agreed with that idea of teaching mentees about what society deemed acceptable and added that a mentor needs to teach real world consequences for violating social norms. He believed that mentees need to be challenged to meet the needs of society, and he stated:

By letting them skate by with the bare minimum, when they turn twenty one their jobs aren’t going to say, ‘oh, hey, you can come in at noon because you’re tired last night because you were up studying’ or vice versa. Society isn’t going to look at it that way.

The mentor expressed that it was important to “teach reality,” so that the youth were set up for real life and subsequent success when they left foster care, rather than for failure. His way of working with the youth and promoting the core values of society with all their consequences encouraged mentees to practice the skills they had learned. The idea was that they will be able to transfer this practice to real life once they exited the mentoring relationship. This transfer would lead to long term gains.

Guide. Having the ability to guide mentees was also important in altering potentially problematic behaviours and emotions that were more common in foster youth than the general

population (Marquis & Flynn, 2009; Stein et al., 1996). A mentor accentuated how guiding the mentee ensured a non-directive delivery of information and continued support for them to use the knowledge gained. A mentor cautioned that guiding must not be forced and has to be done *with* the mentee, not *for* them. A youth reported that he did not like being told to make changes and that he preferred it to be “one of those things that you just decide to change on your own.” If forced to share too much or to make changes too quickly, this youth was likely to rebel and withdraw, actions that were not conducive to establishing a positive mentoring relationship. Another youth emphasized that he appreciated not being forced to make changes and that instead, his mentors were “there to help me . . . they’re not trying to make it so that I’ll do something.” Using this idea of guiding rather than forcing changes, a mentor described how he assisted mentees in making healthy choices. He stated:

I’ll never tell a kid . . . to do something, I’ll just try to imply that it would be a good idea if he did it or that someone might appreciate it and it usually works out pretty good.

In this example, the mentor helped the youth become aware of a proper behaviour and then gave the mentee an opportunity to choose whether or not to engage in that behaviour. A mentor noted that guiding instead of forcing mentees to make changes “improves their confidence and their self-worth, just knowing that people trust them to do the right thing” and make good decisions.

Guiding mentees towards making positive changes and choices could be difficult because of the relationship that is built between mentees and mentors. A mentor explained:

It’s really tough to make a decision with a kid, especially when you’ve exhausted all efforts, you’ve done your lessons, [and] you’ve brainstormed with a group of people, including that kid. What can we do next? You’re putting everything on the table and it’s hard when you’ve tried everything . . . and then you’re not [getting anywhere] . . . I think that it’s tough because we may be putting something on the table that the kid absolutely does not want to do and even though we might know that if he just tried it, it might work out and he could still say no and not try it.

In that case, the mentor's investment in the youth and ability to extrapolate the consequences of not engaging in the mentor's challenge caused turmoil. The mentor further explained:

It's easy to rescue them instead . . . Sometimes you want to make the choices for them and just say 'hey, this is what you're doing' . . . if our kids are failing or taking steps back then . . . it's easy to take that on yourself . . . [you're] worried, are people gonna think that I'm not doing my job cause Johnny's failing?

Even though it is difficult for the mentor to witness a youth struggle, he noted that completing the mentees' challenges or making decisions for them "doesn't help either cause then you're . . . an enabler."

Another mentor agreed with this observation and added that "people need to go through [their] own journeys to get to where they need to be. So sometimes people need to fall down before they can get back up and finish the race." It was easier for this mentor to "be okay if they fail" as he saw a greater purpose in guiding the youth rather than directing them or completing tasks for them. He stated:

That's something that they can take with them forever, even if they're no [longer involved in mentorship] . . . We're teaching them. We're giving them the information. They're making decisions and even if they make the wrong decisions . . . they might not get it now, but eventually, [with] . . . the way we're teaching it, someday they'll get it, whether . . . it's now or when they're twenty five.

The mentor wanted to provide information for the youth and further guide his decision-making process, so that he could not only make immediate decisions, but future decisions as well.

Role model. Mentees learned core values and healthy behaviours through their mentor's role modeling. One mentor from the study felt that mentorship must go beyond talking about situations. While referring to mentors, he stated, "it's one thing to be able to talk about that stuff, they need to be able to do it as well." Mentors engaged in the role modeling process on a regular basis. The youth observed how their mentors approached societal norms and mimicked behaviour that reflected these norms. Participants identified several societal values that were important to role model, which included engaging in: healthy communication, conflict resolution, appropriate relationships, healthy living, household duties, studying, following routines,

practicing religion (if applicable), and refraining from substance use and aggression. As an example, one mentor described how role modeling appropriate male and female relationships helped to change problematic behaviours of his mentees. He explained:

I think that's really good for all these kids who have never really grown up in families to see a man and woman interact and see how they interact with each other. [It] just teaches some of the young guys that we work with how to respect women and how to be in a healthy relationship.

Observing a male mentor interacting positively with a female was especially important for mentees who had experienced or witnessed domestic violence. Such previous experiences may have led a mentee to believe that physical aggression and lack of respect for women were appropriate. However, witnessing positive relationships between males and females allows such a youth to challenge this schema.

Although modelling ideal behaviours was a revered teaching tool, one informant expressed that it was unrealistic to portray an adult who was perfect at all times. He thought that this portrayal could create unreasonable standards for mentees to achieve and jeopardize the mentoring relationship. Attempting to conceal negative habits or unhealthy choices, the mentor accentuated, could be taxing and could promote a relationship based on hypocrisy and lies. The mentor felt that the risk of having mentees discover these issues and feeling deceived by their mentor was enough to warrant a genuinely healthy, but realistic lifestyle. He stressed that the ideal mentor should strive towards living a healthy lifestyle and also genuinely address any problems that he or she may encounter, rather than maintain that these issues did not exist. To corroborate this idea, one mentor found that it was easier to do his job when he could be honest and open about his life. He suggested, "I can be myself at my job cause I do live a clean, healthy lifestyle." The mentor commented that it was easier and more conducive to developing positive and influential relationships when mentors were "able to admit when you're wrong and if you need to [and] apologize for your action," rather than focusing on monitoring and censoring his every move.

Another mentor agreed that it was easier to show the youth "a better way of life" when maintaining a healthy lifestyle. He stated that "the biggest job that we have [as mentors] is making sure that we know that our job is to live as good as we can." He felt that this healthy

lifestyle must extend beyond the mentor's employable hours to include all aspects of his life. The informant suggested that a mentor must have a positive and healthy personal life, because it will affect his mood, motivation, and ability to be genuine while working with mentees. In doing so, this mentor said he had to be cautious about being a role model when engaging in personal relationships and recreational activities while he was not working. He could not partake in the same types of activities as others his age, so that he could eliminate the possibility of appearing hypocritical to his mentees who might have observed him and thus, providing a negative example.

One mentor stated that role modelling was difficult, in that mentors had to exercise diligence with their everyday conversations and actions. Mentees "see and hear more than you probably would think," he shared. "So, you always have to constantly watch what you say and watch what you do when you're around them." He also reported:

If you're a very quiet person, you're very responsible, you have strong morals like where you don't drink or smoke or anything, it sounds very easy. But for some people who do have social lives and wanna do things, it would probably be a lot harder to give a lot of that stuff up. Like, you can't be drinking, you can't be smoking, or you can smoke, but, I just think that as a mentor you need to be setting more of a president, more of a . . . proper example. And probably smoking isn't probably the best thing cause these kids look up to you.

This mentor noted that role modelling positive behaviours was ideal, but that for young mentors it presented a significant difficulty. He expressed that the life of a young university student with a tendency towards drinking alcohol and having few responsibilities could negatively influence mentees. The mentor admitted that altering his young-adult lifestyle to ensure that mentees would not be influenced by any of potentially negative habits was very difficult. He said:

One of the hardest things for me . . . is that I feel like I'm always on stage. I always have to be watching what I say [and] watching what I do. I can't just act like how I would act at home.

The mentor remarked, “that’s just right now. I’m only 25, so maybe when I’m older,” suggesting that it would be easier to role model positive behaviours after he was given more time to mature and strive towards achieving a more healthy lifestyle.

Personal disclosures. Participants thought that mentors should share personal stories of overcoming hardship. Personal disclosures increased the bond between mentors and mentees by discovering a shared experience and increasing the vulnerability of the mentor. One mentee found these stories to be particularly inspirational. He reported,

They tell me stories about their pasts. You think you have it rough sometimes, you get knocked down, it’s like it’s the end. Then you hear about people’s stories and how they get back up and it just makes you want to go again. You feel that drive and it’s really changed my perspective a lot on the way I do things now.

This mentee was comforted in knowing that his mentors had also encountered and overcome hardship. He remarked, that it was valuable to “know that I’m not the only one that’s going through it or has been through it.” Personal disclosures changed the youth’s opinion about his mentors. He no longer perceived them to be intimidating and perfect authority figures, but rather, to be human beings capable of making mistakes and rectifying them. Hearing about his mentor’s struggles enabled this youth to trust him and his advice. Furthermore, the stories inspired the youth to continue working towards success, despite facing adversity.

The youth went on to describe a specific example of how a personal story has helped him. He recalled:

My mentor has told me about how when he was in high school or going to university . . . he spent his money on junk food [and] all this other stuff and how he had so much money to do this . . . My mentor’s always there trying to tell me how to save money. I want to spend it, but I do with it what’s best. I’m looking out for my interests.

In that scenario, the youth was able to relate with his mentor regarding finances and learn from the adult’s experience. He trusted his mentor’s advice about finances, because they had gained expert knowledge about the subject stemming from their experiences. The mentee explained,

“when they tell you something and they’ve really been through it, then they know the feeling.” In this case, the common bond and shared experience between the youth and his mentor led this youth to take his advice and make positive changes.

Mentors warned, however, that the use of disclosures needs to have limits. They reported that disclosures demonstrated benefits when they were used to build rapport or to enhance the mentee’s understanding of a situation. A mentor specified, “If you’re disclosing with purpose, I don’t see anything wrong with that. If your venting block is one of the kids, that’s not appropriate.” The rationale for making a disclosure is not to provide an opportunity for the mentor to vent; rather, disclosures should be used to develop a bond between the mentor and mentee and to create a learning opportunity. As well, mentors noted that disclosures need to be appropriate in their content and their use. Mentors should not make disclosures that cause the youth to feel judged or to influence them to make uninformed decisions. A mentor must also balance his use of disclosures with other bonding and teaching tools so as not to create a relationship based solely on comparisons between mentors and mentees.

Personal attributes. Participants described the ideal mentor as having a variety of personal attributes that were beneficial to fostering the mentoring relationship. The key attributes were: being positive, trustworthy, willing, invested, and approachable. It was noted that that mentors did not need to have all of these attributes or to display them at all times. The idea was that mentors with a combination of these characteristics were often easier to listen to, take advice from, respect, and work with than those who did not demonstrate such characteristics.

Positive. Mentees valued having positive mentors who encouraged them to keep moving forward, even when facing adversity. One mentee described how the positivity of his mentors made it easier to approach them with his problems. He stated that “I always like to talk to them just cause they’re always so happy and joyful [and] that’s what I like . . . I find it the easiest being around positive people like that.” Mentees appreciated when their mentors encouraged them to overcome hardships such as being tempted to drop out of school, feeling like they could not do something that they were afraid of, having a failed attempt at making a change, or being angry over a lost basketball game. A mentee explained that “encouragements just helped keep me going . . . and here I am, another year, [still going].” If it was not for his mentor’s constant encouragement, this youth believed that he could not have succeeded.

One youth stated that his mentor's positivity was especially motivating. He described how the mentors "always bring me up when I am down . . . they keep me thinking positive and not thinking about doing bad things." Having a positive state of mind was an area with which this mentee struggled. When he was not thinking positively, he resorted to spending time with anti-social groups and getting involved with substance use. Having the mentors model positivity and encourage him to remain positive helped keep this youth distracted from negative activities, feelings, and people. To this mentee, it seemed as though the mentor's positivity was contagious and made it easier for him to choose healthier options. With regards to his mentors, the youth also reported, "they might be grumpy one day or something, upset one day, but it's good to know when I'm down, I can still talk to them and they still got a smile left in them." Indeed, it was not necessary for the mentors to be positive at all times, however, a general tendency to be positive and encouraging helped this youth.

Trustworthy. A mentor observed that several of his mentees had negative relationships with people who were close to them. In addition, being associated with the social services program meant that many mentees encountered numerous social workers and youth workers connected to the agency. With high turnover and transfers between workers, it may be difficult for youth to develop a trustworthy relationship with these workers. This mentor used this premise to explain why his mentees were "a little hesitant and resistant to open up and talk to you." He felt that this potentially negative experience made it difficult for mentees to trust adults attempting to work with them.

Participants found that establishing trust with the mentor was a prominent aspect in forming a healthy mentoring relationship capable of being influential. The mentor felt that he must demonstrate he was trustworthy in order to build an influential relationship with his mentees. The mentor acknowledged that mentoring is "all about relationships, building that relationship, the trust, and respect. And without that, it's not gonna work." He emphasized that mentees would be reluctant to listening to and to learning from someone that they did not trust.

Although being trustworthy was viewed as an important mentor characteristic, one participant specified that establishing trust was not solely up to the mentor. He stated that "we're someone they can, if they're willing to, they can trust and confide in and feel comfortable." The mentor can show the mentee that they are a trustworthy individual by keeping the mentee's confidentiality, being genuine and honest, fulfilling promises, and engaging in active listening. If

the mentee was not willing to accept his mentor as being worthy of trust, there may be difficulty in maintaining the relationship. A mentee may increase their willingness over time although the degree to which a mentee is willing to move forward is dependent upon the individual. Mentors must be aware of this fact so that they will not set up unreasonable expectations for the mentee and themselves, which could lead to relationship breakdown and mentor burnout.

Willing. As was the case for mentees, the mentors must also be willing to engage with youth and make changes to their own behaviour. One youth gave an example where the mentors would take the mentees to a recreation night and “just go outside and smoke all the time or . . . just stand in one spot.” He felt that this lack of engagement could role model unhealthy choices and demonstrate a failed interest in the mentee and their success. Both scenarios could pose a threat to the development of a positive mentoring relationship.

One mentor agreed that mentors should be willing to change their behaviour and subsequently, the way they work with mentees based on mentees’ needs. He specified that the mentor must spontaneously adapt his strategies to match with the needs and mentorship stage of a mentee. In order to achieve such a match, the mentor stated that “you have to be willing to learn and grow as a person; otherwise you can’t help other people to learn and grow.” He felt that as a mentor, he should be aware of his own faults or the strategies that had not been beneficial and strive to ameliorate these gaps. He shared:

[making these changes has been] a hard thing to do, but you restructure and you re-group and you go figure it out . . . the only way to role model that is by checking your stuff out, looking at it and figuring out what works for you and what doesn’t and how you deal with that.

In order to make such significant changes, the mentor specified that “[mentors] need to adjust our thinking.” Another mentor declared that making changes required a willingness on the part of a mentor as well as an access to resources and professional support. He felt that it was imperative that mentors seek out the necessary resources to ensure that they were continually learning and adapting their mentoring strategies to fit the needs and developmental level of their mentees.

Invested. One informant described a mentor’s investment as “you’re putting yourself into it.” He felt that the mentor’s investment was a crucial influencing factor in the lives of mentees. When mentors demonstrated that they were invested in promoting the youth’s life and success,

the mentees presented as being more comfortable and trusting of their mentor. A youth felt that his mentors were invested when “they show[ed] an interest in me, [my] growth, what [I] learn . . . they actually want to see me excel at the program.” He recalled how his mentors helped him through his difficulties instead of leaving him to manage his issues on his own. He explained, they “call me or text me and be like ‘hey, is something wrong? You want to talk about it?’. And he’ll actually come over and we’ll talk about it.” That interest in how he was doing and how he was working through his problems demonstrated that the youth’s mentors had an investment in him and allowed the youth to trust that his mentors would be present when needed.

A mentor’s investment was not only denoted by an interest in the mentee’s well-being, but also by a dedication to working with the mentee, even when it was difficult. One mentee shared how his mentors “went out of their way” to help him get settled into his community and apartment. He shared:

[my mentors were] willing to take time out of their day, sometimes when they’re not working, to come and see me . . . they might not be working but they know that the[y’re the] only one I really have to talk to, so they’ll come in and make an exception.

During times when he was struggling, the youth’s mentors did not give up on him, but instead, developed and assisted him in executing a new plan for success.

Another mentee also accentuated the importance of his mentor’s dedication to working with him when he stated, “we’ll bark at each other and that’s kind of the bad parts, but it’s like ‘let’s forget it’ and the next day and stuff it’s back to normal.” For this mentee, the fact that his mentors continued to work with him after an altercation allowed him to be more comfortable with being open around his mentors, and provided him with affirmation that their relationship could withstand difficulties. One mentor emphasized that knowing that the mentoring relationship is strong and genuine was important for foster youth as they have often had unreliable and transient relationships with adults, including their caregivers and social workers. He explained, that when the mentees “don’t get written off right away . . . that’s a benefit cause these kids have been shuffled around so much in the homes.” Having a dedicated and invested mentor seemed to give these mentees a relationship that they never had before, one that is capable of influencing the mentee in a positive and healthy manner.

Approachable. In order for mentees to share pertinent information with their mentors and to be comfortable in the relationship, their mentors had to be approachable. An informant mentioned that it must be “easy for them to approach the mentor . . . [to] go up and talk to the mentor or ask them a question or ask them to do something.” A difficulty in doing so may hinder communication and relationship building. Not only must a mentor be physically approachable, but they must also be mentally and emotionally available for youth to access them. One mentee reported that he struggled when his mentors were away at school or work or when they seemed too focused on other activities to be approached. In these times, he felt that he could not interact with his mentors and was forced to manage his issues on his own, often leading to greater problems and a feeling of rejection.

Being approachable also involved being friendly, non-judgemental, and open enough to accept the mentee and what they had to say. “They have to be ready for us,” reported one youth. Having friendly staff allowed a mentee to more easily connect with his mentors and enjoy spending time with them. Without this quality, the mentee admitted that he could easily reject spending time with his mentors, and instead look towards anti-social peers and subsequent negative influences to fulfill his social needs.

Program Characteristics

Program characteristics emerged as the third aspect of mentorship that influenced the experiences of transitioning male foster youth. I proposed a number of categories to explain this process, including having: access to mentors, follow-up care, matched mentor-mentee pairs, separation of the mentorship program from social service institutions, and engagement in therapeutic activities. See Figure 4.3.

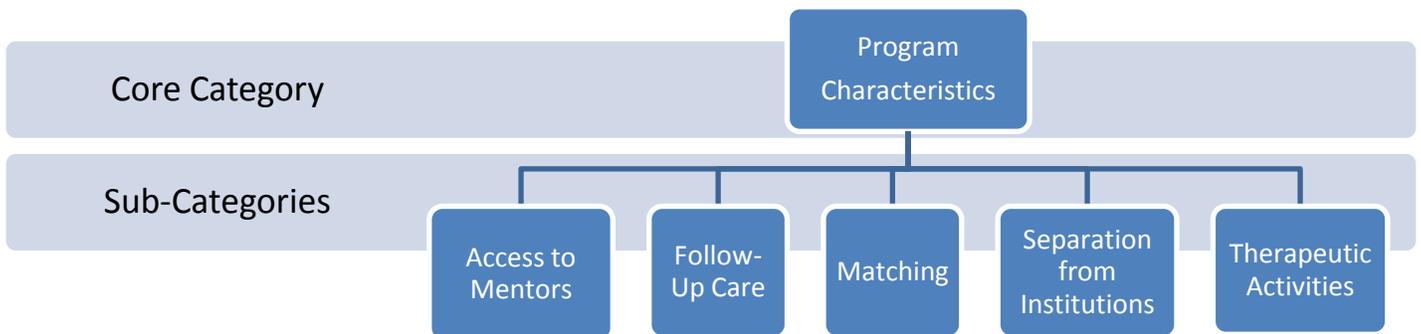


Figure 4.3 Program Characteristics

Following, is a written description of the categories and a detailed outline of the pathways they follow to influence mentees.

Access to mentors. Since mentors were such an important influencing factor in the mentoring relationship, it was not surprising that a mentee's access to them greatly shaped that influence. One mentor recognized that with a set number of work hours and days, he could not provide the care that some mentees required. Since conflict for mentees may arise outside of regular business hours and consequently, the mentor felt that having constant access to mentors was beneficial for mentees. He liked the idea of having a live-in mentor or a mentor that was on-call so that "on the weekend or after hours, the kids will always have someone else to turn to . . . There's someone immediately right there that they can go and just talk to." Another mentor added that "it's about the safety in that relationship and that the mentor isn't going anywhere at the end of the day." Knowing that a mentor was available whenever the youth was in crisis decreased the youth's anxiety and increased their trust in the mentor. One mentor felt that without constant support, "a youth might get frustrated when he feels like there are not enough people around for him" and may subsequently, regress in their negative behaviours or make impulsive and uninformed choices.

The mentor also acknowledged that "some youth are more needy than others . . . [and] need more support." Indeed, in this study I found that some mentees preferred to have access to mentors at all times, while others preferred less frequent interaction. For example, one mentee, who only accessed his mentor's when he had difficulties, remarked:

Most times I don't really need them around cause . . . I don't do much. So I just stay around the house, do my own thing . . . I know they're not going to be around the whole time because they're not there to babysit us.

On an everyday basis, this mentee did not require unlimited access to his mentors to maintain the gains that he had made. In contrast, the youth had a different reaction regarding those times when he was stressed and facing difficulties. He stated:

I would like for them to be there all the time, but I know it's not gonna happen cause they got school and they got work. I understand that . . . [my mentors] are always at work or they're there, upstairs, studying and I'm always downstairs by

myself and I'm like 'oh, that's pretty boring. I got nothing to do'. . . I just wish they were there a little more for me . . . most of the time they're not really around, so I don't even talk to them much . . . They're not gonna always be there. I understand it, but still.

Another mentee reported having a similar experience with previous mentors who were "just never there. You can call them, do whatever, they're just never there. It was just more annoying than anything . . . when they're never there, then it's usually the time when you're in the rougher shape." He also struggled with mentors who were "there every day or every week." Both types of access to mentors caused problems for this mentee, because he felt that the absent mentors were not invested and that he could not depend on them, while the live-in mentors failed to give him his privacy. In these cases, the youth either asked for new mentors or dropped out of the mentoring program. For that mentee, it was important to strike a balance between having his mentors there and having his own independence. This balance and the youth's need for access also changed over time. After he was able to maintain control over some of his own behaviours, he "didn't need as much mentoring," but still appreciated being able to "hang out with them and play basketball every Sunday" so that his mentors could assist him in maintaining the gains that he had made.

One issue that may have limited accessibility to mentors was the mentor's caseload. A participant found that the number of mentees assigned to each mentor affected their mental capacity to engage in mentorship. He explained:

If the house is full, we're at five kids and there's only one mentor, then his time will get a little strapped and he might get a little stressed out from it and deal with so many kids and work and the responsibilities of the mentor.

As indicated in previous sections, mentor stress could lead to instability and burnout which, in turn, negatively affects the mentoring relationship. In addition, the mentor emphasized that "you can't give as much attention to all the kids as you would like to because each kid has different issues and different problems and schedules." Not having appropriate access to his mentor may cause a mentee to feel abandoned and to leave the program prematurely. Thus, the ratio of mentors to mentees had an impact on how much access a mentee has to his mentor.

In order to combat this affect, it may be helpful to have multiple mentors assigned to one mentee. A participant acknowledged that having more mentors increased the mentees' access to mentors if needed, and also gave the mentees a "choice of who they can reach out to." However, he also cautioned that when more people are involved, the mentees:

. . . might feel like there's too many people involved . . . [and] they might find that intrusive . . . they always want the people they're comfortable with, but on the next breathe, you could squash that pretty quickly by telling them that everyone in that room is there for you, to support you.

Since all mentees are unique, their comfort level with having multiple mentors may also differ. It may be that they are never comfortable having more than one mentor as in the case of one youth in the program. He shared, "I don't want two, cause then you got to tell them your life story and then you got to tell them the story . . . I want to be able to tell one person and call it good." For this mentee, keeping his story confidential and developing a trusting relationship with one mentor outweighed the benefit of having a greater access to mentors.

Follow-up care. Mentors and mentees reported that follow-up care was advantageous to youth as they were transitioning out of the foster care system. One mentee explained that because one mentee had developed positive and meaningful relationships with his mentors, he wanted to maintain these relationships over time, and ask for help as he needed it. The mentee did not feel that he required official involvement from the mentorship program at JHS, but he still wanted to follow-up with the mentors on an occasional basis. He also specified that follow-up care should be informal, taking the form of an activity or phone call. "It's nice to have someone call you and see how you're doing," he shared. Such interactions would be valuable for this youth, as he could maintain his connection with his mentors while also achieving independence.

According to another mentor, follow-up care was vital to the mentee's experience, such that it prevented the youth from feeling abandoned once they became of the right age to leave the program. He admitted that, for these youth, mentorship was "going to change, but that it's never going to end." The mentor believed that it was necessary to reconnect with mentees and also link his mentees to other resources, such as counsellors, education programs, and social assistance. He stated that "they need that continued support" and emphasized that resources need to be "set up and in place before they age out so that they're not sleeping at the Salvation Army or The

Lighthouse.” The resources required for each youth will vary and will necessitate a working knowledge of local programming on the behalf of the mentor.

Matching. Although none of the participants were matched in mentor and mentee pairs through the JHS program, a desire was expressed to integrate this concept. A mentor felt that it was unfair and even detrimental to force individuals into mentoring relationships. “It’s pretty arrogant for me to think that no matter what kid comes in, I’m going to influence him, no matter what . . . there’s going to be some kids that just don’t line up with me,” the mentor explained. Since it was not possible to match mentors and mentees so that all of their characteristics complemented each other perfectly, the mentor suggested that mentees be able to choose their mentors based on a list of characteristics and values, or by having groups of mentors and mentees meet and agree on pairings before they were finalized. He stated “maybe we don’t have to have all these interests that are lined up, but yet, there are some basic things in life that we will align on.” Such commonalities between a mentor and mentee could provide a foundation for building a healthy mentoring relationship. The informant further suggested that mentors and mentees should be able to choose their pairing, stating that “it’s hard for kids to invest in a mentor if they don’t get to choose.” The mentor added that forcing mentees to learn from any given mentor may cause unnecessary pressure on both members; whereas giving the mentor and mentees more autonomy in the matching process might decrease that pressure and increase their investment in the mentoring relationship.

This mentor recommended that mentors and mentees be matched to one another based on complimentary personalities and commonalities, such as belief systems, values, interests, and personal style. “Those little interests are kinda like the key to Pandora’s Box sometimes,” he claimed. His recommendation stemmed from both positive and negative experiences he had with his own previous mentorship. He recalled receiving great benefits from being matched to a mentor whom he described as being “me, 40 years from now.” Having so much in common with his mentor allowed him to respect their mentoring relationship and trust that his mentor could understand his perspective and life experiences. “When I got connected with somebody that lined up with me, it helped build my confidence [and] turned me into completely different person,” he explained.

In contrast, the informant had another mentor through a work program, whom he described as being the opposite of him. Although the informant recognized that he was able to

learn from his mentor's differing perspective, he also reported that it "almost ruined my career. . . because it, it killed my self esteem and my personal style." The informant had difficulty relating and connecting with this mentor, to the extent that he felt intimidated and lost motivation. "There was a time there that, that didn't look like [my life] was gonna work out and all because of how the mentorship was going," he emphasized.

Mentees spoke about the importance of having mentors who shared commonalities such as having had similar past and present experiences. One mentee was able to connect with his mentors because of a common experience, which he felt enabled his mentors to "know what to say and . . . know what I'm going through." Similarly, another mentee thought that his mentors could understand him better because they often shared the experience of playing sports together and feeling the frustration of losing. Since they had been through similar situations, the mentee could better relate to his mentors, and he learned to control his sports-related aggression by observing his mentors struggle with their own sportsmanship issues.

Respondents also noted the importance of matching mentors and mentees based on gender. One mentee found it easier to talk to a male mentor because he felt that they shared similar experiences and perspectives. He revealed, "I'm more comfortable talking to a male than a female . . . you expect them to grow up in the same environment and have the same experiences." For this mentee, having a same-sex mentor meant that he could develop a meaningful and trusting relationship with them. In contrast, a mentor expressed that mentees should have both female and male mentors. He stated that having a male and female mentor "teaches some of the young guys that we work with how to respect women and how to be in a healthy relationship." The mentor specified that observing male and female mentors interact also provided the mentees with unique learning opportunities and opportunities to appreciate an alternate perspective.

Separation from institutions. The foster care system is a formal institution that often produced negative connotations for foster youth. Many participants felt that the JHS mentorship program should be separated from this system to escape these connotations. A mentor described JHS' mentorship program as "not so much of a[n] institutionary program cause they're [not] always watched and the day's [not] planned out for them." The JHS mentorship program provided a more comfortable and informal atmosphere that enabled mentees to be more relaxed

and open to making changes in their lives. This informal setting allowed for increased freedom, independence, and an opportunity to practice the skills the youth learned, without judgement.

The mentors spoke about the benefits of setting up an informal family atmosphere, and many of the participants described the mentorship program in family terms. “We’re trying to provide this family environment for the kids who never even had a family before,” a mentor stated. Several mentors equated their relationships with mentees to that of a parent or uncle, and they talked about working with the mentees in the same manner as raising children. One mentor discussed how he found it helpful to give the mentees “ample opportunities to pick themselves up and dust themselves off, much like a family.” The mentors agreed that implementing a family approach to working with the mentees helped them to develop strong and influential relationships and to learn many of the social and coping skills that the youth may have missed while living in foster care.

Inherent in such a casual program was a flexibility to mentor in relaxed settings, like a basketball court, coffee shop, or phone call. The mentees also appreciated this flexibility because it was more convenient and made them feel as if they were spending time with a friend, older family member, or a team mate rather than with an assigned mentor from an institution. These mentees were concerned about being associated with formal institutions as it revealed to others that they were receiving help. One mentee shared his thoughts that “some people would think he needs help . . . [that] he’s struggling in life, so people look down on you that way.” With this stigma on his mind, it would have been difficult for this youth to form a healthy bond with his mentor in a more formal program.

Therapeutic activities. Mentors and mentees engaged in a variety of therapeutic activities, including going to the gym, watching movies, visiting, going out for coffee or meals, playing sports, driving in a car, assisting each other in household duties, riding horseback, taking short vacations, having spiritual encounters (e.g., praying together, going to church, participating in cultural activities, etc.), and assisting in getting to school and appointments. Participants noted the value of such therapeutic activities for relationship development, confidence boosting, stigma reduction, behavioural observation, problem-solving, and motivation enhancement. These activities also provided opportunities to teach skills related to relationships, health management, coping strategies, employment, mediation, decision-making, and daily life situations.

One mentee shared how playing basketball with his mentor influenced his mentorship experience in both a positive and negative manner. He revealed that joining a basketball league with his mentor gave him a sense of belonging and helped him to bond with his mentors. “It made you feel as if you were a part of something,” the mentee shared. He also shared that engaging in such activities “brings out a characteristic in you that you never knew you had.” In the case of this mentee, playing sports brought out his aggression. Although feeling angry was not ideal, expressing his anger appropriately, in front of his mentors, gave them the opportunity to challenge his problematic behaviour and guide him towards more appropriate solutions.

An additional benefit of engaging in therapeutic activities was that mentees often found it easier to talk about their issues within a less formal setting. A mentee explained:

We go to the golf course and just play golf and . . . if I have any problems I usually tell them then. I’m not a person to text my problems or call and be like, ‘blah, blah, blah,’ so, it’s a good way to let it go.

The youth felt that playing sports with his mentors brought them closer together, enabling his mentor to observe his behavioural issues without him having to verbalize them. “They know when I’m upset, I don’t have to tell them, they just know. That comes from playing sports with them and just hanging out with them,” shared the youth. When the mentor recognized these problems, they were able to inquire about them, thus encouraging the mentee to discuss and address their issues.

When deciding in which therapeutic activities to engage, mentors attempted to choose those activities that fit the mentee and his needs while still challenging them to try new activities and consider differing perspectives. Some mentees may not be ready for particular activities or have an aversion to them. In order to show that the mentor understands the mentee and is adapting to their needs, a participant felt that the mentor must “figure out what’s best to do and how to go about it.” Tailoring therapeutic activities to the mentees may also help with targeting negative behaviours by engaging in activities that identify or address these issues, and by boosting mentee confidence by helping them engage in activities in which they do well.

Mentorship Model

The mentorship model is a compilation of the categories and concepts outlined above and it reflects how the mentoring relationship influences transitioning male foster youth. Mentorship

among the target population was found to be influenced by three core categories: mentee, mentor, and program characteristics. I divided these core categories into sub-categories that provided greater detail regarding the influential process of mentorship. All categories were found to influence mentees in different ways depending on their manipulation that is, how they were expressed and the context in which they were expressed. For example, a personal disclosure could have both a positive and negative influence over a youth. Benefits were expected if a disclosure was used to establish rapport or assist the youth through a difficult situation. By contrast, damage to the relationship could occur if the mentor shared personal experiences for personal gain, rather than for assisting the mentee. The combination of the core categories and their subcategories either hindered or enhanced the mentoring relationship and the capacity to make healthy changes and choices. In turn, this process led to many positive or negative consequences for the mentee. See Figure 4.4.

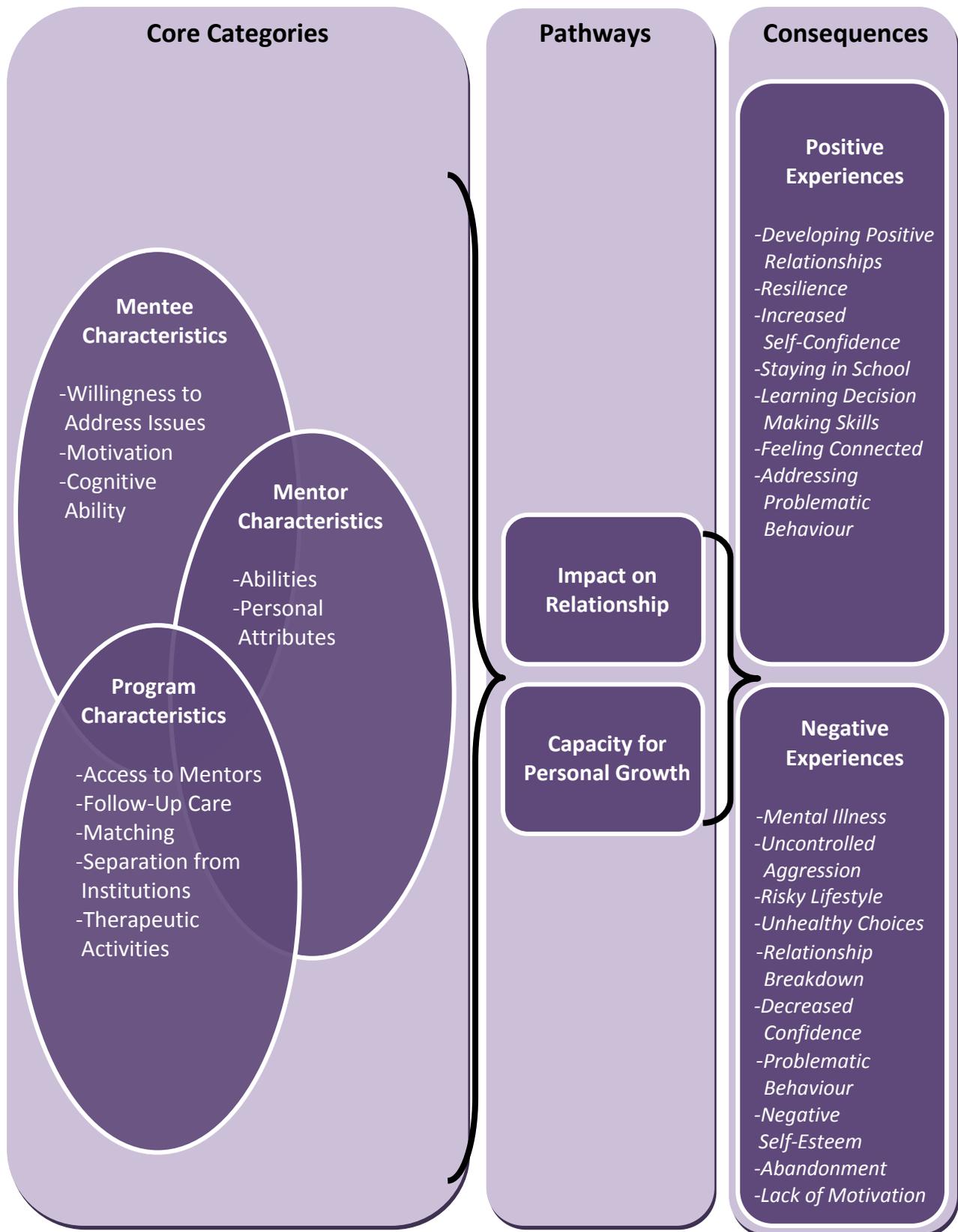


Figure 4.4 Descriptive Mentorship Model

The three core categories that were shown to be particularly influential were made up of mentee, mentor, and program characteristics that were further broken down into sub-categories. Regarding mentee characteristics, the most prominent influencing elements (i.e., sub-categories) were the mentees' willingness to attend to their issues, their motivation, and their cognitive ability. As long as mentees were continually willing to address their issues, participants felt that they could develop valuable relationships and make significant and positive changes in their lives. Mentee motivations were based on mentee and mentor past experiences, their mentor's investment, and a pride in their own environment. Such motivations either strengthened or presented a barrier to the youth's relationship with their mentor and their ability to make healthy choices and changes and thus, achieve personal growth. Mentee cognitive ability also contributed to how mentees were influenced by mentorship, in that having low cognitive functioning made mentorship difficult and necessitated the use of several modifications to amass success.

Within the mentor characteristics core category, two sub-categories emerged as being influential upon mentee experiences. These sub-categories were the mentor's abilities and personal attributes, each of which affected how the mentors related to their mentees, and how they brought about positive changes required for personal growth. A key message identified by these categories was that in order for mentors to influence their mentees, they must possess a number of characteristics and abilities that foster relationship building. Constructing a positive relationship between mentors and mentees was conducive to influencing the mentees in a healthy manner. Also found to be an important contributor, was the mentor's abilities to teach, guide, and role model. Effective mentors were able to assist mentees in making positive informed decisions, thereby increasing their capacity for personal growth and decreasing their risk for negative experiences.

Program characteristics was a core category that included several smaller sub-categories, such as accessibility to mentors, follow-up care, matching mentors and mentees, separation from institutions, and therapeutic activities. Having unlimited access to mentors during times of stress and having access to subsequent follow-up care, allowed mentees to feel supported, and provided the necessary tools to manage their stressors and life situations. Several participants felt that matching mentors and mentees in pairs based on common features would provide a solid base for developing healthy relationships, and facilitating the mentees' motivation to be influenced.

Another key subcategory capable of influencing the youth was having an informal relationship and environment, different from formal social institutions. Informal arrangements did not pressure the mentees into forced relationships and decision making. Therapeutic activities between mentors and mentees were also significant to effective mentorship programming. These activities served to influence youth by increasing their comfort and trust in their mentor and providing learning opportunities designed to invoke positive changes.

These core categories and sub-categories impacted pathways, including the mentee's relationship with their mentor and their capacity for personal growth. Mentoring relationships were also affected by enhancing or diminishing the rapport between partners. If rapport was negatively affected, the youth lost trust in their mentor and became at-risk for rejecting the relationship and the mentorship program. By contrast, strengthening the relationship tended to increase the ability of the mentor to positively influence youth. A mentee's capacity for personal growth included their ability to cope and to make healthy life decisions and adaptive changes. Presenting a barrier to the mentee's capacity for personal growth tended to lead to negative outcomes, while facilitating personal growth enabled youth to achieve gains that had the potential to last beyond the mentoring relationship. The impact upon these pathways lead mentees towards either an increased or decreased risk for a gamut of positive and negative consequences, which are outlined in Figure 4.4 and throughout the textual descriptions of the core categories.

Although all of the categories were important to the experience of mentees, experiencing all of them was not a requirement for success. One mentor found that it was more important to achieve a balance in these characteristics than to possess them all at one time. For example, a mentee could still have positive experiences even if they did not possess all of the qualities highlighted by the mentee characteristic model, as long as his mentor or program was able to address and satisfy his unique goals for growth and development. Thus, a youth who struggled with low cognitive functioning could still benefit from mentorship; however, his success may necessitate having more access to his mentor, who could demonstrate repetition of coping skills. As in this example, it was not simply the individual characteristics of mentees, mentors, and programs that fostered the success of mentorship, but rather their interaction as a whole. The specific interaction that influences one youth may not benefit another. For instance, one mentee with low cognitive functioning would necessitate differing characteristics than another youth who had normal cognitive functioning, but was not yet willing to quit using substances. Indeed,

successful mentorship required individualized programming to fit the unique needs of each youth.

Summary

An adapted version of Glaserian grounded theory analysis was used to extract meaning from the experiences of JHS mentors and mentees. Several results emerged from the data. First, mentorship was found to be a significant influential factor in the lives of transitioning male foster youth in both a negative and positive manner. Second, mentorship influenced youth based on three key aspects: mentee, mentor, and program characteristics. The three mentee characteristics were: the youth's willingness to address personal issues, their motivation, and their cognitive ability. Two mentor characteristics emerged: mentor abilities and personal attributes. The important mentor abilities identified were: to challenge, teach, and guide the youth, as well as role model, and use personal disclosures. Of the mentor's personal characteristics, those that displayed influential value were: being positive, trustworthy, willing, invested, and approachable. Specific program characteristics that influenced youth mentees were: having access to mentors, having follow-up care, matching mentee and mentor pairs, separating from institutions, and engaging in therapeutic activities. All aspects of mentorship were shown to impact transitioning male foster youth by altering the relationship between mentors and mentees and the youth's capacity for personal growth.

I devised a descriptive mentorship model from the data, depicting the process of how mentorship influences male youth who are emancipating from foster care. The model consisted of three elements: pertinent categories (i.e., mentee, mentor, and program characteristics), pathways (i.e., mentoring relationship and mentee's capacity for personal growth), and positive and negative consequences. The model is presented such that it describes how the mentee encounters the issue making up the category and then figuratively travels along particular pathways to arrive at a set of consequences or experiences. Each category interacts with the others to bring about mentorship outcomes.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

A significant amount of research confirmed the positive effect of mentorship on at-risk youth, including those engaged in the foster care system (Ahrens et al., 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999), while a minority of research highlighted a potential negative effect on this population (Karcher, 2005). A small amount of this literature has focused on male youth who were emancipating from foster care and identifying specific processes of mentorship that played a role in its influence (Greenon & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006). The current study addressed these issues by proposing a model that described how mentorship may influence male youth transitioning out of foster care. I used qualitative methods and an adapted version of Glaserian grounded theory analysis to gather and extract meaning from the mentorship experience of mentors and mentees from the John Howard Society (JHS) of Saskatoon.

I conceptualized mentorship as an important influential factor in the lives of mentees. Three significant aspects of mentorship emerged: the characteristics of mentees, mentors, and the JHS program itself. I treated these elements as core categories of a larger, overarching model of mentorship. Within this chapter, I compare existing research to mentorship perspectives, the consequences of mentorship, the core categories, and their pathways toward positive and negative experiences to determine where this study is situated within extant literature. I also focus on the study's limitations, future research, implications, and conclusions.

Considering the Findings

Mentorship Perspectives

Mentors and mentees recruited for the current study indicated that mentorship was a significant component in the lives of transitioning foster youth. Mentorship was important and capable of influencing mentees in the present study, and this finding was consistent with the findings in the literature (Ahrens et al., 2008; Keating et al., 2002; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999). This influence was evident as participants described how mentorship led youth towards both positive and negative experiences. Mentorship fostered more positive experiences when an ideal balance of mentee, mentor, and program characteristics was present. Achieving the ideal balance did not mean that key players needed to continuously possess all of the pertinent characteristics outlined by the current study. Instead, one key player could exhibit characteristics that accommodated the lack of identified characteristics in another player, thus creating a balance of pertinent characteristics. This balance depended on the unique needs of the

mentee and could change over time as the mentee needs also changed and the mentoring relationship evolved. When mentorship consisted of the optimal balance of mentor, mentee, and program characteristics, it proved to be a generally healthy experience with positive consequences. Extant literature emulates these findings by similarly demonstrating positive outcomes of mentorship for at-risk youth (Ahrens et al., 2008; Keating et al., 2002; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999).

The current study also reported that mentorship had the potential to lead to damaging experiences (e.g., decreased confidence, problematic behaviour, relationship breakdown) when an ideal balance between mentee, mentor, and program characteristics could not be achieved. Karcher (2005) found a similar effect, noting detrimental outcomes for at-risk youth as a result of poor mentoring. Both the current study and existing literature suggest that mentorship could foster positive outcomes for at-risk youth, provided the appropriate interaction between the characteristics of mentees, mentors, and programs. Furthermore, when the appropriate interactions did not take place (e.g., inappropriate mentor disclosures, inaccessible mentors, mentee inability to develop meaningful insight, etc.), mentees were vulnerable to negative outcomes.

The extent to which mentorship influenced the foster youth within the current study varied. Some mentees found that they relied on mentorship to make or maintain constructive gains, while others reported having a more casual reliance. Similarly, Keating, Tomishima, Foster, and Alessandri (2002) demonstrated that youth at-risk of delinquency or mental illness did not view mentorship as the sole influential factor in their lives, but rather, as one of many influences. Another study discovered a comparable phenomenon for at-risk mentees (DuBois et al., 2002). In this metaanalysis, participants demonstrated moderate effect sizes when measuring the influence of mentorship and in contrast, the effect sizes for auxiliary programs such as mental health, educational, and behavioural treatment were much larger. Based on this work, it is extrapolated that mentorship can be one of several buffers that moderate the consequences of risk factors for foster youth, rather than a single mediator of these risk factors. It may be that youth require more than mentorship in order to affect positive change and experiences. With this hypothesis at the forefront of mentorship research, future projects should investigate the moderating effect of mentorship, and explore treatment practices that utilize mentorship in combination with other therapeutic and preventative programming.

Consequences of mentorship. In the present study, several constructive consequences of mentorship were identified, including developing resilience, positive relationships, increased self-confidence, staying in school, learning decision making skills, making connections, and addressing problematic behaviour. The current study showed that mentorship fostered positive experiences for mentees, thereby contributing to their resilience, despite their at-risk status. This finding was confirmed by previous investigations that identified positive outcomes associated with mentorship, regardless of the negative risk factors faced by at-risk youth (Ahrens et al., 2008; Keating et al., 2002; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999). The efficacy of mentorship to influence youth relationships has been previously demonstrated in the literature. Rhodes et al. (1999) compared foster youth receiving mentorship to a control group and found that the mentees displayed enhanced social skills and increased comfort and trust with others, ultimately leading to the development of strong relationships. Similarly, the youth in the current study reported that mentorship lead to the development of healthy relationships, particularly with their mentors.

Also supported in the literature was mentorship's power to increase mentee self-confidence and to assist them in obtaining an education. Grossman and Tierney (1998) found that at-risk youth felt more self-confident in their skills and abilities after undergoing a period of mentorship under the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program. Although the populations differed, the findings are similar across Grossman and Tierney's (1998) study and those in the present investigation. Grossman and Tierney (1998) also found that following mentorship, at-risk youth were less likely to be absent from school. Similarly, McPartland and Nettles (1991) investigated the impact of mentoring relationships upon at-risk youth in the education system and discovered that one-on-one mentorship was associated with better school attendance. Likewise, the foster youth within the present study credited their mentorship with encouraging them to attend classes and complete high school.

Participants in the present study also reported that mentorship influenced mentees to exhibit a reduction in problematic behaviour. I found that challenging mentees to change behaviours and teaching, role modelling, and guiding them towards more positive behaviours lead mentees to begin to address their potentially destructive conduct. However, this influence was only possible if the mentoring relationship was strong enough to entice the mentee and provide the milieu necessary to affect the mentee's personal growth. These findings were

supported by three previous studies. Keating and colleagues (2002) found that mentored youth who were at-risk for delinquency and mental illness showed improved internalizing and externalizing behaviour when compared to a control group. Grossman and Tierney (1998) reported that at-risk youth involved in a Big Brother Big Sister program were less likely to engage in such antisocial behaviours as expressing physical aggression and using illegal drugs and alcohol when compared to a control group. After participating in a natural mentoring relationship, foster youth in another study (Ahrens et al., 2008) demonstrated a reduction in problematic behaviours including physical aggression. All three of these studies found that mentorship could reduce maladaptive behaviours in at-risk and foster youth, thus, substantiating the claims of the present examination.

Although mentorship's influence on positive decision-making skills and the feeling of being connected were found to be important influential factors within the present investigation, these sub-categories were not specifically identified within the literature. Reasons for this gap may be that these concepts were unique to my study's sample or that they were newly emergent ideas that were not yet reflected in mentorship literature. Semantics may have also played a role in preventing me from connecting these findings with previous research. Although I reviewed past literature with this terminology issue in mind, mentorship research is vast and it is possible that comparable results exist beyond the search terms I used. Considering these possible explanations, one should not dismiss the current findings; rather, one could view the consequences of mentorship as novel research opportunities in need of further clarification.

In addition to the aforementioned positive influences of mentorship, participants in my study also reported negative influences as well. I found that mentorship may lead mentees to undesirable outcomes such as mental illness, uncontrolled aggression, risky lifestyle choices, unhealthy decision making, relationship break down, decreased self-confidence, increased problematic behaviour, reduced self-esteem, feeling abandoned, and decreased motivation. Since the majority of outcome studies for mentorship research focuses on its positive influence, there is limited literature from which to draw comparisons for the negative consequences of mentorship. One such study that described adverse mentorship outcomes identified many of those elements found in my study. Karcher (2005) found that mentees reported having impairments in self-esteem, social skills, and behaviour when they experienced inconsistent peer

mentorship. As was the case in Karcher's (2005) research and my study, the application of particular aspects of mentorship or lack thereof gave rise to negative experiences and outcomes.

Core Categories

The data I collected from participants indicated that three core categories influenced transitioning male foster youth. These core categories consisted of mentee, mentor, and program characteristics, as summarized.

Mentee characteristics. Mentee characteristics were one aspect of mentorship that influenced the experiences of transitioning male foster youth. The mentorship literature appears to focus on the relationship between mentors and their protégés, and the characteristics of mentors and programs. To date, little is known about how the personal qualities of the mentee contribute to mentorship and shape its impact. It is therefore, difficult to relate this aspect of mentorship to existing research. Since mentee characteristics were viewed as significant within my study and remain relatively obscure within the literature, I believe that future investigations should promote a greater understanding of this concept by exploring the role of mentee characteristics within mentorship.

In order to lower their risk of having negative experiences and to instead, encourage positive outcomes, participants in my study elucidated that mentees must possess a number of characteristics. They suggested that mentees must be willing to manage their personal issues, possess motivation to succeed, and demonstrate the cognitive capacity to reflect on their thoughts and behaviours. Participants elaborated, stating that a youth's cognitive ability could lead to both constructive and destructive consequences of mentorship. Higher levels of cognitive functioning made it easier for mentees to develop the insight necessary to form healthy relationships and alter maladaptive thought and behaviour.

Masten and Coatsworth (1998) found comparable results in their investigation of resiliency factors in at-risk youth. They reported that intelligence levels assisted at-risk youth in overcoming adversity and patterns of anti-social behaviour. As well, these researchers indicated that youth with relatively high intelligence levels were better able to problem-solve, self-regulate, choose adaptive ways of protecting themselves, and attract significant and helpful support systems compared to youth with lower cognitive functioning (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Given Masten and Coatsworth's (1998) description of how mentee cognitive functioning affects mentorship outcomes, I realize that my study did not fully capture the complexity of this process.

Further investigation into the intricate processes of mentee cognitive functioning may be necessary to better explain this relationship.

Mentor characteristics. A second aspect of mentorship, mentor characteristics, was important in influencing male foster youth emancipating from foster care. These mentor characteristics were organized under two sub-categories: abilities and personal attributes. The mentor's ability to challenge, teach, and guide the youth, as well as to serve as a role model, and to engage in personal disclosures had an impact on mentee experiences. Both the current study and research by Liang Spencer, Brogan, and Macarena (2008) emphasized that the impact of role modelling depends on the relationship between mentors and mentees in that a positive relationship must exist before mentees will imitate desirable mentor behaviour. The present study's participants noted the importance of promoting positive behaviours by living a healthy lifestyle and utilizing their mistakes as teaching tools. Previous mentorship research acknowledged this issue and suggested that adolescent mentees gain the capacity to understand and learn from their mentor's mistakes (Liang et al., 2008). Thus, with younger mentees, it is important to present an ideal version of a mentor with a healthy lifestyle; whereas with young adult mentees, there may be room to capitalize on a mentor's minor imperfections (Liang et al., 2008). As with any developmental milestone, a youth's level of success within a given time period may vary. Therefore, mentors must take caution and consider individual variation in development when engaging in their role modelling ability.

Participants involved in the present study reported that a mentor's ability to use personal disclosures influenced mentees. Whether this influence brought about positive or negative consequences depended on how mentors used these disclosures. When their mentors made personal confessions, mentees reported feeling bonded with their mentors and more comfortable in their own abilities and relationships. To achieve this affect, it was necessary for these confessions to assist the youth, rather than the mentor or the JHS program. The disclosures further served as an inspiration to achieve success for JHS mentees. In addition to the intent of disclosures, their level of appropriateness and frequency of use were also found to be important. Informants shared that personal confessions fostered positive outcomes for mentees when they contained appropriate content and were alternated with other rapport building strategies. Previous literature corroborates the importance of using self-disclosures for building strong relationships (Collins & Miller, 1994; Liang et al., 2008). A metaanalysis conducted by Collins

and Miller (1994) determined that intimate disclosures encouraged members of a dyad to initially like each other and to strengthen existing relationships. When examining mentorship among college students, a separate investigation found that a mentor's self-disclosure enabled mentees to feel like trusted and important members of the relationship (Liang et al., 2008). Although the current study focused on mentor disclosures, other researchers noted that it was the mentee's self-disclosures that contributed to constructive outcomes (Wanberg, Welsh, & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2007). Such findings, in combination with that of the present study, suggest that disclosures from both mentors and mentees can be important to youth outcomes. Further investigations into the effect of these disclosures would add knowledge and clarification to past and present findings.

Personal attributes of mentors that were identified as having an effect on the experiences of mentees were: being positive, trustworthy, willing, invested, and approachable. Previous research also supported the significance of mentor positivity. Similar to participants in the current study, the foster youth mentees in Osterling and Hines' (2006) investigation affirmed that mentor encouragement was imperative in leading them towards positive outcomes such as staying in school and developing healthy relationships. The literature supported the notion that trustworthiness is crucial to the development of relationships between mentors and mentees. For example, Osterling and Hines (2006) found that having trust in their mentoring relationship allowed foster youth to feel comfortable expressing their emotions with their mentors. In the present study, once trust between mentees and mentors was established, the foster youth were also able to openly communicate with their mentors, thus transforming their relationship.

Existing research also demonstrated that mentor consistency facilitated positive outcomes (Osterling & Hines, 2006). Although in the current inquiry I did not use the same label, consistent interaction was inherent in the mentors' investment in the mentee. Indeed, I found that it was important to transitioning male foster youth that their mentors continued working with them despite difficulties. The mentees benefitted when the mentors were consistently interested in their wellbeing, regardless of altercations, set-backs, and program constraints. Thus, consistency is an influential factor supported both in previous mentorship literature and by the present study.

Program characteristics. Program characteristics were identified as the third aspect of mentorship that was important to mentee experiences. A number of program characteristics, including having access to mentors, follow-up care, matching, separation from formal

institutions, and therapeutic activities emerged as being important to fostering either positive or negative consequences for mentees. In the current study, I found that youth benefitted from having access to mentors whenever they were in crisis. Their reliance on their mentor changed over time such that as they developed more coping skills and independence, they required less access to their mentors. In support of these findings, Karcher (2005) also noted the significance of having access to mentors. This researcher found that having limited or inconsistent access to mentors contributed to mentee low self-esteem, lack of social skills, and increased behavioural impairments.

My study also found that matching mentor and mentee pairs based on commonalities was another influential component of mentorship programming. Both matching pairs and random assignment of mentees had benefits depending on the needs of the mentee. It was reported that assigning mentees to their mentors assisted in relationship building, while random assignment provided an opportunity to challenge the youth and expand their range of experiences. Comparably, previous research also demonstrated benefits and limitations of arranging mentor and mentee pairs. In a metaanalysis, researchers found that matching pairs based on age, gender, or race was not significantly associated with a more effective mentoring relationship (Dubois et al., 2002). These researchers indicated that assigning at-risk youth to mentors appeared to have more theoretical merit than practical application.

On the contrary, Germain (2011) found that arranging mentoring pairs based on attachment styles was of great benefit to both the protégé and the mentor. Her research demonstrated that positive outcomes were associated with both members of a pair who had secure attachment styles, while matching members who displayed avoidant attachment styles was detrimental to mentee outcomes. Germain (2011) postulated that assessing attachment style at the onset of mentorship would greatly affect the success and experience of mentees. This contradiction in the literature may be due to the importance placed on attachment style over age, gender, or race. Attachment styles may have a greater influence over mentees than these other characteristics, thus, leading to a significant issue when building mentoring relationships. Another explanation is derived from the present study in that optimal mentorship depends on the individual needs of the mentee. Some youth will benefit from having an assigned mentor who possesses unique characteristics found to be important to the youth. Others will benefit from

being randomly assigned to mentors who can challenge mentees to see beyond their current construction of the world.

Participants within the current study also reported that mentees responded better when mentoring was informal and separated from official institutions. Of particular interest was the effect of creating a familial environment where mentors were seen as parental or familial figures. Creating this milieu is in contrast to formal institutions where youth and advocates are known as clients and workers, respectively. A family or community environment allowed mentees to feel comfortable and flexible, while building rapport with their mentors and decreasing the stigmatization of acquiring mentorship assistance. A similar environment was described as being beneficial to youth in a study by Greenson and Bowen (2008). These researchers also reported the parental relationship to be an influential factor for mentored foster youth which, in turn fostered a high level of trust, care, and positive emotions between mentors and mentees. Both of these studies offered evidence for establishing environments and familial relationships and accordingly, I believe that these conditions should be implemented in future mentorship programs and relevant research investigations.

In the present study, I found that therapeutic activities were a pertinent tool when building rapport and increasing the mentee's comfort within the mentoring relationship. The therapeutic activities identified included going to the gym, watching movies, talking, going out for coffee or meals, playing sports, driving in a car, assisting each other in household duties, riding horseback, taking short vacations, having spiritual encounters (i.e.,: praying together, going to church, participating in cultural activities, etc.), and assisting in getting to school and appointments. Such activities allowed mentors and mentees to build healthy relationships, acquire usable skills, and promote communication. A metaanalysis by DuBois et al. (2002) corroborated that therapeutic activities between a mentor and mentee influenced at-risk youth in a positive manner, but also specified that the activities required structure in order to facilitate success. Participants in the current study did not directly specify these structured activities, however, they did suggest that therapeutic activities have purpose and meet the needs of the youth. The flexibility to create such activities must exist within the mentoring program.

Pathways to consequences. JHS mentees were found to be influenced by their own characteristics as well as the characteristics of their mentor and those of the mentorship program. The interaction of these characteristics altered mentees' pathways towards a set of consequences

or experiences. The pathways that were altered included the mentoring relationship and the mentees' capacity for personal growth, shown by their making of healthy decisions and positive changes in their lives. These pathways follow Ungar and Learner's (2008) resilience perspective that asserted that the ability to overcome adversity requires the complex interplay of environmental influences and personal characteristics. The relationship between mentors and mentees fulfills the environmental influence component, while a mentee's capacity for personal growth serves as a personal characteristic. Achieving resilience, or lack thereof, depends on how these pathways are altered.

Since the relationship between mentors and mentees and the youth's capacity for personal growth satisfy the two components necessary for resilience, one would expect that both pathways would be evident within the mentorship literature. However, it appears that little attention in the research has been given to a mentee's capacity for personal growth. Rather, the focus has generally been on the relationship between mentors and their protégés. Past research has documented the influential power of having a strong mentoring relationship for at-risk and foster youth (DuBois et al., 2002; Greenson & Bowen 2008; Osterling and Hines, 2006). The results of these studies demonstrated that having healthy relationships between caring adults and their mentees enabled youth to trust the teachings of their mentor and to feel comfortable in revealing their emotions. Although data describing mentoring relationships exist, further investigation into the mechanisms of this relationship and how it interacts with the mentee's capacity for personal growth would offer a greater understanding of this phenomenon and extend the current knowledge base.

A Mentorship Model

Based on the results of the present study and the perspectives of JHS mentors and mentees, I developed a descriptive mentorship model. The model explains how mentorship influences male youth who are emancipating from foster care. I presented three aspects of mentorship as core categories: mentee, mentor, and program characteristics. The core categories are broken down into influencing elements known as sub-categories. Each of these sub-categories has an effect on the mentoring relationship and the mentee's capacity for personal growth, which in turn, lead to positive or negative consequences for the youth. The sub-categories can influence both positive and negative experiences depending on how they are manipulated and expressed. For example, a mentee's willingness to address problematic issues is

a sub-category that may bring about both positive and negative consequences. If the mentee is willing to do so, he becomes a contributing member of the mentoring relationship who is able to address and challenge his issues and ultimately, invoke positive change. If the mentee is not willing, he may present communication barriers that hinder the mentoring relationship and its power to positively influence the youth.

In the current study, I represented these mentorship processes in a descriptive mentorship model. I transformed the data collected into a model that described these processes above and beyond ideal mentor or mentee typologies and suggestions for best practices that have been presented in the literature (DuBois et al., 2002). Indeed, with the descriptive mentorship model, I detailed the interactions between core categories and the pathways toward particular outcomes, creating a more complex and realistic view of how mentorship operates. Consistent with existing research, I found in the present study that the differing aspects of mentorship worked together to influence the target population (Dubois et al., 2002). With this interplay, there was less reliance on a single mentorship component and more reliance on how these components interact with one another to foster particular outcomes. If one aspect was weak, it could be supplemented by one that is stronger. For example, a mentee could continue to see positive outcomes even though his mentor lacked the ability to challenge his mentees because the mentee possessed the cognitive capacity to develop their own challenges. In this example, a mentor deficit is balanced by a mentee with high cognitive functioning.

Research on how mentee, mentor, and program characteristics work together to influence transitioning male foster youth was lacking (DuBois, et al., 2002). However, mentorship models have been developed for differing populations (Berlew, 1991; DiCicco, 2008). Berlew (1991) proposed a conceptual framework of the mentoring process in the workplace. This framework did not identify mentee and program contributions to mentorship, but instead focused on that of the mentor. According to Berlew (1991), three types of mentors (i.e., training, education, and development mentors) were required to assist mentees in becoming successful workers. Much like the ideal mentors described in the current study, Berlew's (1991) mentors shared a variety of abilities such as being able to disclose personal experiences, teach the mentee, and guide the mentee towards positive behaviours. The three types of mentors differed in the intensity of the services and information they provided. They began by being task oriented and specific and ended up being more vague and promoting behaviours that were functional beyond the period of

mentorship. For example, in the context of obtaining employment, a training mentor helped the mentee obtain a job. An educational mentor assisted mentees in using their employment experiences to identify desirable aspects of a job. A developmental mentor helped the mentee to find a job that featured such aspects, and to achieve the goals necessary to gain such employment (Berlew, 1991). The mentor's abilities did not have to change throughout mentorship; however, the mentee's success was dependent on mentors altering the focus of their abilities and how they were expressed such, that they accommodated the unique needs of the mentee (Berlew, 1991).

The current study was in agreement with Berlew (1991), showing that mentors must be willing to adapt their behaviours and mentorship strategies to match their mentee's developmental level at a given point in time. For example, a mentee may require guidance on a more frequent basis at the onset of mentorship and less guidance upon the conclusion of mentorship. Mentors must be willing to adapt to this situation and match their involvement to their mentee's needs. Although the current study did not demonstrate a need for changing mentors over the course of mentorship, it was consistent with the Berlew's (1991) description of ideal mentors. Since there are similar ideal mentor characterisations across Berlew's (1991) sample and that of the present study, one could assume that the current findings appear reliable.

A mentorship model was also devised for preceptors and health care nurses (DiCicco, 2008). Similar to the current mentorship model I developed, DiCicco's representation highlighted the importance of mentor and mentees to the overall influence of mentorship, in addition to the significance of superior colleagues and mentorship supports. The inclusion of more pertinent mentorship influences may be due to an extended investigation of mentorship or simply, a reflection of the sample being examined. It could be that in the health care system, there is greater involvement from higher level personnel than at JHS. It follows logically that with greater involvement there is the potential for greater influence over mentees, thus, I believe that mentorship should be well supported.

In contrast to my mentorship model, which highlighted influential characteristics of key components, DiCicco's (1991) version focused on their roles and duties. Essentially, DiCicco's (1991) mentorship model was more concerned with results, rather than the process. Both of these concepts are imperative to creating an effective mentorship program. All those involved in mentorship may benefit from knowing what and how to contribute to a healthy mentorship experience that yields positive consequences. Taken into consideration, a section on pertinent

roles could easily be integrated into the program section of the current mentorship model, thereby adding to its utility.

Similar to the present study, DiCicco (1991) examined the challenges inherent in the mentoring process. DiCicco's (1991) model integrated these challenges and potential solutions, while the mentorship model I presented in this study does not. Indeed, I highlighted the relationships between challenges and their consequences, but I gave no further interpretations of this data because to do so would stray away from the original responses of participants. I created this model based on initial responses in order to remain grounded in the data and focus on the research questions. Solutions for identified challenges were not a large part of this data and therefore, were not included in the mentorship model. Perhaps using rewards and recognition could influence the outcomes of mentorship as was the case in DiCicco's (1991) mentorship model; however, it was not the focus of the current mentorship model.

Although Tannis (2006) did not present a descriptive model of mentorship, his efforts were comparable to the present study in that he explored the pathways that lead Saskatoon mentees toward both positive and negative outcomes. Both the Tannis (2006) and I reported that having a flexible mentor who could adapt to the needs of the mentee was important to foster positive experiences for mentees. Lacking access to mentors was consistently associated with negative mentoring experiences across both studies. Tannis (2006) also found that similar to my study, providing mentees with a quality mentor was important to outcomes. He further suggested that mentors work with children on a volunteer basis and obtain a relevant education in order to promote healthy mentee experiences. The influential mentor characteristics identified in my study also showed support for this notion, indicating that the mentor must be competent in relevant areas and must have an investment in the mentee. These characteristics followed Tannis' (2006) logic in that mentors must be competent in their work and have a relationship with the mentee that extends beyond the parameters of a paid position.

In addition to several suggestions for program development, Tannis (2006) demonstrated a need for outside support and professional standards to guide mentorship programming. He also noted that effective mentorship required consistent mentors and mentees, but also that mentor turnover and mentee transience were common among the programs he reviewed. I also observed this issue within my investigation as it was difficult to obtain and maintain the initial sample. Not only did Tannis' (2006) work confirm the significance of a number of contributors and

deterrents to success following mentorship, it also adds credibility to the current study as both investigations found similar results among samples from the same geographical location. This fact suggests that the results of my study are representative of the population.

Limitations

I consider several limitations in examining my study and in determining future research trajectories. First, I conducted interviews were at the agency site, thus raising the possibility that the information provided by mentors and mentees was biased. Although this site was chosen to increase participant comfort in a familiar environment, it may have also created discomfort if it was connected to experiences or memories from their vocation or foster care. It may be that participants were highly invested in the mentorship program, or they may have thought that their placement would be affected by their critique of the program. Both of these issues could have influenced participant responses. In order to bypass these elements, a more neutral interview environment may have to be chosen.

Second, the results of my study may be limited in that I used them to represent a substantive, rather than a formal model. A substantive model describes a specific process and phenomenon while a formal model is more general (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As presented, my mentorship model referred to the mentoring process of male foster youth who were transitioning out of foster care, and it is only preliminary and descriptive in nature. Since the model's data were gathered at a single organization using a relatively small sample, the results may be limited to a John Howard Society style of mentorship and associated foster youth. It may be that the sample is not large or diverse enough to develop a more generalized model. Although it was not my intent for this study to create a formal theory that described all foster youth (i.e., those who were and were not transitioning out of foster care) or all mentorship programs, one could use the current model as a knowledge base upon which to build a more transferable model of mentorship.

A third limitation was the homogeneity of the sample. All of the participants were recruited from JHS. Mentors were hired based on a similar set of qualifications. Mentees were accepted into the program based on subjective criteria that indicated they were fit for JHS programming. Thus, it is possible that my sample represented the criteria for being involved in this organization and may not be representative of other mentorship programs, mentors, and mentees. Such a lack of diversity within the sample could limit the results to this particular

group, alone. The results of my study could perhaps be extended beyond the original sample; however, this generalization could not be verified without further investigation.

Fourth, some of the mentors reported having their own mentors who had assisted them through past struggles. Such prior mentorship experience may have been beneficial in that it could have helped mentors to better relate to the experience of mentees and thus, allowed mentors to more accurately describe these experiences. However, having preconceived notions about mentorship may also have biased the information provided by mentors. It is possible that the data gathered from mentors may have reflected their own experience in addition to that of transitioning male foster youth. Since mentorship can occur naturally and is a common process throughout one's life, it may be impossible to isolate and account for this confound. In this case, it is essential to identify the potential issue and interpret research results with caution, thereby, limiting the influence of this potential bias.

Fifth, since the target mentorship model was based on subjective processes, it is open to interpretation over time, location, and sample. The impact of mentorship may change with these variables. For example, one youth described mentorship as being less influential over time; however, as that mentee grew, developmentally and acquired new skills over the course of their mentorship, he may have reported differing consequences of mentorship at the onset and conclusion of his mentorship experience.

A sixth limitation was the use of an adapted version of Glaserian grounded theory to guide the study and analyze the data. In completing my research project as part of an academic thesis, I was required to prepare a literature review and research questions that may have biased the study. Precautions such as memoing and using open-ended research questions were taken to limit the amount of bias inherent in these deviations.

Finally, the results of the current study may have been further biased by the sample. I experienced difficulty in recruiting mentees and it was necessary to access an alternate group of youth. Several youth mentees were targeted for participation, but failed to attend an information meeting. Of the three mentees that joined the study, only one attended a second interview. One youth left the JHS program before I could conduct his second interview and another youth failed to attend his second interview. It may be that these youth differed from those included in the study. Mentees who failed to fully participate in the study may have done so because they were no longer interested in mentorship or were facing negative experiences. By contrast, mentees

who did complete their interviews may have had a more positive reaction to mentorship, thus initiating an interest in the study. Indeed, I identified a preference for discussing how mentorship affected youth in a positive manner, leading my investigation to focus more on the positive experiences and consequences of mentorship rather than on those that were negative. This phenomenon was evident even though my research questions and interview guide were relatively open-ended with the intention of understanding both the negative and positive aspects of mentorship. Considering this potential positive response bias, the data I gathered may have lacked comprehensive representation and rather, possessed a bias towards positive views of mentorship.

Implications

Implications for Future Research

The mentorship model I presented in the target study builds on my review of extant literature and my research project. This preliminary model served to overcome several limitations in existing research, to add support to previous findings, and to extend the knowledge base surrounding the mentorship of transitioning male foster youth. In using a qualitative approach to understanding the mentorship phenomenon, I did not limit my study to testing an existing theory. Rather, my use of qualitative methods enabled me to gather in-depth information on the processes of mentorship and its consequences. Since I utilized open enquiry and allowed categories to emerge from the data, I was able to identify both positive and negative pathways towards consequences. This result was in contrast to mentorship studies that reported either positive or negative outcomes (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999), thus limiting the knowledge gained regarding the comprehensive and complex process of mentorship. I found in my investigation a tendency for participants to focus on the positive aspects of mentorship, rather than the negative ones. It may be that my study's small and heterogeneous sample was not able to adequately capture the negative experiences of mentorship. Future investigations may consider increasing the sample size or taking an alternate sample and to focus solely on participants who had negative experiences with mentorship programs. However, such a population may be difficult to access.

The majority of past research has recruited samples from Big Brother Big Sisters programs (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Rhodes et al, 1999; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001; Turner & Scherman, 1996) in the United States (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenson & Bowen, 2008;

Osterling & Hines, 2006; Rhodes et al., 1999). By conducting the present research outside of these confines and by utilizing a Canadian sample from the JHS mentoring program, I demonstrated that mentorship is a valuable process that extends beyond a particular program or geographical area. In addition, my study offered a mentorship perspective bypassed by previous research because it focused on male youth who were emancipating from foster care, rather than the largely female at-risk youth populations examined in the literature (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006). In addressing these limitations, I helped provide insight and clarification into areas that previously featured disparities.

After addressing these shortcomings, I believe that the results of my study remain generally consistent with previous inquiries. Congruence among these findings adds support and suggests that my results may extend beyond specific sample populations and programming choices. As demonstrated in past research with at-risk and foster youth populations, I confirmed that mentorship was perceived as being significant and highly influential for transitioning male foster youth. Important to the mentorship process were the characteristics of mentees, mentors, and the JHS program. I found that support appeared for only one mentee characteristic (i.e., cognitive ability; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), suggesting that further exploration of this concept is required. I found several mentor characteristics to have an influence on mentees. Specifically, I found that the ability to role model and make personal disclosures were important to this process, both in my study and in the previous research (Collins & Miller, 1994; Liang et al., 2008). In addition, I showed that personal attributes, including being positive, trustworthy, and invested in the wellbeing of the mentee were consistent both in the present study and in the prior research (Osterling & Hines, 2006). Numerous qualities associated with the mentorship program also emerged as significant both in my study and in previous research. These qualities were providing mentees' access to mentors, matching mentee and mentor pairs, creating a familial environment, and involving therapeutic activities (DuBois et al., 2002; Germain, 2011; Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Karcher, 2005).

I also found that mentee, mentor, and program characteristics influenced youth by impacting upon their relationships and their capacity for personal growth. Both of these pathways were confirmed in the resilience literature (Ungar & Learner, 2008); however, only the power of relationships was corroborated within past research studies (DuBois et al., 2002; Greenson & Bowen 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006). Each pathway led to both positive and

negative consequences, a point that was supported in previous literature (Ahrens et al., 2008; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Karcher, 2005; Keating et al., 2002; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Rhodes et al., 1999). Such consequences of mentorship included achieving resilience, developing positive relationships, increasing mentee confidence, obtaining an education, making healthy decisions, increasing or decreasing problematic behaviour, having a negative self-esteem, and relationship breakdown. With noted agreement among present and past findings after accounting for limitations, I believe my study provides support for the transferability of these results.

I maintain that this study further extends existing mentorship research by elaborating on areas that had been missed or had not yet been discovered. First, earlier reviews of how mentee characteristics affected their own outcomes seemed insufficient, such that little information was available regarding a mentee's willingness to make necessary changes and decisions to motivate them to succeed. Second, I found that knowledge of particular mentor abilities (e.g., to challenge, teach, and guide youth) and personal attributes (e.g., willingness to adapt and approachability) was also scarce in the mentorship literature. Third, a pathway towards mentorship consequences (i.e., the mentee's capacity for personal growth) also lacked empirical research. Finally, concrete models of how mentorship influences mentees, especially the target population were scant. When such models were inferred within the literature, they were often represented in the text without a visual diagram for ease of use. In my study, I described the mentoring process with textual and visual support, offering my insight and highlighting future research trajectories. However, due to the complexity of mentorship, my visual model was only descriptive and preliminary. Perhaps future researchers could seek to verify and expand this model by depicting a more comprehensive version of mentorship processes. With the limitations present in my study and additional areas requiring further explanation, I recognize that certain elements of mentorship have not yet been sufficiently examined. Thus, future investigations need to explore these concepts. In future research, my model may be altered or built upon to accommodate changing variables.

Implications for Mentorship Programs

In my mentorship model I demonstrated how mentorship may influence transitioning foster youth in a positive and negative manner. Since these findings reflect one perspective that may change with different samples, locations, and time, the results may be interpreted with some discretion

and future research may be used to clarify and validate the current findings. Nonetheless, my findings regarding mentorship processes may help directors of human service organizations to develop more efficient programming for the target population, provided that and the model is altered as required. Program directors will adjust their adherence to the model to fit with their program and client base. They will have to recognize that my mentorship model was meant to be a guide rather than to be an absolute set of instructions. With these provisions in mind, my findings suggest that directors should evaluate both mentors and mentees before including them in the program. It is not necessary for mentors and mentees to have all of the characteristics highlighted by the model. Rather, the most effective mentorship requires a balance of these characteristics that is centered around the needs of the youth. A pre-evaluation of the mentee and mentor can provide a foundation from which to build effective programs. Such a pre-evaluation may range from filling out a simple questionnaire to more complex observation of behaviours. Assessments for mentees may include identifying the youth's issues and determining their willingness to address these issues, as well as gauging their motivations and cognitive capacity. For mentors, a proper evaluation may require identifying their abilities and personal traits. Spencer (2007) suggested further delineating the expectations and preferences of mentors and mentees. The goal in obtaining this information would be to ascertain the needs of the client and to determine if the program and mentors available are a good fit. If the level of fitness is low, it may be beneficial to refer that youth to an alternative program rather than to risk influencing them in a negative manner (Scandura, 1998).

Once a good fit has been determined, the data collected from pre-evaluations can be used to create individualized mentorship programming. The specific mentorship program would depend both on what the mentorship organization has available to offer, and, on the requirements of the youth. Some youth may benefit from being matched with their mentor based on accessibility, personality characteristics, and gender, while others may be better matched based on attachment styles (Germain, 2011). Some mentees may require more than one mentor to meet their needs. Scandura (1998) urged program directors to involve mentors and mentees in the matching process such that they would choose their mentorship pairings. In this case, the initial pre-evaluations could assist mentors and youth in making an informed decision regarding their match.

If prior assessments cannot be utilized to establish goodness of fit for mentorship programming, enhancements to programming can be made. My findings suggest that ensuring that the mentorship program provides for follow-up care, an opportunity for therapeutic activities, and a familial atmosphere may promote positive outcomes for youth. In addition, mentorship programs should employ mentors who are approachable, positive, trustworthy, willing to adapt to their mentee's needs, invested in the well-being of youth, and live a healthy lifestyle (Osterling & Hines, 2006). Perhaps employers could arrange training workshops regarding productive ways of challenging and guiding the youth, effective role modeling, making appropriate disclosures, and increasing mentor competencies in core areas (i.e., using coping skills, finding employment, managing conflict, making healthy choices, managing finances, playing sports, understanding current events, and forming relationships). Such training opportunities would ensure that mentors develop the skills and abilities required for effective mentorship.

It may also be important to describe the role of mentees and mentors in the mentorship process, so as to better prepare them for what is expected and allow them to make an informed decision about their participation in the program. It may be that mentees or mentors may choose for themselves not to become involved with mentorship, thereby decreasing the chance of ineffective mentorship and negative outcomes. Scandura (1998) suggested that both mentees and mentors receive training that highlights their roles and the boundaries inherent in their relationship. This training could be used to promote healthy mentorship outcomes and uniform conflict management strategies or to identify mentors who might not fit well within a program. Spencer (2007) cautioned that mentors and mentees must be educated about the program and typical mentorship experiences, so that their expectations will be realistic. Failure to do so may contribute to later breakdown of mentoring relationships. As indicated by my study and the work by DuBois et al. (2002), optimal mentorship may further necessitate the use of supplemental supports such as counsellors, psychiatrists, and physicians in order to combat issues that serve as barriers to mentorship. With these enhancements in place, mentorship programs would be prepared to cultivate more positive outcomes for male youth emancipating from foster care.

If an appropriate mentor-mentee match cannot be made, mentees may require a referral to outside programming. According to my study and outside literature on failed mentoring relationships (Karcher, 2005; Scandura, 1998; Spencer, 2007), mentorship may not be the right program for all youth. In such cases, mentees should know the procedure for substituting

mentors or exiting the program (Scandura, 1998). The current study demonstrated a need for follow-up care to connect mentees with appropriate networks or programs and ease them out of a malfunctioning mentoring relationship. Having an exit plan will help ensure that the youth receives necessary resources, without feeling abandonment, and it may moderate the negative experiences which follow such an event (Scandura, 1998).

I also believe in the importance of program directors also avoid aspects of mentorship that facilitate iatrogenic effects. My results suggest that barriers to the development of quality mentoring relationships and the mentee's capacity to make healthy changes and decisions must be addressed. One program characteristic that provides a specific barrier is a mentee's lack of access to his mentor. This barrier was identified in my study and in past research (Karcher, 2005), such that limited and inconsistent access appeared to produce harmful mentee outcomes. Thus, I recommend that program directors plan and facilitate mentor accessibility. Participants in my investigation suggested that having more than one mentor per youth or having continuous access to mentors at all times would help eliminate this issue.

Implications for Mentors

Mentor perspectives are often dismissed within mentorship research that primarily focuses on the accounts of at-risk youth or youth currently in foster care (Ahrens et al., 2008; Greenon & Bowen, 2008; Karcher, 2005; Osterling & Hines, 2006). In my study, mentors were given the opportunity to share their unique perceptions of how mentorship influences emancipating foster youth. It was possible that mentors saw changes in their mentees that had not been recognized; thus, I counted their perspective as an important contribution to the development of my mentorship model.

I also highlighted several mentor characteristics that influenced transitioning male foster youth in a positive and negative manner. This finding is important for mentors so that they can better understand how their actions affect mentees. It is also important that mentors become aware of the positive affects they foster. As mentors indicated throughout the study, working with at-risk populations can be emotionally and intellectually stressful, especially when mentors are highly invested in the well-being of their mentees. At times, it can be difficult to see the benefits of such work and the mentor becomes at-risk of burn out. This is when it is important for mentors to know that their work has the potential for positive impact. Recognizing that their work has meaning could serve to motivate and reward a mentor for their significant work.

When mentors struggle with their work, I believe that my preliminary mentorship model may provide insight. Perhaps mentors will need to gather new strategies for working with particular youth, or will need simple reassurance that they are engaging in the appropriate behaviour and mentorship processes. In such cases, the mentor could refer to the mentorship model for guidance, thus allowing mentors to adjust or adapt mentorship with specific intent. For example, a mentor may not be able to find a connection with their mentee and thus, they are unable to build rapport. This mentor could consult the model and choose to implement two categories that were found to impact the mentoring relationship (i.e., using appropriate disclosures and engaging in therapeutic activities). Returning to the mentorship model in this case could assist the mentor in delivering intentional and effective mentorship practices.

Not only does this study have implications for programmatic mentors, but it may also be useful for natural mentors such as educators, extended family, and foster parents. Natural mentors may be able to refer to the model to learn about mentor abilities and personal attributes that favour positive outcomes for transitioning male foster youth; and use this knowledge to inform their own mentoring practice. For example, natural mentors may learn how to implement role modeling, self-disclosure, and the power of relationships and utilize this knowledge when interacting with the target population. However, they must also interpret these concepts and the mentorship model with care as it was developed with limited participants involved in a single program. Mentorship programs offer professional boundaries and resources that natural mentors may not have. As a result, certain aspects of my mentorship model may not be accurate or relevant when applying these concepts to natural mentorship.

Implications for Transitioning Male Foster Youth

The findings of my study suggested that when achieving an optimal balance between specified mentee, mentor, and program characteristics, mentorship will promote positive outcomes for male youth who are transitioning out of foster care. If future studies replicated and validated this positive effect, then leaders could consider making mentorship a component of the foster care program, such that it could be offered to all youth as they are transitioning out of foster care. In doing so, the potential to positively alter the lives of youth would be enhanced.

Not only did my study show that mentorship can affect positive experiences, it also demonstrated how mentees can be a part of this process. Previous mentorship research tended to focus more on how mentor and program characteristics affected foster youth experiences rather

than how the characteristics of mentees affected their mentorship experiences (Greenson & Bowen, 2008; Osterling & Hines, 2006), thus limiting control over a mentee's own outcomes. A lack of research on mentee characteristics suggests that youth have little influence on their own experiences. However, my research sheds light on the autonomy of mentees and specifically, how youth have power to influence their own experiences. As such, mentorship becomes a program that mentees are a part of, rather than a treatment that is bestowed upon them.

Additionally, conducting this study with transitioning male foster youth gave a voice to a relatively ignored population. In the past, research appeared disinterested in the outcomes of mentees once they had emancipated from care. By contrast, in the present study, I sought out this population and gave them the opportunity to openly describe their mentorship experiences as they perceived them. Drafts of mentorship models were brought back to the youth to verify and extend the data. Thus, my mentorship model appears to be a tentative, but genuine representation of the voice of male mentees who were transitioning out of foster care.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to explore how mentorship influenced male youth who were emancipating from foster care, and to create a preliminary model depicting this process. Despite the high level of risk experienced by this population, they have not been adequately represented in the literature. Their participation in my study gave them that I had not found in my review of the literature. As a result, I devised a descriptive model based on their experiences, the likes of which had not been well documented in the mentorship literature. What began as the mentorship perspectives of these youth and their mentors lead me to the development of a tentative and descriptive model of mentorship. My mentorship model features three main influential aspects, including mentee, mentor, and program characteristics. Each set of characteristics impacted upon the mentoring relationship and the mentee's capacity for personal growth, which further lead to several positive and negative consequences. Many of the processes within the mentorship model were empirically supported, while other processes did not have sufficient support in the research, thus posing new research trajectories. Standing to gain from the development of a mentorship model were the program, its mentors, and ultimately transitioning male foster youth.

Just as in the literature, it is easy to ignore transitioning foster youth in today's society. Many write them off as delinquents because of their behavioural issues, or they label them as

being intellectually impaired due to their poor educational achievement. In reality, transitioning foster youth are a vulnerable population who may be struggling to overcome adversity confronted in their everyday lives. They often have been maltreated, abused, and abandoned sending them along a path towards negative outcomes. Although mentorship cannot undo these painful experiences, participating in an appropriate mentorship program can help alter this process, directing these youth towards more constructive outcomes. With some precautions, a mentorship program could be devised, combining the appropriate mentee, mentor, and program characteristics necessary to foster positive experiences. Indeed, it appears that many transitioning male foster youth may be merely one program away from being normal “youth,” disentangled from a label or an expectation for poor outcomes and simply classified as “youth” with every chance of success.

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Appendix A

Mentoring Male Foster Youth

JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY DIRECTOR'S CONSENT FORM

Members of your organization (mentors and mentees) are invited to participate in a research project entitled Mentoring Male Foster Youth. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Student Researcher: Miranda Rempel, Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, 966-5258;

mlh419@mail.usask.ca

Supervisor: David Mykota, Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, 966-5258;

david.mykota@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of the study is to understand how mentorship operates with transitioning male foster youth. Mentees and mentors from your organization will be asked to complete two interviews with the researcher. Each interview should take about 45 minutes. These interviews will take place in the meeting room of the John Howard Society and will be recorded using a small audio machine. Participants may ask for the recording machine to be turned off at any time. During the first interview, a mentor or mentee will be asked about their general background information and mentorship experience. Using this information, the researcher will create a diagram of how mentorship works. During the second interview, a mentor or mentee will be asked to review the mentorship diagram and given a chance to remove or add to the information as they see fit.

The final model of how mentorship works will be presented in the researcher's Master's thesis paper. The results of this paper may also be featured in a conference presentation or journal article. Quotes from interviews may be used to support this diagram. All names will be changed to ensure that they cannot be easily identified. However, because your mentees and mentors have been selected from a small group of people who may know each other, it is possible that their stories or ways of wording experiences may be recognized. Signing this consent form means that mentors or mentees agree to letting the researcher use their quotes for these reasons. If for any reason, mentors or mentees do not want their quotes to be used, they can contact the researcher who will remove this information. The researcher will be able to remove information until all interviews are completed.

Potential Benefits: This mentorship model may provide an outline for setting up current or future mentorship programs. As mentorship programs become more effective, they can help more youth. Also, all participants will have their name put into a draw to receive two free movie theatre tickets to show the researcher's appreciation for their time and effort. The names of your mentors and mentees will remain in the draw even if they decide to leave the study. There is no guarantee that mentees or mentors will personally benefit from the study.

Potential Risks: Some people may feel uncomfortable talking about personal or upsetting issues regarding their mentorship experience. If for any reason mentees or mentors experience negative thoughts or emotions because of this study, they will be encouraged to contact their mentor, social worker, director, or SWITCH, a free counseling service at 956-2518.

Storage of Data: All participants' information will be recorded using an audio recorder and will be typed on the researcher's secure computer. Once this information has been typed, it will be stored on the researcher's data key and erased from the computer. This data key, all contact information and consent

or assent forms, will be stored separately in a secure and locked cabinet at the University of Saskatchewan by the project supervisor. All data will be stored for five years after the study has been complete. After five years, this information will be destroyed.

Confidentiality: The information that is shared will be private and discussed only with the research team. All names will be changed in the final paper and any identifying information will be stored separate from other data so that others cannot tell which information belongs to each participant. This information will only be connected using random research numbers, not names or location. However, because mentees and mentors have been selected from a small group of participants who may know each other, it is possible that they may recognize the mentee's or mentor's story or way of wording their experiences.

Right to Withdraw: Participation is voluntary and not required. Choosing not to participate will not upset anyone's lives, relationships, or treatment at the houses. Mentees and mentors may choose to answer only those questions that they are comfortable with. They may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without any punishment. All participants will still be entered into the draw for two movie tickets regardless of whether or not they withdraw from the study. If mentees or mentors withdraw from the research project, any information that they have given will be destroyed at their request. The researcher will let participants know if any new information arises which may affect their decision to participate. Consent will be discussed at the first interview, however only confidentiality and withdrawing from the study will be discussed at the beginning of any other interviews.

Questions: If you concerning the research project please feel free to ask them at any point. You or the members or your organization are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided if they have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on April 22, 2010. Any questions regarding mentee or mentor rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

Follow-Up or Debriefing: After the study has been completed, the researcher will remind participants about contact information and will also answer any other questions they may have. If participants are interested, they may be given a copy of the study's results by contacting the student researcher.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I give consent for the members of my organization (mentors and mentees) to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

(Name of Director)

(Date)

(Signature of Director)

(Signature of Researcher)

Appendix B



Mentoring Male Foster Youth

CONTACT CARD

I, _____, am interested in participating in your study.

Preferred Contact Information (phone number, e-mail address, or home address)

If you have provided a phone number, what is the best time of day to call?

If you have provided a phone number, may I leave a message?

Please check off one of these boxes:

- I am over the age of 18
- I am under the age of 18 and I have included a signed guardian consent form
- I am under the age of 18 I have *NOT* included a signed guardian consent form

Appendix C



Mentoring Male Foster Youth

Invitation Letter

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled Mentoring Male Foster Youth. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions.

Student Researcher: Miranda Rempel, Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, 966-5258; mentoringresearch@hotmail.com

Supervisor: David Mykota, Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, 966-5258; david.mykota@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of the study is to understand how mentorship works. You will be asked to complete two 45 minute interviews with the researcher. These interviews will take place in the meeting room of the John Howard Society and will be recorded using a small audio machine. You may ask for the recording machine to be turned off at any time. During the first interview, you will be asked about your general background information and mentorship experience, including the importance and influence of mentorship, your contribution to being mentored or mentoring, and what made mentorship difficult or easy. Using this information, the researcher will create a diagram of how mentorship works. During the second interview, you will be asked to review the mentorship diagram and will be given a chance to add to the information as you see fit.

The final diagram will be presented in the researcher's Master's thesis paper. The results of this paper may also be featured in a conference presentation or journal article. Quotes from your interview may be used to support this diagram. All names will be changed to ensure that you cannot be easily identified. However, because you have been selected from a small group of people who may know each other, it is possible that they may recognize your story or way of wording your experiences. If for any reason, you do not want your quotes to be used, you should contact the researcher. The researcher will then remove this information. You may contact the researcher to remove your information until all interviews have been completed.

Potential Benefits: This mentorship diagram may help organizations to set up mentorship programs. As mentorship programs become more effective, they can help more youth. Also, all participants will have their name put into a draw to receive two free movie theatre tickets to show the researcher's appreciation for their time and effort. Your name will remain in the draw even if you decide to leave the study. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from the study.

Potential Risks: Some people may feel uncomfortable talking about personal or upsetting issues about their mentorship experience. If for any reason mentees or mentors experience negative thoughts or emotions because of this study, they will be encouraged to contact their mentor, social worker, director, or SWITCH, a free counseling service at 956-2518.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask them at any point. You are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on April 22, 2010. Any questions regarding your

rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact the student researcher, Miranda Rempel and more details will be provided.

CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled Mentoring Male Foster Youth. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions.

Student Researcher: Miranda Rempel, Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, 966-5258;
mentoringresearch@hotmail.com

Supervisor: David Mykota, Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, 966-5258;
david.mykota@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of the study is to understand how mentorship works. You will be asked to complete two interviews with the researcher. Each interview should take about 45 minutes. These interviews will take place in the meeting room of the John Howard Society and will be recorded using a small audio machine. Participants may ask for the recording machine to be turned off at any time. During the first interview, you will be asked about your general background information and mentorship experience. Using this information, the researcher will create a diagram of how mentorship works. During the second interview, you will be asked to review the mentorship diagram and given a chance to add to the information as you see fit.

The final diagram will be presented in the researcher's Master's thesis paper. The results of this paper may also be featured in a conference presentation or journal article. Quotes from your interview may be used to support this diagram. All names will be changed to ensure that you cannot be easily identified. However, because you have been selected from a small group of people who may know each other, it is possible that they may recognize your story or way of wording your experiences. Signing this consent form means that the you agree to letting the researcher use your quotes for these reasons. If for any reason, you do not want their quotes to be used, you should contact the researcher who will remove this information. The researcher will be able to remove information until all interviews are completed.

Potential Benefits: This mentorship diagram may help to set up other mentorship programs. As mentorship programs become more effective, they can help more youth. Also, all participants will have their name put into a draw to receive two free movie theatre tickets to show the researcher's appreciation for their time and effort. Your name will remain in the draw even if you decide to leave the study. There is no guarantee that you will personally benefit from the study.

Potential Risks: Some people may feel uncomfortable talking about personal or upsetting issues about their mentorship experience. If for any reason you experience negative thoughts or emotions because of this study, please contact your mentor, social worker, or director, or please feel free to contact SWITCH, a free counseling service at 956-2518.

Storage of Information: All of your information will be recorded using an audio recorder and will be typed on the researcher's secure computer. Once this information has been typed, it will be stored on the researcher's data key and erased from the computer. This data key, any contact information and consent or assent forms, will be stored separately in a secure and locked cabinet at the University of Saskatchewan

by the project supervisor. All information will be stored for five years after the study has been complete. After five years, this information will be destroyed.

Confidentiality: The information that is shared will be private and discussed only with the research team. All names will be changed in the final paper and any identifying information will be stored separate from your other information so that others cannot tell which information is yours. This information will only be connected using random research numbers, not names or location. However, because you have been selected from a small group of people who may know each other, it is possible that they may recognize your story or way of wording your experiences.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary and not required. Choosing not to participate will not upset anyone's lives, relationships, or treatment at the houses. Also, you may choose to answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without any punishment. All participants will still be entered into the draw for two movie tickets regardless of whether or not you withdraw from the study. If you withdraw from the research project, any information that you have given will be destroyed at your request. The researcher will let you know if any new information arises which may affect your decision to participate. Your consent to participate in the study will be discussed at the first interview, however only confidentiality and withdrawing from the study will be discussed at the beginning of any other interviews.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the research project, please feel free to ask them at any point. You are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided if you have other questions. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on April 22, 2010. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed by that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect.

Follow-Up or Debriefing: After the study has been completed, the researcher will remind you about contact information and will also answer any other questions you may have. If you are interested, you may be given a copy of the study's results by contacting the student researcher.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided; I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

(Name of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Participant)

(Signature of Researcher)

Appendix E

First Interview Protocol for the Study, Mentoring Male Foster Youth

Method: Semi- Structured Interview

1. The researcher interviews mentee participants (45 minutes each)
2. The researcher interviews mentor participants (45 minutes each)

1. Mentee Interview

Introductory Demographic Questions

- (a) What is your age?
- (b) What grade are you in?
- (c) What is your ethnic background?

Priming Questions

- (a) How long have you been a part of this mentorship program?
- (b) What kinds of activities did you do with your mentor?
- (c) Describe a typical day with your mentor for me.

Mentorship Experience Questions

- (a) What can you tell me about mentorship?
- (b) How important is mentorship to you?
- (c) Tell me about your experience of being mentored?

Probe: How has the mentorship program influenced you?

Probe: How has your mentor influenced you?

Probe: How have you changed since you started the mentorship program?

- (d) What was difficult about being mentored, if anything?

Probe: What did you dislike (the most) about being mentored?

Probe: What are the weaknesses of mentorship?

- (e) What was easy about being mentored, if anything?

Probe: What did you like (the most) about being mentored?

Probe: What are the strengths of mentorship?

- (f) How did you contribute to being mentored?
- (g) What do you think will happen after you are done being mentored?

2. Mentor Interview

Introductory Demographic Questions

- (a) What can you tell me about mentorship?
- (b) What is your age?
- (c) What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- (d) What is your ethnic background?

Priming Questions

- (a) How long have you been a part of this mentorship program?
- (b) What kinds of activities did you do with your mentee?
- (c) Describe a typical day with your mentee for me.

Mentorship Experience Questions

- (a) How important is mentorship to you?
 - Probe:* How has the mentorship program influenced your mentee?
 - Probe:* How has the mentorship program influenced you?
 - Probe:* How has your mentor influenced your mentee?
 - Probe:* How has your mentor influenced you?
 - Probe:* How has your mentee changed since they started the mentorship program?
- (c) What was difficult about being a mentor, if anything?
 - Probe:* What did you dislike (the most) about being a mentor?
 - Probe:* What are the weaknesses of mentorship?
- (d) What did your mentee find difficult about being mentored?
 - Probe:* What did they dislike (the most) about being mentored?
- (e) What was easy about being a mentor, if anything?
 - Probe:* What did you like (the most) about being a mentor?

Probe: What are the strengths of mentorship?

(f) What did your mentee find easy about being mentored?

Probe: What did they like (the most) about being mentored?

(g) How did you contribute to mentoring your mentee?

(h) What do you think will happen after your mentee is done being mentored?

**Generic Probes:* Tell me more about that

Can you give me an example?

What do you mean by _____?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix F

Second Interview Protocol for the Study, Mentoring Male Foster Youth

Method: Semi- Structured Interview

1. The researcher interviews mentee participants (45 minutes each)
2. The researcher interviews mentor participants (45 minutes each)

1. Mentee Interview

Mentorship Model Questions

- (a) How accurate is this diagram?
- (b) Does this diagram say what you want it to?
- (c) Is there anything wrong with this diagram?
- (d) What changes need to be made to this diagram, if any?
- (e) Is there anything that you would like to add to the diagram?

2. Mentor Interview

Mentorship Model Questions

- (a) How accurate is this model?
- (b) Does this model say what you want it to?
- (c) Is there anything wrong with this model?
- (d) What changes need to be made to this model, if any?
- (e) Is there anything that you would like to add to the model?

**Generic Probes:* Tell me more about that

Can you give me an example?

What do you mean by _____?

Is there anything else you would like to add?