LEARNING TO CARE: THE INFLUENCE OF A PEER MENTORING PROGRAM ON EMPATHY AND MORAL REASONING IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT MENTORS

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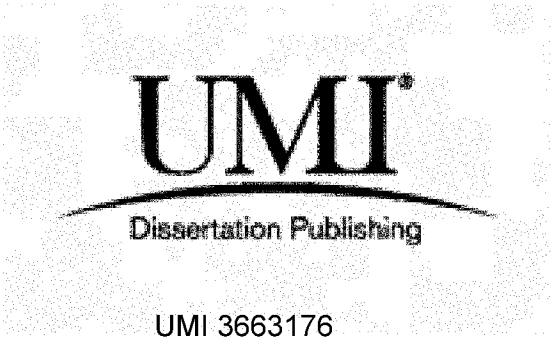

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On behalf of the Graduate Committee for Joshua Jones, I affirm this manuscript is the final and accepted dissertation. Signatures of all committee members are on file with the Graduate School at the University of Maine, 42 Stodder Hall, Orono, Maine.

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Dissertation Advisor: Dr. John Maddaus

An Abstract of the Dissertation Presented
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This investigation examines the effect of a peer mentoring service-learning program established by the University of Maine on empathy and moral reasoning. The methodology is qualitative in nature, using a semi-structured interview protocol and a conceptual framework based on the review of the literature. Mentoring, empathy and moral reasoning were the focus of the literature review, which revealed these two key components of social and emotional learning are associated with academic performance and pro-social behaviors in adolescence, and mentoring is a service learning modality associated with similar benefits.

Two rural high schools were recruited to participate in an innovative collaborative effort with the University of Maine. Volunteer mentors, screened by local guidance staff, were trained in peer mentoring theory, skills, and techniques in three all day workshops. Ongoing onsite guidance was provided by a University of Maine graduate school intern and on site counseling staff. Each mentor was assigned a mentee, whom they met with regularly throughout the school year. In the spring, twelve mentors, representing

approximately half of the mentor population, was interviewed about their experiences and perceptions.

A conceptual framework was developed based on a detailed review of relevant literature. A semi-structured interview was based on this framework, which was then utilized to guide data collection in the interviews. The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed to detect the emergence of themes with high frequency and prevalence. Mentor profiles were also developed for each of the twelve mentors who participated.

The mentor profiles and findings from the interview thematic analysis were then compared and contrasted with the review of the literature, and the conceptual framework was refined into the final concept map. The findings support a strong conceptual connection between moral reasoning and empathy, mediated through the empathic connections of the mentors including family, friends, and mentees, as well as the various moral dilemmas that they encountered in their high school experience. The implications for conceptual developent through research with adolescents is reviewed, as well as opportunities for future research to increase the effectiveness of service learning programs that develop social and emotional capacities in youth.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Samantha, my beloved wife, who has given her wisdom, support and abiding love to me amidst all the trials and tribulations of learning, discovery and personal growth. It is also dedicated to all those who choose to devote their lives to aiding others in finding new ways to overcome adversity and find peace, hope, and meaning in these difficult times.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is the fruit of the labor of many hands and minds. I would first like to express deep appreciation for the patient, methodical and encouraging mentorship of my advisor, Dr. John Maddaus – who took on a project with many complications and saw it through to completion, and Dr. Sandy Caron – who provided detailed feedback for both substance and form, as well as Dr. Annette Nelligan, Dr. Dan Johnson and Dr. Eric Pandiscio for their commitment to the project's success.

Secondly, I would like to recognize the work of the mentors who committed countless hours of time and effort to the success of their mentees, and this project. Dr. Annette Nelligan was indispensable to the creation of the training program and enlistment of the mentors. Dr. Yung-wei Lin was a vital research partner, who initiated contact with the high schools and provided tremendous assistance in the initial phases of the project. Dr. Janet Fairman, Dr. Shi-Fen Tu, and Dr. Mark Tappan all lent their valuable expertise towards the initial design. Leslie Blanchette, Sue Brown, and Andrea Smith were critical to the on-the-ground implementation of the mentoring program and provided invaluable assistance arranging logistics and providing supervision and support.

Special recognition goes to Dr. Judy Tindall, who wrote the Peer Power texts our curriculum was based on, trained me as a Peer Program Professional, and also assisted in the training of mentors. Dr. Gerdes and Dr. Lietz kindly lent their permission for the use of the EAI. Eric Steeves and Ben Thelwell provided the initial momentum behind the peer mentoring concept and rekindled my interest in peer mentoring which led to the inception of this project. There are countless others who assisted in many ways, large and small, to make this possible – thank you all.

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INTRODUCTION

Non Nobis Solum

"Not For Ourselves Alone"

Every day, millions of American youth experience violence, bullying and other forms of aggression, often perpetrated by other young people. Several thousand youth are killed every year, frequently by other youth (Centers for Disease Control, 2010). Prevalent violence among the young has been called "the new normal" (Ruddick, 2006) despite increasing efforts to identify and address the problem (Merrill, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008). The causes of youth violence and aggression have been linked to factors as various as poor psychosocial adjustment, diminished empathic capacity, disrupted family structure, and lack of role models (Nansel, 2001). Victims of bullying and aggression are frequently socially isolated because of deviant clothing, appearance, or behavior (Thornberg, 2011), and suffer from poor relationships with classmates and difficulty making friends (Nansel, 2001). Bullying victims are also at high risk for causing harm, as they are much more likely to bring weapons to school to protect themselves (Carney & Merrill, 2001).

While aggression and violence among the young may be one indicator of poor social adjustment and ethical development, there others that are far more widespread. Cheating in academic settings has spread to the highest achieving students. 80% of students recognized in *Who's Who among American High School Students* admitted to cheating on both school and state-level tests (Lathrop & Foss, 2005). Among those who admitted to dishonest behavior, 95% stated they were never caught, and consider

themselves morally responsible. A separate survey of the parents of those students found that 63% thought their children would not cheat under any circumstances.

The extensive quantity of anonymous information on the Internet has given many adolescents the idea that it is perfectly acceptable to claim someone else's thoughts as your own (Strom & Strom, 2007). As the prevalence of easily available content continues to expand exponentially, it is increasingly possible that students are becoming unaware that they are cheating. Strom and Strom (2007) note how, especially with teens, "the moral compass students need to guide conduct in class and out of school can be thrown off course" (p.113), and the role academic dishonesty plays in that process. These trends are especially concerning when taken in the context of the importance of adolescence in moral reasoning development.

School programs that assist increasing the social integration of students and provide role models to establish new social and moral norms have been shown to be effective (Cowie & Smith, 2010; Feldman, 1992), but there is much that remains to be learned about the influence of these programs on the students that participate, both as providers and receivers of services (Merrill, Gueldner, Ross & Isava, 2008; Nansel, 2001).

This study is an effort to increase the scholarship in this area through the investigation of the influence of a high school based peer mentoring program on empathy and moral reasoning in a population which has often been neglected in research on intervention programs: the teen mentors themselves. Empathy and moral reasoning are two key elements of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2006) and factors that deter bullying and aggression (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988; Blair, 1995). These qualities have

also been linked to improved decision-making (Nesdale, Milliner, Duffy, & Griffiths, 2009; Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Stiff, Dillard, Somera, Kim, & Sleight, 1988),

Why Was Mentoring Chosen as an Intervention?

To effectively counter aggression and bullying, researchers have recognized the need to look beyond typical anti-bullying interventions towards behavioral interventions that are more universal in nature (Merrill, Gueldner, Ross, & Isava, 2008). Mentoring was identified as an intervention that holds significant promise.

There has been a great deal of attention recently in the popular press about the benefits of mentoring for employee and student development, retention, and advancement, and a correlated increase in scholarship (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011). Despite the recent enthusiasm, there have been few attempts to integrate current scholarship into a coherent model of the mentoring process (Noe, Greenberger & Wang, 2002; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). It has often been assumed that the effective components of the mentoring process were related to the mentor's advantages of seniority, experience, and organizational familiarity. However, recent research has revealed that mere *seniority* may not be as significant as once thought (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

A number of studies have indicated that the key effective elements of the mentoring relationship are not determined by the status and position of the mentor, as much as the level of relationship satisfaction (Viator, 1999), quality and depth of the relationship (Ragins et al., 2000), as well as the similarity of the people being mentored (*mentees*) with the mentor (Allen & Eby, 2003). These factors support key aspects of

peer mentoring, a type of mentoring relationship between peers in a similar role or age group in which peers use their areas of strength and skill to assist one another.

Why Were Peers Utilized as Mentors?

When designed, implemented and run well, peer mentoring programs have proven their capacity to directly address many of the challenges that face adolescents in their daily lives. Peer mentoring programs have run successfully using mentors of many ages (Hoffman, 1983; Gatz & Hilleman, 1984), from youngsters on elementary school buses (Carns, 1996) up through elderly residents of nursing facilities (France & McDowell, 1982).

Several studies have shown that mentees can improve their conflict resolution capacities (Bell, Coleman, Anderson, Whelan, & Wilder, 2000), academic performance (Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Hodge, 1995), classroom behavior and disciplinary referrals (Bell et al., 2000), and increased self-confidence (Cowie, Naylor, Talamelli, Chauhan, & Smith, 2002). Mentees value many different aspects of working with peer helpers, including some features, such as advice-giving and being a good listener (Boulton, et al., 2007) that are more commonly associated with peer mentor relationships than with other intervention programs. Benefits to the school from well-supported peer mentoring programs have included improvements in classroom involvement and organization (Wright & Cowen, 1985), fewer suspensions and fewer disciplinary referrals (Hurst, 2010), and improved retention and achievement for at-risk students (Slicker & Palmer, 1993).

The benefits to the mentors have also been remarkable, potentially doubling the effectiveness as both mentor and mentee reap the benefits of these types of relationships.

Findings have indicated that those teens who serve as mentors not only develop mentoring skills (Naylor & Cowie, 1999), but also increase self-efficacy (Brewer & Carroll, 2010), learn to resolve conflicts (Hurst, 2010), increase their awareness of social responsibility (Benson, 2006), enhance their interpersonal skills (Steinbauer, 1998), develop their self-image (Switzer, Simmons, Dew, Regalski, & Wang, 1995), and experience more satisfying family relationships (Fuhr & Pynn, 1987).

Mentors are a critical component in any formal mentoring effort (Ragins et al., 2000), and the failure to examine their perceptions and development provides an incomplete picture of formal programs (Allen, 2007). To focus exclusively on benefits to the school, or to the mentees, is to risk overlooking the welfare of the mentors, on whom the program depends. Several studies have found that neglect of the mentors causes harmful effects to those they were intended to help (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; McCord, 1981). Effective support, supervision, and research is necessary for mentorship programs to encourage the growth and development of mentors, ensure professional oversight of mentoring services, and provide for the collection of outcomes data.

Why Are Interventions at the High School Level So Important?

During the critical period of adolescent development, when young people are exceptionally sensitive to the influence of one another, high school peer mentoring programs play an exceptionally vital role in changing the lives of their mentors, their mentees, and their schools (Ikard, 2001). James Marcia (1980), a noted researcher in adolescent development, remarked that adolescence is "the first time physical development, cognitive development, and social expectations coincide to enable young persons...to construct a viable pathway toward their adulthood" (p. 160).

Adolescence is also an especially critical period for mental and behavioral health in general. Recent high profile incidents of youth violence, such as the school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut (Kerwick, 2012) and the bombings at the Boston Marathon (Miller, 2013), have refocused national attention on the emotional health and moral condition of American youth. Public outrage and concern has come on the heels of reports that have revealed an unprecedented severity and prevalence of emotional and behavioral disorders among the young. Public health investigators (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, & Walters, 2005) recently found that the ages of onset for a wide range of mental disorders and conditions were surprisingly low, with over 90% of impulse control disorders, 75% of anxiety disorders, and 25% of mood disorders emerging before the age of 20.

Public health data reveal similar cause for concern. Suicide and homicide are now the second and third leading cause of death in the 15–24 age group (Centers for Disease Control, 2010), and it has been recognized that these suicide statistics are likely lower than actual rates, especially for African-Americans and women (Phillips & Ruth, 1993). Simultaneously, school budgets across the country are being slashed, resulting in significant cuts of hundreds of millions of dollars from educational services, including a severe impact on academic, emotional, and behavioral support services for at-risk youth (Johnson, Oliff, & Williams, 2011).

At the high school level, these cuts can leave young people in an especially vulnerable condition. During adolescence, many risk factors are especially acute, including aggressive behavior by peers (Moffitt, 1993), parental conflict (Steinberg, 2001), drug use (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2010) and sexual

activity (Benson, 2006). New approaches that provide effective solutions are required to meet the confluence of intensifying and conflicting demands regarding behavioral health and academic performance being made upon schools and students in a time of increasing fiscal austerity.

In the developmental stage of adolescence, teens come to know and define themselves predominantly through social interactions and relatedness (Hart, 1988; Kuperminc, Blatt, & Leadbeater, 1997). The development of teens' perceptions of themselves in relationship to groups of peers is correlated with improved self-esteem (Brown & Lohr, 1987), and has a powerful impact on how they perceive one another (Tarrant, 2002). Teens that learn to identify themselves as "helpers" and incorporate this role into their nascent adult identity may catalyze transformations in themselves even as they reach out to aid others.

Why Investigate Empathy and Moral Reasoning?

Empathy and moral reasoning have been found to be strongly associated with the formation and maintenance of helping behaviors (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Hoffman, 2001). A targeted investigation into the influence of mentoring on these two personality qualities would be quite useful for quite a number of reasons. Empathy is an essential part of effective helping relationships (Gibbs, Potter, Barriga, & Liau, 1996), as well as general emotional health (Goleman, 2006). Moral reasoning is a key part of adolescent development (Piaget, 1933; Gilligan, 1987; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969), and many studies have shown that service experience can stimulate reflection on society and morality (Yates & Youniss, 1996). Learning the effectiveness of interventions that may have an

impact on these capacities may yield great benefits to the mentors, their mentees, schools, and society at large.

Statement of the Problem

It has been clearly shown that peer-mentoring programs can be beneficial to mentors and mentees. Empathy and moral development are essential aspects of helping relationships. The research into the effects of mentoring, moral development and empathy has been very limited, most noticeably on the mentors themselves. Investigations to date report some promising initial findings (Ikard, 2001), but note there remains a significant deficit of scholarship on practical investigations and applications of recent insights (Brewer, 2010; Karcher, 2005). Given the confluence of concerning data and the deficits in extant studies on effective interventions to increase these capacities, especially for high school student mentors, an increase in the depth and breadth of scholarship on outcomes in this area will make a key contribution towards the ongoing effort to identify interventions that are simultaneously effective in the prevention of bullying and the encouragement of the physical safety, healthy development, and academic achievement of American students.

Purpose Statement

The primary purpose of this mixed-methods study is to investigate how the empathy and moral reasoning capacities of high school age peer mentors are influenced by participation in a peer mentoring program.

Overview of Methodology

Students who wish to serve as mentors were selected from two high schools and received training this year provided by a team of faculty and graduate students at the

University of Maine. All mentors were tested using standardized instruments to measure empathy and moral development. After serving as peer mentors for several months, mentors were given a post-test with the assessments and a semi-structured interview.

The method of data collection included a pre- and post-test with two standardized instruments, and a single instance semi-structured qualitative interview. The quantitative instruments were administered at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the first semester, and the interviews were conducted in April of the following year.

The standardized instruments chosen for this study were the Defining Issues Test, Version 2 (Appendix A) to measure changes in moral reasoning, and the Empathy Assessment Index (Appendix B) to measure changes in empathic capacities. The interviews were designed to further investigate the subjective thoughts and feelings of the mentors about their mentoring experience and their understanding and use of moral reasoning and empathic capacities.

Organization of the Report

Chapter Two consists of a review of the literature, with special attention paid to the connection between empathy and moral reasoning and the research supporting the proposition that these qualities are learned. The pioneers in the field who laid the foundations for the theoretical framework will be introduced, along with their contributions. Recent scholarship concerning the mentoring relationship, moral reasoning, and empathy, will also be reviewed to give a necessarily incomplete but hopefully enlightening background against which to understand the work in progress.

Chapter Three contains a detailed description of the research methodology, which contains the procedures that was used to collect and analyze the quantitative and

qualitative components of the data set, along with a description of the validity and reliability of the research instruments. This chapter also includes an introduction to key terms and details regarding the design, the population and sample, personal bias, limitations, and the range of applicability of the current study.

Chapter Four provides a presentation of the results, including a sample mentor profile, summary of codes organized by the working conceptual framework, and a thematic analysis of the transcripts highlighting themes which were found in the interview responses with high frequency and prevalence.

Chapter Five contains the final conceptual framework, discussion of the significance of the study and the findings of the present investigation, using the literature review as a basis for comparison.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Overview

The extensive research on the key elements of this study crosses many realms including education, social work, violence prevention, child development, counseling, disciplinary approaches, emotional and behavioral health, and many more - however, the themes in the scholarship that informed the design of the current study are fairly clear and straightforward. This brief literature review is intended to give the reader a basic overview of key findings and insights in the fields of mentoring, moral reasoning and empathy.

The literature review is divided into three sections, each one focusing on one of the key areas under investigation: mentoring, empathy, and moral reasoning. Each section begins with a working definition of each major term, followed by a brief historical review, a summary of current trends in each field, special considerations for adolescents, and finally a review of research into the relationship between each area and behavioral and emotional health. Insights gained from research in each of these areas is collated and integrated in the synthesis at the conclusion of the chapter.

Mentoring: Current Scholarship

Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

Proverbs 11:14, King James Version

The primary intervention under investigation is mentoring, which has a broad scope, and a long history. It has received a significant amount of attention just recently (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006), which is a bit of a mixed blessing, as the majority of the

literature is based on adult to adult mentoring in employment settings, or between adults and youth (McManus & Russell, 2007). Much of the research that does exist laments the lack of empirical scrutiny in general (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006; Kram, 1985). Data on mentoring as a mode of peer-to-peer youth programs is even harder to find, partially because similar services are often provided using a variety of terms, including peer helping, peer counseling, and peer support (Cowie & Smith, 2010). The following sections will discuss how the concept of mentoring has some unique attributes that provide a valuable perspective, even on services that peers provide for one another (Kram & Isabella, 1985), including special attention to the effects of mentoring on the mentors themselves.

Operational definition of mentoring. In an interesting contrast to the etymology of other key terms, Mentor was a man, or a myth, before his name became synonymous with a guiding figure. Mentor was a wise and faithful advisor that was given the charge of Odysseus's son, Telemachus, when he went to fight the Trojan War (Allen, 2007). However, the current use of the term has expanded far beyond anything Mentor himself would have done.

Traditionally, mentoring has described a relationship between an older, more experienced individual mentor and a younger, less experienced mentee for the purpose of helping and developing the mentee's career. More recently, however, Kathy Kram (1985) conceptualized mentoring in terms of offering developmental functions in two realms: career, and psychosocial.

In the context of peer mentoring, the definition becomes more elusive still. Kram (1985) defined peer relationships as a *mentoring alternative*, capable of providing critical

and enduring developmental functions when an 'actual' mentor is not available. Using terms more applicable to the relationship of an adult to a young person, Jean Rhodes (2002) defined mentoring as "a relationship in which the adult provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement aimed at developing the competence and the character of the mentee" (p.3).

A very lucid definition was given by Dubois & Karcher (2013), who stated that cross-age peer mentoring "entails a school aged youth at least two years older than their mentee, meeting weekly, for a sustained, consistent period of time lasting at least ten times" (p.239). These authors believe that the failure to utilize consistent terminology has created a great deal of confusion in the field, and is largely responsible for the inconsistent data on effectiveness.

History of peer mentoring programs. In whatever setting, peer mentoring, in the sense of peers gaining skills and knowledge from one another, has a heritage as long as any form of education. However, the earliest research reference to formal school-based peer counseling programs in the United States dates back to the early 1970's (Hamburg & Varenhorst, 1972). However, schools have only relatively recently begun to formally incorporate the ability of students to be part of the educational & developmental support process for one another into their educational programming (Hurst, 2010; Topping, 2005), although the popularity seems to be growing quickly (Cowie & Smith, 2010). The most prevalent, current, organized peer helping effort is Alcoholics Anonymous, a peer support program to help battle alcoholism that is now reaching as many as 12 million Americans (Wuthnow, 1994).

How peer mentoring differs from traditional mentoring. In her groundbreaking investigation of traditional mentoring relationships, Kram (1985) discovered that peer relationships, while not fitting the traditional mold, also provide some critical mentoring functions, particularly in the area of psychosocial functions. She found peers are frequently more accessible, more likely to form intimate and enduring relationships, and that "the lack of a hierarchical dimension aids in communication, mutual support, and collaboration" (p. 134). The power of peer relationships was such a dominant theme in her initial investigations that it inspired her to run a second major study (Kram & Isabella, 1985). The varying implications of this "mentoring alternative" and considerations for implementation are yet to be fully articulated (Cowie & Smith, 2010).

What is clear is that the absence of a clear hierarchical relationship questions the intuitive idea that peer mentorship is a type of counseling, consisting of the "well" helping the "unwell," or the elder helping the younger. It may be that simply cultivating the desire in people to help one another by formally empowering them to do so *is* the operative mechanism that conveys benefits to both participants in the helping process. Indeed, the quality of *mutuality* may be one of the key elements of peer mentoring (Kram, 1985). Even in more traditional mentoring relationships, Allen and Eby (2003) found that degree of perceived similarity, including traits such as gender, attitudes, values and beliefs, between mentor and mentee was one of the key indicators of quality and learning in the mentoring relationship.

Selection of students to serve as peer mentors. Successful peer mentoring programs have often utilized students that are independent, performing well academically

(Dennison, 2000), and held skills of reflection, empathy and concern for others (Karcher, Davidson, Rhodes and Herrera, 2010). The single most important element, according to one study conducted by Roth & Brooks Gunn (2003), is that mentors hold an attitude that other youth are "resources that can be developed rather than as problems to be managed" (p. 204).

Forms of peer mentoring. Today, school-supported peer programs can come in many forms. Tindall (1995) identifies the essential common feature is a systematic approach that delivers peer helping services to others. Effective peer programs include a vision, mission, goals, infrastructure, selection process, training process, evaluation process, and promotional efforts (Tindall, 1995). Modalities for peer programs include such diverse specialties as stress management, leadership training, group work, crisis response, suicide prevention, mediation, highway safety advising, character education, bullying reduction, grief and loss consolation, and classroom assistants (Hurst, 2010; Tindall, 1995).

Service delivery arrangements range from individual helpers working with others in various locations around the school, to groups of peers (usually younger) being led by a peer helper, to groups of peers aiding one another with a volunteer adult facilitator (Wassef, Ingham, Collins, & Mason, 1995). Training, preparation and certification arrangements vary, although national standards and personnel certification programs are becoming more widely adopted, such as the Certified Peer Program and Certified Peer Program Educator credentials offered by the National Association of Peer Program Professionals (NAPPP).

Peer mentoring trends. While programs have been in existence for some time, peer mentoring came to receive national attention after Kram and Isabella's (1985) groundbreaking study. They found that peer relationships represent a continuum of intimacy and provide different services to the individuals at different career stages. They found that "a diagnostic approach to managing relationships at work, and personal reflection on how various relationships influence career advancement and psychosocial development, benefits both parties" (p. 155).

The extent of high school peer mentoring programs in the United States is unknown. National Association for Peer Program Professionals is currently seeking funding for a survey to determine the number of programs nationwide (Tindall, personal communication). One survey conducted in Indiana in 2002 revealed that 72% of the counties in Indiana had high school peer programs at that time (Tindall, 2002). In Baldwin County, Alabama, every single school has an active peer program (Tindall, personal communication). In the UK, it has been reported that up to 50% of primary and secondary schools have such systems in place (Cowie & Smith, 2010). It is presumed most programs are running independently and are uncertified.

While the popularity of formal programs waxes and wanes, the ability of peers to informally help one another get through the trials and tribulations of adolescence has been and continues to be a mainstay of popular culture. When I was a teen, movies such as *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (Hughes, 1986), *Pump Up The Volume* (Cappe, Risher, Stern & Stilladis, 1990), and perhaps most famously, *The Breakfast Club* (Hughes, 1985), showcased the critical role peers play for one another as they learn better ways of dealing with school, parents, their personal struggles, and one another. *The Breakfast Club* in

particular consisted of very little action aside from a long group therapy session, as teens helped one another – sometimes well, sometimes not so well – to survive and connect with one another in high school. A quote prominently featured at the end of the film sums up their experience after learning to understand one another:

> Dear Mr. Vernon,
>
> We accept the fact that we had to sacrifice a whole Saturday in detention for whatever it was we did wrong. What we did was wrong, but we think you're crazy to make us write you an essay telling you who we think we are. You see us as you want to see us: in the simplest terms, and in the most convenient definitions. But what we found out is that each one of us is a brain...and an athlete...and a basket case...a princess...and a criminal. Does that answer your question?
>
> Sincerely yours,
>
> The Breakfast Club (Hughes, 1985)

Adolescent mentoring relationships. Understanding adolescent peer mentoring programs in their proper context involves seeing same-age peers as more than simply a "new way of providing services." Gartner & Reissman (1977) argued that helping others creates feelings of independence and social usefulness, and results in personalized learning and self-initiative. Reissman (1990) later stated that a complete paradigm shift is needed in the way institutions provide services. Instead of helping the needy, programs should be designed so that they are constantly creating more "helpers."

It is increasingly evident from a number of studies that the mentoring process helps those in both roles of the relationship (Kram & Isabella, 1985; McManus &

Russell, 2007; Karcher, 2009), and there is often a reverse process occurring as well. The mentees are also helping young mentors develop their mentorship skills (Vorrath & Brendtro, 1985).

The power of this mutually reinforcing dynamic may be further leveraged by the creation of a group identity, as the mentor becomes an increasingly essential member of a team of other mentors, supporting one another in their efforts to go out and help those who are struggling to adapt and grow. The example set by this group can then inspire the entire community to consider youth "not as problems to be fixed, but as resources ready to contribute to their families, schools and communities" (Benard, 1990). Those receiving help may also see in their peer mentors a new identity and future for themselves (Varenhorst, 1992).

While peer programs have often been found very beneficial (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Hughes, 2010; Ikard, 2001), they are not without risk. Peer programs have been criticized in the past for exacerbating difficult situations, as teens who are still developing and often carrying a heavy load of life concerns themselves are asked to help other teens handle their burdens (Feldman, 1992; McCord, 1978, 1981). There have been cases where mentors, in an effort to gain approval and acceptance by their mentees, have reinforced negative, antisocial behaviors and become complicit themselves (Baginsky, 2004; Dishion et al., 1999). For teens immersed in a negative youth culture, those designated as helpers are often viewed with suspicion, and sometimes the mentors are not able to allay those suspicions and form genuine bonds of trust with their mentees. Peer mentors working in such cultures are also susceptible to increased stress, and susceptibility to depression and involvement with delinquent behavior (Baginsky, 2004).

Yet, for some mentors who also went through hard times, they may find this 'familiar territory', and that their own efforts to overcome their challenges have provided an area of strength and competence. In the words of Vorrath and Brendtro (1985), "in reaching out to help another, a person creates his own sense of worthiness" (p.6).

Barbara Varenhorst (1992) reported the story of a high school girl who was a heavy drinker and drug user who enrolled in the peer counseling program, and through reaching out to others facing similar situations was able to overcome her own addictions and forge a new identity for herself as a peer mentor. She went on to complete her higher educational degrees and attain professional licensure.

Mentoring outcomes for mentees and schools. Peer mentoring programs are often started as part of anti-bullying initiatives (Tindall, 1995), and many studies have shown them to be especially effective when dealing with peer-to-peer conflict (Gibbs, Potter, Barriga, & Liau, 1996; Hughes, 2010; Hurst, 2001). These types of programs often have an impact on youth violence, as they promote the development of conflict resolution skills, provide an outlet for safe expression of personal feelings, and create a culture in which youth are expected to generate creative solutions to problems (Vorrath & Brendtro, 1985).

These types of programs also can have an impact for students that are experiencing disruption in their family relationships. A study conducted by Sprinthall, Hall & Gerler (1992) found that 11^{th} & 12^{th} graders working with middle school students experiencing parental divorce were able to create a significant improvement compared to a control group in measures such as psychological causation, individuality, and internalizing locus of control. Support for these students is especially important in

consideration of the powerful negative impact of parental divorce on school success (Jeynes, 2002).

Mentoring outcomes for mentors. Mentoring has several components that benefit the mentors. Mentoring programs utilize peers in helping relationships, involve students in extracurricular activities, and engage students in service learning (Karcher, 2009). The research regarding outcomes for each of these components is promising.

Michael Karcher (2009) conducted a quasi-experimental study assessing changes over time in connectedness, attachment, and self-esteem on a group of 46 teen peer mentors and reported gains in school-related connectedness and self-esteem. After a systematic review of 20 studies (Cowie & Smith, 2010), the authors stated that benefits to the mentors were the "most well established finding" (p.189) of their analysis, yielding a wide array of benefits including improved self-esteem, social and communication skills, greater empathy, and a greater sense of responsibility. The authors credited the quality of training and supervision, as well as the opportunity to use their skills for the benefit of the school as a whole, as key positive influences on the mentors.

The service-learning component also can provide significant benefits. Yates and Youniss (1996) performed a meta-analysis of 44 empirical studies, and concluded that service learning has positive impacts on agency, social relatedness, and moral-political awareness. Hamilton and Fenzel (1988) found that adolescents engaging in volunteer community service projects showed small but statistically significant gains in social responsibility on the Social and Personal Responsibility Scale, with strongly positive personal testimony. Peer mentors have been extensively utilized in a service learning

capacity to assist transitional groups such as high school freshmen, and have gained in empathy, listening skills and patience (Frank, 2011).

Finally, teens benefit from involvement in extra-curricular activities in general. Eccles and Barber (1999) found that while all teens who participate in extra-curricular activities benefit in a variety of ways, participants in pro-social school activities (such as church attendance or volunteer service activities) were also less likely to engage in risky activities such as drinking, drug-use or skipping school than participants in any other type of activity. Participants in pro-social activities were also more likely to be enrolled full-time in college at age 21.

Mentoring and empathy. The critical role empathy plays in helping relationships has been known for many decades. As early as 1957, Carl Rogers included empathy as one the six key conditions necessary for constructive personality change. For this change to occur, Rogers believed therapists must be, "experiencing an accurate, empathic understanding of the client's awareness of his own experience" (p.99). It was understood even at that time that empathy was important not just for therapists, but for others involved in helping relationships including doctors, nurses, relatives, and friends (Reusch, 1961).

The research conducted to date lends strong support to that belief. From the initiation of the helping relationship to discharge, the presence of empathic relationships appears to benefit the client. Dawson, Schirmer and Beck (1984) reported that patient-reported empathy was positively related to willingness to disclose health care information. While patients are receiving care, high provider empathy was associated with more mutually negotiated actions, more intimate collaboration, and greater attention

to both concrete and abstract subject matter (Hughes & Carver, 1990). Mohammadreza Hojat (2007), a researcher at Thomas Jefferson University's Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior, has spent her professional life studying the relationship of empathy to clinical outcomes. She found, consistently, that "the relationship between empathy and a clinician's performance is considered to be linear. That is, the more empathic the relationship, the better the outcomes" (p.15).

In the area of mental health, the healing influences of empathy are equally striking. Duncan, Miller, Wampold, and Hubble (2010) stated that in "hundreds upon hundreds of research studies convincingly demonstrate the therapeutic relationship makes substantial and consistent contributions to treatment outcomes" (p. 118), and identify empathy as the first effective element. Miller, Taylor, and West (1980) examined the contribution of therapist empathy to successful substance abuse treatment and found a very significant correlation (r=.82) between therapist empathy and positive client outcome at six to eight months post-discharge. A recent meta-analysis supported the idea that Miller et al.'s finding may not be atypical. Elliott, Bohart, Watson, and Greenberg (2011) found a moderate effect (effect size = .31) between therapist empathy and psychotherapy outcome in a meta-analysis of 47 studies, indicating a moderately strong relationship, and the leading factor of all those studied.

Martin Hoffman (2001) has been also actively investigating the factors that bring someone from empathically sharing in someone else's distress, to the decision to actively work to ameliorate their suffering. He proposed that empathy is congruent with moral reasoning with its concepts of fairness and justice. He speculated that violations of principles of fairness and justice will elicit feelings of empathic anger and indignation in

others, *to the extent they are empathic,* and then become motivated to rectify those violations (p. 229). While research exploring the validity and strength of this connection is quite scarce, approaches designed to build moral reasoning and empathic capacity have been used in work with at-risk youth, with some promising early results (Gibbs, Potter, Barriga, & Liau, 1996).

Mentoring and moral reasoning. The development of a moral sense has been one of the keystones of mentoring relationships. The ancient Greeks considered mentoring relationships to be at the heart of moral reasoning, social judgment, social competence, and wisdom (Sosik & Lee, 2002). Modern research lends support to these insights.

In a study of 136 undergraduate students, researchers found significant improvements in moral reasoning as well as ego development for those who elected to serve as peer mentors (Locke & Zimmerman, 1987). An intervention using the Deliberate Psychological Education (DPE) model of mentoring was able to make a significant difference in the moral reasoning capacities of undergraduate business majors in a 2008 study, revealing an intriguing method for establishing a strong professional identity and standards for ethical conduct among new business professionals (Schmidt, McAdams, & Foster, 2009). Mentoring as a means of improving moral reasoning has also been incorporated into the training of physicians (Stern & Papadakis, 2006),

Efforts to utilize mentoring relationships to promote moral reasoning are not limited to students and professionals. As an encouraging sign for scholars, Fischer and Zigmond (2001) have initiated a series of evidence-based interventions, including

mentoring, to ensure that ethical academic conduct remains a core element of the preparation to become a career researcher.

Empathy: Current Scholarship

> *Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart, and a humble mind.*
>
> 1 Peter 3:8, Revised Standard Version

While the desire and the need for mutually caring relationships is as old as human history, in some respects, it has never been more difficult. The scale and the complexity of the social context for today's youth is redefining notions of traditional friendship. Castells (2011) observed that technology has transformed our culture into a "network society," consisting of isolated personal identities that have become "more specific and increasingly difficult to share" (p. 3).

In addition to the more traditional narratives of literature, television and movies, young people are now exposed to a dizzying and often contradictory array of personal perspectives. Blogs, tweets, Facebook status updates, and the continuous chatter from the universe of other social media have reshaped the social landscape of our day-to-day lives, including the not uncommon experience of youth negotiating overlapping social streams of text, voice, video, and music while still facing the demands of their immediate "offline" environment (Castells, 2011). Nielsen recently revealed the startling fact that on average, teenagers send and receives over 3,000 texts per month, which works out to almost six texts per waking hour (The Nielsen Company, 2010). Although the multiple aptitudes necessary to successfully negotiate the many nuances of human emotional expression in this torrent of digital data have yet to be fully articulated (Castells, 2011),

returning to the fundamentals of emotional and social intelligence appears to be an excellent beginning.

Empathy has been receiving significant amounts of attention in recent years (De Waal, 2010; Taylor & Signal, 2005; Verducci, 2000; Wispé, 1987) – and there is good reason. As the channels of communication multiply, developing the ability to see important issues from multiple perspectives, and anticipate the responses of others to our actions is becoming increasingly critical (De Waal, 2010). In this context, it is especially necessary to cultivate the desire for mutual understanding, teach and model communication skills, and provide opportunities for youth to understand and form empathic, trusting relationships with one another.

Operational definition of empathy. There are many competing definitions of empathy, each of which has important implications for how it is understood, measured, and developed. Many theorists, including the psychologist responsible for person-centered counseling, Carl Rogers (1957) have considered empathy to be a primarily cognitive, objective, and neutral ability to relate to another's perspective. Others, such as Carol Gilligan (1982) and Martin Hoffman (1983), consider caring and empathy to be the emotional engine that drives moral cognition and conduct. Many current theories articulate empathy as a complex blend of emotional and cognitive capacities (Wispé, 1987).

The cognitively-based and affectively-based approaches to empathy do not need to be in conflict. Verducci (2000) was an advocate of the synthetic approach towards empathy, stating that, for those who value both "affect and cognition, empathy emerges as a rich, affectively charged, cognitively active complex" (p. 67). William Ickes (1997)

developed one of the most elegant definitions of empathy, which he understood as a "complex form of psychological inference in which observation, memory, knowledge and reasoning are combined to yield insights into the thoughts and feelings of others" (p.2). This definition, which I have adopted for the purposes of this investigation, allows the study of empathy to be approached through the examination of its various constituent components and processes.

History of empathy. Edward Titchener coined the term "empathy" in 1909 as a translation of the German *Einfühlung* as a type of "kinesthetic image", which we "feel or act in the mind's muscles" (p. 21, a definition that reveals a cognizance of its complex makeup. This *kinesthetic image* was considered to be one's subjective sense of the emotional state of another. As the concept developed in its early stages, Titchener also came to believe that empathy enabled intellectual and moral similarity and a type of solidarity (Wispé, 1987).

Wispé (1987) translates the German term *Einfühlung* more literally, "to feel one's way into" (p.21). She noted that psychology was very sensation-oriented at the time, and language was being sought to communicate the idea that all knowledge comes from sensation. Over time, the rich and multi-faceted world of *Einfühlung* began to break down into derivatives, each holding a slightly different emphasis (Wispé, 1987).

Freud (1905/1960) used empathy as a way of describing the phenomenon of humor. Washburn (1932) conjectured an idea of "ejective consciousness", holding that "other people's bodies have experiences such as mine has" (p.8). Piaget and Inhelder (1963) understood empathy as a way of perspective taking. While empathy had long been considered helpful in the healing process (Wispé, 1987), it was Carl Rogers (1957)

who placed empathy firmly at the center of the therapeutic relationship. Empathy, along with genuineness and acceptance, was a keystone of his person-centered treatment philosophy (Rogers, 1957). Although each use of the term "empathy" has areas of strong overlap, it is also evident that subtle variations can lead to significant distinctions as these concepts continue to be developed and empirically grounded.

Recent conceptual developments in empathy. There are two theorists who conceptualized empathy in ways especially relevant to the current effort. The first is Heinz Kohut (1959), an Austrian-born psychoanalyst who was among the first to analyze the role of empathy in the acquisition of psychological information (Wispé, 1987). His cognitive and introspective approach to the phenomenon of empathy provided the foundation for Lietz et al.'s (2011) conceptual framework for the Empathy Assessment Index (EAI) used in this study. He understood empathy to allow one to have access to "modes of cognition attuned to complex, psychological configurations (1971, p.300)," which provides the basis for the multi-element construct of empathy used in the EAI.

The second is Martin Hoffman (1970, 1987, 2001) at New York University, who was among the first recent theorists to return to Titchener's (1909) thoughts about connections between moral reasoning and empathy. Hoffman (1987) argued that empathic arousal transforms moral principles into "hot cognitions," that contribute to an increased willingness for pro-social action and a greater commitment to moral principles. He used the term "empathic moral affect" (1987, p. 48) to describe the development from a simple "global empathic distress" of an infant who cries because others are crying, to a conscious, reflective sympathetic distress of one who sees someone else suffering due to the violation of certain moral rights and principles that they also value and hold dear.

Empathy trends. A recent meta-analysis conducted by Konrath, O'Brien, & Hsing (2011) on the self-reported empathy scores of over 14,000 U. S. college students, found a stunning result. Fully 75% reported themselves as less empathetic than college students thirty years ago. This type of dramatic reduction in self-reported empathic behavior over the last thirty years is especially distressing, given the evidence of correlations between self-reported empathic tendencies, actual empathic feelings (Batson, 1987) and pro-social behaviors (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987).

Carney and Merrill (2001) found increases in bullying prevalence across the United States, found in several studies to be negatively correlated with empathy (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoè, 2007; Scholte, Engels, Overbeek, de Kemp, & Haselager, 2007). Lower levels of empathy and perspective taking in college have been correlated to increases in social anxiety and relational aggression (Loudin, Loukas, & Robinson, 2003). Youth and young adults in the United States are currently suffering from epidemic levels of depression and anxiety (Surgeon General, 1999), and both of these disorders have high correlations with deficits in emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). Other symptoms of low emotional intelligence, such as school bullying, are galvanizing increasing national concern (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Glover, Gough, Johnson, & Cartwright, 2000), affecting as many as three out of every four students (Nansel et al., 2001). These findings are especially troubling when in consideration of the strong correlation between bullying, suicidal ideation and actual attempts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Kim & Leventhal, 2008). Almost 10% of Maine's youth consider, plan, or attempt suicide every year (Maine Office of Substance Abuse, 2012). The decline of empathy is

real and measurable, the effects are harming children's emotional health and impeding their academic success, and the repercussions can be deadly.

Empathy development in adolescents. Theories regarding the development of empathy in adolescents are as nuanced and varied as the original definition. Cynthia Gerdes and Elizabeth Segal, have suggested (2009) that empathy is an inductive process that begins instinctively but culminates in a conscious course of action. Some go so far as to assert we are essentially "wired" to share feelings, and a powerful drive to extend and receive empathy underlies all social interaction, from the animal to the human world (De Waal, 2010). Recent research in neurophysiology led to the discovery of "mirror neurons" present in every human baby that respond to distress in others (Gallese, 2001).

While a great deal about empathic development remains uncertain (Decety & Lamm, 2006), increasing evidence has found to support the assertion that while empathy has a strong neurophysiological basis (Gerdes, Lietz, & Segal, 2011; Lamm, Decety, & Singer, 2011), without social interaction and emotional bonds with others, empathic components and processes are unlikely to develop (Decety & Jackson, 2004).

The development of empathy during adolescence remains a key deficit in extant empathy research (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985; Davis & Franzoi, 1991). What is known is that even in young children, significant differences are apparent in how individuals react to the feelings of others. For instance, how children spontaneously match their facial expressions to characters on films (Hamilton, 1973) showed large variations. Given that personality traits tend to exhibit considerable stability over time (Finn, 1985), these wide discrepancies at extremely young ages suggest that socialization factors

deserve increased attention to determine whether they can offset or strengthen these early tendencies (Barnett, 1987).

Davis and Franzoi (1991) surveyed 205 high school students in self-consciousness and empathy every year for three successive years. The authors utilized Hoffman's (1976) model to predict that increased capacity for role-taking would increase their ability for empathic concern. They found that while adolescent personalities as a whole maintained significant stability, their capacity for empathic concern and perspective taking consistently increased over time, as well as significant correlation with one another, providing support for Hoffman's model.

In 2004, Laible, Carlo, and Roesch conducted a fascinating investigation into the role of parental and peer attachment and self-esteem, and how these relationships might be moderated by empathy and pro-social behavior. Attachment relationships with peers were entirely mediated by empathy and pro-social behavior. The authors argued that peer relationships "are distinctive in terms of the level of equality and reciprocity, which provide the optimal context for the acquisition of behaviors reflecting concern for others and kindness" (p.712).

How empathy is learned. Research has shown that while great discrepancies exist among individuals at birth (Hamilton, 1973), empathy is universal characteristic (Gallese, 2001) that naturally develops (Decety & Jackson, 2004) and can be learned (Gazda & Evans, 1990; Gibbs, Potter, Barriga, & Liau, 1996). The learning of empathy is different than traditional learning, however, because it is shared with the affective domain. To learn to feel, students cannot simply be taught. As affective perception is

highly experiential in nature, students must be given opportunities for experiential learning (Goldstein & Michaels, 1985).

In 1949, Rosalind Dymond was attempting to define and measure empathy in an effort to answer the question of whether empathy could be learned (Peitchinis, 1990). Aspy (1975), in his memorably titled *Empathy: Let's get the hell on with it*, made the case that empathy is critical for every service relationship, and is essential for positive human development. Other notable thinkers and social scientists, including Carl Rogers, Charles Truax, Robert Carkhuff, and George Gazda, all believe that empathic capacity is a potential, which must be developed and not left to chance (Gazda & Evans, 1990). In a 1983 study in Finland, 665 students, aged 11 – 18, who participated in an empathy campaign demonstrated significantly more prosocial behavior as measured by peers and teachers over students who did not participate in the campaign. The author noted that the intensiveness of the campaign as well as the participation of the students in the campaign were essential to the success of the program (Kalliopuska, 1983).

Empathy and emotional health. Given the powerful and complex nature of empathy, it should come as no surprise that empathy has a prevalent and nuanced influence on emotional health. Children with high levels of empathic concern are significantly less likely to report social anxiety (Zahn-Waxler, Cole, Welsh, & Fox, 1995) or to exhibit aggression (Nesdale, Milliner, Duffy, & Griffiths, 2009; Van der Graaff, Branje, De Wied, & Meeus, 2012). Children who retain high levels of empathy are less likely to suffer from depression or acute negative reactions to stress (Lee, Brennan, & Daly, 2001). High levels of empathy and emotional intelligence are linked to greater

resilience (Brooks & Goldstein, 2001), improvements in memory (Alea & Bluck, 2003), life satisfaction, and physical health (Lee, Brennan, & Daly, 2001).

Empathy development also yields great rewards among children suffering from a variety of disabilities and mental disorders. Among those children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), high levels of empathy are associated with improved peer relations and attention (Marton, Wiener, Rogers, Moore, & Tannock, 2009). The connection between affective understanding, which is a component of empathy, and cognitive abilities was especially strong among children who have been diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders (Yirmiya, Sigman, Kasari, & Mundy, 1992).

Perhaps most germane to educational settings, improvements in emotional intelligence have been found to be "intricately interwoven with the neocortical areas associated with cognitive learning" (Zins, 2004, p. vii). Students involved in programs that centered on cognitive, emotional and social skills showed improvements in self-efficacy, problem solving, and math (Linares et al., 2005). Increases in emotional intelligence have been shown to be particularly critical for disadvantaged students, as they reduce a number of deviant behaviors including truancy and classroom disruption (Petrides, Frederickson, & Furnham, 2004). Petrides and colleagues theorized that emotional intelligence plays an enabling role in performance, assisting students in the application of their cognitive abilities to reveal their true academic potential.

Other researched effects include the inverse relationship of empathy to adolescent and young adult aggression (Joliffe & Farrington, 2006; Loudin, Lukas, & Robinson, 2003; Van De Graff, et al., 2012), positive correlations with social perspective taking (Marton, Weiner, Rogers, Moore, & Tannock, 2009), positive correlation with social

functioning (Cliffordson, 2002), externalizing and antisocial behavior (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988), and willingness to communicate. Empathy has also been found to impact moral reasoning and ethical decision-making (Detert, Treviño, & Sweitzer, 2008).

Moral Reasoning: Current Scholarship

Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

James 4:17, King James Version

Moral reasoning is a tremendously rich field, with roots extending deep into antiquity, which has often elicited charged polemics and contentious debate around the basis for human values, the objectivity of the conscience, and even the ultimate origin of knowledge (Jonsen & Toulmin, 1988). Historically, the realm of morality and moral decision making has emerged from both religious and philosophical worldviews, resulting in deeply conflicted views of what it means to *do the right thing*. Since the Enlightenment, there have been increasing efforts to resolve the ethical dimensions of a given situation on a purely secular basis. Ethical and moral reasoning as we currently understand it re-emerged during this period, continuing the efforts of the ancient Greeks, to resolve moral dilemmas through the powers of human reasoning. Returning to public discourse within the context of a religiously oriented culture, moral reasoning had a difficult beginning. As it was often seen as a secular effort to avoid reliance on divine Providence, moral reasoning was demeaned as mere sophistry, or even the "art of quibbling with God" (Long, 1836, p. 359).

The contention about the foundations of the field has not impeded the emergence of a vast body of literature, dialogue and scholarship. Investigations into patterns of ethical reasoning and correlations with behavior continue to yield results with powerful

implications for society, especially in regards to the education and socialization of the young (Benninga, 1988; Blasi, 1980; Narvaez & Bock, 2002). While definitional disputes continue to cause difficulties for wide ranging meta-analyses (Blasi, 1980), the tremendous importance and significant areas of common ground are valuable assets as scholars continue to investigate the ways people discern right from wrong, and how those perceptions influence their behavior. The operational definition, history, trends, development and learning, and the relationship of moral reasoning on behavior in general and mentorship in particular are reviewed below.

Operational definition of moral reasoning. In the largest sense, moral reasoning can be understood as the process of conscious, thoughtful reasoning about moral dilemmas (Narvaez & Bock, 2002). As the term is employed in this study, however, moral reasoning refers to the capacity for reasoning regarding any issue of justice or fairness (Damon, 1975). The theoretical context that situates this investigation is expanded upon in greater detail in the following sections.

History of moral reasoning. When reviewing the growth and development of moral reasoning scholarship, it is hard to overstate the importance of the ancient division between the *pragmatic* and *idealistic* traditions as classically exemplified by Aristotle and Plato. In the fresco *The School of Athens,* painted by Raphael in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican, Aristotle and Plato occupy the central position. Plato points to the sky as a representation of his belief in the essential truth of *ideals* and *perfection,* and Aristotle, his student and much his junior, walks forward stretching his hand over the earth, asserting the undeniable importance of *reality* (Temple, 2012), and the immediate context of our thoughts and actions. The parallels, comparisons, and contrasts between the ideals

and the pragmatic applications of moral understanding continue to frame the discussion to this day.

Jean Paul Piaget. In the early 1930's, Piaget (1933) made careful observations of children at play, blending colorful descriptions of their interactions with detailed interviews on their thoughts about rules, terms, and fairness. Through the use of thoughtful interviewing techniques and by keeping their responses in their original vernacular, Piaget was able to trace the development of moral processes as children learned to understand both the rules of their game play and the rules about making rules.

Piaget identified four stages of play, which he grouped into two types. The first type of moral development is *egocentric*, the first stage of which generally appears in the first few months to around three years of age. The first stage is exploratory and symbolic "pretend" play, with no real regard for any rules. The second egocentric stage generally occurs between the ages of four until seven, in which consciousness of rules appears, but the child mostly wishes to maintain the appearance of rules through imitating the behavior but changes them easily, and has difficulty seeing contradictions. The third stage of moral development represents the beginning of the *cooperative* type. He noted that starting at around age seven and persisting until around eleven, children start to passionately pursue *social understanding* around rules, that is, to be 'good rules' they must be held in common with other children. The limit of Piaget's stages was the fourth stage, in which the rules themselves can become subject to higher rules, such as a younger player getting special allowances, based on the *principle* of fairness (Piaget, 1933). He found that these developing concepts of right and wrong behavior, rather than

inherent in the character of each individual, are created, developed, and internalized by children as they grow in the context of dynamic, interpersonal *peer* relationships.

Piaget's (1933/1997) work was significant for its emphasis to the importance of peer relationships, an influence that had been frequently overlooked in developmental psychology. While children may inherit a great deal of their moral sensibility from the direct and indirect influence of our parents and elders, Piaget believed that it is only through the interaction with peers that our moral independence, agency and autonomy come into full expression (DeVries, 2012).

John Dewey. John Dewey was a turn of the century philosopher and educational reformer. To Dewey, Piaget's findings confirmed his own conviction that education is a social process and therefore school must be a social institution. Dewey (1964b) believed that acting solely to attain desired ends and avoid negative consequences for oneself, whether imposed by biology or society, was *pre-moral* or *pre-conventional.* At this stage, thoughts such as "I should not touch the stove, I will get burned," and "I should not laugh at the teacher, I will get punished," are functionally equivalent. As individuals begin to incorporate the standards and behavior of their social group, they enter the *conventional* stage of moral reasoning, indicated by their acceptance of the standards of his or her group. Examples might be "people are lining up, and not pushing each other. I should do that too," or "I need to graduate, and get a good job, and raise a family, because that's what people are doing." Many, perhaps most, stay in this second stage, where social conventions and law-and-order concerns dominate decision-making.

However, Dewey observed that certain individuals move on to attain an "autonomous" level of moral reasoning, distinguished by an ongoing, conscious

reflection on the moral standards that apply and how they should be brought to bear on the case at hand.

In Dewey's thought, conscious reasoning does not merely separate humanity from the animal kingdom, but "converts action that is merely appetitive, blind, and impulsive into intelligent action" (1964b, p.212). Hence, development in moral reasoning is an intentional, deliberate process by which actions are undertaken by principles that can be applied in novel conditions.

Moral development was finally beginning to gain traction as a legitimate field of psychological development. Dewey's (1964b) social, developmental theoretical structure was in place, Piaget (1993/1997) illuminated the development of moral reasoning in children in unstructured social settings with keen observation and analysis, but the empirical validity of the moral reasoning construct was still uncertain. The integrity of the construct of moral reasoning as a discrete ability, such as intelligence, musicianship, or physical strength, that could be clearly defined, isolated, and measured, was still in question.

Lawrence Kohlberg. In 1976, Lawrence Kohlberg, a professor at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, refined the theoretical developmental stage sequences of Dewey (1964b) and Piaget (1933/1997) into a progressive, hierarchical, and invariant sequence of measurable types, or "schemas". Schemas are sets of expectations, hypotheses and concepts that are formed as the individual notices similarities and recurrence in experience (Neisser, 1976; Rummelhart, 1980). In other words, schemas are frameworks that are formed as a way to interpret experiences and form expectations that aid in guiding behavior (Narvaez & Bock, 2002). Based on previous research in

moral understanding (Rest, 1973) and his clinical experience, Kohlberg organized these schemas into six stages. While each stage has particular characteristics, they each fit within the general attributes of each of the three schemas detailed below (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1999).

Table 1. Features of Moral Judgment Schemas

Schema	Features
Personal-interest schema	Arbitrary, impulsive co-operation Self-focused Advantage to self is primary Survival orientation Negotiated co-operation Scope includes others who are known In-group reciprocity Responsibility orientation
Maintaining norms schema	Need for norms Society-wide view Uniform categorical application Partial society-wide reciprocity Duty orientation
Post-conventional schema	Appeal to an ideal Shareable ideals Primacy of moral ideal Full reciprocity, rights orientation

Kohlberg believed that these stages invariant in sequence, but that individuals were also limited by their current stage, unable to comprehend reasoning that was based on one level higher than their own. However, he believed there was a natural developmental course to the stages, as individuals are *cognitively attracted* to higher levels as each stage enables the resolution of ethical dilemmas that lower levels are unable to adequately address. Further, Kohlberg (1976) conceived of both moral development and moral behavior to be essentially voluntary, although it could be

encouraged by social interaction and moral discourse as individuals came to see how higher levels of reasoning provide benefits that lower levels do not.

Trends in moral reasoning. Despite the apparent increase in social interaction enabled by the rapid increase in computer mediated interactions, the capacity for moral reasoning as measured by standardized instruments in a number of high school populations and a striking number of professions has been declining. Studies of numerous populations have shown that the capacity for moral reasoning in professionals has declined with increased experience in a range of capacities, including high school, college and professional athletes (Beller & Stoll, 1995), accountants (Shaub, 1995), medical students (Helkama, et al., 2003; Hojat et al., 2004), pharmacists (Latif, 2001), chief financial officers (Uddin & Gillett, 2002) and – perhaps of most concern – teachers (Cummings, Dyas, Maddux, & Kochman, 2001). The etiology of this decline across so many professions is uncertain, but factors such as increased pressure and reward for academic success (Uddin & Gillett, 2002), increased sensitivity to the opinions of peers (Uddin & Gillett, 2002), and the cumulative effect of many transient relationships (Hojat et al., 2004), have been suggested.

All of these factors weigh on high school students as well. While there is a very limited research base on the trends of moral reasoning in high school students, the prevalence of dishonest behavior and speech among high school students is also extremely troubling. In a study utilizing the "Circles Test", a simple task designed to test students' willingness to both follow simple rules and report honestly on whether they in fact did follow the rules of the test when they were given both the incentive and the

opportunity to cheat, found that over 70% of students lied, cheated, or both (Bruggeman & Hart, 1996).

Moral reasoning development in adolescents. The research investigating the moral reasoning capacities in adolescents is a subject of great interest to many, and the findings to date reveal interesting possibilities for the outcome of the present study. As children enter the period of adolescence, they become more capable of abstract thinking and deductive reasoning, and their moral reasoning development becomes more complex (Ikard, 2001). Some take an active interest in the welfare of others and become involved in school and community activities (Youniss & Yates, 1997), while others become increasingly isolated, avoiding prosocial activities for fear of embarrassment (Eisenberg, 1992). As social interaction has been found to be a positive impact on moral reasoning capacity (Taylor & Walker, 1997; Tesson & Youniss, 1995), the types of social activities in which adolescents engage during this period may be especially critical.

Carlo, Eisenberg, and Knight (1992) at Arizona State University developed an instrument for the measurement of prosocial moral reasoning along the template of Rest's (1978) Defining Issues Test, successfully utilized for several decades on a range of subject ages. Their study found that sympathy tended to be positively associated with moral reasoning among adolescents, consistent with prior findings (Eisenberg, Miller, Shell, McNalley, & Shea, 1991). This positive correlation is also consistent with Hoffman's (1987) belief that higher level moral reasoning reflects thoughts for others and emotions related to concern for others.

When they had conducted interviews on pro-social moral reasoning in adolescents, Eisenberg et al. (1991) found that adolescence was a period during which

stereotypical conceptions of good and bad began to decline, and give way to more nuanced, self-reflective approaches and internalized modes of reasoning. This discovery is in accordance with known adolescent advances in formal operations and deductive reasoning (Byrnes, 1988; Gemelli, 1996). In other words, adolescents were more likely to evaluate the moral valence of a given situation based on their own personal experiences rather than external codes of right and wrong or need for adult approval.

How moral reasoning is learned. There is a large body of scholarly work, theoretical critique, and rank opinion about the nature, importance and inherent contradictions of teaching moral reasoning, sometimes mistakenly labeled "character education" in the schools (Alexander, 2003; Bennett & Delattre, 1978; Benninga, 1988; Ryan, 1986; Smith, 1943). However, many of the programs that were cited as ineffective consisted of using typical educational methods, using a didactic, presentation-based approach to convey content on "morality" to students.

However, researchers investigating effective methods of teaching moral reasoning have found what Dewey, Piaget, and Kohlberg had long held: experiential, social learning is a key modality for the development of ethical reasoning, insight, and decision-making skills. When active and experiential approaches to learning are used, especially through the intentional use of opportunities to serve others, the results can be extraordinary. Sprinthall, Hall, & Gerler (1992) found that 11th and 12th graders working with middle-school students experiencing divorce were able to create a significant improvement compared to a control group in measures such as psychological causation, individuality, and internalizing locus of control. Yates and Youniss (1996)

performed a meta-analysis of 44 empirical studies and found that service learning has positive impacts on agency, social relatedness, and moral-political awareness.

Moral reasoning can also be taught in less formal, and sometimes less predictable ways. Irene McHenry (2000), in her discussion of a study conducted by the Friends Council on Education, highlighted how working through conflict as the "school community wrestled with painful and difficult cycles of hope, disappointment, confusion, and conflict" (p. 224), facilitated by community forums and committees and sustained by an ethic of "patient reflective inquiry and reflective dialogue" (p.226) was essential in cultivating moral growth. The real-world laboratory of the high school community can serve as an excellent "proving ground" for young men and women to gain the qualities of character necessary (in one student's words) " to take as much of the learning as we can to the real world, where it is not as safe" (p. 225).

The influence of moral reasoning on behavior. The relationship between moral reasoning and moral behavior has been a subject of significant academic attention since moral reasoning came into the academic realm (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Bergman, 2004; Blasi, 1980; Lickona, 1976). While the nature of the relationship continues to be hotly contested (Bergman, 2004; Blasi 1980), what is commonly agreed is that the ability to reason according to moral principles does not equate to moral *action.* James Leming (1978), who studied this relationship, found that students who had high moral reasoning scores were just as likely to cheat as those with low moral reasoning scores, when the possibility of negative consequences was low.

Augusto Blasi (1980), in an exhaustive systematic review of 74 published empirical studies on moral reasoning and behavior, claimed that the failure to find

consistent links between reasoning and action is not caused by inconsistent findings, but is due rather to a larger failure to develop coherent definitions and consistent applications of the terms, amidst a vast array of complex situational factors and unstated assumptions.

Summary

Conceptualizations of mentorship, empathy, and moral reasoning have ancient origins, but have each been the subject of renewed interest over the last century. While definitional and conceptual diversity exists within each field, there is increasing interest in the exploration, focused investigation, and both qualitative and quantitative assessment of moral reasoning ability, empathic capacity, and the mentorship process.

While mentoring relationships have been beneficial for many populations, for adolescents in particular, peer mentorship holds particular promise (Cowie & Smith, 2010; Benard, 1990; Damon, 1975; Vorrath & Brendtro, 1985). This is due to the increased sensitivity to peer relationships that is dominant at that age and, as Piaget (1993/1997) realized, can become a powerful influence on the formation of moral sensibilities.

The findings of Eisenberg et al. (1991) regarding the increase in capacities of adolescents for self-reflection and internal reasoning based on personal experience lend further support to the premise of the current study that empathy and moral reasoning development at this age may be highly responsive to personal experience in service learning. Empathy as a skill and a type of emotional intelligence has also been seen to undergo significant transformations during this time period (Davis & Franzoi, 1991; Laible, Carlo, & Roesch, 2004). Both empathy and moral reasoning have a powerful impact on behavior and helping relationships in particular.

Thus, the investigation of the relationship between peer mentorship programs and the development of empathic capacity and moral reasoning ability in adolescent peer mentors appears to be built on cogent connections between significant and substantive conceptual areas that is likely to yield fruitful data for analysis.

Synthesis

Each of the areas reviewed – mentoring, moral reasoning, and empathy – brings a distinct perspective on the current study. For the purposes of clarity, I would like to use an allegorical explanation of how they relate to the purpose and design of the current investigation.

The three central elements to a sailing vessel are: the hull, which, in combination with the rudder, provides floatation and directional control to convey the sailors to their destination; the sail, which when attached to the mast, captures the wind and provides forward motion; and the mast, which anchors the sail and provides the necessary rigidity and tension so it can work effectively. Each of these elements can be compared to an element of the design.

Mentoring is the hull and rudder. Without integrity, the ship will sink, and without integrity, mentoring can actually cause harm (Dishion et al., 1999; McCord, 1978, 1981). Reliability, stability, trustworthiness, experience and sound judgment - these are the same qualities that Odysseus saw in Mentor, so that Odysseus could entrust him with stewardship over his only son. A hull, like mentoring, is the platform on which the sailors perform, so they can become increasingly adept at maneuvering their craft through all the trials of the sea. A successful crew depends on good collaboration, diligent effort, and an awareness of mutual self-interest.

Moral reasoning is the mast. Its development is hierarchical, sequential, and invariant (Kohlberg, 1981). It provides the structure to which empathy can attach itself (Hoffman, 2001) and we can not only feel *compassion* but understand the *principles* behind someone else's pain – whether it is physical torment – such as being whipped without cause – or indignity – such as someone being spat upon. As Hoffman (1987) suggested, moral reasoning may provide the necessary tension for empathy to compel *commitment* to the principles which people may only be *capable* of.

Finally, empathy is the sail. Whether it is conceptualized as primarily a cognitive or affective capacity, it is capable of great power (De Waal, 2010; Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978; Hoffman, 2001; Horvath & Bedi, 2002), as anyone who has ever strongly felt the pain of another can testify.

All these elements must work together, designed for one another, operating as one vessel, if the enterprise is to be successful. Although the difficulties and challenges of running real-world programs will likely cause a number of failures, it is my hope that this study will contribute to the ongoing effort to create strong, sensitive, mutually beneficial mentoring relationships for continuing development and growth of all young people learning to navigate the treacherous seas of adult life.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Design and Purpose

As the purpose of this study crosses and combines the predominantly cognitive realm of moral reasoning and the emotive realm of empathy, it was fitting to choose a design that crosses and combines the empirically validated and statistical domain of the quantitative method, with the personal narrative and subjective depth enabled by the qualitative. The design of this study pairs the quantitative element of a quasi-experimental, pre-test post-test design, with a semi-structured interview as the qualitative element. This architecture was chosen to serve the primary purpose of the study: to learn more about how peer mentoring changes empathy and moral reasoning in high school students. The following sections will review the research questions, provide the justification for the mixed methods approach in general, and explain the basis for the design of each element.

Research Questions

One: How do student mentors understand their experience of peer mentoring and its effects on their empathy and moral reasoning?

Two: What is the measured difference in the empathy of high school student mentors before and after peer mentoring?

Three: What is the measured difference in the moral reasoning of high school student mentors before and after peer mentoring?

The first question was investigated using participant narratives, researcher observation, and qualitative methods such as coding and thematic analysis. Through the

process of conscious reflection, categorization, interpretation, and synthesis, the data from the interviews may reveal how high school students think about empathy and moral reasoning, in their own words and according to their own experience, in light of their experience mentoring peers.

The second and third research questions were addressed through the use of a pre-test, post-test design. Subsequent ANOVA analysis was expected to reveal if significant changes occur in the data collected by the standardized instruments, although statistical power will be limited as situational factors did not allow the utilization of a similar, non-intervention control group.

The Mixed Methods Approach

Mixed methods research, an integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, utilizes a mode of investigation known as *triangulation.* Triangulation has several meanings: it can be understood as the use of differing methods to investigate a single topic (Denzin, 1970), or as the use of comparative perspectives on the same data through the eyes of various participants in various roles (Glaser & Strauss, 2009); it can be utilized "within-method" to increase internal validity, or "between method" (as in this methodology) to increase external validity (Jick, 1979). Triangulation in all of its permutations has a long and noted history in the social sciences (Mathison, 1988), pioneered in part by Jean Piaget (Ridenour & Newman, 2008). Some scholars (Bouchard, 1976) advocate mixed methods on the basis that multiple angles of interpretation increase the validity of the results, ensuring that the findings are not a "methodological artifact" (p. 268). The increase in validity and reliability is not only one of magnitude, but of scope (Jick, 1979).

Triangulating phenomena using mixed methods has benefits beyond an increase in validity and reliability. Triangulation also allows for a more complete, holistic portrayal of the subject of the investigation. Mathison (1988) advocated for mixed methods designs because they provide the researcher with the opportunity to assess results which are either *convergent* (each method confirms the finding of the other), *inconsistent* (each method is unable to confirm nor deny the findings of the other) or *contradictory* (each method contradicts the other). It is here, Jick (1979) notes that qualitative approaches can be especially valuable, "eliciting data and suggesting conclusions to which other methods would be blind. Elements of the context are illuminated" (p. 603). The strength of each perspective then compensates for the weaknesses of the others.

The strength of the qualitative. The narrow focus of the data, especially when taken in reference to the complexity and elegance of the two constructs under investigation, created the need for the qualitative component. Qualitative approaches often provide richer data (Creswell, 2012; Gay & Airasian, 2000), allowing for more depth, through the use of open-ended questions, follow up questions, and the incorporation of contextual aspects of the response that are often invisible to standardized instruments.

The interviews were analyzed using traditional qualitative methods, including transcription, coding, categorization, and interpretation. The analysis strategy possessed some of the characteristics of the phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2012), as I attempted to understand the experience of each peer mentor and how they understood the

experience of peer mentoring as it related to their understanding of empathy and moral reasoning.

Since there were differences in the peer mentoring experience between individual mentors, this approach revealed patterns and discrepancies in the data that would be explicable when the circumstances regarding that particular mentor's experience is known. The initial codes that I used to design the interview guide were based on the research questions and a working concept model, detailed below that initially shaped the analysis. Additional codes emerged from the data and were organized into a conceptual scheme as the analysis continued.

Although the analysis was not conducted according to the formal phenomenological perspective, the analysis was influenced by this approach to allow students to be heard in their own voices, and provide a format that is hospitable to subjective understanding and individual perceptions.

The strength of the quantitative. The key strength of the quantitative element of this study was its potential application to larger populations. This method also permitted a greater range of questions to be asked, under confidential conditions, and utilizes a larger sample, which is important given the relatively small sample size to begin with, which was only 24 students (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Well-established statistical procedures were planned for the analysis of the data, providing an opportunity to demonstrate effect size and statistically significant change. The quantitative element was designed to provide the strengths of standardized measurement to the overall data set, and enhance the validity of the conclusions.

Mixed methods considerations. Certain considerations must apply when pursuing a single subject through multiple means, as the researcher must anticipate and prepare for convergent, divergent and contradictory data from the various methods chosen (Creswell, 2012). These are cases when the strengths and weaknesses overlap one another, instead of compensating for one another. Divergent results also provide the opportunity for novel explanations to become apparent in the process of reconciling the data. The reconciliation of contradictory data is also a valuable part of the mixed methods analysis (Jick, 1979), strengthening the validity and discovering the limitations of the methods being used.

A critical element in the final reconciliation and analysis of data was to determine at the outset how data should be "weighted." The primary data were initially planned to be the quantitative results from each of the instruments, and the secondary data set was to be the qualitative interviews that would deepen and enrich the conclusions that I drew from the primary analysis. Upon This chapter will review the overall design, the justification for the instruments being used, as well as detail the process for each approach in the appropriate section.

Instrumentation and Measures

As detailed in the introduction to the methodology section, each of the instruments measured different data, to approach a separate question, from a distinct angle. The most significant distinction in the research design is between the qualitative and quantitative methods, and similarly, the most significant separation in research instruments is the use of semi-structured interviews for the qualitative data collection, and standardized surveys for the quantitative data collection.

The semi-structured interview is a qualitative research technique best used when the interview is likely to be a single-event (Bernard, Killworth, Evans, McCarty, & Shelley, 1988). A semi-structured interview is a type formal interview that optimizes the investigative and exploratory potential of the qualitative method, yet still contains enough structure to provide reliable and comparative interview data. The interview guide establishes the interview protocol. The guide contains both open-ended and closed questions, as well as topics to be covered. The interview was digitally recorded, transcribed, coded and analyzed. The interview is described in more detail in the qualitative research design section. The complementary strengths of each research instrument are clarified in Table 2.

Table 2. Instruments, Questions, and Methods

Research Question	Instrument	Method	Strength	Weakness
1	Semi-Structured Interview	Qualitative	Depth, adaptive approach and sensitive to context	Small sample size, no standardization, subjectivity in interpretation
2	Empathy Assessment Index	Quantitative	Larger sample, confidential, self-report	Lack of context, requires self awareness
3	Defining Issues Test	Quantitative	Larger sample, more questions, standardization	Fictional narrative, highly cognitive

Similarly, each of the two quantitative instruments could be characterized as a version of *within method triangulation*, to measure correlations between moral reasoning and empathy using similar, but quite differently oriented, instruments. This distinction is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Quantitative Instrument Styles and Methods

Instrument	Measuring	Style	Method
Empathy Assessment Index	Empathy	Emotional, Behavioral	Self-Report
Defining Issues Test	Moral Reasoning	Cognitive, Judgmental	Fictional Narrative

Population

The population for the study consisted of high school students in the state of Maine, a demographic group numbering approximately 62,105 according to recent census data (U. S. Census Bureau, 2012). This area of Maine has a median income approximately 10% lower than the U.S. average, and only 21.6% have a college degree, approximately 25% lower than the national average. The unemployment rate in this area is high, due partially to the waning paper industry, topping 10%, and the largest industries – because of the decline of heavy industry and the aging population – are now health care, education, social services and retail sales. These students are predominantly local, at least 70% having been born and raised in the state, and predominantly (97%) Caucasian (U. S. Census Bureau, 2012). The sample population for this study, although not randomized, is expected to have similar demographics.

Participants

Four local high schools initially agreed to participate in the study, although only two were able to set up peer programs this year. The high schools selected are in north

central rural Maine, and have student populations ranging from 180 to 350 students. They each face a variety of challenges, primarily related to the aging of the population, decline of the paper industry, and economic uncertainty, including the recent statewide school district reorganization, and the looming threat of consolidation or closure faces many schools from year to year.

Peer mentors. School guidance counselors selected the students participating in the peer mentoring program with input from teachers. There were approximately 24 mentors who participated in the program during the year, a small sample that nonetheless represented approximately 5% of the total population in these schools. The sample was expected to be limited in racial diversity due to its small size, however, this area of rural Maine is approximately 97% Caucasian (U.S. Census, 2012) and so the sample was likely to be racially representative of the surrounding area.

The selection criteria were: class standing of sophomore (10th grade) or junior (11th grade) in the 2013–2014 academic year; above average academic performance; no at-risk behaviors such as bullying, depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, or alcohol and drug abuse; and experience in helping relationships (preferred but not required).

At-risk students. Teachers and guidance counselors identified the at-risk students who participated as mentees. Selection was based on these criteria: 7th to 11th grade students in the academic year of 2013–2014; demonstrating at-risk behaviors including bullying, depressive symptoms, isolation, alcohol and drug abuse, and lack of family or social support. School counselors recruited approximately twenty to twenty-five mentees in the larger school, and about ten in the smaller school.

Peer Mentoring Training

Mentors took training workshops provided by faculty and graduate assistants at the College of Education and Human Development at the University of Maine. The three day long training workshops held throughout the year were designed to provide basic skills in helping, as well as training in confidentiality, diversity, disability awareness and self-awareness. Materials developed from a curriculum designed by Judith Tindall, Ph.D., approved by the National Association of Peer Program Professionals (NAPPP), were used as primary sources for curriculum development. Each of the mentors was also given the opportunity to participate in video recorded mock mentoring sessions, which allowed them to practice, review, and debrief their helping skills with the program leaders at their schools. University of Maine students who served as mentors, both in a peer mentoring capacity as well as cross-age, spoke to the mentors about their mentoring experiences. To help them develop their professional identity, peer mentors were also provided with career and higher-education information about helping professions.

The peer mentoring program was set up in coordination with existing school counseling services. Selected students then served as peer mentors, meeting with three of four same-gender mentees throughout the course of the school week, for a maximum of 1.5 hours per week. School counselors and graduate assistants provided supervision to ensure the quality of services, and support the mentors in their efforts. Supervision was planned to be approximately 30 minutes per week, however, in actuality it was frequently on an as-needed basis. The supervision consisted of reviewing the mentor's work, giving feedback and suggestions, and providing encouragement.

Qualitative Component

The central focus of the qualitative component is the first research question: "How do student mentors understand their experience of peer mentoring and its effects on their empathy and moral reasoning?", although the interview protocol was also designed to illuminate hidden aspects of the last two research questions. The research design was created with this focus in mind, and it is this question which informs each of the components of the research design described below.

Data sources. The participant pool consisted of the student mentors at the two rural Maine schools just mentioned. Guidance counselors at these schools to randomly selected a small group of mentors from each school, ideally one boy for every four girls, and request their verbal assent. This ratio was chosen to approximate the gender balance of the mentor population.

Data gathering procedure. Informed assent from the students and informed consent from the parents were obtained before the interviews began. In the event that there are more volunteers that can be accommodated during each interview day, the final selection would have been made randomly. Fortunately, this was not necessary. After obtaining written consent, mentors were interviewed for approximately 30-45 minutes. The mentors at each school were interviewed in the middle of the spring semester, after they completed the first two of their trainings and have begun regular meetings with their mentees. Data for the mentor profiles was also gathered by researcher observation and video recordings taken during the mentor training workshops.

At the beginning of each interview, the mentors were familiarized with the interview procedure. The primary talking points were:

1. The interviews are part of an academic project designed to investigate the ways in which students think about caring for other people, and acting in moral ways.

2. The interview questions are open-ended, and there are no right or wrong answers.

3. Student privacy and anonymity will be protected at all times. While their verbatim quotes will be used in the writing of the study, a pseudonym will be used in the place of their actual names.

4. Interviews will be digitally recorded, transcribed and then erased at the end of the investigation.

5. Participation is entirely voluntary and students may decline to participate at any time.

6. No harmful effects or negative repercussions are expected from any answers to the questions. Participants will be able to discontinue or skip any question they feel uncomfortable answering.

7. All parents and students will be asked to sign an informed consent form to ensure they are well informed as to the purpose and nature of the study.

Setting. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable, quiet, and private location near the main office where the students were free to express themselves openly and without interruption.

Subjects. There were twelve students who volunteered to be interviewed. Eight girls and one boy came from the larger school, which chose sixteen of the twenty-four mentors who participated in the program, and two girls and one boy came from the smaller school that accounted for the remaining eight. The 75% larger school to 25%

smaller school ratio of the interviewees approximated the mentor population, which was split 66% to 33%. There were 10 girls and two boys, approximating the 20% / 80% male to female population that elected to serve as mentors. The small high school was in a very rural area and had an enrollment of approximately 170 students. The mid-size high school was in a larger town and had an enrollment of approximately 400 students.

Table 4. Interview Subjects

Name	Gender	Age	Grade	High School
Tricia	Female	15	Sophomore	Small
Alexis	Female	16	Sophomore	Mid-size
Ali	Female	16	Junior	Mid-size
Sophia	Female	16	Junior	Mid-size
Ariel	Female	16	Junior	Mid-size
Susan	Female	17	Junior	Mid-size
Shawna	Female	17	Junior	Mid-size
Toby	Male	17	Junior	Mid-size
Amy	Female	17	Junior	Mid-size
Sarah	Female	17	Junior	Mid-size
Nick	Male	17	Senior	Small
Laura	Female	17	Senior	Small

Duration and scheduling. Interviews lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes, depending on the availability of their time and the interview setting. Times were found during the school day that caused a minimal amount of disruption to their regular education.

Timeline. The interviews were conducted during the early spring semester of 2014. Coding and analysis continued through the summer and fall of 2014. After the determination that the quantitative results were not suitable for further study (a contingency explained further in Chapter Four), analysis and conceptual development continued through qualitative analysis through the spring of 2015.

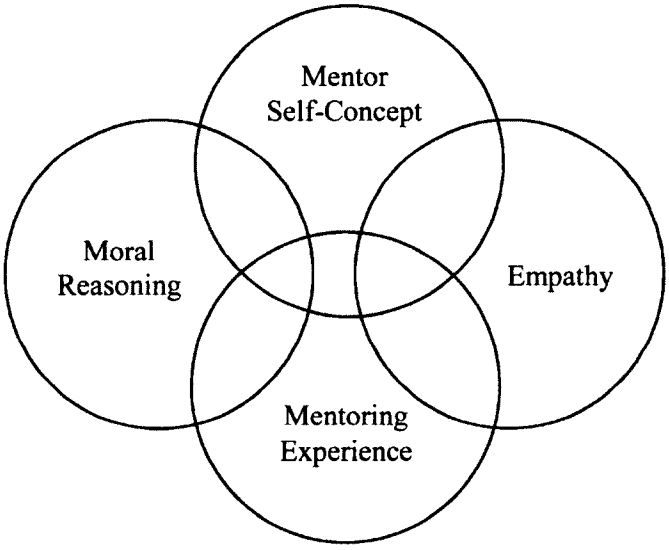
The semi-structured interview protocol. The use of the semi-structured interview is designed to elicit responses that expand and clarify how the students think about the issues measured by the quantitative instruments. For example, questions such as "Did your mentees often seek your advice on what they should do?" may reveal more about the ethical sense that the mentor has. Responses may reveal how that mentor conceives of "should". For instance, "should" can be interpreted differently according to different moral schemas, as conscience based, or rule based, or self-interest based. This aspect of the interview was intended to either converge with and support the statistical findings, or diverge and reveal alternate interpretations of the data. In either case, the additional information would prove quite valuable in the analysis of the complete data set.

The interview guides (attached as Appendix A) contain questions centered on two areas: student experience in peer helping, and student perceptions of empathy and moral reasoning. The questions that are intended to get a sense of each actual student's experience in training and in practice were designed to get enough information to compare individual cases. They include questions such as, "What do you remember about the peer helping workshops and classes? What has your experience been like actually meeting with other students?"

The working concept model. The interview guides were based on an initial working concept model that I developed from the research questions, which contained four primary elements: mentors, the mentoring experience, empathy, and moral reasoning.

Based on the literature review and the importance of applied learning in areas of identity, social, and emotional development, I had anticipated that there would be conceptual connections between moral reasoning and empathy through each mentor's self concept, and the mentoring experience, which could be represented as follows.

Figure 1. Working Concept Model



Each of these elements was set as a parent code for the initial coding process, explained in more detail below.

Plan for qualitative data analysis. Data analysis consisted of two primary phases: the coding procedure, and the development of mentor profiles. After the coding and profiles had been completed, they were analyzed for themes that occurred frequently in most of the transcripts. The details of the procedure are described below.

Coding procedure. The initial codes were the elements in the working concept map. As the analysis proceeded, additional codes were identified, categorized under the most relevant element, and the transcripts were reviewed again. Occasionally, codes would be developed to help disaggregate discrete concepts which were directly related to a single code. They were designated as *child codes* and placed under their respective *parent code.*

After several rounds of coding and reviews, frequency and prevalence measurements were made and the results were collated. A complete listing of each codes and with its associated element is presented in Chapter Four.

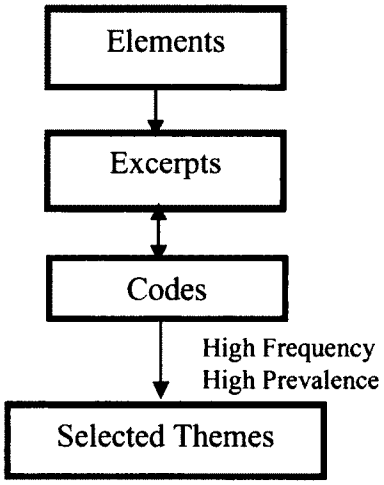
Mentor profile development. After the coding process, mentor profiles were created from notes and the transcript from each interview. The notes which I took during the interview and the codes which emerged from the analysis allowed me to create a profile of each mentor to illustrate how their responses to the interview questions either supported or failed to support the conceptual model. As the semi-structured interview protocol was structured according to this model, it made for a relatively smooth process of conceptualization to bring each mentor's quotes into the context of the research questions.

Thematic analysis. These profiles allowed me to juxtapose the areas under analysis from the interviews, so that the areas of congruence and disparity could emerge more clearly and the themes within each element from the working model would become more distinct. The codes that were associated with each element were examined for frequency and prevalence. The excerpts attached to each code led to the identification of themes. As themes emerged from the data, not all excerpts led directly to the

identification of themes, but as they tended to aggregate along certain lines, an appropriate theme was identified and excerpts exemplifying it are presented.

Once a particular theme, such as Peer Identity, became evident in the mentor profiles, and associated with a high frequency and prevalence, it was possible to place interview excerpts under this theme alongside one another so that a *range of variation* within that theme could be created. Each of these themes are then re-examined within the context of the element as a whole to determine the level of support they provide for the relationships depicted in the concept map.

Figure 2. Theme Selection Process



A description, analysis and summary of each selected theme, with its associated excerpts, is presented in Chapter Four.

The researcher. It has been widely noted that the researcher him or herself is a critical component of qualitative research (Creswell, 2012), and this recognition has led to a great deal of controversy regarding the nature of validity and reliability using methodology that reduces the possibility of experimental reproduction. However,

qualitative researchers have taken on this challenge and have developed criteria for the value and reliability of qualitative findings.

The self-awareness of the researcher, and a deliberate and articulated recognition of the researchers as a research instrument, are critical to establishing the validity and reliability of qualitative findings. Part of this self-awareness is noting at the outset some of my relevant history. Twenty-five years ago, I was a peer helper myself at a large, suburban high school in Fairfax County, Virginia. This was a small, experimental program run by a teacher consisting of six peer helpers trained for six months and then licensed to meet with peers referred to the program.

The program was profoundly influential during a difficult time in my adolescence, and planted the seeds of my understanding that as others helped me in overcoming my own challenges and difficulties, *I can aid others in overcoming theirs.* Since that time, I have worked in many capacities with youth including leadership training, service learning, camp counseling, tutoring, residential treatment, in-home care, guidance and clinical counseling, and most recently as teaching principal in a small alternative high school in Blue Hill, Maine.

In my current position, I have set up a character education program centered on the classical Greek and Augustinian virtues and vices, and established a peer helping program here. I am also part of the staff at the University of Maine that set up and ran peer counseling training workshops for two rural high schools in the 2012 – 2013 school year. We will also be running the workshops for the participating high schools in the fall. In short, I have seen a great deal of anecdotal evidence of the power of these programs,

when run well, and I am strongly motivated to find evidence that these programs actually encourage the development of empathy and moral reasoning.

Reducing researcher bias. The process of reducing researcher bias in qualitative research has a long and contentious history. The approach that seems most relevant to my research design and compatible with the premises of the study was that advocated by Heidegger (1962) in which, rather than vainly attempting to remove oneself from the research process through a process of detachment or "bracketing" (Gearing, 2004), conscious engagement and ongoing contextual interpretation is valued and sought after (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Constant acknowledgement of my bias can aid in my determination to attend to evidence that counters my expectations, and compel me to ask questions which may lead to unexpected and divergent conclusions.

I believe this approach maximizes the benefit of the qualitative method, and provides the greatest opportunity to identify and isolate tendencies that would distort the portrait of the phenomena I am seeking to capture. I would like to address and counter researcher bias directly through my thorough investigation and engagement with both the context and the material, and let the readers decide for themselves whether I have adequately attended to and addressed my preconceived notions and expectations.

Quantitative Component

Research design. The quantitative data for this study were gathered as part of a larger project sponsored by the College Of Education and Human Development entitled "Examining the Effectiveness of Peer Mentoring Programs in Local High Schools", with Dr. Yung-Wei Lin as the principal investigator. The aim of this larger study was school-

wide, incorporating behavioral, emotional and academic aspects of the program, and focuses primarily on the impacts on the mentees, and on the school at large.

While this larger study provided the necessary resources and infrastructure to run the peer mentoring training workshops and helps coordinate the peer mentoring program between the two high schools, the focus of this investigation was on the mentors and was functionally independent of data collected on the population of mentees and on the school at large. The focus of my investigation is on the impact of mentoring on the mentors.

The quantitative element for this investigation utilizes a quasi-experimental, simple pre-test post-test design, designating a group of peer mentors in two schools serving as the experimental group, and a group of peer mentors in the other two schools who have been placed on a waitlist serving as the control group. The research plan was to analyze using two split-plot ANOVAs to determine the relative impact of the peer mentoring training on the empathy and moral reasoning of the peer mentor experimental group as compared to the control.

Data collection. Data collection was undertaken with an abundance of caution and thoughtful, deliberate consideration for the rights, privacy and welfare of all involved. All data collection procedures and consents were approved by the University of Maine Insitutional Review Board, including the procedures for informed consent, actual data collection, as well as data storage and confidentiality.

Assessments. There were two instruments that were utilized to gather the data for the quantitative element of this study, the Defining Issues Test (DIT-2) and the Empathy Assessment Index (EAI).

The Defining Issues Test (DIT-2). The Defining Issues Test (DIT-2) is a well validated and widely utilized instrument in the field of moral reasoning, demonstrating statistically significant results in over 400 published studies, with subject age groups ranging from junior high school to retirees, demonstrating equally significant validity for males and females (Rest, Thoma, Narvaez, & Bebeau, 1997; Thoma, 2006). The DIT-2 consists of five fictional ethical dilemmas, and a selection of twelve subject items that might factor into the subject's decision making on the best resolution to the dilemma. The instructions ask the subject to first state the preferred action for the protagonist, and then to rate and rank various issue-statements regarding what factors influenced their decision, using a Likert scale of 0 (no relevance) to 5 (great importance). Each item is associated with a certain schema (described in more detail below), and the final index score (the "N2") is a measure of which schemas were used in the consideration of the dilemmas.

Results on the DIT-2 have been correlated to qualities of mentoring such as *richness of social environment* at .66, and with *moral comprehension* at .69 at a significance of $p < 0.001$ (Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz, & Anderson, 1974). Somewhat surprisingly, while respondents can easily "fake bad" and answer lower than their actual capacity for moral reasoning, they have great difficulty "faking good" (McGeorge, 1975), lending further support to the sequential nature of the moral stage model.

Lawrence Kohlberg, the architect of the theory of moral reasoning that underlies the DIT-2, believed that moral reasoning occurred in certain *schemata* that progressed in invariant sequence, from Stage One reasoning, up towards Stage Seven. In stages one and two, *pre-conventional reasoning*, the only moral index is away from pain and towards pleasure. In stages three and four, the *conventional* stages of moral reasoning, the

moral compass develops so that it is responsive to social norms, or "law and order" of a social group. In stages five and six, the domain of *principled reasoning*, individuals act according to personal beliefs and universal principles, regardless of the consequences on the individual. In stage seven, the individual has completely moved beyond self-interest and works according to transcendent principles that benefit all.

In the many years of research, individuals exhibiting the traits of the later stages were never found, and in his later years even Kohlberg confined his theoretical work to stages one through five (Gibbs, 2003). His theories have been debated for many years, but they have continued to hold pre-eminence in the field of moral reasoning research for over 50 years, and the many studies of the instruments based on this theory, most frequently the Defining Issues Test, have borne out that the model seems to have a great deal of clinical viability.

The DIT has been tested for internal reliability according to a range of criteria, including (1) differentiation of various age/education groups; (2) longitudinal gains; (3) correlation with cognitive capacity measures; (4) sensitivity to moral education interventions; (5) correlation with behavior and professional decision making; (6) predicting to political choice and attitude; and (7) overall reliability (Narvaez & Bock, 2002). The initial studies of reliability for the revised version included fairly large sample sizes (n=993), and yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .83 for the new N2 index. Larger studies have been conducted and continue to confirm that the DIT-2 produces results very helpful for the investigation of moral reasoning (Killen & Smetana, 2006; Rest, et al., 1999).

The Empathy Assessment Index. While the importance of empathy has been widely agreed upon, comparatively less attention has been paid to quantitative assessment. The most common instrument used for the empirical assessment of empathy has been the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), developed by Mark Davis (1983). However, some have argued that the IRI was too broad, including areas such as sympathy with fantasy characters that have not been linked to feelings in actual interpersonal relationships, correlating more strongly with sympathetic capacity than empathic ability (Lietz et al., 2011). Later statistical studies of the IRI found that the non-hierarchical approach used in the IRI contributed to a lack of clarity in the construct (Cliffordson, 2002). Empathy research is also beginning to include insights from social cognitive neuroscience, an interdisciplinary approach attempting to understand the phenomenon of empathy from social, developmental and neurological viewpoints, that the IRI does not specifically consider.

For these reasons, a fairly recent instrument developed from the insights gained from the IRI, the Empathy Assessment Index (EAI) was chosen for this study. This index utilizes the strengths of the IRI, and integrates aspects of the social cognitive neuroscience approach. The EAI consists of 17 questions on a six-point scale, broken down into five elements: affective response, self-other awareness, emotion regulation, perspective taking, and empathic attitudes (Gerdes, et al., 2011).

The internal reliability results were solid – the Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency was .823, and test – retest reliability analyzed by element resulted in correlation coefficients ranging from .686 to .792. Construct validity measures were somewhat limited, but comparisons with similar instruments, such as the IRI and the

CERQ (Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire) yielded Pearson's *r* values ranging between .48 and .75, which the authors concluded was a positive initial indication (Lietz et al., 2011). The EAI has been used with college undergraduates, but as it has been recently developed, validity with other age groups has not been assessed. The IRI on which it was based, however, has been validated for use with high school students (Cliffordson, 2001; Hatcher et al., 1994).

In addition to my interest in strengthening interdisciplinary understanding of the empathy construct, I am also enthusiastic about contributing to the research base of a recently developed empathy measurement based on new insights in cognitive neuroscience to investigate whether this instrument demonstrates similar robust results in other areas of application. As this instrument has been tested primarily on undergraduates, the authors were eager to apply it to research working in other developmental levels, such adolescence.

Informed consent. The parents of all participants were provided with a letter detailing the study and the terms of their child's participation requesting their consent. Students were be provided a similar letter requesting their assent. If the consent form is unsigned, no data was collected on that student for this study. No student was required to participate. See Appendix D for examples of the informed consent.

Assessment administration. The quantitative data were gathered through two pre-intervention assessments and two post-intervention assessments, administered by the guidance counselors coordinating the peer helper program at their respective schools. The pre-tests of the EAI and the DIT-2 were each administered in early October shortly after the mentors were selected and before the peer mentoring training workshops. Post-

tests for the experimental group were administered at the beginning of the final peer mentoring training, and after they had started meetings with their peer mentees, approximately halfway through the academic year.

The peer mentoring supervisors at the respective schools assigned randomized identification numbers to each of the participants, obscured the names on each answer sheet, then retained the results for later distribution to Dr. Lin. It was at this point that the response sheets were likely mixed.

Data storage and confidentiality. Throughout the study, student confidentiality was maintained. The names on the answer sheets on the standardized instruments were obscured with numbered labels. The information sheets correlating the numbers to student names were stored in a locked file cabinet in the school building, and only the school counselor and the principal were provided access. The data will be stored for 5 years after the completion of this study and then deleted.

Plan for quantitative data analysis. The revised Defining Issues Test uses a new index ("N2") to measure overall moral reasoning, and the Empathy Assessment Index, in its current form, yields a total ("E") score as well.

The initial plan specified that the basic pre-test, post-test data for each instrument would be reported using a split-plot ANOVA, with EAI score as the first dependent variable, the DIT-2 scores as the second dependent variable. The analysis was to be run on the interactions between the pre- and post-test results on each dependent variable, utilizing standard statistical analysis software (SPSS Version 19). This analysis was intended be utilized as the primary means to confirm or disconfirm research questions two and three.

Complications. During the course of the data collection process, a significant complication became apparent. Due to the measures taken to ensure confidentiality, names were removed and replaced with numbers, and the answer sheets from each study were stored separately. At some point in the process, answer sheets between schools, and between test dates, were apparently mixed together. There were duplicate identification numbers in the same sets, and it could not be discerned with any confidence which answer sheets came from which test date, or which school.

Reluctantly, this researcher agreed with his lead advisor that the quantitative data had been corrupted beyond any ability to compensate and the quantitative results were not suitable for further analysis.

Design adaptation. However, the data from the semi-structured interviews was extremely rich, yielding some fascinating insights into the ways the mentors thought about and talked about the concepts of empathy and moral reasoning. It was decided to continue the investigation using the analysis of the interview transcripts as described in the qualitative analysis section. The last two research questions, which inquired into the measured difference in empathy and moral reasoning, could no longer be directly addressed without the standardized instrumentation. However, a thorough analysis of the twelve transcripts yielded a wealth of information regarding the first research question: how student mentors understand their experience of peer mentoring and its effects on their empathy and moral reasoning. The connections between the responses of the mentors to all of the interview questions as well as conceptual model provide a great deal of insight into the original subject of the investigation, and are detailed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This study was designed to explore three questions: How do student mentors understand their experience of peer mentoring and its effects on their empathy and moral reasoning? What is the measured difference in the moral reasoning of high school student mentors before and after peer mentoring? Finally, what is the measured difference in the empathy of high school student mentors before and after peer mentoring?

The results will be reviewed in this chapter, including an overview of the results presentation approach, a sample mentor profile, and the presentation of selected themes for each of the six elements in the final conceptual model, which will be presented in Chapter Five.

Presentation Approach

The results presentation from qualitative investigations necessarily involved choices regarding the best way to effectively share interview data. Some researchers (Huberman & Miles, 1984) contend for more extensive reliance on charts, graphs and numerical matrices that can concisely convey the many statistical results that can be extracted from a quantitative analysis of the transcripts. This mode of presentation is quite attractive, and increasingly enabled by advances in information technology.

Recent developments in qualitative analysis software, such as the popular Dedoose web-based platform that was used for data anlysis in this study, make a wealth of data easily accessible to the enterprising researcher. Once the codes are applied to each transcript and categorical descriptive data is entered about each subject, thousands of cross-comparisons are instantly available between each descriptive variable and each

parent, child, and grandchild codes, across any or all of the transcripts subjected to analysis. This wealth of information presents a serious quandary to the qualitative researcher: how can one best "open up" interview material for the benefit of other scholars – through the number, or the word?

Irving Seidman (2012) recommends the use of crafting profiles, or vignettes, of each participant's experience to allow other readers to share the experience, and make the interview available for analysis and interpretation. That is the approach which was recommended to me, and which I have adopted. A *student mentor profile* was created for each interview that gives a description of the mentee, as well as a summary of their responses corresponding to each of the concepts in the working model. These profiles allowed a more fully realized portrait of each mentor to come into focus, so that the connections between the various elements began to make more sense in the expressions of an individual mentor.

There were three categories of the data which seemed most suitable to present in a quantitative format: group demographics and code frequencies, and data highlights. demographics (Table 4) are important to know to get a sense of the overall group of mentors. The code frequencies are presened in a table for each element that describes how common, and how often, each code arose during the process of transcript analysis. The frequency column indicates how many times this code was found in the twelve transcripts, and the prevalence column indicates the percentage of transcripts in which this code occurred at least once. The data highlights are their answers to some of the simpler, categorical responses to questions like, "Do you feel like you got enough training?" Those responses are catalogued in Appendix F.

The presentation of the results begins with a student mentor profile for Sophia, one of the more articulate mentors. This transcript was chosen because it best illustrates how each interview was analyzed in the context of the elements of the conceptual model.

In the presentation of themes, the central component of the results presentation, the mentor profiles were analyzed to give a sense of the variety of perspectives concerning each of the six elements in this group of mentors. These excerpts are then categorized by themes, and themes which had associated codes with high frequency and prevalence were selected for discussion. The findings within each element for the thematic analysis are then summarized.

Sample student mentor profile: Sophia

Sophia's profile was chosen as a model template not only because she was an exemplary mentor, but also because she expressed herself in a way that best illustrated the discrete elements of the conceptual model, as well as the many vibrant interconnections between them. While every mentor had unique qualities and attributes that contributed to the overall conclusions of the study, Sophia's profile provides a good example of what the mentor profiles contributed to the analysis process. In the following pages, I will describe my initial impressions, and provide summary of findings for each of the primary areas under investigation: her self-concept as a mentor, her mentoring experience, empathic connections and moral dilemmas, her understanding of empathy and moral reasoning.

Initial impressions. Sophia displayed an elegant blend of modesty, youthfulness, kindness, and thoughtfulness. Her demeanor was relaxed, her posture was confident, and she seemed to be very perceptive, present and engaged throughout the interview. She

often took a moment before answering to phrase things in a clear, direct, and often surprisingly powerful way, using complete sentences with a minimum of "ums", "uhs", or "likes".

In the initial training sessions, she was one of the only mentors that immediately settled into the role, taking it seriously even when the initial assignment (to play a character from a movie, book or TV show) was rather light-spirited. She immediately got the sense of her mentee's issues and was able to re-tell them their story in a compelling, serious way – even if it was struggling with her newly discovered fairy family and falling in love with a fairy prince from another realm. She was able to quickly help her mentee figure out what was most important in the given situation – and these skills continued to carry through to her real world mentoring experience.

Self-concept. Sophia had a very clear, principled and multi-faceted self-concept which revealed itself throughout the interview. She clearly held herself to high standards of performance and behavior, and accordingly, had some initial trepidations about joining the mentor program. Her response showcased the importance of effective training and preparation. When asked about her doubts about her ability to be a good mentor, she replied:

> At first, I did. I had some doubts about how things were going to go. I have a full courseload, and, at first I doubted whether I was able to be a mentor to kids, and, as I had more training done, and got more used to it, I became more confident in the program.

Her motivations were in a category of their own – she was the only mentor to express her desire to be a mentor in terms of a school-wide mission:

> I've always really wanted to be part of changing the atmosphere in our school, and, um, making sure that all students are comfortable.

J: When you say 'changing the atmosphere,' does it feel like there have been times where morale has been kinda low, or...

S: Yeah....we definitely, I've seen a lot of students that are alone, and a lot of, we have a lot of cliques in our school, and I realize that with this program, kids are becoming more vocal and they're not as scared to talk to other people.

She brought up this sense of mission in other contexts as well, saying at one point that:

School should be a place where you are comfortable, and feel safe, and it's always bothered me when kids are being picked on and don't feel safe, or don't feel comfortable in their learning....community.

As much as she was concerned about the welfare of others, she also appeared to remain quite open to self-discovery throughout the mentoring experience. When I asked what training has been like, she responded:

It's been very informative, I've realized other ways to talk to, like, peers...and understanding what they're going through....and, obviously, I've learned a lot about myself, too..

Sophia went on to note how she has grown and changed in various ways, how her outlook has shifted over time, and how this has influenced the way she now sees herself. Sophia expressed beautifully the increased sensitivity and awareness that many mentors noticed of the ways they are valued among their friends. When I asked if mentoring had increased the amount of trust people placed in her, she affirmed that it had:

In a sense, yeah, they're realizing that they can trust in when I tell them that I won't, that nothing is going to happen if they do trust in me. And, I realize that the people around me, like my friends and stuff, realize that I'm a trustworthy person, I can listen, and I can understand what's going on.

The congruence between her sense of personal mission and values and her own path of growth and self-discovery was one of the most fascinating things about Sophia.

Even though she knew mentoring "would be good for people," she did not expect the transformative impact that her mentee had on her. When I asked about any surprises in the process of mentoring, her response was indicative of her desire to broaden her perspective:

> I think one of the biggest surprises for me is that it's affected my outlook on people around me more than I thought.
>
> J: Yeah?
>
> S: I thought it would just be kind of, more for the mentee, but I found that it has also helped me grow, in ways of dealing with other people around me. And, I know that it's affected the mentees, too...if you look at the mentors, we've definitely changed in ways that because of what the mentees have taught us.

Although it was hoped that mentorship would have a noticeable influence on the mentors, Sophia was exceptionally perceptive concerning how mentorship – the act of helping others –provided surprising benefits to those on both sides of the helping relationship .

She appeared to have a real gift for understanding what the mentorship process was like for the students they were helping, which in turn gave her some necessary insights into becoming a better helper herself. When I asked what advice she might give future mentors, she said:

> To definitely give it a chance and be patient. It's not going to come together and be this incredible feat the first time you meet with your mentee – give it time and be patient with the person, and understand that this is just as scary, or more scary, for them than it is for us.

Mentoring experience. In a number of respects, Sophia appeared to have as close to possible as an "ideal mentoring experience" as one could hope for. She really seemed

to value learning for herself some of the maxims of effective counseling, such as 'helping clients help themselves. After I inquired about what went especially well, she said:

> We had one session that went really well because she was having some problems with friends, and we had a lot of small talk in the beginning, and, um, after a while, once we broke through that ice, she really opened up and told me a lot about the situation, and...I didn't really...it was more of a breakthrough for me because I didn't really have to give her a lot of advice, I talked her through her giving herself advice....which I think was awesome, because she came in as, like, someone who, she had struggled to do a lot of things on her own, but to see her deal with something on her own, and have the passion to help her friends...she, pretty much did a lot of it on her own while I, pretty much, talked her through it, instead of telling her exactly what to do.

As was the case for many of the mentors, the first sessions, and the logistics of meeting were the hardest part. Her response to my question about challenges revealed that, while the relationship had its difficulties, it was finding the space and time that was the real struggle:

> I think the most challenging for me was definitely the first time that we met, she didn't really want to open up a lot. But with the training that I had it was easier to get her to open up.
>
> J: Yeah?
>
> S: I was...I had more patience in doing that, and...other than the scheduling, I mean, it was definitely hard for me to schedule because we are both really busy people, but other than that there wasn't much that was challenging about it.

However – also similar to the feelings of other mentors – it wasn't dealing with the "issues," so much as it was the power of a strengthening relationship that was most significant for Sophia. Her first response when I asked about mentoring in general was:

> It was very refreshing, because it was a student that I didn't know anything about, and she was a very intimidating person, she didn't have a lot of people around her, and it was...nice to...learn a different side and... to go through the steps of her feeling more and more comfortable with me.

While some mentors had difficulty expressing conceptually what they got from the experience, and others had difficulty coming up with examples of sessions that went well or badly, Sophia seemed to have a trove of well-examined stories to pull upon. She had apparently done quite a bit of reflecting on her mentoring experience herself, before being given the opportunity during the interview. Sophia's interview highlights the self-reflection that seemed to come naturally to many mentors. The prevalence of reflective thought was another unexpected finding of the study – although whether this is due to the nature of the experience or the types of students that are attracted to mentoring can't be determined by this study design.

Empathic connections & moral dilemmas. Sophia's growth shone through her description of the impact of mentoring on her relationships and the moral decisions she made. Remarkably, even when her values and experience did not seem in line with her mentee's, she relied on the empathic connection and her listening skills to let her mentee figure out the solution on her own.

> She was in a situation in which she was being bullied and where she thought that solving it would be to do it back to those people...She was putting up that tough front, and I connected with it, because I had been in the same situation, I had been bullied for years, and I showed her that she can go to a member of the administration and they'll make sure that that things are done with, they can make sure that these kids stop bullying her. And, by explaining that, and by connecting it to myself, and showing her that it worked for me, it got her to stop dealing with it in the way that she was, in a violent and harsh way, and started using, and ended up going to administration, and ended up dealing with that in a much safer way.

This incident seems to reveal how the strength of the empathic connection to overcome differences in values and to allow her mentee to receive her skills and wisdom in decision making.

Sophia really recognized the scope of the changes that mentoring had on her perceptions and relations with other students. I was especially intrigued by how she intuitively grasped the concept of "universal positive regard" so powerfully featured in the counseling philosophy of Carl Rogers (1957). After I posed a question about the impact of her experience dealing with other students from difficult situations, she replied:

> Yeah, I definitely look at people a lot differently, I have an easier time understanding where they are coming from, and taking time to give them a chance instead of automatically assuming things. It's a much easier way for me to understand what people like her are going through, instead of assuming that everyone has a great life, or feeling that if they have a bad life they're bad people.

Sophia talked about exposure to the struggles of her mentee that helped Sophia become more patient and consider things more carefully, as well as what matters to others, including family and friends. Whe she was asked if mentoring had changed her relations with her family, she said:

> Definitely. With my family, it made it easier for me to look at things. Like, with family, if something happens at home, I kind of put it on more of a front that 'this isn't the worst that could be happening.'
>
> J: Right.
>
> S: I found myself, like, not overreacting as much anymore, cause you know in that back of your mind, you have like that 'people have things a lot worse going on right now, like...my parents arguing over the cat is not going to be like the worst thing that's ever happened to someone,' and, um, it was the same way with friends. I find myself understanding, and realizing how important things are to people now, instead of, kind of brushing them off, because they're not important to me.

Empathy. Sophia had such a clear sense of the nature and power of empathy that her thorough comprehension of the definition seemed to permeate every anecdote, however, her understanding of empathy in the abstract was also remarkable. When she was asked about her use of empathy in sessions, she responded:

> I definitely used the empathy during my sessions to understand, to make sure that she knew that I was understanding how she was feeling, instead of making her feel as though I didn't feel the same way, or didn't agree, I used my empathy to be like, 'Well, I understand that you're sad right now, and I get how you're feeling – and that definitely had her open up a little more, and she explained her feelings more, because she knew that I understood why she was feeling that way.'

Sophia here highlighted a key interactive aspect of empathy that other mentors did not mention. She understood that empathy is is not merely a passive understanding or awareness of another's emotional state, but the communication of the understanding of why they feel as they do. Her intuitive sense of empathy as an active awareness, as well as a communicated understanding is exceptionally well stated in this excerpt.

Another remarkable aspect to Sophia's empathic development is the ease with which she transferred her own experience to that of others. Her clear sense of school-wide mission appeared to have come from a strong empathic transfer to students who are struggling in their first years of high school. When I asked if the program had an impact on the school culture, she noted that there were changes for both mentors and mentees:

> Yeah, certainly. I think our group as people realized that we can talk to different people, that maybe don't have as many friends, and it definitely opened up in the fact, that the ones that are alone definitely feel more comfortable trying to find people to be around.

She also spoke eloquently of the struggles she faced when she first arrived, and how she was able to use her own experience reaching out to benefit new students:

> I struggled a lot in my freshman and sophomore year, whereas I was alone a lot. So, it was nice to see that these kids can break out and find these friends, that I did the same thing.

What I also found interesting about Sophia's perspective was that, in addition to her remarkable insights, she seemed to have a strong sense of the limits of her ability to understand her mentee's experience. As her mentee was, in her words, "intimidating",

there were some harder edges to some of her experience that were beyond what Sophia knew how to handle. When I asked if there were things her mentee had gone through that were "outside of her experience," her response is indicative of her maturity:

> Definitely. There were some situations where um, I didn't really know how to respond to her, um, but in those situations I...tried to help her in ways that weren't so in depth, try to keep it a little more basic, which, uh, worked. And...it was just...some of the situations she brought up would kinda throw me back a little, but I had to give her a chance to explain the situation and a lot of the times I could at least listen, it was less of her asking for me to fix it, and more for someone for her to listen to, talk to.

Sophia's felicity with changing approaches, articulate expression of her mentee's struggles and challenges, and her courage to take on issues outside of her experience and comfort level all speak to the range, depth and development of Sophia's empathic abilities revealed in this interview.

Moral reasoning. Given Sophia's rich and elegant portrayal of the use of empathy in counseling, I was initially a bit struck by the simplicity of her definition of moral reasoning in the context of mentoring:

> I think the moral reasoning comes in to help people comes in because you need a reason to, uh, tell them what to do. They don't want to be just told, 'Well, you should do this instead.' That moral reasoning comes in the fact of explaining to them why you're choosing to make that decision. It shows them why you're making that decision, and why they should make that decision.

She took the term *moral reasoning* quite literally: *reasons for behaving morally*, while she also maintained a very clear moral vision in terms of *why others should make moral decisions.* Admittedly, this may be due partially to a poorly phrased question, but regardless, her response does reveal a strong moral compass that Sophia uses in decision making.

Her description of how she knows the difference also reveals this strong internal intuition of right and wrong:

> It sounds kind of cliché but I've always had that gut feeling of knowing that...if something is right, you have more of a drive to do it, you're more confident in the decision if you know that it's the right thing to do. Whereas, if it's an impulsive and...bad decision, where you know it's something, you know deep down that there's going to be repercussions when you make bad decisions. Deep down, you get that feeling that something wrong is going to happen after you do it.

The expression she used, knowing "deep down," is representative of the strong moral vision that was evident in the interview from her very first answers that she wanted to be "part of changing the atmosphere in our school" and that "students should be feel comfortable in their learning community."

A notable difference between Sophia and the other mentors in her description of moral reasoning is that I did not detect any overt acknowledgment of other people's values, but rather a deep sense of her own. She recognized that her intuition around moral decision making has gotten stronger from the mentoring process:

> I feel it's gotten more sensitive. I realize things much easier now, I realize what decisions are good or bad. It's a stronger feeling, if you want to put it that way. When I'm making a decision, my feeling for what would be the good and bad decision is much more hypersensitive. I can realize what things are before, instead of, kind of, making the decision, and then being, like, 'Well, that probably wasn't a very good idea.'

This increasingly sensitive and strong moral awareness appeared to impact the way that she conducted herself in her relationships and decision making.

Profile summary. Sophia's experience is not typical – she reflects on her experience more deeply and expresses herself more clearly than the other mentors. Yet her experience does reveal the potential power of the mentoring process to benefit all parties involved, as well as the advancements in understanding the complex inter-

relationships between empathy and moral reasoning that become evident in the context of mentoring. Notably, her account of her experience shows that even the most insightful student, perhaps especially the most insightful students, have a lot to gain from an opportunity to work with struggling students.

Presentation of Themes

In this section, I will be reviewing the findings in each of the six elements of the conceptual model: mentor self-concept, mentoring experience, empathic connections, moral dilemmas, empathy and moral reasoning. Each element contains selected associated themes that were identified through the thematic analysis process detailed in the previous chapter in Figure 2.

The elements and their selected themes that will be detailed in this section are as follows:

Table 5. Elements and Selected Themes

Element	Selected Themes
Mentor Self-Concept	*Peer Identity; People Anxiety; The Me Generation; One of my kind?*
Mentoring Experience	*Training teens to talk...and listen; Learning to help others...and themselves; Time Management; Reaping the Rewards*
Empathic Connections	*Family Ties; Finding Making and Keeping Friends; Sympathy for the Strugglers*
Moral Dilemmas	*Applied Authenticity; To Serve, and Protect, My Peers, The Team Needs Me*
Empathy	*Do You Know How I Feel? Do You Know Why?; The Best Part? Him Talking to Me!; Not Feeling It, and Not Wanting To*
Moral Reasoning	*People Need Reasons; Guided by Instinct, and by Conscience; Guiding Lights*

The codes used to identify the themes are presented in the associated section. The codes were applied independently of one another, so a given excerpt might have several codes from one element, or sometimes multiple elements.

Mentor self-concept. Self-concept is a key element of the initial working model that emerged from literature review and was the basis for the interview protocol. As such, there were no direct questions along the lines of "How do you see yourself as a mentor?", but rather comments about how they see themselves, especially in comparison to others, were extracted from the transcript and assembled to create a rough self-portrait of each mentor. Through the use of this emergent method, several themes recurred and are highlighted here as a way of understanding how self-concept varied from mentor to mentor within this sample.

Nine child codes emerged from the data that were associated with this element: Self – Awareness, Proficiency, Motivation, Trustworthiness, Prior Experience, Patience, Kindness & Compassion, Openness, and Honesty. The following table contains the disaggregated data from the analysis, ordered by frequency (the total number of codes applied) and prevalence (how many of the twelve transcripts contained this code). Since the criteria for each code application are evaluated separately, it was not uncommon to have multiple codes for the same excerpt.

Table 6. Mentor Self-Concept Thematic Analysis Results

Element	Code	Frequency	Prevalence	Associated Theme
Mentor Self-Concept		162	100%	
	Self Awareness	62	100%	*People Anxiety*
	Proficiency	36	100%	*People Anxiety* *Me Generation*
	Motivation	27	100%	*Peer Identity*
	Trustworthiness	26	100%	*Peer Identity*
	Prior Experience	25	100%	*Peer Identity* *Me Generation*
	Patience	21	67%	*Me Generation*
	Kindness & Compassion	15	58%	
	Openness	14	58%	*Me Generation*
	Honesty	5	42%	

Although excerpts categorized under mentor self-concept were present throughout the transcripts, there were several themes which recurred with significant frequency. There were four themes with significant frequency and prevalence: *Peer Identity; People Anxiety; The Me Generation?; and One of My Kind – or not?*

Peer identity. The first theme to become clear was the theme of *peer identity.* Although the modality of the intervention for this investigation is primarily known as *peer mentoring* as well as *peer helping* and *peer counseling* (Tindall, 1995), the key term seemed to always be "peer". However, one of the insights that emerged rather clearly from the data is that mentors did not identify with the same peer group. Some students, such as Toby and Ariel and Laura, liked to work with younger kids and saw themselves as needing to work well with younger people for their future careers.

Even with this younger set, there were differences in approach. Toby seemed to really identify with them as peers, while Ariel and Laura seemed to view them as future clients or students. A couple of others spoke of the importance to them of "being looked up to", even for students similar in age. For these mentors, distance in age or maturity was seen as an important part of a good mentoring relationship.

When Laura was asked about changes in the way she was seen by other students after participating in the peer mentoring program, she viewed mentoring as another part of her essentially trustworthy, hard working character:

> I haven't, a lot of people look up to me, I guess, and they'll come to me for advice, and they also know that I do good in school, and if they need help with schoolwork or whatever, they know they can come to me.
>
> J: Do you feel that you're trustworthy more now, or...
>
> L: Yeah..
>
> J: Or, have you always felt pretty trustworthy?
>
> L: Yeah, I don't really share, spread rumors, that kinda thing, so...

For other students, especially the more direct and brash personalities, such as Shawna and to a lesser degree Ali, very much saw themselves as peer leaders, and dealt directly with similar age peers, and their authority came from both academic success as well as their integrity and honesty. Shawna, in particular, prided herself on being forthright:

> A lot of teachers tell me they don't like me because I'm so open-minded, and like, no matter how mean it is, or how rude, like I will just speak my mind. And I don't lie to people, so, like, I will tell you the truth, whether it's really honest, or it's...I don't know, I don't sugarcoat things. A lot of people just don't like it..and I'm like, well, would you rather hear me lie to make you feel good, or tell you the truth, so you can change?

Even though she appeared to have a very clear vision of herself and what she stands for, Shawna also reported some of the most powerful impacts on their personal

relationships as a result of connecting with their mentee – either to other struggling students or to relationships with their own friends and family.

People anxiety. The second mentor self-concept theme identified was named after the mentor who phrased it most memorably: *people anxiety.* A surprising number of mentors admitted to some social discomfort or uncertainty. Amy spoke eloquently of how attuned and sensitive she is to the problems facing others and how she experiences emotional feedback, but then said she has very few friends. Tricia, who presented as bubbly, social, and outgoing, was the first to admit that she has some social discomfort – coining the phrase "people anxiety" used in the heading. When she was asked about what she thought of the preparation experience, she relected:

> Tricia: It's been an interesting experience...we learned a lot of different things about how to interact with people younger than you...and it helps you with the social aspect of your life.
>
> J: Really? Like...
>
> T: That's one of the reasons why I did it. I have people anxiety.
>
> J: Really?
>
> T: Hmm-hmmm. Like, people I don't know, I'm like, ewww. Or I just talk nervously.

Susan talked about the prospect of actually trying to help people work through their problems as "nerve-wracking", and said that taking on someone else's problems in addition to her own could be "totally overwhelming at times." Ariel had a number of friends that vented to her, but didn"t know how to vent her feelings with others.

Even those that came across as very confident and mature, such as Sophia, admitted that they had a difficult time in their first years. Some like Susan, added however, that these social difficulties only increased her desire to make it easier for

others who might be experiencing the same challenges. Nick had a similar motivation, as he had been in counseling for a number of years, and said that was part of what made him want to help others.

The me generation? Or professional development? The next theme was named to reflect the degree of self-interest that mentoring represented for each of the mentors. Self-concept formation is one of the key developmental characteristics of adolescents (Hart, 1988), so it's not perhaps surprising that all of the mentors evidenced a certain amount of self-absorption. What was surprising was the diversity of ways in which the mentoring proess interacted with, challenged, and refined each mentor's self-concept. One part of the mentor self-concept that frequently emerged was a sense of professional identity that helped them focus on interpersonal relationship skills as a distinct set of abilities, and not simply an expression of their character.

Susan, Laura, and Ariel all seemed to balance a healthy level of self-awareness and self-consciousness with the needs and relationship with the mentor. All of them reported some good advice (usually centering on patience and taking one step at a time) that they would give to themselves at the beginning of the year, and all of them reported the strength of the mentoring connection on their relations with their friends or family. The common factor among these mentors was the awareness that listening and helping are discrete skills that can be learned, developed, and refined, and are not necessarily just part of being a good person.

Laura, in particular, seemed to understand that it really is the little things that count. She reported that the most helpful things from training being the most basic:

> Mmm...I think for the beginning, just trying to get him to open up, like how to, you know, don't...be open to him, don't be all like closed up. Show him that you're there for him.

J: Yeah. Like the posture and all that stuff?

L: Yeah, posture and eye contact and, letting them talk first, and then if they don't really say anything, ask a few beginning questions.

This emphasis on skills seemed to help certain mentors develop a professional persona as a helper / mentor, and several of them mentioned how they have become more able to let go and not adopt the problems of others as their own. Some, such as Sarah, revealed surprising virtues – such as the courage to stand up for kids getting picked on – that surprised even them.

Sophia and Amy were also introspective but more appreciative in nature of what her mentee and the mentoring process offered them in terms of their growth and development, and usually framed the benefits as mutual in nature. Alexis and Tricia, being younger, were a lot more self-conscious but not as able to articulate how mentoring had influenced them, or how they saw the development of a mentoring "persona". Ali and Shawna had very bold and direct personalities that retained their essential character, but they each displayed a surprising sensitivity to the problems faced by their families and other struggling students, and reported real changes from their efforts to mentor. There was one, Sarah, who felt a bit uncertain and out of place because her mentees didn't come back, and another, Nick who appeared so self-absorbed that he only saw his mentee on two occasions.

One of my kind – or not? The final theme identified reflected how closely mentees saw themselves in the peers they served. One of the real surprises was the emergence of a real diversity in the level of identification of the mentors with their mentees. As touched on earlier, several mentors felt that a degree of separation between

themselves and their experiences and their mentees was not an obstacle but in fact allowed for a more genuinely helpful relationship. In Ariel's words:

> ...sometimes it's good to have similarities because you can connect, but at the same time, like me not having gone through any of those problems, there wasn't any of 'well, this happened to me,' in the back of my mind...

Similarly, the mentor who had received the most counseling – and in fact was in counseling over the year he was mentoring – did not connect with his mentee on their shared family difficulties, but was in fact so caught up in his family situation that he pretty much neglected his mentee.

In fact, even though some of them acknowledged that their earlier difficulties in school had been part of their motivation, mentors rarely expressed sympathic responses with their mentees on the basis that they were similar in character. If anything, it was the power of difference, distance, and diversity *within the peer group,* which seemed to yield the most significant gains in insight, empathic abilities, and an effective working relationship. This finding raises some interesting questions about what it is in the peer mentoring process that actually makes this an effective modality.

Summary of findings in mentor self-concept. There were several key surprises that emerged in the discussion of the mentors' self-concept. One was that, although these students were hand-picked by teachers and guidance as students who had strong interpersonal relations skills, several of them admitted to significant anxiety concerning their interpersonal skills and sought out this opportunity to mentor, in part, to help them overcome their nervousness in social situations. Another was how many mentors were looking forward to developing their interpersonal skills as part of their career goals – these were not students simply looking for opportunities to help people out, but rather students who were actively looking for ways to improve themselves and their career

opportunities. Finally, what was perhaps the most surprising, none of the mentors expressed a desire to work with mentees on the basis that they were similar to them, but actually wanted to reach out across class and social divisions to work with students who were facing problems very different from theirs. While some of them later found that their problems weren't really so different, the degree to which mentors felt separated from their peers was striking, and may indicate that what makes mentors effective may go beyond mere similarity or proximity in age and situation.

Mentoring experience. Mentoring experience was one of the central elements of the conceptual framework. It consists of everything involved in the student's participation in the mentoring program, beginning with selection, continuing through their experience with the training, their initial meeting with their mentee, and following the trajectory of that relationship until the point of the interview.

Mentoring experience was the element associated with the most coding applications, with two-hundred and twenty-nine excerpts, due in part to the large number of questions in the semi-structured interview that were relevant. There were eleven child codes that emerged from the data and the conceptual model that were placed under this parent code: Mentor Relations, Challenges, Training, Scheduling & Logistics, Activities, Mentor Advice, Benefits to Mentor, Benefits to Mentee, Feelings about Mentoring, Mentor Support, and Academic Concerns.

Table 7. Mentoring Experience Thematic Analysis Results

Element	Code	Frequency	Prevalence	Associated Theme
Mentoring Experience		229	100%	
	Feelings About Mentoring	56	100%	*Learning to Help Others*
	Benefits to Mentor	55	83%	*Training Teens to Talk, Reaping The Rewards*
	Challenges	49	100%	*Time Management*
	Training	43	100%	*Training Teens to Talk, Learning to Help Others*
	Benefits to Mentee	32	75%	*Reaping The Rewards*
	Scheduling & Logistics	23	100%	*Time Management*
	Mentoring Advice	18	100%	*Time Management*
	Mentoring Support	17	75%	*Training Teens to Talk*
	Academics	14	75%	
	Mentor Group	9	58%	
	Activities	6	25%	

The themes identified connected with this element were somewhat varied, as their mentoring experiences were very diverse and there were a large number of anecdotes that the mentors told as they recounted their experiences. After creating the mentor profiles, four themes seemed to recur with some frequency and were also associated with a high number of code applications: *Training Teens to Talk...and Listen; Learning to Help Others, and Themselves; Time Management; and Reaping the Rewards.*

Training teens to talk...and listen. The initial theme is related to what the mentors gained from mentoring training. While all of the mentors reported getting valuable experience out of the training process, several mentors did feel that additional, and more extensive, training would have been helpful. The responses ranged from the

very specific, like Ariel who learned how to "not to slouch" and "look like you're paying attention" and Alexis, who liked "reflective questioning and listening", to the very general, such as those from Sarah and Laura, who learned how to "be there for your mentee" and "work with other people".

Sophia and Ali were a little more philosophical about the benefits of the trainings – Ali gave the training credit for helping her "stay in the right frame of mind," and Sophia learned how to become "more comfortable and confident," and helped her "get her mentee to open up."

It may not be intuitive that teens need to be trained to communicate, but several mentors mentioned the listening part of the process as a concern for them. Shawna, in particular, mentioned that talking too much was one of the things she was worried about:

> I was just worried, like, whether I was going to, like, be able to like give everything I could. 'Cause I like to talk...and it's hard being quiet.

Although it's a common belief that talking is what teens do best, most of the mentors said that the one-to-one practice sessions were very helpful. Ariel, one of the mentors that came across as more mature and confident, highlighted this:

> I liked the first training. I don't know if it was exactly what I expected – I liked the practicing the talking to people, one-on-one, it was a lot of new information but it was a lot of good information.

Learning to help others...and themselves. The next theme consisted of excerpts in which mentors expressed how the helping skills they learned had a personal application as well. Toby and Susan enjoyed how the training helped them to learn more about themselves and their style of interactions. Susan found her personality profile to be especially rewarding, saying: "It helped me learn a lot about myself, the very last training, when we did that tranquil turtle thing, that was awesome to me." Ali gave the

training credit for helping her to not be so quick to judge: "I tried to stay open-minded before, and then the training just kind of made it easier to stay really open-minded." Nick found the training helpful in transitioning from the helped to the helper:

> ...having been through a lot of counseling and stuff myself, I've always wanted to be able to help people, so I kind of...I've been kind of nonprofessionally mentoring before this program started up...and when the opportunity arised [sic], I took it because it would give us the proper training to do it.

Time management. The third theme was quite specific and surprisingly frequent. One of the greatest surprises in the investigation of challenges and obstacles in the mentoring process, the *only* response I received was not in the context of the mentoring process itself, but rather in how hard it was to find good times and places to meet. Every mentor mentioned how hard it was to arrange meetings. For Ariel, better scheduling was the most important thing she would have done differently:

> [I would] schedule in more time, because she definitely wanted to talk a lot! And it made it hard getting stuff done when I said well we're only meeting for 20 minutes so I have time to do this, and like, she wants to talk so I'll let her talk...so maybe just you know scheduling better, and maing sure that vacations didn't mess up, and you know, learning how to schedule better, would be the best advice.

Amy, one of the more sensitive and invested mentors, was especially frustrated:

> Scheduling is sooo bad. Because he's a freshman, and I'm a junior, and, we have so...we have such different schedules.

Even among mentors that weren't the most dedicated, this theme of finding it hard to commit the time came up:

> Joshua: Was there anything after you started talking to him that was difficult to handle?
>
> Nick: No, everything went well. It was just, giving the time to meet with him.

Scheduling was not solely a logistics problem – Amy and Ariel, among others, often mentioned time management in the context of their many other responsibilities and academic concerns.

Other challenges did become apparent as other questions were asked about other aspects of their mentoring experience as mentors helped their mentees work through various issues, but it seems significant that the mentors themselves did not identify them as difficulties, but rather just part of the story of their mentoring experience. When asked specifically about problems with mentoring, they just wanted more time for it!

Reaping the rewards. The final theme captured the more general benefits that mentors spoke of. Although the questions in the interview protocol were carefully phrased to avoid directly suggesting benefit, mentors responses frequently revealed a variety of rewards they got out of the experience. The benefits especially relevant to empathy and moral reasoning will be reviewed in those sections, but there were quite a number that were more general in nature that will be discussed here.

The top reward, by far, was just the good feeling teens got from intentionally forming a helping relationship and observing their mentee grow and develop, becoming happier and better adjusted in school. Ali captured this sentiment well:

> I really enjoyed actually just watching him, just kinda open. Like publicly, I can see him more accepting....I see him talking to people he never really talked to when we first met.
>
> J: So, you're starting to see him more...comfortable in talking to different people?
>
> A: Yeah, he's more outgoing.

As shown by the quote above, mentors based this not only on their intuitive sense that mentors got their mentee was prospering from the additional attention, but also on observations that they made of their interactions *outside the mentoring relationship.*

Several mentors also reported gaining a sense of professional competence as well. Nick took pride in doing better with his mentee than his previous counselor:

> The middle school counselor was telling me how it took her a few years to get him to finally talk, and it only took me a couple sessions, so…it was a nice feeling.

Ariel was gratified that she was able to connect with students that seemed very different from her:

> I guess one good thing, is that she never really seemed like somebody I would walk up to and talk to...she was somebody that you look at and you're like, 'I don't think I have anything in common with them or want to talk to them,' Just, getting to know her and...realizing that she wasn"t like what you first think when you saw her, she was actually really nice and easy to talk to and everything.

This hidden insecurity around social relations was present in several of the mentors' stories, and the competency to connect with different types of students seemed to be surprisingly powerful for a number of them. In the interviews, this ability to connect to their mentee came across almost as a type of relief for some, such as Tricia, that had social anxiety. For Shawna, she felt that she had learned to connect to an entirely new crowd. When I asked if her experience mentoring changed the way she saw other students, she felt that it had:

> …in a way it has, because, like the group of people he hangs out with is... I'll see 'em and they'll just start talking, because they know, cause he went and told 'em that I was his...mentor, and...like he wished that they woulda done it too, even if it wasn't like, with me, just, like in general. And...so I've had them come to me as well with...problems and stuff, so….. they would tell me their story, and so... I don't really judge people,

until they give me a reason to, so...when they told me their whole life story, it just kinda... just made me understand their whole little group...

Summary of findings in mentoring experience. While there were relatively few questions that directly focused on benefits, the many ways that mentoring had a wide-ranging and powerful beneficial impact on the mentors was one of the predominant themes that emerged from the transcripts. The primary difficulties encountered by mentors were not emptional, or crisis situations, or mentoring strategies – but often simple logistics, finding times and places to meet. What was quite prevalent in the responses of the mentors were their remarks on how enjoyable the experience was, outside of any concrete results. They seemed to enjoy the simple, intentional formation of a helping relationship. All of these findings indicate that the challenges and rewards may be far different than what one might expect from an adult in a similar role.

Empathic connections. Empathic connections are an aspect of human relationships in which one person is actively attempting to understand the emotional experience of another, and communicating that understanding in some form (Gagan, 1983).

The three domains that were most frequently mentioned for the element of empathic connections that arose most frequently in the context of the interviews were, perhaps unsurprisingly, relations with family, connections with friends, and interactions with other peers. Codes associated with this element were among the most commonly applied, accounting for up to forty percent of the code applications for each mentor.

The empathic connections element was used to categorize excerpts that refer to the emotional content of relationships between the mentor and another person. There were four child codes that emerged from the data and the conceptual model that were

associated with this element: Struggling Student Relations, Family Relations, Friend Relations, and Empathic Reasoning.

Table 8. Empathic Connections Thematic Analysis Results

Element	Code	Frequency	Prevalence	Associated Themes
Empathic Connections		137	100%	
	Family Relations	36	92%	*Family Ties*
	Friend Relations	34	92%	*Finding, Making,& Keeping Friends*
	Struggling Student Relations	13	75%	*Sympathy for the Strugglers*
	Empathic Reasoning	9	42%	

Many of the codes associated with this element were also associated with Moral Dilemmas, which is part of the justification for the conceptual connection illustrated in the concept map. The three most frequent empathic connections themes were: *Family Ties; Finding, Making, and Keeping Friends; and Sympathy for the Strugglers.*

Family ties. The first theme related to their empathic connections encompassed, as might be expected, relationships with family. The scope and variety of the influences that the mentoring process had on their family relationships were among the many surprises encountered during the course of this research. The influence ran both directions - their experience with their own family situation seemed to have a powerful influence on their ability to connect with their mentees. Shawna and Nick stood out especially strongly in this regard, as each of them said that the mentoring program helped them rebuild their relationships with their fathers. Even with an understanding parent,

Ariel had never felt able to freely express herself, but after listening to her mentee "vent", she was now learning to do this with friends. When I asked if it was helpful speaking with her family, she replied:

> Yeah...my mother will listen a lot. My sister's always been more comfortable talking to her than I have, so I don't really vent a lot of problems to her, because I'm always the one, with my friends, I'm always the one vented to, so I don't vent to a lot of people very often, so it's like I really want to...that makes it hard. But, kinda, after this year, listening to my mentee vent, kinda it's like, well, this is actually kinda useful, and I have a couple of friends that I wasn't really close with anymore, that I"m really close friends with now that we'll vent back and forth and it helps a lot.

Toby and Tricia reported having very supportive parents who helped them get started as mentors – and even in these situations gained the additional benefit of more patience and, in Tricia's case, less "snappiness". Sophia reported a similar gain just from the additional perspective of listening to her mentee's problems, thinking when her family would argue about the cat, that "it's not the worst that could be happening..."

Sometimes, that perspective was a little wider. Alexis said that her own family experience, in her words, was very "relatable" to her mentee's, and not only did that help her connect with her mentee but had the additional benefit of helping her understand some of the benefits of having gone through what she did:

> I think...I got better as a person through all the things that I had to go through, and...telling her things…
>
> J: Yeah? Do you feel, I mean, your experience...going through all that tough family stuff, do you feel like it helped you become a better helper to her?
>
> A: Mm-hmmm. Cause I know, like, when this incident happened to me…and she's talking about it now, and I know how I would feel, and how I felt, and it was easier, to help her feel better about the situation.

For Ali, even though her own family situation was stable, her mother's side of the family had gone through a number of divorces, so she had several cousins who had been through similar tough experiences. She felt that connection with her mentee not only helped her in her mentoring, but helped her strengthen her empathic connection with her on her cousins' challenges as well. When I asked Ali about the impact on her relationships to friends, she had this to say:

> Hmmm...to friends, not so much, because we all, kind of, we have a secure family life.
>
> J: Right.
>
> A: And like my one sibling, we're pretty secure at home. I have connected to my cousins a lot, where it's like, they've made it in the world by themselves, despite the fact what their parents have gone through, what my mentee's gone through. So I do appreciate my older cousins, a lot more. And my younger cousins, for that matter.

While not all mentors mentioned significant family influences, the connections were always surprising in their strength and diversity when they did arise. More frequent, if not more intense, were mentions of the key social influence for adolescents: friends.

Finding, making, and keeping friends. The second theme that became distinct was the variety of influences mentoring had on the mentors' friendships. As the mentors came in to the program often as friends, met other mentors and sometimes made new friends in the program, and worked with their mentees most frequently on issues around finding, making, and keeping healthy friendships – friends were the daily "bread and butter" of their relational world.

The importance of friendships in daily life was recognized and emphasized by several mentors. Sophia related how satisfying it was able to help her mentee find their own supportive relationships:

> I struggled a lot in my freshman and sophomore year, whereas I was alone a lot. So, it was um, it was nice to see that these kids can break out and find these friends, that I did the same thing.

When I asked about what helped and supported her during the course of the mentoring experience, Susan said there was basically just one: her best friend, and she was her "everything".

When mentioned during the course of the interview, mentors often mentioned their friends in terms of closeness and familiarity. Tricia said initially that her world was divided into two kinds – kids who didn't really connect with her, and then her friends, and "she always knew what they were going through." Laura similarly said that her role as a mentor didn't really change her status with kids she didn't know, but her friends, well, they were coming to her more often with problems. A couple of Alexis' friends were in the program and she mentioned friendships only as steady sources of support: "My friends don't cause drama for me".

The support ran different ways for different mentors. Ariel and Ali both said that they were supports for their friends and that they learned some of their listening skills for their mentee from providing the same role with their friends. Not infrequently, they were also sources of stress. Amy and Sarah both mentioned how friendships could cause quite a bit of stress. Sarah's first mentoring relationship came to an end because their overlapping friendships were "too close for comfort".

The boys, Nick and Toby, expressed their emotional investment in friendships a little less directly, but it was still a pervasive theme in my discussion with them. Moral role modeling and decision making in the area of friendships arose for them as well. Toby in particular very much wanted to be looked up to – which may explain why he enjoyed

mentoring younger kids so much. Nick, on the other hand, seemed to like making his friends question themselves:

> There's this one person, she always has problems, and when she comes to me, she knows I'm gonna make her question whether she's doing the right thing or not, or how she's affecting other people, and she hates me for it...but she likes the fact that I do it.

Sympathy for the strugglers. The third theme targeted a population that is one of primary concern to many educators: kids who aren't doing that well in school. Mentors had a wide range of responses to this group. While the welfare of these students was intended to be a key focus area for this program, students who didn't take school seriously and seemed always to be dismissing the importance of doing well academically seemed to be a continual irritation for the mentors, who were generally working hard to succeed. In fact, sometimes this was even a source of solidarity inside the mentoring relationship as, for example, when Tricia connected with her mentee around irritation with the 'slackers'. When I asked what seemed to upset her mentee, she replied:

> The things that would bother her, I would understand, cause sometimes they bother me, too – cause they're just like generalizations...of the school population, half the time....and I actually had her opinion on a lot of 'em.
>
> J: Yeah, what were some of the things that you remember that really bugged her?
>
> T: Umm, some of the kids in her eighth grade class doesn't care about their academics, and they're going to high school, like, 'Oh, I can just make it through high school. They won't care about my grades.'
>
> J: Right.
>
> T: And her and I had really, I wouldn't say a debate, because we're on the same side, but we just discuss it...
>
> J: Yeah....like what's going on with them, and why...
>
> T: We just agreed.

When Sophia was asked if mentoring had any influence on her perceptions of struggling students, Sophia said that she did learn to connect with this group better:

> You know, a little bit, actually. For kids that are really, really struggling, with doing their homework, I don't, because I was like, 'You could get that done,' you know, if you have to take notes in class. And, I mean, my home life isn't the best thing in the world, but I understand when they say, like, I couldn't get my homework done because something happened at my home, and it's an ongoing issue. And, I mean, I definitely understand that better now because of who I've talked to.

Summary of findings in empathic connections. There were several aspects of the findings in empathic connections that were especially striking. One was the degree to which family and friend relations not only improved as a result of the mentoring experience. More patience, more perspective, and less snappiness were among the personality changes they noticed as part of their participation in the program.

Their existing close relationships provided both valuable experience to be able to form a relationship with their mentee as well as active, ongoing support for the mentors in their own growth and development. The experience mentors had of providing a supportive base for their mentee seemed to highlight for the value of the network of caring relationships that was providing similar support for them. The effect of mentoring on the support from, stress with, and investment in friendships was quite diverse, with different mentors often playing different roles with different friends – and in a couple of cases, friendships that were too close to the mentoring relationship seemed to interfere with the benefits.

Finally, several of the mentors began to form connections with groups that they had known very little about, such as the transgender students, or students that appeared to dismiss the importance of schoolwork. The perspective that they now had on the many

factors which were occurring in the background for these struggling and outcast students enabled them to adopt a more conciliatory tone and to begin asking themselves if there is more going on than meets the eye.

Moral dilemmas. Moral dilemmas are so called, according to Victor Grassian (1981), because of a certain kind of conflict between the rightness or wrongness of the actions and the goodness or badness of the consequences of the action. Other definitions have expanded this further to include having to choose only one out of two good things, including the occasional impossibility of satisfying both obligations (Marcus, 1980).

There were five codes and two child codes that were associated with this element. Teacher-Student Disputes, Moral Awareness, Moral Emotions, Empathic Reasoning, and Active Responses. Active Responses was further disaggregated into four child codes: Providing Guidance, Fostering Autonomy, Other Direct Interventions and Other Indirect Interventions. These results are described in Table 9.

Table 9. **Moral Dilemma Thematic Analysis Results**

Element	Code	Frequency	Prevalence	Themes
Moral Dilemmas		137	100%	
	Active Responses	61	100%	*Applied Authenticity To Serve and Protect, The Team Needs Me*
	Moral Emotions	33	100%	*Applied Authenticity, The Team Needs Me*
	Moral Awareness	32	92%	*Applied Authenticity*
	Peer Conflicts	16	67%	*To Serve and Protect*
	Teacher / Student Disputes	6	33%	

Moral dilemmas often played themselves out within the context of their existing relationships, but they were categorized within this element if the central emphasis of the excerpt was on a principled decision to be made. There were three themes that emerged from the profiles: *Applied Authenticity, To Serve and Protect Peers, and The Team Needs Me.*

Applied authenticity. The idea that doing the right thing is part of *who you are* was identified as the first theme, as several mentors made statements to the effect that being honest was not so much a decision to be made as an expression of their character. Being authentic as an essential part of their character came up in a number of contexts. Shawna had a sometimes conflicted relationship with her friends, although her disputes seemed to center around principles of being honest and direct. She saw herself as genuine, straightforward, and vocal, and she didn't mind risking a friendship if she had to to tell them the truth. Later in the interview, she expressed some ambivalence about what her honesty has cost her. When I asked how she knows if she did something wrong, her response seemed to be more emotional than cognitive:

> Well, like, a lot of the time, I have, I don't even know, I have like a really big conscience thing, and I don't care, like, with the things I do, if I know somebody's not gonna like me [or] not like me for doing it...like, it doesn't bother me, cause, I don't care if people like me or not. And so, I've almost lost... friends, for that stuff, and so...I think a lot more about the stuff I'm gonna do, because I know it's gonna turn out for the better,

> and...when I do something that, like, is for the better, like it makes me feel good about myself.

What was notable about that Shawna was that she was very conscious of the tension between doing the right thing and keeping friends, but continuously came back to needing to say and do the right thing, when it's "for the better." She claimed the process of mentoring helped her to become more conscious and intentional about balancing the costs and benefits,

Laura placed a similar importance on 'being true to yourself', but saw it much more comprehensively. When asked about how she makes moral decisions, she placed honesty at the very heart of the definition:

> Being able to take who you know you are as a person, and being able to apply that to every day situations. Being true to yourself, and not trying to act like you're something different just to get a different result.

Her statement is remarkable in that she saw acting differently just for a different result as not just being deceitful, but "acting like you are something different." Her statement that moral reasoning is essentially "applying yourself" shows a very distinct and well developed understanding of identity and behavior.

To serve, and protect, my peers. The second theme to be selected focused on the role mentors played in protecting peers - in some cases, peers they did not know. There were several times in the interviews when mentors spoke out more assertively about learning to connect with, advocate for, or defend other peers – sometimes whole groups of peers.

One of the more remarkable mentor experiences in this area was with Shawna, as she became the person created a connection with a whole group of kids struggling with gender identity, based on her work with her mentee. Shawna's response to the question

inquiring if mentoring has changed the way she sees other students was surprisingly comprehensive:

> Ummm…in a way it has, because, like the group of people he hangs out with is...they're not just like want to be a different gender, it's just like, they're all, like, liking the same gender, or something in that whole area, and...there's a couple of them that ride the bus, and I'll see 'em and they'll just start talking, because they know, cause he went and told 'em that I was his...mentor, and that, ...they've really...wished that they woulda done it too... so I've had them come to me as well with like some problems and stuff...and they would tell me their story ...and I don't really judge people, until they give me a reason to, so...when they told me their whole life story, like, it just kinda like made me understand why they are what they are. And, it just made me understand their whole little group…

Sarah, who seemed to have a fairly mild temperament, became a surprisingly forceful advocate for one of the kids in her class that was getting bullied. Her story in response to a question about standing up for others was striking:

> Yeah... in my third class, there's this kid that everybody, like, picks on, and like I said something, and I could tell that people weren't happy that I said something, but I could tell that that kid felt better...He felt good that somebody actually stood up for him.
>
> J: Great. Yeah, I know, that's a great feeling. And he wasn't even like a friend of yours, necessarily? But you just…you knew that he wasn't being treated right…
>
> S: Yeah.
>
> J: How did the teacher…react?
>
> S: He was kinda, like, shocked – because everybody just kinda like goes along with it and stuff…

Ali was quite clear about the connection between her mentoring experience and her advocacy for struggling students. Her reply to the question asking how she reacted when she saw injustice happening to others was revealing:

> I always stuck up for people, I feel like, but it was always like a mental thing, like, 'I'm gonna get picked on if I stick up for this person,' and now

> I'm like, it's an automatic reaction, 'If that was my mentee, I would not be sitting here.' So, I treat them like somebody you know.

The idea that mentoring helps mentors treat others who are being picked on like 'somebody you know' is a powerful one, although it was not directly investigated as part of this project.

This sense of taking other peoples' perceptions and experience more seriously emerged in some unexpected areas – such as team spirit.

The team needs me. This theme describes an unexpected finding - the last area I expected to see benefits from mentoring with was in their athletic performance. Yet when asked about how mentoring has changed the way they made decisions, both Ali and Laura brought sports up spontaneously as an area where they really pushed themselves, and where they seriously thought about the impact of their actions on the team:

> Joshua: Can you think of a time that that...you decided you really were going to do, because of seeing things from a different point of view?
>
> Laura: Uh, I think about when I was going to play softball my senior year.
>
> J: Softball?
>
> L: Yeah, I was kind of thinking about not doing it, or not going at all, and then, I noticed, after talking with some of my team-mates, they were just disappointed, and I could tell, the coach wasn't very happy knowing that he was losing one of his seniors, who could help, who was there to help him for things, and then so I thought, maybe I'll manage, and then, I actually sat there and I watched the practice and realized that, this isn't really needed, for me just to sit here, watching. I needed to be out there – the team needs me...

That wasn't the only occasion where mentors brought up athletic proficiency in the context of moral decision making. When I asked Tori if she could have given herself advice about mentoring, she gave a surprising answer:

> Don't tell the boys I'm on the golf team.

J: Don't tell the boys you're on the golf team?

T: I'm the only girl, and there's nine guys, and we went to a track meet, golf match...And there was the one time I didn't play off the guys tees, and we lost by two strokes. And, I totally beat myself up about it, like, if I had played off the guys tees - cause I don't count if I play off ladies tees - if I had played off the guys tees, could we have won that match? And I just...oh boy, cause they played with my hair the whole ride back, and I was just, I am going to kill one of you! You don't understand my frustrations right now. So...

J: That's good to know...but I was actually asking more specifically about mentoring...

T: I think mentoring would have kept me from being frustrated at all, it will get better.

What was interesting about this quote was that she made an intuitive connection between mentoring, improved frustration tolerance, and more self confidence to do her part for her team, fairly similar to the equally spontaneous softball story from Laura.

Summary of findings in moral dilemmas. As moral dilemmas represent the practical arena for the application moral reasoning, much in the way that empathic connections represent the same for empathy, it was especially notable that mentors supported, and in some cases deepened, key aspects of existing scholarship in the field. The idea of honesty and ethical behavior as "taking who you know you are as a person, and being able to apply that in everyday situations," as Laura so eloquently stated, aligns quite powerfully with key insights in the literature regarding self concept and moral reasoning (Bergman, 2004).

Several mentors expressed awareness of a delicate balance between honesty and compassion, and how difficult it is to remain honest enough to maintain self-respect and yet still compassionate enough to maintain relationships with friends. Shawna's statement

that she now thinks more about that balance speaks volumes both for the complexity of adolescent social development as well as the importance of intervention programs that directly target these areas.

Finally, the occasions in which mentors took an active role connecting with and standing up for peers that "everybody picks on" revealed that several mentors did internalize their role as a mentor as more than just a school program, and applied this new sense of themselves to situations outside of the mentoring context. This included situations such as athletics, were a couple of mentors spontaneously remarked that mentoring helped them think about the impact their actions have on the team.

Empathy. Empathy was coded frequently, second only to stories about the mentoring experience, and had six associated codes, described in Table 10.

Table 10. **Empathy Thematic Analysis Results**

Element	Codes	Frequency	Prevalence	Associated Themes
Empathy		196	100%	
	Understanding & Listening	63	83%	*Do You Know How I Feel?, The Best Part?*
	Connection & Communication	51	92%	*The Best Part?*
	Empathic Interference	35	92%	*Not Feeling It*
	Intentional Limits	25	75%	*Not Feeling It*
	Affective Mentalizing	46	100%	*Do You Know How I Feel?, The Best Part?*
	Empathic Transfer	33	92%	*Do You Know How I Feel?*
	Personal Experience	33	83%	
	Definition	12	92%	*Do You Know How I Feel?*

While it was anticipated that the existing social connections of the mentors would be the domain for the demonstration of empathy, there were a couple of surprising findings: the degree to which mentors enjoyed created an empathic connection, as well as the level of discretion that mentors used in determining how much of an empathic connection to maintain. The three themes selected showcase both their sophisticated understanding of empathy, their enjoyment of the process, and their prudence in limit setting. These are titled: Do You Know How I Feel? Do You know Why?; The Best Part? Him Talking To Me!; and Not Feeling It, and Not Wanting To.

Do you know how I feel? Do you know why? The first theme was strongly associated with how the mentors conceptualized empathy. When it came to their definitions of the concept of empathy, all except one mentor were able to come up with something in the general area of "knowing how someone feels," which seems to be the minimum one could expect from mentors who have gone through three days of intensive training. Several mentors, though were able to incorporate some of the more active

components of empathy, including perspective-taking into their definition. Some mentors were able to immediately relate specific aspects of their experience that helped them connect to their mentee without being prompted.

While there did not seem to be any direct connection between the ability to accurately articulate the definition of empathy and their expression, the range of levels of understanding of even the basic dynamics involved was surprisingly large. Based on their responses, there were four mentors that I seemed to be highly empathic. One of them, Sophia, included in her definition one of the key aspects of empathy cited in the literature, which is communication of your empathic awareness to the person. When she was asked how she used empathy in her sessions, she replied:

> I definitely used...empathy during my sessions to understand, to make sure that she knew that I was understanding how she was feeling, instead of making her feel as though I didn't feel the same way, or didn't agree, I used my empathy to be like, 'Well, I understand that you're sad right now, and I get how you're feeling' – and that definitely um, had her open up a little more, and she explained her feelings more, because she knew that I understood why she was feeling that way.

Another mentor I classified as highly empathic wasn't able to express the definition as elegantly, but the immediacy and intimacy of her response seemed to be a clear indication that empathy was a strong and active force in her mentorship work. What Shawna's formal definition lacked in elegance, it seemed to make up for in potency:

> Well, empathy is...just kinda like being able to understand and feel for the person. And, so,...when he was telling me that he has trust issues, and that his step-mom didn't like him, and stuff like that, like, I felt like, super-mad, because I was just like, 'Oh, my God! This is terrible!'
>
> J: Did you feel that way cause you just kind of connected with...anything in your own life, people that don't trust?
>
> S: Yeah, my half-sister, and my half-brother, they're both, they don't really even talk to my dad that much, cause...my dad is, like, doesn't like

> them. And so, they don't really like my dad, because they think that he ran out on 'em. So, I just kinda like, I could, like, understand how they were feeling, from like seeing my dad with that, so, it just kinda like, made me feel super bad.<laughs> I was like, 'Oh my God!'

A typical example of mid-level awareness that I found more often was expressed by Alexis – who had a solid, if somewhat basic, definition of what an empathic connection consisted of:

> Umm...understanding how someone feels...Like, you go through the same situation and you can understand what they're feeling, so it can help you with them, or help you get them through it...

Most of the mentors included the word *understanding*, and many of them intuitively connected the ability to understand with the ability to connect with some similar experience themselves. There were also those mentors, who, after several all- day trainings, had basically no idea what empathy was in the abstract. One of them, Toby, had been mentoring for several years and evidenced a deep and strong connection with his "kids", but when asked about empathy, said simply, "I know I learned but I don't remember."

When he was coached through it, though, he connected his mentee's sadness and anxiety about his brother going away to college wih his missing his mother when she went away on a business trip for a week when he was ten. Even though it appears quite dissimilar in terms of circumstances, he accurately identified the basic feelings of losing someone close:

> Toby: And, I kinda thought about it as when my mom went to Florida for a like week seminar thing for training....for work, and it kinda, cause my mom and I are really, really close, and his brother and him are probably even closer....So, I thought about how hard it was for me to get through a week. And I was like ten at the time...
>
> J: That's a tough time to leave....

T: How hard it must be for him to think about his brother being gone for three or four years...

What signified some degree of empathic awareness to me was that he did not try to equate the two, but rather used his personal experience to create an empathic connection to his mentee's experience.

There were also two mentors that had a very limited verbal comprehension, and also very brief and intermittent relationships with their mentees. Interestingly, however, there were no mentors in my sample who knew the formal definition well but did not connect with or enjoy working with their mentees. While not conclusive, the prevalence of mentors' ability to connect with mentees and the variability of their comprehension of the concept does indicate a possible disconnect between the conceptual grasp of empathy and a mentor's ability to use this capacity in actual helping relationships.

The best part? Him talking to me! The second theme to show itself was the great satisfaction mentors got from the formation of this type of relationship. I had a preconception going into the interviews that mentors would be brimming with stories about problem-solving, creative interventions, forming working alliances, and working through crises. What I was not expecting was how much enjoyment mentors got from the simple formation of a friendship. While Toby's story is not exactly typical, the delight he got from his mentee opening up was pretty common. When I asked about the most enjoyable part of his experience, Toby replied:

Working with mentees?

Joshua: Yeah...

T: The most enjoyable part was when he actually started talking to me.

J: <Laughs>

T: Versus just being there in silence.

J: Yeah, yeah, I can imagine that.

T: The middle school counselor was telling me how it took her a few years to get him to finally talk, and it only took me a couple sessions, so…it was a nice feeling.

There were several other mentors who had a similar experience – that they really enjoyed the fact that the mentee appreciated the help, enjoyed working with them, and seemed to be getting some benefit, however general. Ali desrcibed it as "opening":

I really enjoyed actually just watching him, just kinda open. Like publicly, I can see him more accepting...I see him talking to people he never really talked to when we first met.

J: Yeah, yeah. So you're starting to see him more...comfortable in talking to different people?

A: Yeah, he's more outgoing.

When I reviewed the records, I was struck by how many different ways this came up, always in response to the question, "What was the best part?" Alexis, true to form, said it succinctly, but potently, "I mean, the...relationship, that we've kinda built, together."

Laura had noticed her mentee just enjoyed being with her. When she was asked how it was going, she told the story of their first meetings:

Umm…well, it started out ...both of us were really nervous, I could tell he was...the first time meeting me. But, as time went on, I noticed seeing him even in the hallway, he was a different, he was happier and had a little more of a bounce to him. And the last time I met him, he was really happy to see me, and just excited all in general, than the beginning where it was kinda well, if I have to go with you, I'll come, kinda thing.

What is striking to me about these responses is that they are almost always in response to the most general questions –"What's the best part?" Or, "how has it been going?" The responses seem to be more along the lines of happiness that they see in their mentee, and the strength of their relationship. Sophia, in particular, mentioned how much she enjoyed seeing her mentee become a different person:

> It was very refreshing, because it was a student that I didn't know anything about, and she was a very intimidating person, she didn't have a lot of people around her, and it was...nice to...learn a different side and...to go through the steps of her feeling more and more comfortable with me. It was really awesome to see her open up, and become a different person, around me, at least.

Also notable was that each of the mentors conveyed the sense of a certain equality implied in the relationship that isn't always part of a mentoring type of relationship, which traditionally implies, or at least exists within, a hierarchy. Alexis claimed that she and her mentee had "built this relationship together," and later in the transcript, Sophia noted she and her mentee were still just "just learning about each other." These types of remarks, in which the mentors spontaneously mentioned enjoying the friendships, watching mentees become more comfortable, and seeing their mentee happier, were surprisingly prominent and prevalent, occurring in eleven out of the twelve transcripts.

Not feeling it, and not wanting to. The final empathy theme describes the many instances of mentors difficulty connecting with their mentees, and sometimes intentionally limiting the degree of empathy they felt. One of the most common instances of empathic interference was difficulty getting a regular space and time to meet. Less common instances of this type of interference included a mentee struggling with gender identity issues, which was pretty far outside the mentor's personal experience. When I

asked what it was like meeting her mentee for the first time, Shawna stated her initial discomfort with this quite frankly:

> Uh, it was awk-ward. Because it's like technically, my person is a girl, but he's like getting his name changed and stuff like that...so it's like when he first told me, I was like, "Oh. Well..."<laughs>
>
> J: So is he born boy becoming girl, or born girl becoming boy?
>
> S: Girl becoming boy. And like he just was, like, he told me that like, if I'm talking and stuff and he wants to be called "he" or "him", and like, he doesn't like when people will like call him by his actual name, so he was like getting it changed, and, he was saying that like, he would be bullied a lot and stuff like that, and I was like, kinda like, didn't know what to do... I just kinda sat there, and was like, "Okay..."
>
> J: Wow. So, have you...worked with any transgender kids before?
>
> S: No...
>
> J: Have you got any people in your family going through similar...
>
> S: I have, I do have a couple people in my family. Um, and I like, have friends that, are like gay and whatnot and stuff, and it doesn't bother me any...it just, it was the first day, 'Here you go...'

However, intentional limit setting turned out to have some of the most interesting findings of this section. Intentional Limits was a code used to describe events in which a mentor consciously reduced the empathic connection that they might have with a client for their own best interest. I found this to be the case fairly often, that mentors who had a *capacity* to connect with and relate to the feelings of others in no way meant they had an *obligation.* When I asked Ali, one of the more highly empathic mentors, about her relationships with struggling students, she revealed her hard-as-nails side surprisingly quickly:

> I've actually found that some of the kids that, they're openly, like I've had some kids that like, openly tell me they hate me. I"m one of those kids that either you hate me or you love me.
>
> J: Oh really?

> A: Not in between. Because I'm just really blunt and honest....with everything. So, like, I found it's easier for me to get past the people that are like, 'I just plain out hate you.' I'm like, 'Alright.' I mean, I can't do anything about it.

What I found remarkable was that Ali brought this up when I asked if it was *easier* to relate to other struggling students. She was quick to show that if she was sensitive, in no way did she wish to be seen as weak. Ariel found that mentoring helped her limit how bad she felt for her friends who were dealing with issues that were really not all that "big a deal", although – unlike Ali – she didn't seem to like setting that limit. In response the the question about whether mentoring changed they way she interacted with family and friends, she replied:

> Uh, a little bit. Like, it's, listening to my friends stories sometimes when they're having stresses it makes it easer for me to kinda like, put what I'm thinking about what's going on in my life back on the back burner and just listen to them for a little bit, but also I think kind of in a, kind of, in a bad way because if they're complaining, like one of them complains about this guy she likes but it's not really working, and I'm just like, and it comes into my mind, there are people dealing with a lot worse, and.....it's hard, because it's like, this is bad, for her. It's not necessarily bad for somebody else, but it's bad for her, so it's kinda comparing tolerance levels of people, I guess.

The importance of good limit setting was most articulately expressed by one of the most sensitive mentors, Amy, who winced while she talked as if it actually hurt to listen to people who were just being negative. After a brief discussion of people that seem to like to make themselves miserable, Amy draws her line:

> With, with my friends...I'm very cold towards some of my friends, just because that's kind of how you need to treat them...because a lot of my friends, because I can take...I don't want to say take control, they take advantage of me a little bit, because I'm very emotional, and they want somebody to sympathize with them, they want that empathy, but they want it sooo much, and I'm like, 'Honey, I can't do that all the time. It

> hurts me.' They don"t understand that it's hurting me, too. So, and I hate to see them like that.

The idea of good boundaries was discussed in training, but these mentors seemed to have an intuitive sense of when it's not healthy to be too *emotionally* connected with a client, which was not something that we had covered in training, aside from a brief presentation on the importance of self-care. This would be a good area to cover in more depth during training, as it appears to be a difficult and confusing part of empathy development.

Summary of findings in empathy. The conceptual illustration showing empathy influenced by self-concept and the mentoring experience, and conceptually connected empathic connections is supported by these excerpts, which weave back and forth between empathy as a part of the character, part of their mentorship work, and finally, a significant part of their existing relationships. There were a range of abilities to express empathy verbally, but each mentor appeared to have an intuitive sense of how empathy functions in the context of mentoring, as well as how to use empathy to bridge their personal experience with that of their mentee. Finally, the findings on limit setting show that there is a danger to the free exercise of empathy, which was creating stressful situations for mentors both in their formal and informal roles. More attention to this area in particiular may be needed, so that programs don't unintentionally harm those that offered their hands, and hearts, to help.

Moral reasoning. There were several questions on the semi-structured interview protocol that ere designed to elicit responses from the mentors about their experiences, perceptions, attitudes and feelings related to moral reasoning. The questions ranged from the more neutral and objective ("How would you define moral reasoning?"), to the more

emotionally charged ("Did it used to bother you very much when you saw people being treated unfairly?"). There were questions that were more abstract ("How do you know whether or not you are doing the right thing?"), as well as questions intended to reveal trends ("Has that changed since you started serving as a mentor?"). Frequently, mentors would tell stories and provide examples. These anecdotes provided much of the material for the subsequent analysis.

As a coding category detailed in Table 11, moral reasoning was the least frequently applied. The abstract nature of some of the questions seemed to lead to occasionally brief responses, deflections or confessions of ignorance ("I used to know but I forget."). However, the depth, color, and variety of events and characters made up for its somewhat infrequent application. The six codes that emerged from the data were Definition, Judgment & Stereotypes, Perspective Taking, Universal & Relative Morality, Moral Guides, and Personal Experience with Injustice and Unfairness.

Table 11. **Moral Reasoning Thematic Analysis Results**

Element	**Code**	**Frequency**	**Prevalence**	**Associated Themes**
Moral Reasoning		118	100%	
	Judgment & Stereotypes	32	67%	*People Need Reasons*
	Perspective Taking	23	92%	*Guided by Instinct*
	Definition	15	92%	*People Need Reasons*
	Moral Guides	12	67%	*Guiding Lights*
	Universal vs. Relative Morality	11	58%	*Guided By Instinct*
	Personal Experience	7	25%	*People Need Reasons, Guiding Lights*

Moral reasoning, as a more abstract construct, was encountered considerably less frequently than the other codes – except in the case of some of the more mature mentors. Even with the relatively sparse data set, there were several themes that revealed the nuanced understanding of moral reasoning, the multiple influences on moral behavior, and the importance of role models. These three themes were titled: *People Need Reasonsl Guided by Instinct, and By Conscience;* and *Guiding Lights.*

People need reasons. The first theme reflects the way mentors spoke about assisting mentees in their thinking about moral concerns. When I initially asked for their thoughts on moral reasoning, I was expecting some blank stares, as *moral reasoning* isn't exactly a household term, but what I was not expecting was how much depth mentors brought to the topic, sometimes starting with the most simple definitions of the term. For example, Sophia used the following definition:

> I think the moral reasoning comes in to help people comes in because you need a reason to...tell them what to do. They don't want to be just told, 'Well, you should do this instead.' Moral reasoning comes in the fact of explaining to them why you're choosing to make that decision. It shows them why you're making that decision, and why they should make that decision. Instead of just, looking at them and saying, 'No, you should do this.' It gives them a reason to believe that that would work.

While Sophia used a slightly different variation of the term *reason* than I had intended by the question ("giving people reasons," instead of *reasoning*), her response reveals a surprisingly astute insight into how sharing the thought process behind a given recommendation can play an important role in helping others have confidence in that recommendation. Giving advice while simultaneously demonstrating reasoning skills, or even just "giving people reasons" as Sophia alluded to, provides an interesting conceptual bridge between giving advice and fostering autonomy.

Some mentors fostered autonomy through helping people understand why others act the way they do. Ariel gave a powerful example to her sister, of how judgment & stereotypes are results of poor understanding:

> But my younger sister has a lot of issues, where there are people that look at her like she's different, I guess...they'll call her weird or something, and she goes, 'But I don't understand why,' and I'm just like, 'It's because they don't know you.' Trying to help her understand, why people create the stereotypes, I guess. I don't really know how to describe it.
>
> J: So, you're not as concerned with how people look at her, would that be fair to say?
>
> A: Yeah, and I'm trying to help her be less concerned with how people look at her...because I never really cared about what people thought of me. But, she's always been somebody who's very judgmental of herself, and worries when people look at her differently....trying to be like, 'Well, they don't know. And the reason they look at you differently is because they don't know.'

Some of reasons for acting morally were much more down to earth. Sarah summed up her decision making process around some moral dilemmas, such as whether to go to a party where there might be drinking, this way:

> Well, like, my mom is one of the health teachers, so, like, a lot of that stuff, I get at home, and I get it here, so I just kind of think about how much trouble I'd get in, and make a decision.

Tricia used a similar litmus test, which seemed to be a simplified, but no less powerful, version of the thinking process. When she was asked about how she knows what a moral choice is, she responded:

> Um, I ask myself...like, what would I, how much trouble would I get into if I do this?
>
> J: <laughs>
>
> T: If it involves a lot of trouble...then I probably shouldn't do it.

However, avoiding trouble wasn't the most common reason given for making good decisions. Many mentors used some combination of empathy, perspective taking and, most interestingly, group interest. This last rationale was stated in different ways by different mentors, but Ali expressed succinctly:

> Um, when I make decisions on...whether this would be a good idea, I don't know, I don't have a good example. But yeah, I do think of like is this going to affect people around me?

Alexis revealed that for her, what's right for everyone wasn't just part of the picture, but was how she oriented her entire moral compass. When I asked her what she used to make good decisions, she said:

> I think if it's not just better for me, but better for everyone in the situation...

I found it endlessly fascinating how many different thinking styles, patterns and nuances these mentors expressed when speaking about how they made good decisions. These questions appeared to tap into a really rich internal dialogue for these teens as they wrestled with the many considerations inherent in making choices that work well for everyone involved.

Guided by instinct, and by conscience. The second theme that emerged connects excerpts in which mentors reveal the many influences on the moral decision making, and the many ways mentors conceptualized it. Shawna said that doing the right thing was becoming more of an instinct:

> I actually think a lot less now...like, I used to overthink...everything <laughs>. And, like before I used to be one of these people, I was just like, I wrote everything down, because I was just so worried that I wasn't gonna, like, get it all, or...I wasn't gonna, like, be good enough to be able to do everything. And, so, like, I would talk myself out of a lot of stuff just by overthinking it, and so I'm...finding myself not thinking as much, so it's like, if I know I wanna do something, and I know it's going to be good, then I'll just do it.

J: You think it's more of an instinct now than it used to be?

S: Yeah.

Sophia phrased the changes in her thinking process quite eloquently as well, adding that she now takes more time reflecting back on decisions she has made in the past:

> Definitely, I'm thinking a lot more about how my decisions are rubbed off on the people around me....I find myself wondering why I"m making the decision, before I make the decision, which makes it a lot better. Whereas before, like you said, I was much more impulsive, whereas now I'm thinking to myself why am I making this decision before I make it. I find myself looking back at decisions and being proud of them now, and knowing that, I knew the repercussions that were going to happen before I made the decision.

The power of that looking back and reflecting on whether they had done well, was very significant for several mentors. Ariel said that the consequences of a bad decision "bugged her" even if everyone else had already forgotten about it. When I asked her how she knew if she had done the right thing, she told me:

> That's hard. I stress myself out a lot with that. I tend to do that a lot, I will sit and in my head, 'Did I do that right?' I will stress myself out a lot, but I don't know, I guess, I'll stress it out, but sometimes, even if I'll just go through, and it gets to the point where I"m like there isn't anything I could do that would have been better. Or if I think, I really could have done this, instead of this, it makes, because I go over this in my head, it makes it easier to go up to the person later on, and say, 'Wow, I wish I hadn't done that, I'm sorry.... It may not have even bugged you at all, but the fact that I could have done something else instead of what I did, bugs me.'

The level of detail that these mentors worked through, choosing one options out of many, and holding themselves to a standard that no one else even knew about, seems remarkable.

Guiding lights. The final theme relates the ways mentors spoke about their moral role models. Eight out of the twelve mentors mentioned at least one person that that they regularly went to to assist with moral decision making. For many of them, as it was for Ali, there's no place like "home", and usually that meant Mom:

> Mostly my mom. I go to her about a lot of things, and being, her being a teacher also, so I get her teacher side of things, and then she gets her mother's side, of how things should be, so I feel, going to her it usually, it makes things a little bit clearer for me to understand.
>
> J: Yeah. Any changes over the year in terms of who you go to, or how you figure things out? You think that's…
>
> A: It's pretty much the same.

Sometimes, however, their guide was someone that they could relate to a little more as a peer. Susan had a sister that was thirteen years older that played that role for her. A few mentors, such as Sarah, had friends that played that role:

> J: What's your second line of defense if you...are wavering…
>
> S: I talk to my best friend...ask her what she thinks, she's been there for me for a long time.

And some really felt that they were at their best when they used their own judgment. Nick, for instance, had friends he went to, but they didn't offer much in the way of assistance:

> Joshua: What do you generally use...to help you make the right…moves?
>
> Nick: I look at it from the other person's point of view, and then how I would feel in that situation, if the same thing were presented to me, as in , 'How would I react to that?'
>
> J: Is there anyone you go to?
>
> N: I have a couple people I go to, to talk things over, and they usually tell me to 'do what I need to do,' no matter how it affects the other person, but…<laughs>

J: So, you end up, kinda, relying on your own judgment?

N: Yeah.

Summary of findings in moral reasoning. The major finding from the range of responses that mentors gave concerning the area of moral reasoning was the depth, scope and detail in their descriptions of how they thought, felt and acted in the realm of moral decision making. Every mentor in the sample had actively struggled with issues of right and wrong, and gave a robust description of the basis on which they made decisions, how they knew if it was the right decision, the consequences for bad decisions, as well as the people they went to if they weren't able to reach a satisfactory decision on their own.

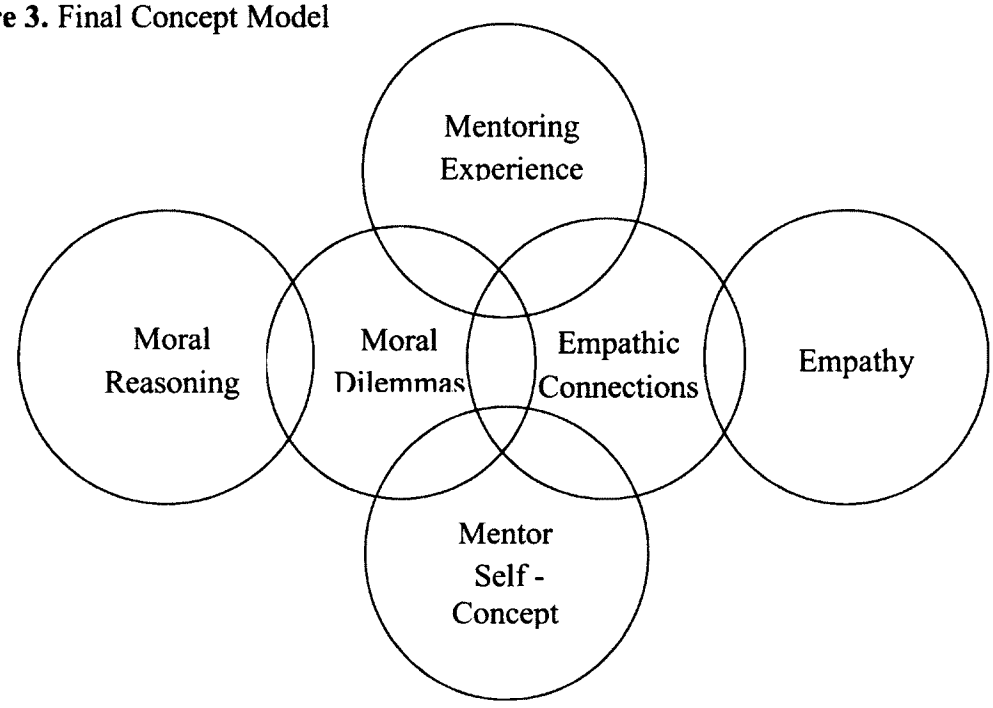
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

One of the adventitious aspects of compensating for the data corruption in the quantitative data sets was the ability to go much deeper into the findings that emerged from the transcripts and the mentor profiles. This exploration allowed a more complete development of an adequate conceptual model to address the first research question: *How do student mentors understand their experience of peer mentoring and its effects on their empathy and moral reasoning?*

A conceptual model was created based on themes that emerged from the data and provides explanatory power for how the mentors understood their own experience as a peer mentor. Each of the six elements of the conceptual model corresponds to the thematic analysis as well as part of the research question: Mentoring Experience, Moral Reasoning, Moral Dilemmas, Empathic Connections, Empathy, and Mentor Self – Concept.

Figure 3. Final Concept Model



Description of Final Conceptual Model. There are now six, rather than four, elements in the final model. The elements are Moral Reasoning, Empathy, Moral Dilemmas, Empathic Connections, Mentor Self-Concept, and Mentoring Experience. Moral Reasoning and Empathy are situated to the left and right of the model.

There are two elements situated between them, which are Moral Dilemmas, which is how the mentors perceive moral concerns and apply their moral reasoning; and Empathic Connections, which is how mentors perceive emotional concerns and apply their empathic capacities. Moral Dilemmas and Empathic Connections are conceptually connected with one another, to represent the the degree to which mentors are empathically connected about the people involved in the moral dilemmas.

Mentor Self-Concept and Mentoring Experience are situated separately from the abstract concepts, but conceptually connected with both Moral Dilemmas and Empathic Connections, which illustrates how the mentors thought about themselves, and about their experience, in terms of their moral struggles as well as in terms of their empathic bonds. The central features of the model were arranged in this way to illustrate the connections mentors made in their thinking about their experiences, and how their mentoring experience influenced the way that they spoke about empathy and moral reasoning.

The Moral Reasoning element is integrated into the model through Moral Dilemmas, the domain in which Moral Reasoning is applied. The Moral Dilemmas element is then conceptually connected to the each of the two mentoring realms, Mentor Self-Concept and Mentoring Experience, as well as to Empathic Connections. This configuration represents the way that mentors spoke about moral reasoning through the

lens of their struggles and decisions within their mentoring experience, as part of their self-concept, and within the context of their existing empathic relationships.

Similarly, the element of Empathy was placed to the right of the conceptual model, interacting with each of the two mentoring realms only through Empathic Connections, which is the applied domain of Empathy. Empathy served as the motive for their involvement, however, it was the mentors' empathic connections that appeared to generate the emotional impact of the mentoring experience, as well as their self concept.

Empathy is depicted as distinct from the elements of Moral Dilemmas and Moral Reasoning. It was represented in this way to illustrate how empathy was distinguished from moral reasoning by the use of more emotionally charged language, and its less deliberative, more intuitionally-based decision making process.

Evidence of empathy was present throughout their stories of their mentoring experience, both formally as they were taught some of the basics of person centered interactions, and informally, as they talked about their mentee, their friends, and their family. Most of the mentors struggled to speak about empathy outside of these connections. These findings provides support for the representation of empathy as a discrete element which intersects the other elements only through application. The model also provides support for a more situationally sensitive and relationally based conceptualization of how adolescent mentors learn to understand the role of empathy in human interactions.

This model can be seen as a practical, situationally-based alternative to the cognitive, hierarchical, stage focused schemas typically associated with the development of moral reasoning in the tradition of Piaget and Kohlberg, and more compatible with the

hybrid understanding of moral reasoning and empathy that Hoffman has been diligently pursuing. The traditional understanding that moral reasoning was highly correlated with other areas of cognitive development was consistent with the results of this study. Mentors' expression of principles appeared to correlate with their academic performance and verbal intelligence. However, the mentors consistently expressed surprisingly insightful moral reasoning principles, but almost exclusively these insights were enmeshed within their decision making and existing emotional connections.

Mentors rarely spoke about moral principles in categorical terms, such as the right to be presumed innocent or to be safe in school, but rather spoke about moral decisions in the context of stories and personal connections with the people involved. The prevalence, intensity, and frequency of these type of expressions reveal how mentors connect moral reasoning with empathy primarily through the context of their experiences in the peer mentoring program.

Significance of the Study

The significance of the present investigation is two-fold. One is that a properly designed and supported mentoring opportunity, even with irregularities in the frequency and duration of the mentoring relationships, can provide numerous benefits to the personal growth, social development, moral responsiveness, and career preparation of students selected to be mentors. Given the opportunity, mentors were able to actively reflect on the impact of intentionally forming a helping relationship and how that influenced their personal qualities such as patience, listening abilities, trustworthiness, and perspective taking. A number of mentors reported improvements in their social

development, including reduced anxiety, increased confidence, as well as a personal satisfaction in seeing their mentee become more socially connected and comfortable.

Many mentors also reported taking a more active role in responding to moral dilemmas and bullying situations as a result of their experience mentoring. Finally, several reported that their desire to be a mentor was an important part of their career preparation in the helping professions.

The second conclusion of this study is that research involving service learning opportunities with adolescents has a valuable role to play not only in social programs that benefit teens, but in the conceptual development of empathy and moral reasoning scholarship. The key developmental learning tasks of adolescence in regards to social and personal identity development align well with the goals of social scientists seeking to understand the relationship of constructs such as empathy and moral reasoning within the context of human experience.

High school programs offer a valuable chance to investigate how adolescents understand and develop key characteristics of their adult personalities. Given the increasing consciousness of the dangers of social isolation, bullying, and moral maladjustment, these research opportunities have a critical role to play not only in the ongoing development of scholarship in this area, but in the active improvement of schools as safe, encouraging environments for the academic, social, and personal growth of adolescents.

Discussion of Key Mentoring Findings

Operational definition of mentoring. When considering the conclusions for this study, it became apparent that a clear operational definition of what exactly qualifies as a

mentoring relationship is absolutely essential. Due to situational and design constraints, a rigorous definition was not utilized in this investigation. The methodology did not specify a certain age difference, and the frequency and reliability of meetings – while ideally weekly, over several months – was found to be highly variable in practice, due to the program's status as an extracurricular activity.

Of the twelve mentoring relationships covered in this study, only five met the criteria specified by Dubois & Karcher (2013), and significant differences were immediately apparent between the mentoring experiences of those mentors who were a couple of years older, had weekly meetings, sustained over several months – and those who did not. Based on the findings from this investigation, studies which do not clearly specify the age requirements, minimum duration and frequency cannot expect consistent results.

Differences between peer and traditional mentoring. In Kram's (1985) study on peer mentoring in work relationships, she found that the lack of a hierarchical dimension in peer mentoring assisted in the creation of more enduring and intimate relationships. In this study, I found a mix: mentors who felt a real distance from their clients – such as Shawna with her transgender mentee – were able to connect with and advocate for an entire population of students. Ariel said it was easier not having gone through any of those experiences, because she wouldn't be distracted. Other times, similarity in age and experience really did seem to help: Alexis said she felt her experience was very "relatable" to her mentee's, and that helping her also helped her recognize some of the strengths she had gained going through her own troubles.

Selection of students to serve as peer mentors. The study supported key aspects of existing scholarship regarding mentor selection, as good academic performance, career aspirations, and student leadership experience all played important roles not only in their initial selection, but throughout their mentoring experience. For example, Amy mentioned how she bonded with her mentee around their mutual feelings about other students who just "don't seem to get" why it's important to do well in school. Student leadership played a large role, not only in developing their active participation in school affairs, but also as part of creating a cohesive group bond that existed within and outside their participation in the mentoring program. All of the mentors were chosen in part for their genuine concern for others, which was expressed throughout their interviews, with the codes for empathic concern one of the top two coding categories.

Peer mentoring trends. Even within the limited scope, brief timeframe, and various logistical constraints of this program, many aspects common to peer programs nationwide became also apparent in this undertaking. As Kram (1985) noted in her observations, there was a significant diversity in both the intimacy levels and the types of support provided by peer mentors.

Despite the prevalent and powerful influence of teen culture and public awareness campaigns to "pay it forward", mentors did not seem to participate in the program as part of their belief in any moral principles or generational awareness, but rather saw mentoring as "making sense", good for "people skills," and as part of their overall preparation for life after high school.

Mentoring relationships. In the interviews, mentors often made connections between their formal and informal mentoring efforts and often confirmed how much of

an influence they have on each other's social development. They frequently expressed pleasure in helping one another cope with life's difficulties and seemed to confirm research (McManus & Russell, 2007; Karcher, 2009) that emphasizes the benefits provided to both parties.

Several of the mentors mentioned how much they enjoyed working with friends as fellow mentors, and the opportunities provided by the trainings to connect with other empathic, high-achieving youth in other schools and grades. The brevity of the program precluded the development of any real "team identity", but it was clear in the interviews, as well as the videos collected during the trainings, that the mentors enjoyed one another's company and the opportunities provided by this effort.

The results for mentors who might at one time have been classified "at risk" were mixed. One mentor who was actively in counseling throughout his mentoring experience hardly met with his mentee at all, and during the interview focused mostly on his new relationship with his dad. Others, who had gone through some family disruptions and difficult home situations, did report using their experience to help them connect with their mentees. It was clear that these mentors in particular – and, presumably, their mentees – would have benefited from more intensive support and supervision.

Outcomes for mentees and schools. Although no large scale surveys were administered, mentee gains, as reported by the mentors, were frequent. As Karcher (2005) discovered, an increase in social connectedness was the most frequently mentioned benefit. Many mentors reported a gain in their mentee's confidence and social comfort level – in the words of Laura, "just seeing him open up."

As the Sprinthall, Hall & Gerler (1992) found, helping mentees adjust to family disturbances was also an important part of the mentoring experience. Several of the mentors worked directly with their mentees on coping with family disruptions – sometimes due to a conflict situation, such as a divorce, other times related to more benign changes of life, such as a beloved brother going to college. Shawna, Alexis, and Sarah all reported direct advocacy, enlisting guidance support for a bullying situation, or both. Most of the mentors reported more confidence and active interventions in peer conflict situations. Two mentors mentioned working with their mentee to accept additional assistance with academics, and helping to arrange those services.

Outcomes for mentors. As Cowie & Smith (2010) found in their work, mentors frequently reported feeling more connected in the mentoring relationship, with their friends, and with the school and school activities in general. Mentors came across as confident and eager to talk about their experiences – although none of them were directly rewarded for their participation, all of them showed up for their interview and were cooperative and engaged.

One of the more surprising outcomes for mentors who participated in the program was an increase in what Yates & Youniss (1996) termed *agency*, which they defined as "the ability to change conditions for everyone". This political and social awareness was only expressed in a nascent form, advocating for peers getting picked on in class, but a couple quickly made the connection to other strangers in need. As Ali memorably stated, "If that was my mentee, I would not be sitting here!"

As Youniss and Yates (1997) also noted, those that had more emotional engagement in their service learning appeared to make more of a conscious connection to

become better advocates and more actively engaged in improving 'social conditions for everyone,' or, as Alexis said, "not just better for me, but better for everyone in the situation." Agency also appeared in smaller ways for individuals in sometimes surprising contexts – Laura spoke about how mentoring made her realize that her softball team needed her, and Ali said that next time she's going to be "hitting off the men's tees" for her golf team.

Finally, both of the seniors were college-bound, and many of the students who were selected for mentoring were increasingly focusing on careers in the helping professions, providing additional support for Eccles and Barber's (1999) findings on the multiple benefits of pro-social school activities.

Summary of Key Empathy Findings

Operational definition of empathy. Mentors' responses were tremendously rich in this area, yielding connections to the full range of definitions that emerged as the term "empathy" was first becoming recognized in the field of human psychology. Some mentors had a working definition of empathy that was based on intuition, close to Titchener's (1909) original conceptualization of empathy as a "kinesthetic image". Others, such as Ariel, understood empathy in a more clinical, intentional sense, which seems more aligned with Piaget and Inhelder (1963), who understood empathy as a more cognitive form of perspective taking. Significantly, all mentors used some form of the word "understand" or "thought" more often than "felt" (although this was sometimes used in conjunction), which seems to indicate that there was a strong cognitive component to their empathic experience. Consistent with Rogers' beliefs, all mentors reported using empathy in their work with mentees, and in their retelling of their

experiences, it often occurred at key moments in their formation of their mentoring relationship.

Recent conceptual developments in empathy. Based on the way mentors discussed and illustrated the role of empathy in their mentoring experience, the findings from the current exploration appeared to support the key premise of both Kohut (1959) and Lietz et al. (2011) that empathy is a mode of cognition that consists of complex configurations. In addition, there were several examples supporting Hoffman's (1987) assertion that empathic arousal is able to transform moral principles into 'hot cognitions', most memorably demonstrated by Ali's passionate exclamation, "If that was my mentee, I would not be sitting here!" The mentoring experience appeared to offer Ali and others the opportunity to develop the 'conscious, reflective sympathetic distress' (p.48) that Hoffman believed was necessary for moral action.

Evidence corroborating recent trends in empathy. Several mentors reported personally experiencing bullying or seeing it occur with their mentee or other struggling students, consistent with research indicating wide bullying prevalence (Nansel, et al., 2001). The motivations for many of the mentors joining the program was personal and career based, consistent with findings of lower self-reported empathic tendencies. This could be due to an actual decrease in empathetic behavior, or also a change in the perceived acceptability of reporting empathic concern as a motivating force. Although it was not targeted in the interview protocol, for several of the mentors, overcoming their own social anxiety was a significant part their motivations for becoming a peer mentor.

Empathy development in adolescents. Although methodological constraints prevented a true longitudinal analysis of development, the videotapes of the various

training sessions and many of the mentors' recollections revealed, while their personalities remained fairly stable, they displayed notable gains in empathic sensitivity, awareness, and concern – congruent with the experience of Davis and Franzoi (1991). Whether this is due to developmental factors or the mentoring experience cannot be determined, but what is notable is that they frequently mentioned the importance of their role as mentors, which aligns with Davis and Franzoi's speculation that an increased capacity for role-taking would play a key part in this process. Laible, Carlo, and Roesch (2004) observed the distinctive nature of peer relationships in terms of their equality and reciprocity, and this was affirmed in this investigation by the mentors' frequent expressions of pleasure and satisfaction in the reciprocation of their efforts to form the relationship. This was concisely expressed by Toby's recollection: "The most enjoyable part was when he actually started talking to me!"

Empathy and emotional health. In support of the research of Zahn-Waxler, Cole, Welsh, & Fox (1995), empathic concern appeared to correlate with a number of other pro-social attributes. A number of mentors expressed increased self-confidence and reduced social anxiety, exemplified by Laura's determination to rejoin softball, Toby's increased involvement in athletics and his off-school mentoring program, Sarah's advocacy for a bullied peer in the classroom, and Tricia's increased involvement in school activities. Ali and Tricia both signed up for advanced college classes at a nearby university. Nick, the mentor who was in counseling all year, decided that he was ready to terminate counseling based in part on his successes negotiating family and friendship troubles, which appears to be in agreement with Cliffordson's (2002) scholarship indicating a correlation with improved social functioning. And, in an interesting

connection to the moral reasoning element, several mentors mentioned significant changes in their moral reasoning coinciding with the changes in their empathic conern, consistent with the work of Detert et al. (2008).

Summary of Key Moral Reasoning Findings

Operational definition of moral reasoning. While the term 'moral reasoning' is not in every day parlance, it was clear that the mentors were quite comfortable discussing how they make moral decisions, and what constitutes moral behavior. In line with the sequentially oriented framework of Piaget, Dewey and Kohlberg, a developmental progression of what 'right' behavior entails was also immediately apparent. Several mentors were quick to mention immediate negative consequences, such as Sarah's statement about her mom being one of the health teachers, while others were more concerned with more abstract principles, such as Ariel's beliefs that people only see her sister as 'weird' because they don't know her. What was common to all of the mentors' explanations was that they all utilized phrasing consistent with conscious, thoughtful reasoning about moral dilemmas, aligning with the definition provided by Narvaez & Bock (2002), and consistent with Dewey's strong belief in experiential learning.

Moral reasoning development in adolescents. All of the mentor interviews provided very strong support for the increase in abstract reasoning and deductive reasoning predicted by the literature. While the capacity for abstract thought varied between mentors, they were frequently able to identify moral dilemmas, weigh various options, and transfer abstract concepts to practical application, and even insights gained in one type of experience, such as mentoring, to another, such as family relationships.

The majority of the teens in this sample enjoyed socializing and appeared motivated for others' welfare, although a surprising number did admit to anxiety in social situations.

All of the mentors were involved in a number of extracurricular activities and appeared to have a wide social network, in concert with research (Taylor & Walker, 1997; Tesson & Youniss, 1995) on the importance of social interactions on moral reasoning. Carlo, Eisenberg & Knight's (1992) finding that sympathy correlated with moral reasoning levels did seem consistent with results from this study, as mentors frequently mentioned considering the impact of their actions on the people around them, and a couple of mentors in particular expressed concern that they 'make the right move', to the point of personal distress.

There were a number of occasions where mentors used self-reflective approaches, rather than reliance on adult authority or an established code of conduct from training – and this lines up with Eisenberg et al.'s (1991) observations on adolescent development, as well as Byrnes' (1988) & Gemelli's (1996) predictions of advances in formal operations and deductive reasoning. Mentors never mentioned a desire for adult approval or praise, although a few did consult with adult mentors when confronting a particularly difficult situation.

How moral reasoning is learned. One of the more interesting results found in this study is that, although decision making, ethics and confidentiality were all covered and emphasized in training, and most of the mentors reported enjoying the training, moral dilemmas were always discussed in the context of the mentor's actual mentoring experience, or their current relationships. This finding is consistent with the scholarship covered in the review of the literature that underscored the key role that experiential and

social learning plays in the development of ethical reasoning, insight, and decision-making skills. McHenry's (2000) observations on the power of reflective dialogue to encourage moral growth was also validated through these interviews, as mentors frequently discussed moral insights gained during mentoring sessions, and even had a number of helpful suggestion about the design of the program – already eager to be part of creating a better program. These types of insights and observations by mentors reveal that the experience did seem to serve as a type of proving ground, preparing students for a lifetime of future situations in which the problems may be more complex, and the consequences more severe.

The influence of moral reasoning on behavior. The reliance on experiential methods in the design, implementation, and evaluation of this program allowed for many opportunities to assess how the concepts of empathy and moral reasoning actually played out in the mentors' experiences, both as a part of the mentoring experience as well as in their day-to-day lives. This was a mixed blessing, while the situational contexts allowed for a rich exploration of their moral conduct, it was often difficult to get a solid understanding of mentors' grasp of moral reasoning in the abstract. For a couple of mentors in particular, they were able to switch between the ideal and the real with some degree of fluency, explaining in the abstract and demonstrating in real world experiences. However, Blasi's (1980) claims of incoherent definitions and inconsistent applications in the field of moral behavior applied equally well to the real lives of most mentors. It is not possible, within the confines of this study, to extract any causal links between moral reasoning and behavior, except to say that the large majority of the mentors demonstrated a real interest and surprisingly keen insights into the many factors that come into play

when negotiating moral dilemmas in the dynamic and dramatic context of modern high school life.

Empathic Connections and Moral Dilemmas

One of the most interesting findings of my investigation into these domains was that approaching the area of empathic connections and moral dilemmas the strong conceptual connection is evidenced and justified by the way that mentors spoke about emotional connections and good decision making in the same sentence, sometimes in the same breath. It was clear that the emotional context of moral reasoning is vibrant within the thinking of these mentors.

Another finding is that the roles they play with their mentees, with struggling students, with friends, with teams, and with entire groups of kids although quite nuanced and diverse, is surprisingly interconnected, as mentors frequently made connections between aspects of their experience that did not seem immediately apparent. One of the quotes that jumped out was one of Ali's: "If that was my mentee, I would not be sitting here."

Finally, coming from their diverse family situations and quite an array of mentoring experiences, several mentors were able to make the connection to larger, categorical principles such as honesty, advocacy, or compassion for those that are struggling. The ease with which they connected the individual event with the general principle, and the emotional struggles that came along with their wrestling with how to apply these principles provided a rich field of study for how critical these concerns are in the daily lives of adolescents, and how easily they are overlooked in the day to day routine of high school life.

Limitations

There are a number of considerations that limit the generalization of this study to larger populations. The most significant of these is the lack of a control group, which made it impossible to compare findings from the group of mentores to a group of similar students without any mentoring experience. The single-interview design, although chosen more due to logistical constraints than due to validity considerations, limited the ability of the analysis to make meaningful conclusions regarding actual, rather than perceived, changes across time.

Secondarily, the small sample size, which was a consequence of the small student populations of the schools participating in the study, significantly limits generalizability to larger groups of similar students. Although this was partially addressed through using two schools and a mixed-methods design to acquire a rich data set, a greater number of similar settings would be desirable to increase statistical power. A larger sample, with a deliberate effort to recruit adequate numbers of males and females, would also allow for greater opportunities to examine differential outcomes between genders, as well as the effect of same-gender versus different gender mentoring relationships.

Another limitation is possible variability in program implementation between the various schools. As I can attest to after attempting to set up my own peer program, the logistics involved in coordinating referrals, obtaining parental permission, arranging locations and meeting times, and establishing supervision were complex, and there were significant differences in program implementation between, and within, schools. The students were selected to participate in the programs according to suitability criteria and their participation in the research process was voluntary.

Selection bias did likely play a role in the composition of the final mentor group, potentially biasing the sample towards those most likely to display empathic and moral reasoning abilities. Finally, while I attempted to enroll a wide range of students for the interviews, it is possible that self-selection played a role here as well.

Implications for Mentoring Program Design

While all of the mentors in my sample enjoyed the process of training, mentoring, and reflecting, this study revealed several components to the success of the program, as well as several key challenges that face those who would like to run a peer mentoring program in their school. Strong, collaborative relationships with other professionals and institutions were one of the most successful parts of our program. The training process, consisting of three all-day workshops run throughout the first half of the program, provided the mentors with basic counseling skills, a sense of group identity, and an opportunity to practice and refine their mentoring techniques. The fact that the workshops were run on a university campus created a sense of learning and future preparation for the mentors themselves. Our efforts to keep mentor welfare and success a centerpiece of the program helped the mentors feel like a valued part of a team effort, and that was reflected in their interviews. Providing for similar mentor support in future programs appears to be an essential part of program success.

Many of the mentors revealed in their responses that they had a strong interest in providing guidance for future mentees. Those students would be unmatched resources to involve in the design and implementation of successive training programs, as they would be able to continue with the successes of the previous year, and compensate for

weaknesses. Their experience and practical wisdom would provide a strong foundation for the program to build on in the fall.

While mentors all had positive things to say about the training and the level of support and supervision, every single mentor reported difficulty managing the logistics of finding times and locations to meet. As adolescents are often extraordinarily active and high schools are quite busy places, finding willing staff and creating a reliable system for arranging times, finding locations, and tracking the frequency of mentoring sessions would provide a greater consistency in the mentoring process and allow for early detection of mentoring relationships that don't appear to be productive or helpful.

Finally, the creation of opportunities for a reflection process, so that students become more conscious of their growth and development both personally and professionally, was another key benefit offered by the research aspect of this program. While it is not always possible to partner with higher education institutions, finding ways to involve the active reflection of the mentors themselves as a part of the evaluation process seems to be a good way to monitor outcomes as well as ensure that the mentors experience is heard and valued.

All of these challenges and supports could be addressed by the establishment of an elective mentoring class as part of the academic curriculum, which provide stability, consistency, monitoring, and an opportunity to engage in social and emotional learning in an academic context. As parents and administrators come to see mentoring is a valuable part of student growth and future preparation, greater community support may arise to sustain ongoing efforts for more peer programming.

Implications for Future Research

The most immediately applicable implication is that future research into empathy and moral reasoning is that key aspects of these concepts lie in two areas: adolescent development, and service learning. This study has revealed that teenagers can play a valuable part in conceptual development of these areas, as their personal development and increasingly articulate expression of conceptual understanding seem to provide a window of opportunity for the enterprising researcher. In addition, the service learning opportunities which are integral to the study are likely to benefit the school, the mentees and the mentors, even as the research component simultaneously provides outcomes measurement, program oversight, and valuable scholarship to the social science community. If these areas can be more deeply integrated into the research process, richer and much more vibrant findings can be discovered than by simply using interviews, questionnaires, or standardized assessments alone.

Secondly, succesful mixed methods approaches need to be carefully overseen so that both components are approached with equal vigilance and rigor – possibly utilizing different researchers on the same research team that can each specialize in their approach without the risk of unconscious bias, and increasing the level of scrutiny required for accurate triangulation of these phenomena. While the qualitative and quantitative methods both bring complementary strengths, their overlapping weaknesses – in combination with the daunting workload that can face a single researcher – require collaborative research efforts to share the load, as well as widen the perspective.

The 80% female gender balance of the sample utilized in this study likely had a significant impact on the results. Future efforts would be well advised to investigate the

significant role likely played by gender characteristics and capacities, which would allow for greater comprehension of the role gender plays in outcomes for both mentors and mentees, and highlight changes that might be required for mentors and mentees of all gender identities to benefit from the mentoring process.

Although not a focus of this study, a comparative analysis of outcomes for both the mentees and the mentors would provide a much greater insight into the dynamics of the helping relationship that benefit both parties. Examing the perspectives of the mentees would enable a comparative analysis of benefits to mentee relative to those gained by the mentor. More attention to mentee perceptions would also provde an ability to differentiate between mutually advantageous mentoring arrangements and mentoring arrangements which primarily benefit only one party.

A need for increased attention to the definitions employed in the field is more evident than ever. A common understanding of mentoring, and of how empathy and moral reasoning are applied within the context of social science research would ensure that studies could be meaningfully compared and contrasted with one another, and the sum of their strengths would contribute to an integrated body of research into this increasingly important realm of inquiry.

Identifying effective interventions to counter the widespread decline in moral reasoning and the significant negative effects of poor empathic understanding must become a central focus of educational research if this area of social science is to remain relevant for American youth. Without a concentrated, coordinated, and comprehensive effort to reverse prevailing trends, widespread bullying behavior, increasing intolerance, prevalent cheating, and unethical conduct may well become the "new normal".

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APPENDIX A

The Defining Issues Test 2 (DIT-2) Description

From the Center for Ethical Development at the University of Alabama

The DIT is a device for activating moral schemas (to the extent that a person has developed them) and for assessing these schemas in terms of importance judgments. The DIT has dilemmas and standard items, and the subject's task is to rate and rank the items in terms of their moral importance. As the subject encounters an item that both makes sense and also taps into the subject's preferred schema, that item is rated and ranked as highly important.

The complete DIT-2 consists of five dilemmas: (1) a father contemplates stealing food for his starving family from the warehouse of a rich man hoarding food; (2) a newspaper reporter must decide whether to report a damaging story about a political candidate; (3) a school board chair must decide whether to hold a contentious and dangerous open meeting; (4) a doctor must decide whether to give an overdose of pain-killer to a suffering but frail patient; (5) college students demonstrate against U.S. foreign policy.

Validity for the DIT has been assessed in terms of seven criteria cited in over 400 published articles (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999; Thoma, 2002; Thoma, 2006)

1. Differentiation of various age/education groups:
   Studies of large composite samples (thousands of subjects) show that 30% to 50% of the variance of DIT scores is attributable to level of education in samples ranging from junior-high education to Ph.D.'s

2. Longitudinal gains:
   A 10-year longitudinal study shows significant gains of men and women, of college-attenders and non-college subjects, and people from diverse walks of life. A review of a dozen studies of freshman to senior college students (n=755) shows effect sizes of .80 ("large" gains). DIT gains are one of the most dramatic longitudinal gains in college of any measured developmental variable.

3. Correlations with cognitive development:
   DIT scores are significantly related to cognitive capacity measures of Moral Comprehension ($r = .60$), to the recall and reconstruction of Postconventional moral arguments, to Kohlberg's measure, and (to a lesser degree) to other cognitive-developmental measures.

4. DIT scores are sensitive to moral education interventions:

One review of over 50 intervention studies reports an effect size for dilemma discussion interventions to be .40 (moderate gains) while the effect size for comparison groups was only .09 (small gains).

5. Correlations to prosocial behaviors and professional decision making:

DIT scores are significantly linked to many prosocial behaviors and to desired professional decision making. One review reports that 37 out of 47 measures were statistically significant (see also Rest & Narvaez, 1994, for a discussion of professional decision making).

6. DIT scores are significantly linked to political attitudes and political choices:

In a review of several dozen correlates with political attitudes, DIT scores typically correlate in the range of $r = .40$ to .65. When combined in multiple regression with measures of cultural ideology, the combination predicts up to two-thirds of the variance of controversial public policy issues (such as abortion, religion in the public schools, women's roles, rights of the accused, rights of homosexuals, free speech issues).

7. Reliability:

Cronbach's alpha is in the upper .70s / low .80s. Test-retest reliability is about the same.

Further, DIT scores show discriminant validity from verbal ability/general intelligence and from Conservative/Liberal political attitudes. That is, the information in a DIT score predicts to the seven validity criteria above and beyond that accounted for by verbal ability/general intelligence or political attitudes (Thoma, Narvaez, Rest & Derryberry, 1999). Moreover, the DIT is equally valid for males and females (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999).

APPENDIX B

The Empathy Assessment Index (EAI)

50 items (*final 17 items are in bold*)

Five components: Affective Response (AR), Emotion Regulation (ER), Perspective Taking (PT), Self–OtherAwareness (SOA), and Empathic Attitudes (EA)

Q1 I am open to listening to the points of view of others. (PT)
Q2 I can imagine what it's like to be in someone else's shoes. (PT)
Q3 If a person is poor, I believe it is the result of bad personal choices. (EA)
Q4 When I see a stranger crying, I feel like crying. (AR)
Q5 I believe unemployment is brought on by individuals' failures. (EA)
Q6 I can tell how I am feeling emotionally by noticing how my body feels. (SOA)
Q7 When something exciting happens, I get so excited I feel out of control. (ER)
Q8 I consider other people's point of view in discussions. (PT)
Q9 Seeing someone dance makes me want to move my feet. (AR)
Q10 When someone insults me or verbally attacks me, I don't let it bother me. (ER)
Q11 I am not aware of how I feel about a situation until after the situation is over. (SOA)
Q12 I believe poverty is brought on by individuals' failures. (EA)
Q13 When a friend is sad and it affects me deeply, it does not interfere with my own quality of life. (ER)
Q14 When I see a friend crying, I feel like crying. (AR)
Q15 I feel what another person is feeling, even when I do not know the person. (AR)
Q16 I believe adults who are poor deserve social assistance. (EA)
Q17 I am aware of my thoughts. (SOA)
Q18 When I am with a sad person, I feel sad myself. (AR)
Q19 I believe government should support our well-being. (EA)
Q20 Watching a happy movie makes me feel happy. (AR)
Q21 I can tell the difference between someone else's feelings and my own. (SOA)
Q22 I have angry outbursts. (ER)
Q23 I have a physical reaction (such as shaking, crying or going numb) when I am upset. (SOA)
Q24 When I am with a happy person, I feel happy myself. (AR)
Q25 When I care deeply for people, it feels like their emotions are my own. (SOA)
Q26 I think society should help out children in need. (EA)
Q27 When I am upset or unhappy, I get over it quickly. (ER)
Q28 I can imagine what it is like to be poor. (PT)
Q29 I can explain to others how I am feeling. (SOA)
Q30 I can agree to disagree with other people. (PT)
Q31 I get overwhelmed by other people's anxiety. (ER)
Q32 When a friend is happy, I become happy. (AR)
Q33 I believe government should be expected to help individuals. (EA)
Q34 I like to view both sides of an issue. (PT)
Q35 Emotional evenness describes me well. (ER)

Q36 Friends view me as a moody person. (ER)
Q37 It is easy for me to see other people's point of view. (PT)
Q38 I am aware of how other people think of me. (SOA)
Q39 When I get upset, I need a lot of time to get over it. (ER)
Q40 When a friend is sad, I become sad. (AR)
Q41 I can distinguish my friend's feelings from my own. (SOA)
Q42 I have large emotional swings. (ER)
Q43 I can imagine what the character is feeling in a well written book. (PT)
Q44 Hearing laughter makes me smile. (AR)
Q45 I rush into things without thinking. (ER)
Q46 I think society should help out adults in need. (EA)
Q47 I watch other people's feelings without being overwhelmed by them. (ER)
Q48 I am comfortable helping a person of a different race or ethnicity than my own. (EA)
Q49 I believe the United States economic system allows for anyone to get ahead. (EA)
Q50 I can simultaneously consider my point of view and another person's point of view. (PT)

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Research Question: *How do student mentors understand their experience of peer mentoring and its effects on their empathy and moral reasoning?*

During the course of the interview, I will use the following questions as probes. After each part, I will offer summaries and confirm them with the student. I will also be using reflections and paraphrases throughout to support and verify that I have adequately understood their meaning.

Part 1 Preparation Process

"Since the beginning of the year, you have been training to be a peer mentor. What has the experience getting ready to serve your peers been like?"

Follow-up Questions:

a. *"What do you remember about your feelings about being selected?"*
b. *"Did school seem any different after your training? How so?"*
c. *"Did you ever have any doubts about your ability to be a good mentor? What kind?"*
d. *"Did you feel like you received enough training? What was most helpful? Was there anything missing from your preparation?"*

Summarize preparation and verify with student.

Part 2 Service Experience

"How many students have you mentored so far?"

Follow-up Questions:

a. *"How has it been going?"*
b. *"What have you enjoyed the most about mentoring?"*
c. *"What has been the most challenging thing about mentoring?"*
d. *"Could you tell me about a session that went really well?"*
e. *"Could you tell me about a session that didn't go as you had hoped? What do you think happened?"*
f. *"Does mentoring students feel different now than when you started? How so?"*

Summarize Service Experience and verify with student.

Part 3 Definition & Impact on Empathy

"Empathy is an important quality for counselors and mentors.

Please tell me what 'empathy' means to you."

Follow-up Questions:

a. *"Could you tell me how you use empathy in your mentoring sessions?"*
b. *"Does the way you feel about a student influence how mentor that student?"*
c. *"Has it ever been difficult to empathize with a student?"*
d. *"Since you have started mentoring, has it become any easier to relate to students who are struggling? Harder? How so?"*
e. *"Has your time mentoring changed the way you relate to family or friends?"*

Summarize Definition & Impact on Empathy and verify with student.

Part 4 Definition & Impact on Moral Reasoning

"Learning to consider multiple points of view and help

others make moral choices is another critical skill for mentors.

Please describe what 'moral reasoning' means to you."

Follow-up Questions:

a. *"Before you began mentoring, did it bother you very much when you saw other people being treated unfairly? Have your responses changed?"*

b. *"Are you treating people any differently since you started peer mentoring?"*
c. *"How do you decide whether or not you are doing the right thing? Has that changed since you started peer mentoring?"*

Part 5 Wrap-Up

"What do you think is the biggest impact that peer mentoring has had on your relationships at school?"

Follow-up Questions:

a. *How do you feel other students view you now?*
b. *Do you feel that other students treat you any differently?*
c. *Do you feel that others trust you more? Less?*
d. *Has it changed your friendships and relationships at school in any unexpected ways?*
e. *Is there anything you would tell future students who want to be peer mentors?*
f. *Knowing what you know now, would you do it again? Why or why not?*

Summarize Wrap-Up and verify with student.

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE CONSENT

February 1, 2013

Dear Parent:

Last year, you gave your consent for your child's participation in a peer mentoring study. The program and the study are going well, and we very much appreciate your consent for your child's participation. I am writing with a follow-up request for your consent to interview your child. The details are below. All previous precautions regarding confidentiality will be maintained. There are no other changes to the study, nor will there be any further time commitment required by you or your child.

What the Interview Involves:

- I will be interviewing your child on the school premises in a safe, private, supervised location that for approximately 45 minutes during a school day sometime in the next 6 weeks.

- The questions in the interview will be about their experience mentoring, and their understanding of empathy and moral reasoning during the mentoring experience.

- Sample questions include, "What have you enjoyed the most about mentoring?", "Has it ever been difficult to empathize with a student?", and, "Are you treating people any differently since you began peer mentoring?"

- I, or a professional transcriber, will transcribe the interview with all identification information removed. The transcribed interview will then be analyzed, and the data will be incorporated into the study results.

Risks

As stated in the previous consent, your child may feel uncomfortable answering questions about moral and empathy development. He or she may skip any question that he or she does not wish to answer. I cannot guarantee that your child will not miss class time, however, I will make every effort to ensure that any class time missed will be made up and the interview will not have a negative impact on his or her academic progress.

Benefits

The interview will help me learn whether this peer mentoring program is successful and may also help create similar programs for other local high schools. In addition, the opportunity for your child to reflect on his or her experience can be a valuable part of participation in this type of mentoring program.

Confidentiality

I will be very careful to protect your child's confidentiality in this study. I will personally collect and maintain the privacy of all the data I collect. I will save the data in my password-protected personal computer and this copy will be kept for 5 years and then be destroyed.

Compensation

Unfortunately, there is no compensation for the interview, aside from recognition for being part of the program.

Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. Your desire and your child's desire not to participate are always respected.

Researcher Information & Contact Information

My name is Joshua Jones. Your child knows me from the peer mentoring trainings at the University of Maine. I am a licensed clinical counselor and certified school guidance counselor, and currently working as a principal at a small, alternative high school. I have been working with teens in both school and counseling settings for over 10 years.

This research is part of my dissertation for my Ph. D., entitled "The Influence of Peer Mentoring on Empathy and Moral Reasoning in High School Peer Mentors." If you have any questions about this part of the study, please contact Joshua Jones, M. Ed., LCPC, at the University of Maine. I can be reached at any time at (207) 664-8684.

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant, please contact Gayle Jones, Assistant to the University of Maine's Protection of Human Subjects Review Board. Her phone number is (207) 581-1498 and her email is: gayle.jones@umit.maine.edu

Thank you for your help with this study. Your child's participation will help me better establish a successful peer mentoring program and help the school provide better service for students.

Sincerely,

Joshua Jones

APPENDIX E

Peer Mentoring Training Agendas

Introduction to Peer Counseling Workshop

September 20, 2013

AGENDA

9:00 – 9:15	Welcome & Introduction	Staff
9:15 – 9:45	Prisoner's Dilemma	Mr. Jones
9:50 – 10:15	Role of Peer Mentors - Student Needs (Academic, Motivational, Emotional, Social) - Abilities & Limits	Dr. Nelligan, Dr. Lin
10:15 – 11	Mentoring 101: Basic Skills - Active Listening - Reflecting / Restating / Summarizing - Open-ended Questions - Posture / Eye Contact	Dr. Nelligan
11:00 – 11:30	LUNCH	
11:35 – 12:45	Role Plays w/ Video Recording & Mentoring 101: Confidentiality (Alternating Groups) - Who you can talk to, and about what - The Hats We Wear (Classmate, Friend & Mentor) - Times & places – types of conversations and where and when to have them	Mr. Jones Dr. Lin
12:50 – 1:10	Role Play Debriefing in Small Groups	Staff
1:15 – 1:30	Reflections and Self-Care - How counselors process their feelings - Who is available for support - Journaling – Why, How, and how it helps	Dr. Nelligan, Mr. Jones
1:30 – 1:45	Review and Discussion - Feedback Forms & What's Next	Staff
1:45	Head for home!	

Advanced

Peer Mentoring Workshop
College Of Education & Human Development

November 22, 2013

AGENDA

8:30 – 8:45	Welcome & Introduction Career Fair Signup	Staff
8:45 – 9:00	Energizer	Dr. Annette Nelligan
9:00 – 9:45	Wise Decision Making	Ms. MaryBeth Willet Ms. Jessica Bishop
9:45 – 10:00	BREAK	
10:00 – 10:30	Mentoring Matters Discussion	Dr. Nelligan & Mr. Joshua Jones
10:30 – 11	Athletes Against Violence	Mr. Spencer Wood
11:00 – 11:30	LUNCH	
11:35 – 1	Video Role Plays "Spinning a Yarn" Stories of Mentoring	Mr. Jones Dr. Nelligan
1 – 1:30	Career Fair / Feedback Forms & Wrap – Up	Dr. Mary Brakey, School of Nursing Ms. Faith Erhardt, College of Education
1:45	Head for home!	

Capstone

Peer Mentoring Workshop #3

College Of Education & Human Development

March 20, 2014

AGENDA

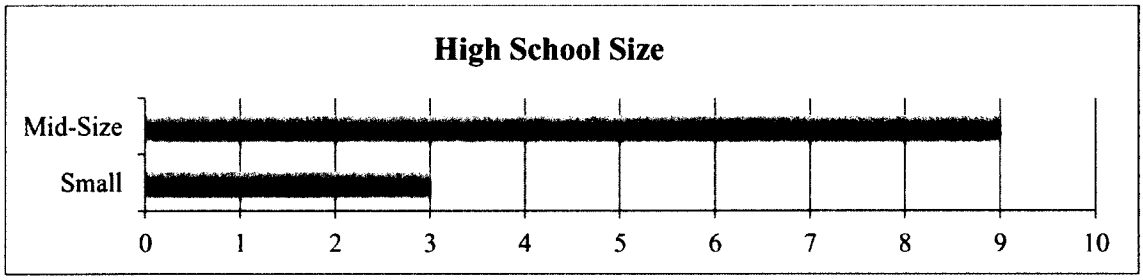
8:30 – 8:45	Welcome & Introduction	Staff
8:45 – 9:00	Energizer & Springtime Parade	Dr. Nelligan
9:00 – 9:50	The Wild Side of Working Relationships	Mr. Jones
9:50 – 10:00	BREAK	
10:00 – 11:00	Small Groups with Black Bear Mentors	Aaron Chase, James Bergeron, Randilyn Driver, Casey Carson, and Vanessa Igoe.
11:00 – 11:30	LUNCH	
11:30 – 12:15	You and Your Team Exercise	Dr. Nelligan & Mr. Jones
12:15– 1:15	Mid-Year Assessments	Staff
1:15-1:30	Graduation and Wrap Up	Staff
1:30	Head For Home!	

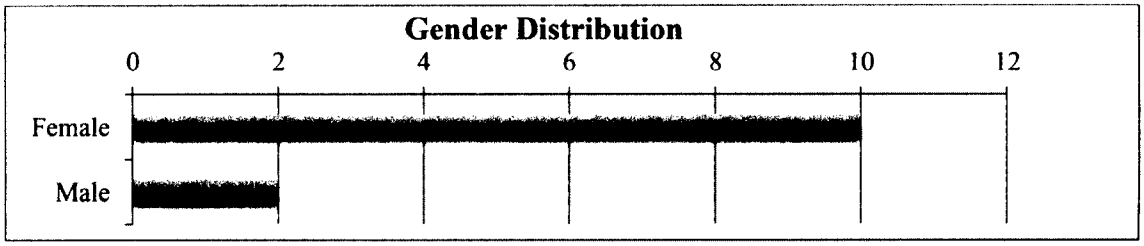
CONGRATULATIONS & KEEP IN TOUCH!

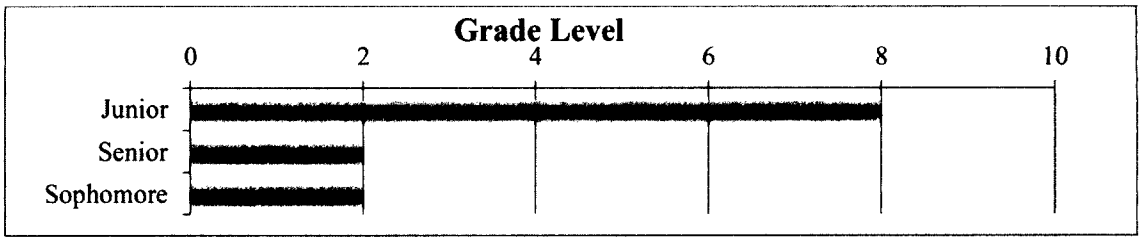
APPENDIX F

Peer Mentor Interviews: Data Highlights

Sample Demographics (n=12)

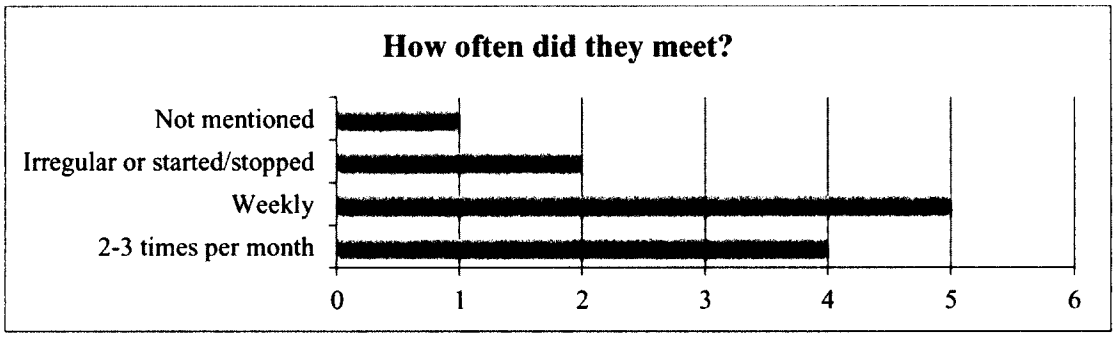


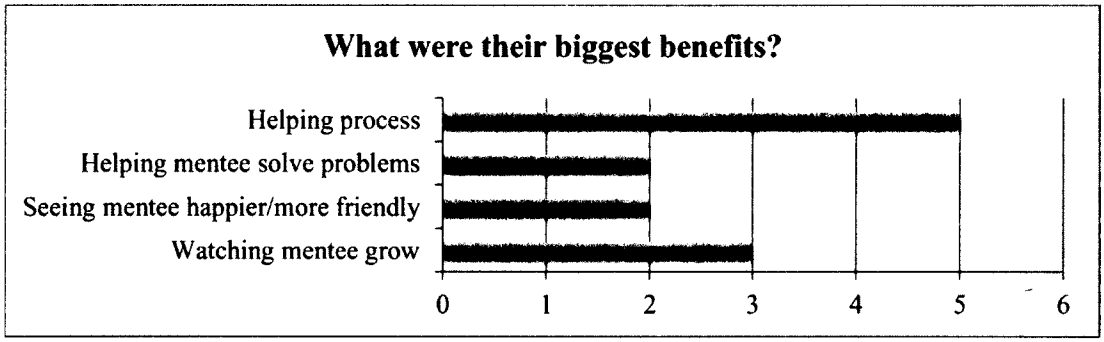


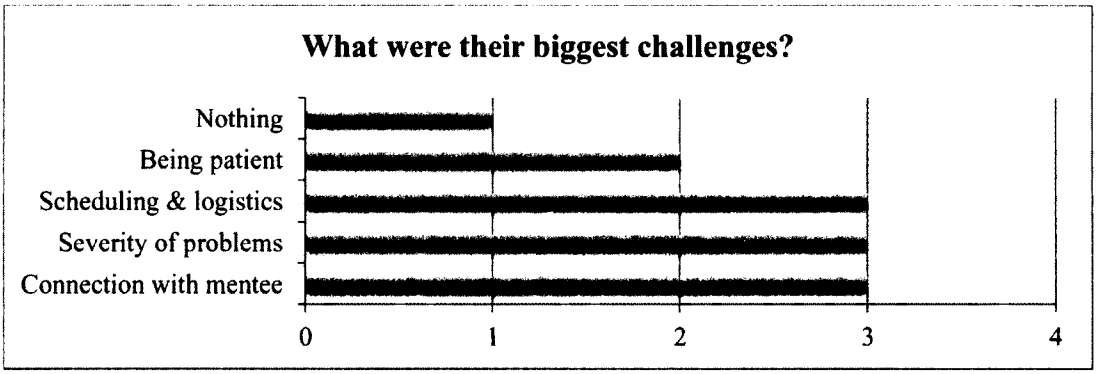


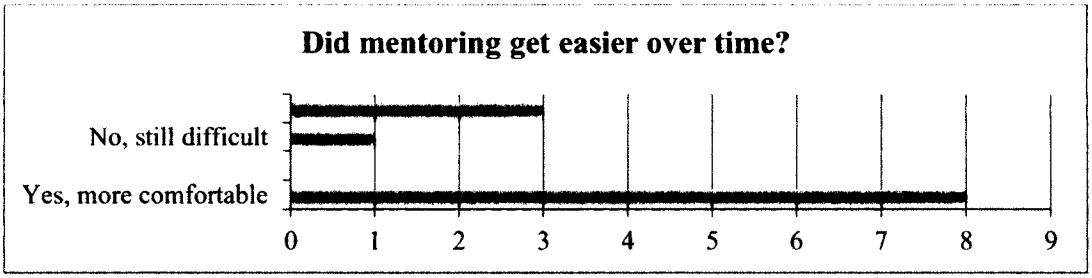
Mentoring Experience

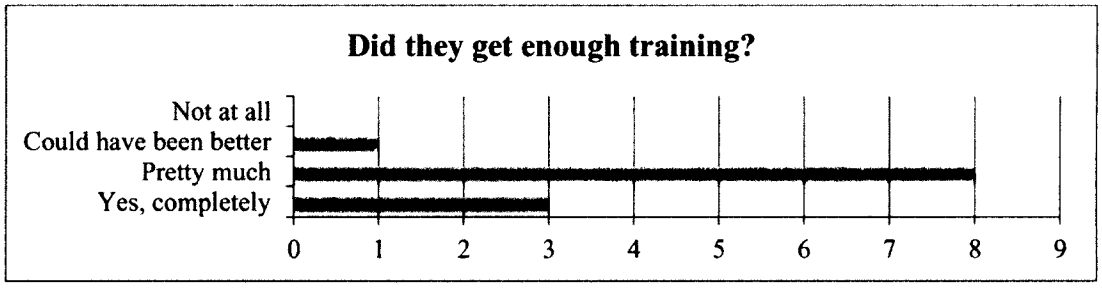
"I didn't know if I was going to be able to help this person. Like, I'm a teenager. You obviously have your own things going on in your life, and then you're adding their troubles on top of that." –Amy




What were their biggest benefits?
Helping process
Helping mentee solve problems
Seeing mentee happier/more friendly
Watching mentee grow
0
1
2
3
4
5
6


What were their biggest challenges?
Nothing
Being patient
Scheduling & logistics
Severity of problems
Connection with mentee
0
1
2
3
4


Did mentoring get easier over time?
No, still difficult
Yes, more comfortable
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9


Did they get enough training?
Not at all
Could have been better
Pretty much
Yes, completely
0
1
2
3
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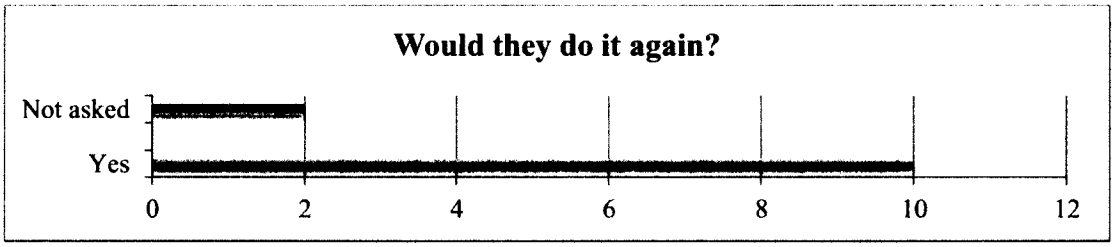
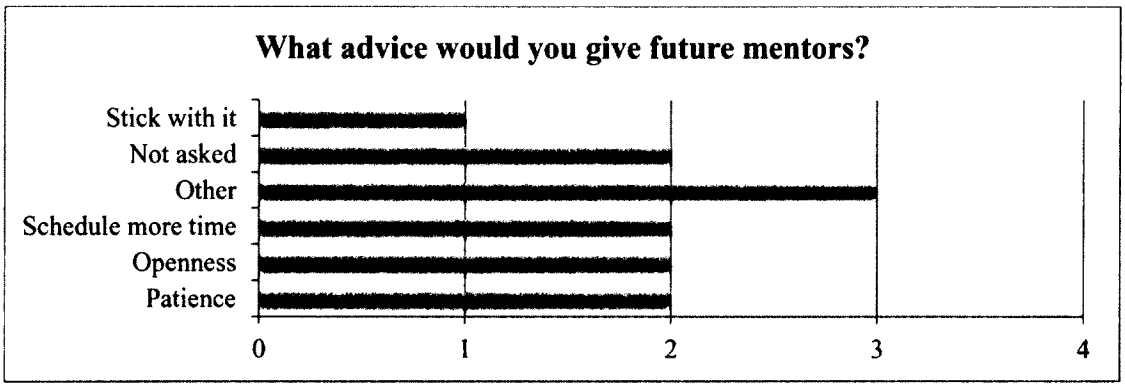
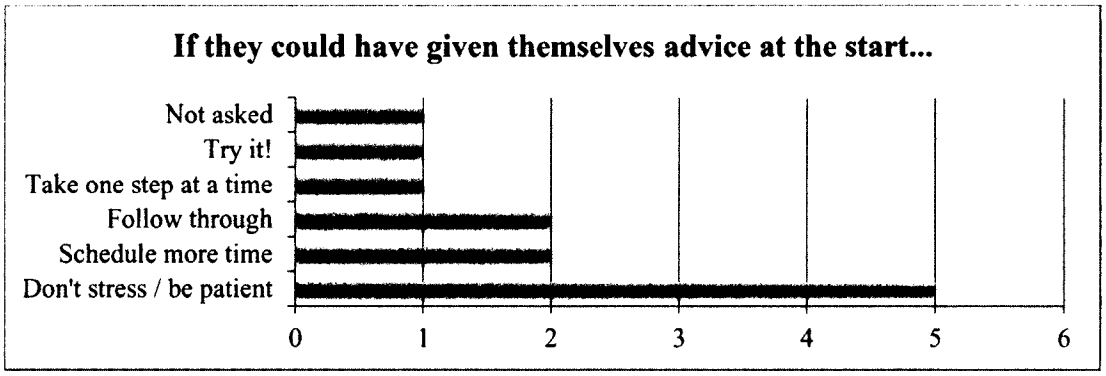
8
9

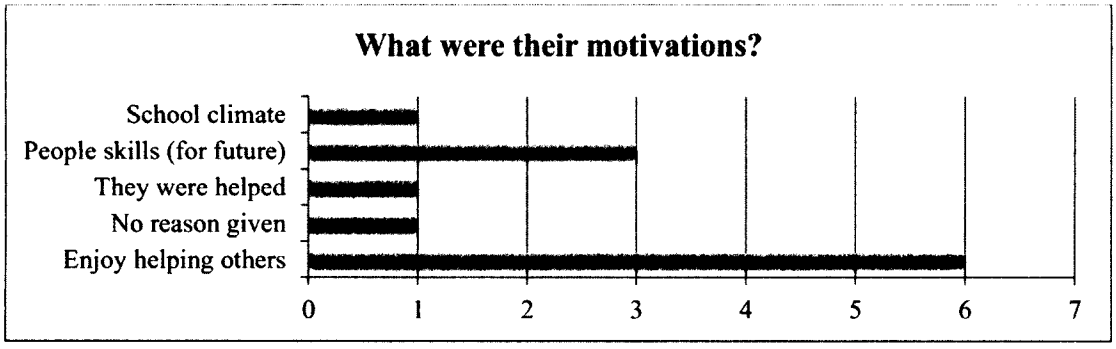

Would they do it again?
Not asked
Yes
0
2
4
6
8
10
12

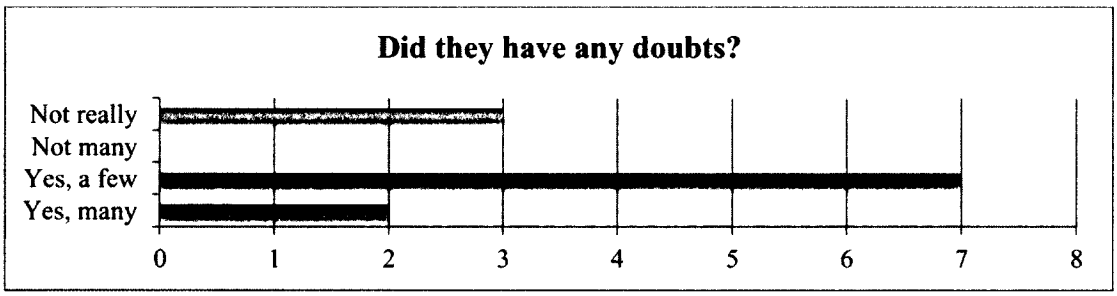


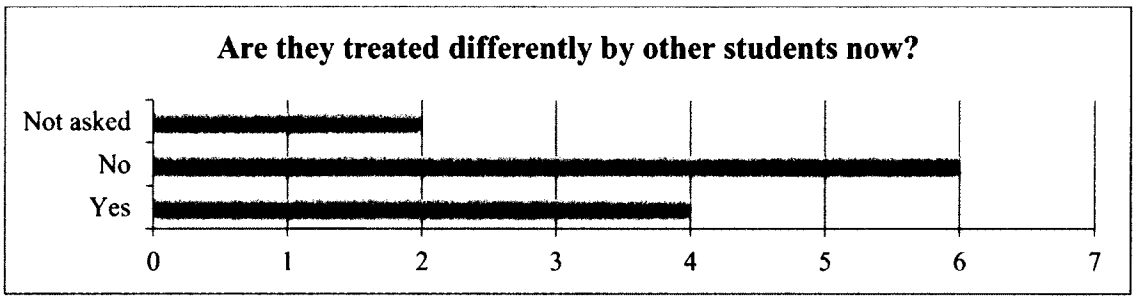


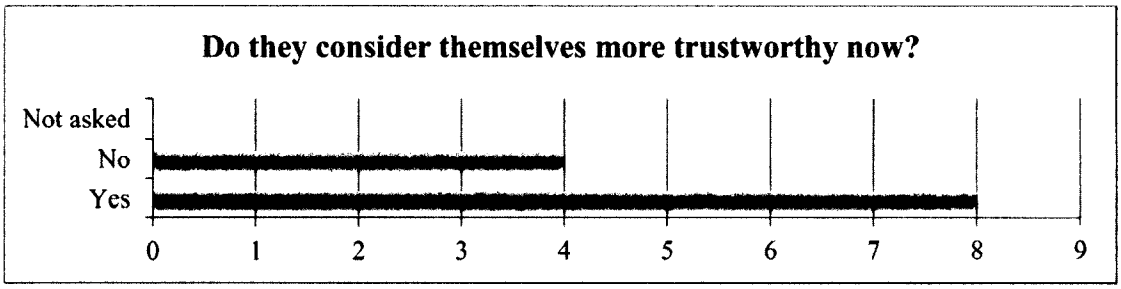
Self-Concept

"The middle school counselor was telling me how it took years for herto get him to finally talk, and it only took me a couple sessions, so...it was a nice feeling." –Toby



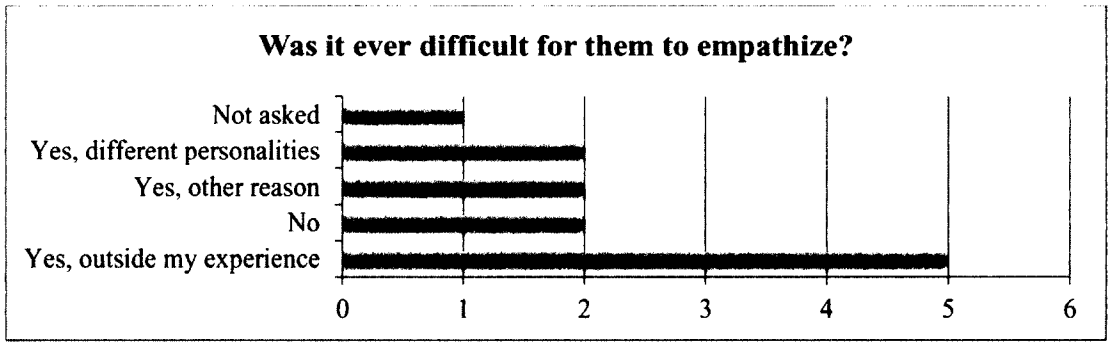


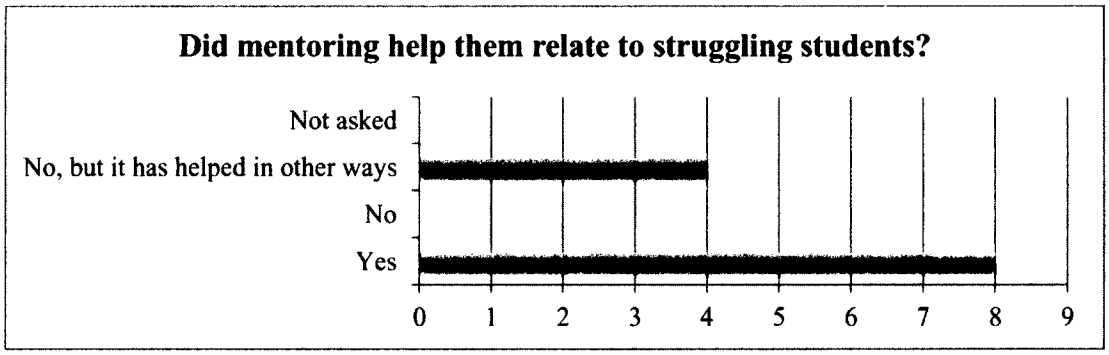


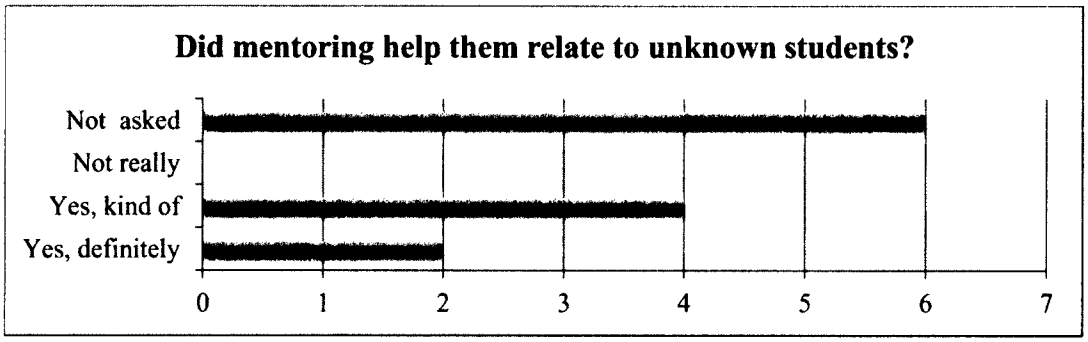


Empathy

"When he was telling me that he has trust issues, and that his stepmom didn't like him, and stuff like that, I felt, like super-mad, because I was just like, 'Oh my God, this is terrible!'" –Shawna

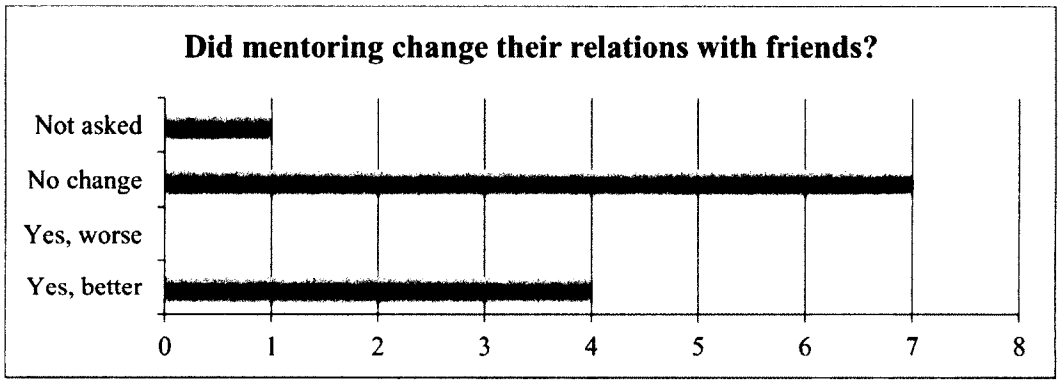


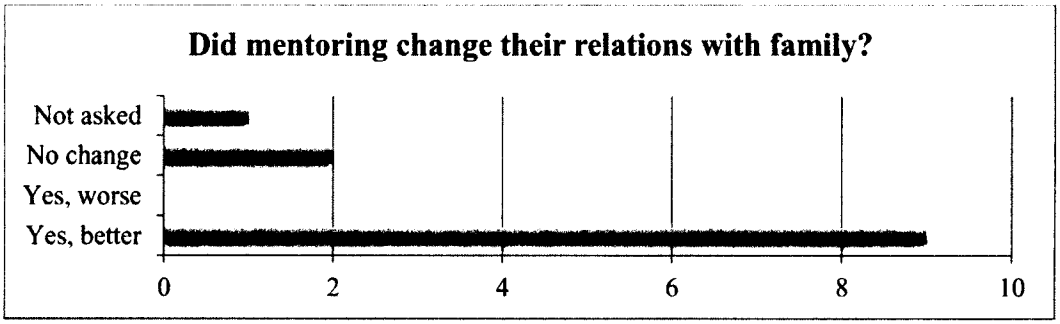




Empathic Connections

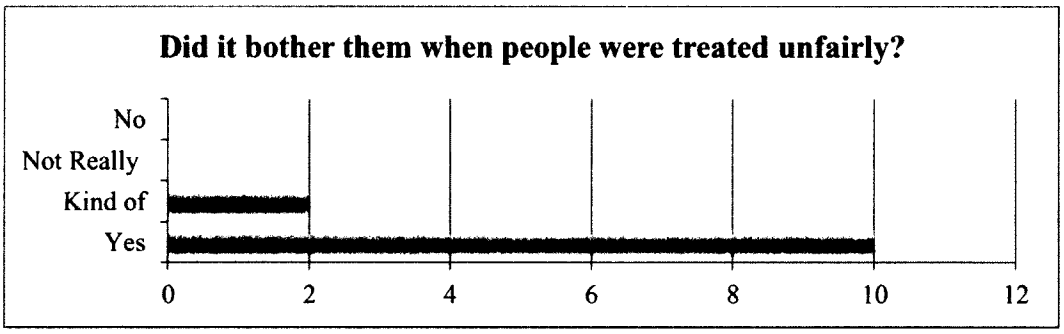
"I think it definitely helped me a little bit, like meeting my father for the first time, it helped me, I don't know, take everything into account."-Nick

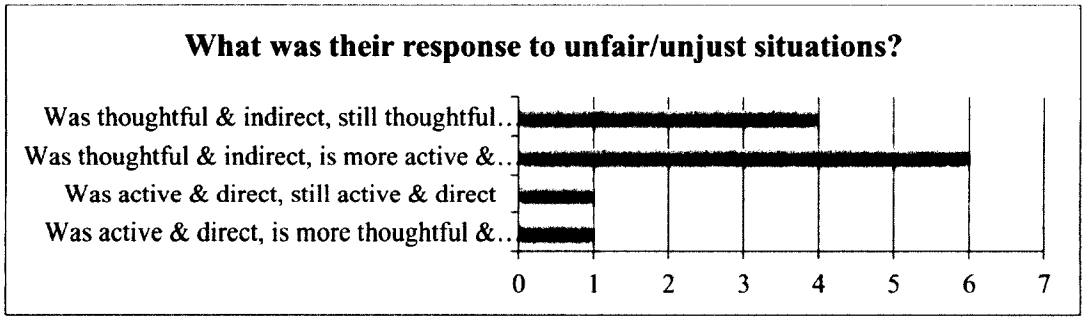


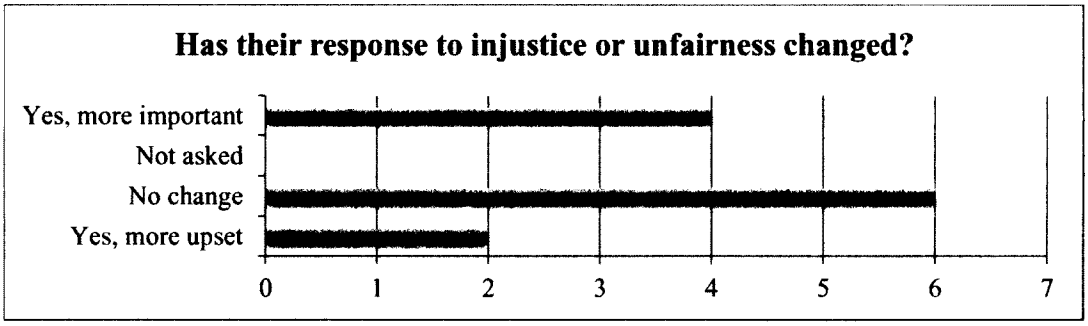


Moral Dilemmas

"I always stuck up for people, but it was always a mental thing, like, I'm gonna get picked on if I stick up for this person, and now, I'm like, it's an automatic reaction, 'If that was my mentee, I would not be [just] sitting here.' So I treat them like somebody you know." –Ali

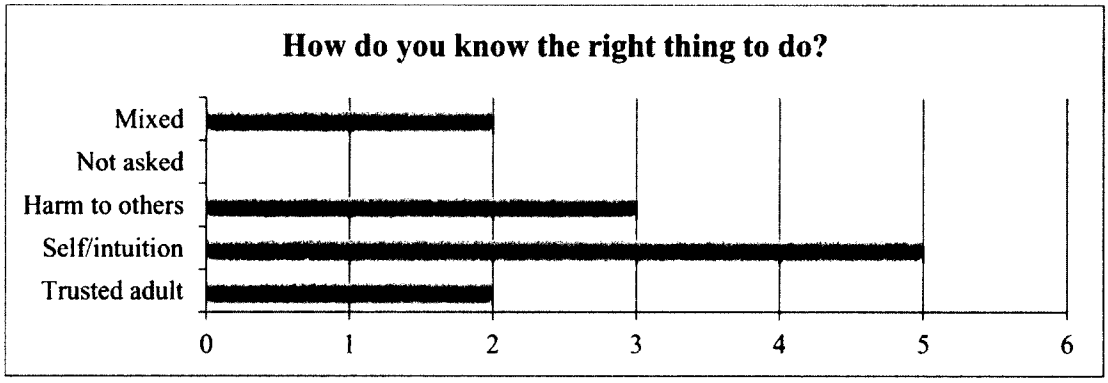


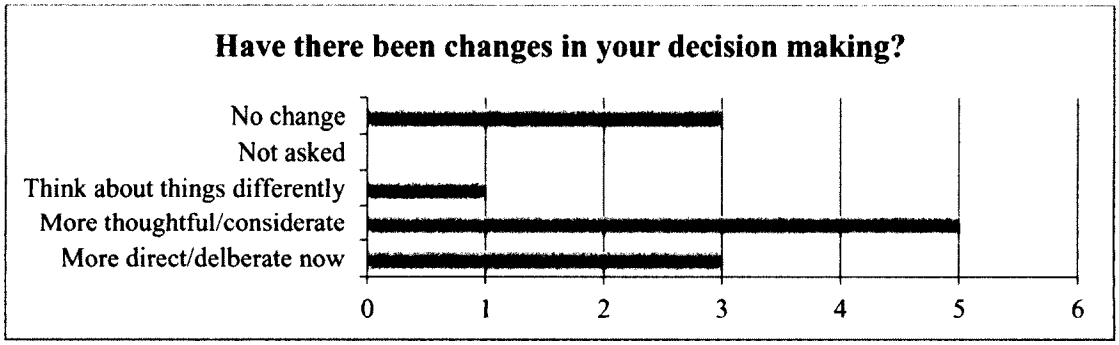


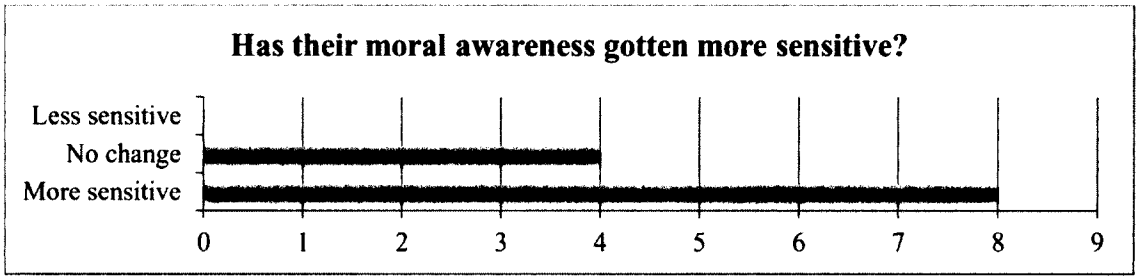


Moral Reasoning

"It may not have even bugged you at all, but the fact that I could have done something instead of what I did, bugs me." –Ariel







BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Joshua Jones was born in Brooklyn, New York and spent his early childhood in several rural and suburban locations in Maryland and Virginia. His junior high and high school years were spent in Reston, Virginia, where he was trained as a peer counselor and participated in a number of youth leadership organizations, including Boys State, Model Judiciary, and Model U.N. He graduated from South Lakes High School in 1988, and went on to enroll in the Peace and Global Studies Program at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana.

While at Earlham, he travelled to Scandinavia, Europe and the Middle East, working with international organizations in youth leadership and conflict resolution. After leaving Earlham, he was employed in the non-profit sector working with young people in the areas of community service, electoral activism, social justice and environmental leadership domestically as well as in Europe and Japan.

In 2007, he graduated from the Master of Education in Counselor Education program at the University of Maine, and matriculated into the Counselor Education doctoral program in the spring of 2008. He has professional experience in residential care, in-home support, primary school guidance, day treatment psychiatric clinical care, addictions treatment, and as an outpatient therapist, specializing in children and adolescents, as well as in university classroom and clinical supervision settings.

Currently, he lives with his wife and two dogs in a cabin they built together near Blue Hill, Maine. He is a teaching principal at a small project-based learning high school and serves as an adjunct professor teaching adolescent mental health and creativity in childhood at the University of Maine Augusta. He is a candidate for the Doctor of

Philosophy degree in Education with a concentration in Counselor Education from the University of Maine in May 2015.