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The Reciprocity of Mentorship: Impacting Christian Higher Education

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by

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my family, without whose support and encouragement I never would have even started. Thank you for believing I was made “for such a time as this.”

Acknowledgments

My sincere thanks to Dr. Halstead for her endless encouragement and support, and to the committee members, who were willing to continue to serve even during the pandemic.

I would also like to thank all the participants, without whom this study would not have been possible: your honesty and candor were invaluable.

Finally, thank You, God, for helping me persevere despite so many setbacks. I hope this work reflects Your character and brings You glory.

"You have made us for Yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in You."

Saint Augustine

Abstract

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to explore the lived experiences of students and faculty engaged in mutually beneficial mentoring relationships at Christian universities. A dearth of current research focused on the experiences of emerging adults and on the benefits to mentors in a Christian context prompted this inquiry. Semi-structured interviews were completed virtually with two mentor-mentee dyads, while data analysis included use of qualitative research software as well as original phenomenological reduction and interpretation. Findings provided insights not only into the meaning student mentees ascribed to mentoring but also into the perceptions of faculty mentors. Despite different mentoring circumstances, the participants' accounts revealed a shared experience of mentoring as a worthwhile and mutually beneficial endeavor that deepens spirituality, develops identity, and fulfills vocational goals. Attempting to uncover the phenomenological essence of participants' expressions, the researcher found that mentoring may be likened to Christian discipleship and even to an expression of agape love.

Keywords: mentoring, emerging adults, Christian higher education, spirituality, vocation, identity, phenomenology, interpretive phenomenological analysis

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Who am I? What is the meaning of life? How should I then live? The answers to these existential questions were once at the center of higher education instruction in colonial America, based on biblical tenets almost universally accepted since the establishment of Harvard College in 1636 (Chickering et al., 2006; Kronman, 2007). Particular to American institutions was their nearly homogenous classical curriculum to ensure moral and theological student development (Chickering et al., 2006; Glanzer et al., 2017). The preamble to the charter for the College of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations (later renamed Brown University) reflects the focus on ethics for the common good:

> Institutions for liberal education are highly beneficial to society by forming the rising generation to virtue, knowledge, and useful literature and thus preserving the community a succession of men duly qualified for discharging the offices of life with usefulness and reputation. (Thelin, 2019, p. 61)

The uniformity of moral and educational goals in the early days of American higher education fostered communities of learning where faculty and students shared a collective bond, which in turn promoted the ideals of the institution (Chickering et al., 2006).

After the Civil War, a shift to rational empiricism relegated existential instruction to the humanities—specifically, to the study of philosophy, literature, and art (Chickering et al., 2006; Kronman, 2007). Greatly influenced by the Germanic university model, separate academic departments supplanted the previous homogenous educational structure, and by the beginning of the 20th century, professors focused on becoming experts in their field of research (Chickering et al., 2006; Kronman, 2007; Thelin, 2019). Eager to emulate the unity of European nationalized universities, educational leaders in America marginalized theology to studies of religion while

shifting focus to scientific research (Chickering et al., 2006; Glanzer et al., 2017). Since then, "the church has become the sole guardian of faith and the university the prime champion of knowledge" (Chickering et al., 2006, p. 80).

Eventually, the secularization of higher education promoted the creation of the "multiversity, a university that exalts the freedom to experience a fragmented education and life" (Glanzer et al., 2017, p. 97). Not only have curricula become splintered into subdisciplines, but faculty are in general more focused on professional research than teaching and students are divided between individualism and multiculturalism and between specialization and general education (Chickering et al., 2006). In time, the essence of higher education in the United States slowly transitioned from educating the whole person to focusing on discipline-specific instruction in an effort to prepare graduates for an increasingly competitive job market (Astin et al., 2010). Kronman (2007) described the failure of college professors to discuss the meaning of life with students as the end of education, and Talbot and Anderson (2013) bemoaned faculty who limit their instruction to information strictly specific to their field. In fact, the importance of faculty members cannot be overstated. They have been described as "major agents of socialization" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 620) who deeply impact students' intellectual growth, values, and career goals. In regard to today's faith-based institutions, Davignon and Thomson (2015) characterized the availability of Christian educators and mentors as essential to the development of young adults, and Maier (2014) posited that faculty are favorably positioned to impact the development of students' moral character. In addition, in a longitudinal study spanning seven years, Astin et al. (2010) stated, "Spirituality is fundamental to students' lives" (p. 1), and that helping students connect mind and spirit leads to graduates who "live more

meaningful lives, … prepared to serve their community, our society, and the world at large" (p. 140). The search for meaning and purpose is a central characteristic of a recently identified stage of development, emerging adulthood, which can be understood as "a reflection of social, political, and economic changes that have occurred" (Buskirk-Cohen et al., 2016, p. 26). In his seminal article on the theory of emerging adulthood, Arnett (2000) identified individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 as a new demographic characterized by tumultuous identity exploration, coupled with instability and transitions while personal values, beliefs, and relationships are being reformulated. Jay (2013) called this period "a defining decade," and Bailey et al. (2016) described it as "a crossroads of development" (p. 108).

Complementing Arnett's (2000) theory, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors remains one of the most prominent psychosocial theories of student development. The theory was derived from the work of Erik Erikson, the first psychologist to theorize about stages of human development from birth to death (Patton et al., 2016). Chickering and Reisser (1993) proffered that students begin with developing competence, then progress toward managing emotions, move toward interdependence, establish interpersonal relationships, formulate self-identity, identify life purpose, and finally develop integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The last three vectors are of particular interest to this research: As they establish their identity during the fifth vector, students find answers to the question, who am I? Subsequently, students develop purpose by intentionally determining a destination with definite goals and a commitment to persevere. In the last vector, students move toward integrity as their actions become congruent with their personal values and as they embrace ethical principles. Chickering et al. (2006) also

commended mentoring communities where students can progress through the vectors, aided by interactions with faculty, staff, and peers who share the same values.

Researchers agree on the positive role of faculty–student interactions and, in particular, mentoring relationships, which foster leadership development (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018); promote student spirituality (Gehrke & Cole, 2017); develop personal and career goals (Maier, 2014); and increase student retention and degree completion (Schriner & Tobolowsky, 2018). Although the majority of research has focused on the unilateral benefits for mentees, mentors have also recognized professional and personal development opportunities (Chun et al., 2012). In the context of Christian colleges, meaningful faculty–student mentoring offers educators a unique opportunity to develop elements of spiritual leadership, deepen core values, and model intimacy (Sweeney & Fry, 2012). In fact, one of Erikson's (1981) stages of adult development describes the positive impact of meaningful relationships that foster a deep emotional connection (Patton et al., 2016). Out of that intimacy comes generativity, or selflessly caring for the next generation, which can be actualized in the mentoring of undergraduate students. Sweeney and Fry (2012) explained that altruistic love is fostered by honesty, integrity, authenticity, and compassion, values that characterize spiritual leaders. Thus, mutually transformative exchanges can aid emerging adults to answer the deeper questions about their existence and role in the world (Crisp et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2015) while also allowing mentors to experience deep personal and professional satisfaction (Zanchetta et al., 2017), intellectual and cultural stimulation (Ward et al., 2014), and even spiritual growth (Maier, 2014).

Because the number of studies exploring how mentors and mentees at Christian colleges benefit during these exchanges are not only meager but also outdated, this research offers current

qualitative insights and new perspectives that will inform faculty and students while contributing to the unique mission of Christian higher education. To this end, this chapter includes the background of the problem, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework that guides the study, the research questions, and the definition of terms.

Background of the Problem

Ambiguous Spirituality

Many colleges and universities with religious beginnings have chosen to become more secularized to gain academic notoriety and recognition (Davignon, 2016). Swezey and Ross (2012) stated, "History has shown that time secularizes schools with even the most ardent faith commitments" (p. 99). This has been the case for Duke University, as an example. Despite tracing its origins to Methodist and Quaker families in 1838, Duke University is now a research institution whose mission includes scholarly, intellectual, and ethical standards at the local, national, and international levels without professing a religious affectation (Duke University, n.d.).

Rine (2013) posited that a postmodern society demands that all cultures and religions be given equal voice, especially on university campuses. However, Chickering et al. (2006) explained that as Christian values and traditions in American colleges have decreased, there has been "no corresponding growth of a concept of spirituality that encompass[es] the growing religious diversity on campus" (p. 168). Some define spirituality as "a dynamic expression of who we are, truly" (Hindman, 2002, p. 165); others claim it is an existential quest for meaning (Astin et al., 2011); or "a way of life that affects and includes every moment of existence" (Teasdale, 1999; as quoted in Chickering, 2006, p. 2). Most agree that spirituality evokes the

ideas of faith and religion and that it is deeply personal (Astin et al., 2011; Chickering et al., 2006). Fowler (1981) expounded a personal, integral progression of "stages of faith and human becoming" (p. 40), and Parks (2000) posited that "spirituality is understood as a one's lived relationship with Mystery, [and] a religion is a *shared* way of making meaning of that relationship" (p. 268). For the purposes of this study, the term *spirituality* will be used as a synonym for the Christian faith, or a belief in the biblical Jesus, the second person of the triune God, and the Savior of humanity. While this definition allows for a nondenominational Christian identity, it also delimits the construct to a clear profession of faith and corresponding lifestyle, whose goal is to love God and love others, emulating Jesus's example while holding Christ at the defining center of one's existence.

Extracurricular Faith

The early American universities sought to embody John Winthrop's (1630/n.d.) ideal of "a city upon a hill" (para. 18), guided by the belief that "all Scripture is breathed out by God profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for good work" (*English Standard Version Bible [ESV]*, 2011, 2 Timothy 3:16). According to Hofstadler (1955, as cited in Adrian, 2003), theological liberalism and secularization of the curriculum were well underway by the beginning of the 19th century. By the end of that century, "the model of the German university, the elective system at Harvard, and the American land-grant movement, all came together and changed the scope of higher education" (Adrian, 2003, p. 20). The term *Christian* was relegated to seminaries and departments of religious studies, while leading universities focused on science and socioeconomics (Adrian, 2003). Influenced by an increasingly secular culture, many American

colleges discarded their religious traditions well into the 20th century (Adrian, 2003; Kronman, 2007).

In contrast, a few smaller institutions, mostly private, remained affiliated to their original founders. In 1976, the Christian College Coalition was formed, now called the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU). Through the years, member institutions have grown in recognition of academic reputation while remaining committed to their faith. Some colleges have tried to integrate faith and learning in the curriculum; others have added classes on social issues. Most of them have made changes, such as becoming more tolerant on dress code and mandatory chapel attendance, and others still have embraced theological diversity (Adrian, 2003). Moreover, many faith-based institutions rely on activities outside the classroom to offer opportunities for student spiritual development and identity exploration (Feenstra, 2011). One example is a prominent Christian university in Southern California. Students may choose to participate in short-term mission trips, community outreaches, on-campus Bible clubs, prayer walks, feeding the homeless, weekly guided meditations, monthly Sabbathing, ministry to high school students, outreach to the local Muslim community, outreach to the local Mormon church, travel to Utah to interact with Mormons, and travel to Mexico or Honduras. Students are also required to attend a minimum of 20 chapel services and five conference services per semester. They may also get involved in leading worship for chapel services.

Whereas Hulme et al. (2016) explained that the proliferation of cocurricular programs may be a way to compete with larger institutions, such a plethora of spiritual practices allows students opportunities to practice their faith in different contexts. However, several developmental theorists suggest that spiritual development in college is better achieved through

significant relationships with nonfamilial authority figures (Fowler, 1981; Parks, 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Riggers-Piehl and Sax (2018) analyzed data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California Los Angeles—specifically, the 2004 freshman survey and the 2007 college student beliefs and values survey. They concluded that "the more frequently faculty members displayed a personal interest in students' inner lives, especially when helping students navigate questions of meaning and purpose, the more students tended to report gains across two spiritual measures [meaning-making and spirituality as a quest]" (p. 116). This echoes Parks's (2000) emphasis on the importance of a mentoring community, particularly faculty who foster student spiritual development through mentoring relationships.

Invisible Faculty

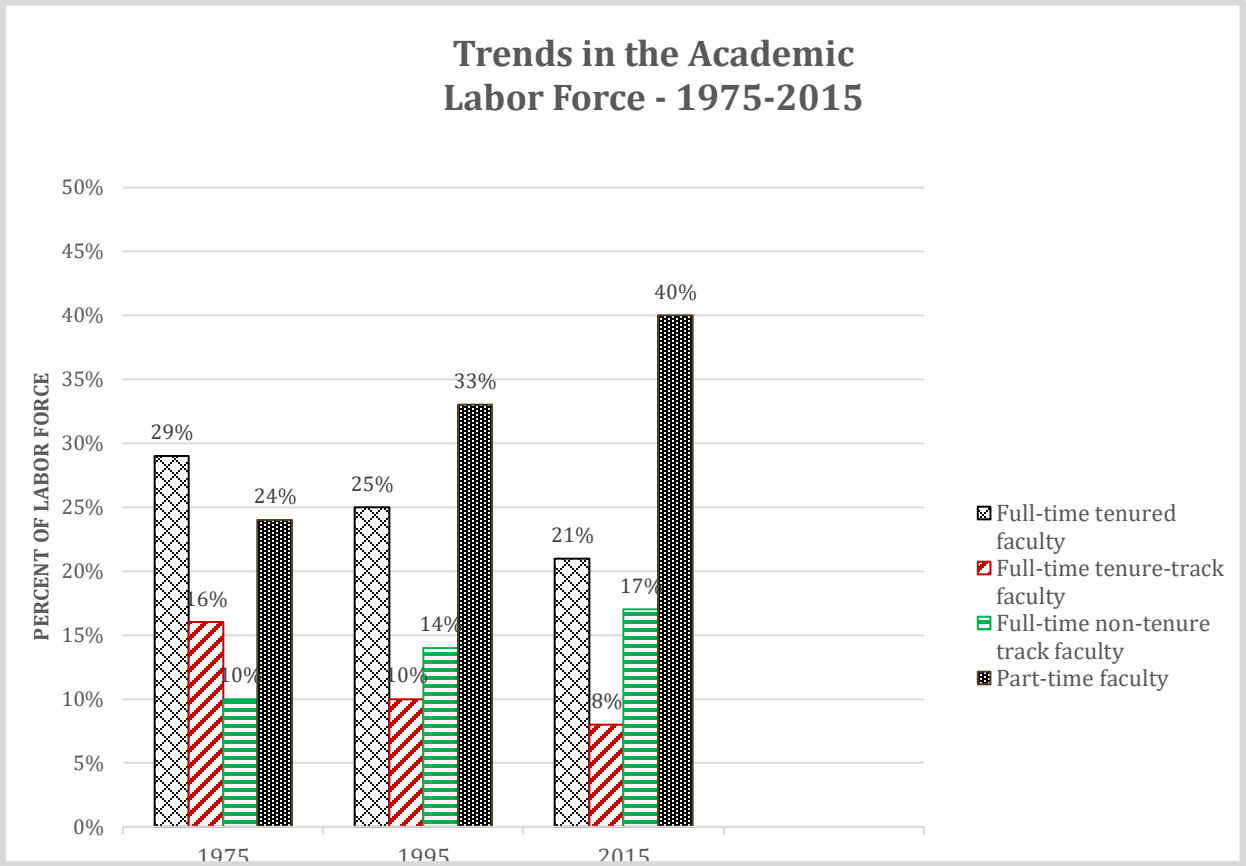
In the last few decades, the makeup of instructional employees in American colleges and universities has significantly shifted from mainly tenured faculty to a significant majority of part-time adjuncts, also called contingent faculty (American Association of University Professors [AAUP], 2013; Buller, 2012; Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Eagan et al., 2015; Yacoboski, 2016). In 1975 about 10% of faculty were hired in a nontenured position, and about 24% were part-time educators; in 2015, the total percentage of non-tenure-track positions jumped to 70% (AAUP, 2018). In particular, during the 2008–2012 recession, "the number of tenure-track faculty increased 1% … and part-time faculty increased 18%" (AAUP, 2018).

The faculty composition of Christian colleges has also followed this trend, partly to save money amid increasingly tight budgets and partly to allow tenured professors more time to pursue notable research undertakings. As shown in Figure 1, the trends of the academic labor

force from 1975 to 2015 affected part-time faculty the most, increasing from 24% to 40%, while the percentage of full-time tenured faculty decreased.

Figure 1

Trends in US Higher Education Labor Force, 1975–2015



Note. Adapted from *Trends in the Academic Labor Force 1975–2015*, by American Association of University Professors, March 2017, (https://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Academic_Labor_Force_Trends_1975-2015_0.pdf). Adapted with permission.

Despite representing the majority of the professoriate, contingent faculty are usually hired on a semester or trimester basis without certainty of rehiring, are paid a fraction of the salary of their tenure-track counterparts, and are seldom invited to participate in department events (Eagan et al., 2015; Yacoboski, 2016). Often called “invisible faculty” or “disposable faculty” (Morton, 2012, p. 406), adjuncts compose up to 79% of the faculty at some institutions, receive few opportunities for professional development, seldom enjoy individual office space on campus, and are grossly underpaid (Caruth & Caruth, 2013; Kezar, 2012; Murray, 2019). In a *New York Times* article, an adjunct stated she was paid so little that she had to teach at several colleges to make ends meet (Korkki, 2018). Accordingly, contingent faculty tend to have less time to provide face-to-face feedback to students or engage in mentoring relationships outside of class (Edmonds, 2015). This reduction in volitional time that faculty could use to mentor students exacerbates the problem.

Statement of the Problem

Emerging adults wrestle with complex identity exploration, often rejecting conformity, deconstructing previously held beliefs, then reconstructing a new value system (Chan et al., 2015; Hall et al., 2016). During this time of considerable instability (Arnett, 2000; Chan et al., 2015; Liang & Ketcham, 2017), students can find guidance in important authority figures, like educational leaders and faculty members (Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). At the same time, professors at Christian colleges may actualize their spiritual leadership skills as mentors who facilitate meaningful conversations with undergraduates, helping emerging adults define a sense of purpose and contributing to their spiritual development (Astin et al., 2010; Bailey et al., 2016; Clydesdale, 2015; Davignon & Thomson, 2015; Liang & Ketcham, 2017; Maier, 2014; Sullivan,

2016). Concurrently, educational leaders who regularly engage with undergraduates may also experience profound professional and personal satisfaction and even spiritual growth (Maier, 2014; Zanchetta et al., 2017). Through mutually transformative mentorship, not only can faculty members influence students by building trust and becoming role models (Caza & Jackson, 2011; Kiersch & Peters, 2017), but educators may also enrich their own spiritual life and find deeper meaning in their vocation (Maier, 2014; van Vuuren, 2017).

However, scant research has been completed regarding the way faculty mentors and student mentees experience the reciprocal connection of mentorship in the context of Christian colleges. In fact, the most recent scholarly studies either focus on a definition of spirituality that is too broad or is a decade old (Astin et al., 2011; Gehrke & Cole, 2017; Parks, 2000; Piehl, 2013; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). In addition, extant research does not address the fact that currently fewer faculty are available to engage in mentoring with undergraduate students due to the increasing number of adjuncts hired at Christian universities. If emerging adults "are at an important crossroads with regard to their spirituality" (Bailey et al., 2016, p. 106), a deeper and more current understanding of how mentors and mentees perceive such meaningful exchanges is needed to adequately meet an important aspect of Christian higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological inquiry was to explore the lived experiences of students and faculty engaged in mutually beneficial mentoring relationships at Christian universities in two different U.S. states. The context for this study was the campus of these universities, where I identified faculty members who were willing to identify emerging adult mentees. This context directly provided the backdrop for this research.

Theoretical Framework

Two psychosocial development theories and one faith development theory guided this study in a parallel fashion: Erikson's (1981) eight stages address prolonged adolescence as well as the characteristics of midlife adults, whereas Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors address student development. Correspondingly, Fowler's (1981) theory addresses the faith development of mentors and mentees.

Human Development Theories

Basing his model on Freud's psychoanalytical perspective, Erikson (1981) theorized that individuals progress through eight stages of life, each marked by a conflict that can be "resolved by balancing the internal self and the external environment" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 288). Erikson's (1981) stages begin at infancy, when newborns learn basic trust or mistrust, depending on whether their daily needs are being met. During the second stage, children begin to explore their environment and gain autonomy; this is also the time when they might receive punishment from their parents, which may cause shame and doubt. In the third stage, school children start building their social network and interact with others; however, if their initiative is not appreciated, they might experience guilt. Children continue to develop a sense of industry in Stage 4, establishing social networks and growing in their competence and self-identity. If their experiences are negative, children will enter adolescence with a sense of inferiority.

According to Erikson (1981), Stage 5 is particularly important since it marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood: Individuals without a clear self-identity may experience role confusion, which negatively affects intimate relationships. Of particular interest to this study is the sixth stage, prolonged adolescence, which spans a decade, much as in Arnett's

(2000) theory of emerging adulthood, and the seventh stage, when midlife adults may engage in generative behaviors. During Stage 6, adults with a strong self-identity engage in intimate relationships, while others may experience isolation due to a lack of self-confidence (Patton et al., 2016). This echoes Arnett's (2000) description of emerging adulthood, a tumultuous period of life marked by a redefinition of values, beliefs, relationships, and behaviors. In Stage 7, generativity versus stagnation, older adults seek to leave a legacy of care by giving back to the community, by becoming parents, or by mentoring the next generation; alternatively, they will experience sluggish idleness. In the final stage, individuals reflect on their life choices: They may experience integrity if their legacy is one of wisdom or despair if they bemoan many regrets.

Expanding Erikson's (1981) model, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven-vector psychosocial rationale described student development as a series of tasks that may or may not occur in chronological order, depending on a person's biological, psychological, or sociocultural influences (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The seven vectors include developing intellectual, physical, and manual competence; managing emotions; moving through autonomy toward interdependence; developing mature interpersonal relationships; establishing identity; developing purpose; and developing integrity. Vectors were chosen as determinants—as opposed to stages—of development to reflect the complexity of student development. In fact, vectors include direction and magnitude, advancing more like a spiral than a linear sequence of steps, and they become increasingly complex as students integrate them into their personal development. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), students move through the vectors at different rates and may deal with more than one at a time. Vectors 4 through 7 are of particular interest when

applied to emerging adults. As students move toward interdependence, their capacity for vulnerability increases, which enables them to engage in meaningful relationships with faculty mentors. Anchored in these exchanges, emerging adults are then able to establish their personal identity, develop purpose, and authentically embrace their core values and beliefs (Patton et al., 2016). Erikson's (1981) and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theories parallel and complete each other in the mentorship dyads: As faculty mentors invest in the next generation, they gain a new sense of personal and professional satisfaction, while students are encouraged to progress toward interdependence.

Fowler's Faith Development Theory

To Fowler (1981), "Faith [was] not so much a set of beliefs as a way of knowing" (S. Parker, 2009, p. 40). In fact, Fowler differentiated between faith, religion, and belief: He considered faith a universal human characteristic that is expressed in various religious practices and personal beliefs. In addition, faith brings purpose to one's life and guides an individual's yearning and calling. According to Fowler (2001), "Faith Development Theory took form in order to illumine a path persons follow from the origins and awakenings of faith through the interactive process of forming and reforming frames of meaning, in and between communities of shared traditions and practices" (p. 167). Much like Erikson (1981), who identified psychosocial crises that offer individuals the opportunity to progress to the next stage of development, Fowler (1981) described seven sequential and hierarchical phases of faith that correlate and integrate with each other from infancy to mature adulthood as individuals make sense of increasingly complex ways of understanding the transcendent. In fact, Fowler (2001) stated, "Erikson helps us keep body, psyche, ideology, developmental challenges, and society in faith development

studies" (p. 168). The first four stages of Fowler's model occur during childhood and include primal faith, intuitive-projective faith, mythical-relative faith, and synthetic-conventional faith. Once adults can attain self-authorship, they may reach individuative-reflective faith or conjunctive faith, or a few may reach universalizing faith. Fowler (2001) summarized his model as "a theory of the journey of the faithful or religious self, with its companions and life challenges, toward increasingly reflective and responsible relation to and grounding in the Holy" (p. 165). Fowler's (1981) model of faith development directly informs the mentorship dyad as mentor and mentee continue to make meaning of their beliefs and to further commit to their God-given calling.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do faculty perceive mentorship to impact their Christian vocation and spirituality?

RQ2: How do students feel impacted in their identity, spirituality, and life purpose as a result of mentoring relationships?

Definition of Key Terms

Calling/purpose/vocation. For centuries, the idea of Christian vocation brought to mind visions of religious professionals, like monks, nuns, and priests, whose ascetic lifestyle allowed them dedicated time to pray and serve others and was seen as a selective calling only bestowed on some. With the advent of the Protestant Reformation and Gutenberg's bible, the Word of God became available to everyone, encouraging believers to "approach God's throne of grace with confidence" (*ESV*, 2011, Hebrews 4:16). Indeed, God ascribes to all believers "a holy calling" (2

Tim 1:9), which imbues life with purpose and meaning (Fowler, 1981). In addition, Thompson and Miller-Perrin (2003) affirmed, "Christian vocation includes a calling from God to love and serve others in their specific needs" (p. 49). Accordingly, the meaning and purpose of life are gained not only when believers choose to "do all to the glory of God" (*ESV*, 2011, 1 Corinthians10:31) but also when their actions are other-centered. In its most simplistic, albeit profound, definition, the Christian vocation is to "love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (*ESV*, 2011, Luke 10:27). Phillips (2011) affirmed, "Educators at Christian universities can help students … begin to comprehend a sense of vocational calling in the purposeful activities that go beyond self-satisfaction" (p. 318). In this study, the Christian faith provides the context in which divine purpose and vocation guide individuals "to live a life worthy of the calling [they] have received" (*ESV*, 2011, Ephesians 4:1).

Mentoring. As of 2009, over 50 definitions of mentoring existed (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). In fact, according to Crisp et al. (2017), "There is no one definition that accurately represents the diversity of relationships that students and institutional agents may term 'mentoring'" (p. 18). Despite the lack of consent, Kram's (1983) definition remains the most common, whereby mentoring consists of a relationship between someone with more experience who assists in the development of a less experienced individual. Jacobi (1991) listed five characteristics to define mentoring: the mentor provides support and assistance to help the mentee succeed; the relationship offers emotional and psychological support, assistance with career development, and role modeling; mentoring is a reciprocal relationship from which both mentor and mentee glean benefits; and, in general, mentors have more influence and experience in their field than their

protégés. Combining Jacobi's (1991) first two elements, Crisp et al. (2017) offered a similar definition but added that mentoring relationships are also characterized by "intent, purpose, intensity, and duration" (p. 18). Because of the plethora of mentoring features, structures, and forms, Crisp et al. (2017) encouraged researchers to clarify the attributes of the relationship they are studying. For the purpose of this inquiry, two dyads comprising one faculty mentor and one undergraduate mentee met weekly during the course of one semester. These exchanges center around informal conversations about faith, spirituality, the meaning and purpose of life, and any other topic participants might choose.

Spirituality. For the purpose of this research, spirituality is neither ineffable nor indefinable. Rather, the centricity of Christ as God incarnate inspired this study. For the Christian, to grow spiritually is to "be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may know what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (*ESV*, 2011, Romans 12:2). The goal of Christian learning should be to reflect Christ's character as individuals are being conformed to the image of Christ, a process that should be evident in every aspect of a believer's life (Chandler, 2015).

Summary

This introductory chapter presented the background for the study, whose aim is to provide current research by exploring how students and faculty experience mutually transformational mentoring relationships at Christian colleges. To address this problem, an interpretive phenomenological inquiry was chosen to reflect on the first-person perspective of the participants and subsequently interpret what the experience means for the respondents. In Chapter 2, I review the extant literature on the development of emerging adults and mutually

beneficial mentorship. Chapter 3 includes a discussion of the methodology of the study and details regarding methods used in gathering and analyzing the data.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Researchers agree that mentorships between students and faculty positively affect student retention, academic success, and degree completion (Crisp et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2015; Ingraham et al., 2018; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Schriner & Tobolowsky, 2018). In fact, among significant faculty–student interactions, mentoring relationships have often proven to be the most meaningful and beneficial (Crisp et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2015). Despite positive findings, it remains difficult to agree on a specific definition of mentoring because the relationship depends on its nature, duration, and intensity and because of the absence of a definite theory pertinent to these unique relationships (Crisp et al., 2017; Dawson, 2014). Further, while mentoring relationships involve an element of reciprocity (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Long et al., 2010; Zanchetta et al., 2017), seldom have researchers focused on the bilateral benefits of both mentors and mentees and almost never in the context of faith-based institutions.

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of emerging adults and faculty engaged in mentoring relationships at Christian universities. The theoretical framework was informed by Chickering and Reisser's (1993) psychosocial development, Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, and Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development. The dearth of specific research regarding the reciprocal benefits of mentor and mentee dyads at faith-based institutions motivated this study. As a college educator, I have also been personally invested in furthering my understanding of faculty–student relationships to contribute to the academy and to fulfill what I believe to be my vocational calling. To provide background of extant literature, in this chapter I discuss the importance of mentoring and place mentorship in the context of Christian higher education.

Literature Search Methods

The literature review was completed from the following sources: (a) EBSCOhost and ProQuest databases from Abilene Christian University online library for peer-reviewed journal articles; (b) scholarly books on student development theories and application in higher education; (c) scholarly books on Christian vocation and mentoring; (d) books on phenomenological research and coding qualitative data; (e) two dissertation studies on the spirituality and mentorship of college students; (f) U.S. government impact studies; (g) supplemental research from the World Wide Web; and (h) journals and periodicals. The following words and phrases were used in searches to retrieve relevant literature: (a) Christian higher education, (b) college students, (c) emerging adulthood, (d) faculty–student interaction, (e) faith development, (f) identity, (g) impact of mentoring, (h) interpretive phenomenological analysis, (i) life purpose, (j) mentor, (k) mentoring, (l) psychosocial development, (m) questing, (n) student spirituality, (o) spiritual formation, (p) student development, (q) transformative learning, (r) transformational leadership, and (s) vocation.

Theoretical Framework Discussion

To effectively inform this inquiry, two sets of parallel frameworks are included: Erikson's (1981) eight stages guide the development of faculty mentors, whereas Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors address student-mentees. Correspondingly, Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development applies to mentors, and Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood directly informs this study of students attending Christian colleges.

Psychosocial Development Theories

Psychosocial theories view individual development as the accomplishment of a series of developmental tasks that may or may not occur in chronological order depending on an

individual's biological, psychological, or sociocultural influences (Patton et al., 2016). Working from a Freudian psychoanalysis construct, Erikson (1981) identified eight polarized stages of development, each marked by a crisis that prompts individuals to either improve, regress, or remain at a standstill developmentally (Patton et al., 2016; Weiland, 1993). Depending on whether caregivers meet their needs, infants develop trust or mistrust, deciding whether the world is safe or not. As children grow, develop coordination and independence, and begin school, they may also experience autonomy, initiative, and industry. Conversely, they may suffer shame, guilt, and inferiority from poor performance. During Stage 5, adolescents need to form a sense of identity, or they will experience role confusion, which will likely continue into their 20s during a period Erikson (1981) called *prolonged adolescence* (as quoted in Arnett, 2000), which corresponds to Arnett's (2000) emerging adulthood. Whether young adults successfully form intimate relationships depends on their sense of self: a strong identity will lead to intimacy whereas a weak one, to isolation. Of particular interest to faculty-mentors is the seventh stage, generativity versus stagnation, occurring sometime during the midlife period. Erikson (1981) stated, "Generativity includes productivity and creativity, as well as procreativity" (p. 254). Indeed, adults may focus on leaving a legacy by raising children, contributing to their community, or mentoring the next generation; on the other hand, stagnation occurs if individuals lack a strong identity (Patton et al., 2016; Weiland, 1993). Finally, mature adults reflect on their life and may experience a sense of fulfilment and wisdom or bitterness and despair depending on the choices they made and the legacy they left.

Within Erikson's (1981) stages, prolonged adulthood loosely coincides with Arnett's (2000) emerging adulthood, when individuals between ages 18 and 25 "explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews" (p. 469) before committing to long-term

adult roles. This widespread demographic is characterized by identity explorations coupled with instability and transitions, as emerging adults evaluate and redefine their values, relationships, and behaviors. In addition, this turbulent stage is often marked by a quest for self-identity and life purpose independent of beliefs held by parents or other institutions (Arnett, 2000; Chan et al., 2015). Whether exploring or floundering, emerging adults tend to fluctuate in and out of college and regular employment, changing their educational goals as often as they change jobs (Krahn et al., 2015). A similar inconsistency characterizes emerging adults as optimistic, confident, and ambitious but also as anxious, depressed, and feeling in-between (Arnett, 2019). Because the majority of undergraduates falls into this age group, it is crucial to understand their developmental needs and idiosyncrasies.

One particularly helpful theory is Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of development, which applies to educational settings. Although not sequential, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors become increasingly complex as students integrate them in their personal development and are described as "major highways for journeying towards individuation … and also toward communion with other individuals and groups" (p. 35). Chickering and Reisser (1993) identified the first vector as developing competence, a stage with four interrelated elements: intellectual competence, physical competence, interpersonal competence, and a subjective sense of competence (Patton et al., 2016). During the second vector, students become aware of their emotions, then learn to manage them appropriately. Development also includes identifying whether feelings are constructive or destructive and learning coping techniques to reach emotional balance (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). With the third vector, students move through autonomy toward interdependence, initiating the process of "becoming their own person and taking increasing responsibility for self-support" (p. 115). At

this stage, students gain greater emotional independence and freedom from needing approval from others, as well as instrumental independence and the confidence to pursue self-directed activities. Moreover, as students separate from parents, they come to recognize their reliance on others and develop "an awareness of [their] place in and commitment to the welfare of a larger community" (p. 117). Vector 4, developing mature interpersonal relationships, includes tolerance of other people's opinions and differences and the ability for relational intimacy. Chickering and Reisser (1993) explained that in this stage students learn not only to become less self-centered but also to "choose healthy relationships and make lasting commitments based on honesty, sensitivity, and unconditional regard" (p. 147). Vectors 1 through 4 culminate in the fifth dimension, establishing identity, which includes being comfortable with one's physical appearance, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and background, while reaching self-acceptance, self-esteem, emotional maturity, and autonomy (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016). As students progress toward establishing a secure identity, they also move toward developing purpose, both personal and vocational, often identifying a transcendent, more meaningful life purpose. Finally, students who progress toward a clear self-identity and purpose develop integrity when their moral values guide their action and reflect a sense of social responsibility (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016). Clearly, the psychosocial theories explained above are intricately connected and inform one another; such is also the case for the following theories of faith development.

Fowler's (1981) Faith Development Theory

Conducting interviews with more than 350 individuals over 10 years in the United States and Canada, Fowler's (1981) research remains foundational in regard to faith development. Fowler distinguished faith as encompassing both beliefs and religion. Fowler's model begins

with a pre-stage, primal faith or undifferentiated faith, when infants begin to develop a first image of God based on the characteristics of their caretakers. Intuitive-projective faith develops as young children begin to speak; in this stage, children form their image of God from stories and pictures shared with them. In the second stage, elementary school children develop mythic-literal faith, embracing the accounts of their loved ones without doubt. As adolescents develop abstract thinking, their beliefs evolve into synthetic-conventional faith that is still not their own. During the next stage, adults between the ages of 30 and 40 develop individuative-reflective faith, "a coherent and explicit meaning-making system [that] evolves from beliefs, values, and commitments" (Patton et al., 2016, p. 199). At midlife or later, individuals experience conjunctive faith, having become more self-aware and more accepting of others' beliefs. Finally, few mature adults reach universalizing faith, a stage marked by altruism, selflessness, and love for others. Salient to this study, Fowler's (1981) fifth stage points to emerging adults who may still be developing a reflective faith by critically reviewing their beliefs. Faculty are likely to fall into the next stage, conjunctive faith, when adults seek to contribute to the betterment of the world. In turn this echoes Erikson's (1981) stage of generativity and the focus to care for the next generation.

Overall, the aforementioned theories parallel and complement each other in both psychosocial and faith developments. Of note is the apparent complementarity between middle-aged adults, who may engage in generative activities, and emerging adults, who need mentors to help them establish their identity and define their life purpose. Highlighted in Figure 2 are the developmental stages pertaining to mentors and mentees unifying the theoretical framework of this research. Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood is not included because it does not comprise specific stages of development but rather the characteristics of an entire decade.

Figure 2

Summary of Theoretical Framework

Stages	Erikson (1981)	Chickering & Reisser (1993)	Fowler (1981)
Infancy 0-18 months	trust vs mistrust Virtue: hope		
Toddlerhood 18 mos. – 3 yrs old	autonomy vs shame Virtue: will		*(pre-stage*) primal faith
Early childhood 3-6 yrs old	initiative vs guilt Virtue: purpose		Intuitive faith is populated by powerful images
Childhood 6-12 yrs old	industry vs inferiority Virtue: competence		Mythical faith guarantees order & fairness
Adolescence 12-18 yrs old	identity vs role confusion Virtue: fidelity		Synthetic faith begins to understand another person's perspective
Young adulthood 18-29 yrs old	*(Prolonged adolescence)* intimacy vs isolation Virtue: love	Develop mature relationships Establish identity Develop purpose Develop integrity	Reflective faith critically reviews beliefs; leads to individuation
Adulthood 35-60 yrs old	generativity vs stagnation Virtue: care		Conjunctive faith contributes to betterment of the world
Maturity 60 yrs old – death	integrity vs despair Virtue: wisdom		Universalizing faith embraces wholeness without paradoxes

Literature Review

Preeminence of Mentoring

Far from being a new concept, mentoring relationships have been lauded in most world religions. Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism promote guru–disciple relationships, and Judaic rabbis act as mentors to converts. In the Hebrew scriptures and in the Christian bible are found many examples of mentoring dyads, such as Moses and Aaron, Elijah and Elisha, Eli and Samuel, and in the New Testament, Paul and Timothy. To be sure, the idea that mentorship

is beneficial is as old as Homer's (ca. 700 B.C.E./2018) character Mentor—more precisely, the goddess Athena in disguise—who was responsible to teach, inspire, and care for Telemachus while his father, Odysseus, battled the Trojans. Other literary examples include the Mesopotamian poem *Gilgamesh* (ca. 1800 B.C.E./2014), in which Utnapishtim mentors the hero on his quest for immortality. In John of Salisbury's political criticism *Policraticus* (ca. 1159/2000), the "footprints of philosophers" provide a metaphor for mentoring. *Les aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse* (Fénelon, ca. 1699/2006) expounds on Homer's tale to describe Mentor's advice on how to rule. Less-mythical mentors have enriched, even galvanized, the lives of their famous protégés, from Alexander the Great to Helen Keller.

In the United States, mentoring has played an increasingly significant role, affecting several sectors of society, including social programs, business, and education. For instance, the Big Brother/Big Sister Federation founded in New York in 1904 is now the largest mentoring program in the world (Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, n.d.). Since the early 1990s, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership has helped over 4.5 million at-risk youths engage in mentoring relationships (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014), and in 2014 President Obama launched the My Brother's Keeper initiative, a nationwide mentoring program for inner-city youths (*My Brother's Keeper 2016 Progress Report,* 2016).

Corporate America has also recognized the various benefits mentors can bring. In the last several years, the *Harvard Business Review* has published several books and articles that speak to the importance of mentoring relationships: *Coaching and Mentoring: How to Develop Top Talent and Achieve Stronger Performance* (Harvard Business Review, 2004), *HBR Guide to Getting the Mentoring You Need* (Harvard Business Review, 2014), "Find the Right Mentor During a Career Transition" (Claman, 2014), and *CEO's Need Mentors Too* (de Janasz &

Peiperl, 2015). Similarly, *The Economist* contended “Protégés of Nobel Laureates Are More Likely to Thrive” (2019). A similar concept that has emerged in the last decade is business coaching. For instance, with the slogan “Everybody needs a coach,” Gallup (n.d.) offered several coaching courses to managers and senior leaders, led by veteran coaches all over the world. The John Maxwell Company (n.d.) advertises executive coaching programs to “improve critical thinking skills, improve interaction with a team, and increase self-awareness” (para. 3). In the early 1980s, Kram (1983) completed foundational research on mentoring in a business context that remains salient in other fields, including higher education. Kram (1983) posited, “A mentor relationship has the potential to enhance career development and psychosocial development of both individuals” (p. 613). Drawing from Erikson’s (1981) life stage of generativity versus stagnation, Kram (1983) further stated that mentoring younger workers is an opportunity for midlife growth. Thus, a senior manager may experience inner fulfillment when he helps develop the skills, performance, and sense of competence of his mentee; the manager may be acknowledged for his mentoring efforts, while the new hire benefits from the experience and counsel of their mentor (Kram, 1983). As shown in Table 1, Kram (1983) identified career functions with corresponding psychosocial mentoring functions.

Table 1

Kram's (1983) Career and Psychosocial Functions in Mentoring Relationships

Row	Career function	Psychological functions
Row 1	Sponsorship	Role modeling
Row 2	Exposure and visibility	Acceptance and confirmation
Row 3	Coaching	Counseling
Row 4	Protection	Friendship
Row 5	Challenging assignments	

Note. Career functions are those aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance career advancement. Psychosocial functions are those aspects of the relationship that primarily enhance sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness in the managerial role (Kram, 1983).

Similarly, Chun et al. (2012) concluded that engaging in mentoring increased the transformational leadership skills of senior employees, which in turn positively affected their well-being. Transformational leaders "are recognized as change agents who are good role models, who empower followers to meet high standards, who act in a way that makes others want to trust them, and who give meaning to organizational life" (Northouse, 2016, p. 190). Chun et al. (2012) also determined that the well-being and organizational commitment of protégés were mainly affected by career development support as a function of mentoring. Of late, changes to the national workforce due to shifting demographics and diversification, paired with accelerating technological growth, have also prompted executives to implement mentoring models to diffuse tensions between employees (Gratton, 2016). Specifically, cross-generational mentoring has fostered employee cohesion: younger hires acquire skills for future potential career advancement, and older workers enjoy making a positive impact in the life of incoming

workers and, indirectly, in their organization (Gratton, 2016). Proposing high-quality relationships, Ragins (2016) identified relational mentoring as "a mutually beneficial relationship that meets members' needs while providing experiences of relational closeness (i.e., care, concern, responsiveness, vulnerability, emotional connection and commitment)" (p. 229). According to this construct, participants in high-quality dyads experience benefits beyond those of traditional mentoring models, like mutual discovery and learning. Overall, the impact of mentoring in corporate America reflects the desire of older employees to contribute to their organization and invest in productive activities that benefit younger workers, reflecting Erikson's (1981) stage of generativity (as cited in Patton et al., 2016).

In the field of higher education, extant research has generally grouped mentoring with the traditional paternalistic approach to education, "where the tutor makes the majority of decisions about the desired outcomes and learning experiences, and the student's role is mostly passive" (Heron, 2008, p. 65). From this perspective, mentoring is considered a hierarchical relationship in which the expert fills the pupil with knowledge instead of both dyad members enjoying a reciprocal exchange (Adedokun et al., 2010; Emmanuel & Delaney, 2014; Komarraju et al., 2010). Consequently, most research has focused on the benefits gained by students but rarely on the mentors' lived experiences. Although on a college campus mentoring may take many forms, studies have supported the hypothesis that student–faculty relationships positively impact undergraduate intellectual growth, career development, academic success, and personal, moral, and spiritual development. In a quantitative study of 20 core courses offered at 7,668 community colleges in the south-central United States, Crisp (2010) concluded that mentoring directly impacted students' ability to integrate in their institution both academically and socially, which in turn influenced students to complete their college education. Komarraju et al. (2010) surveyed

242 undergraduates required to live in residence halls. The researchers determined that informal interactions with faculty helped increased student confidence in their academic skills as well as their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Komarraju et al. (2010) encouraged institutions to provide mentoring opportunities to maximize on these beneficial relationships. In a mixed-methods study, Lunsford (2011) analyzed interviews of 128 students from three cohorts during their sixth semester. The results showed that students who were mentored displayed a higher career certainty than those without a mentor. From their comprehensive longitudinal study, Astin et al. (2011) concluded that faculty could considerably affect student spirituality through informal interactions, which in turn fostered academic success and intellectual growth. Ward et al. (2014) conducted an exploratory case study to investigate the meaning that tribal students ascribed to their experience with instructor-led mentored research. Results indicated improvement in students' confidence and performance in math and science, increase in course completion, and growth in the number of students intent on pursuing a 4-year degree. In a qualitative study of two faculty mentors and 25 undergraduate mentees, Zanchetta et al. (2017) concluded that all participants benefited from what they considered "intellectual partnerships" (p. 114): Student nurses felt supported and encouraged as equal researchers, and mentors came to appreciate their pupils' interests and contributions. E. Parker (2017) also encouraged institutions to implement mentoring programs after conducting an analysis of longitudinal national data. With a sample of 999 students, E. Parker (2017) concluded that informal student–faculty interactions positively affected student moral development. E. Parker (2017) also advocated for further qualitative research in this area of study.

Whereas the benefits of mentoring to students have been well researched, few studies have focused on the experiences of faculty mentors. Long et al. (2010) explained, "For the

faculty–student relationship to flourish, the interaction between faculty and students must benefit both participants" (p. 21). From a survey of 18 faculty members who mentored undergraduates, Adedokun et al. (2010) determined that mentoring contributed to faculty research and interpersonal gain. In a phenomenological study, Reddick and Pritchett (2016) interviewed six Caucasian faculty members who mentored African American students at a predominantly Caucasian college. Mentors expressed developing a deeper understanding for minority students, and some even offered their help to mentees with issues of discrimination. The two faculty mentors involved in the study by Zanchetta et al. (2017) experienced increased self-confidence and job satisfaction and "considered that mentees' success and accomplishments inspired and motivated them as scholars" (p. 116). Indeed, faculty mentors can have a generative experience, a sense of fulfillment in caring for the next generation of scholars while leaving a worthwhile legacy (Erikson, 1981). They can also find satisfaction in encouraging emerging adults on their path to maturity.

Mentoring in the Christian Context

The individual journey of discovery that emerging adults embark upon moves them toward finding a guiding purpose that transcends financial security (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). For the Christian student, this entails a move from dependent faith to inner-dependent faith and spiritual well-being. For the Christian mentor, this becomes an opportunity to support and encourage mentees in their spiritual development while providing a role model of the faith (Cannister, 1999).

Past research has supported this theory in regard to the spiritual development of students attending faith-based colleges. Exploring the impact of mentoring on the spiritual well-being of freshman students at a religious private college, Cannister (1999) determined that mentored

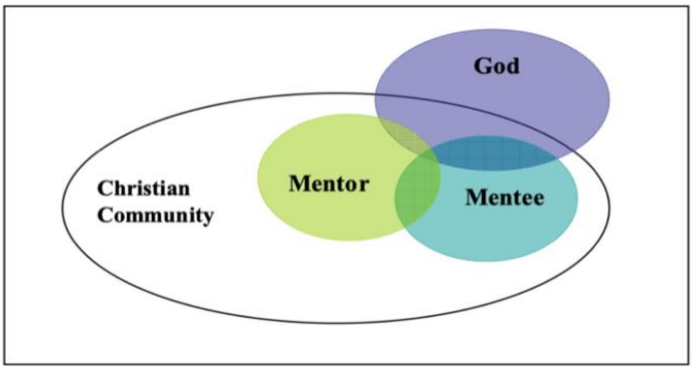
pupils experienced significantly higher religious well-being than their non-mentored counterparts. More recently, gathering initial data from over 800 students, Hall et al. (2016) resolved that emerging adults underwent a recentering process, during which they deconstructed previously held beliefs and then reconstructed a more personal faith. Although only 29 participants completed the surveys through their senior year, the longitudinal study confirmed previous research by Chan et al. (2015), who also determined that a newly constructed religious identity positively affects a sense of meaning and purpose in emerging adults attending college. In particular, the authors stressed the importance and uniqueness of the period after adolescence and the positive effect on eudaemonic well-being stemming from a newfound religious self-identity. In another study, Bailey et al. (2016) confirmed the spiritual quest of undergraduates attending Christian colleges, calling this stage "a crossroads of development" (p. 108). From their qualitative research, the authors developed a grounded theory of spirituality in Christian emerging adults. Echoing Arnett's (2000) theory, Bailey et al. (2016) submitted that this is a time of instability and searching for personal and spiritual identity. In a study of a longitudinal data set with an original sample of more than 14,000 individuals, Riggers-Piehl and Sax (2018) explored student interactions with faculty in and out of class. The researchers concluded, "When faculty encourage student spiritual exploration and act as spiritual role models, students are more likely to show growth in their spiritual quest and meaning-making outcomes" (p. 102).

While Christian mentors play a crucial role in the spiritual development of emerging adults, research also points to the salient function played by the community of faith. Parks (2000) theorized that mentoring communities provide the optimal environment to provide spiritual leadership to emerging adults. Kiesling (2008) commended communities that value individuals and encourage their moral visions. In a qualitative phenomenological study, Powell et al. (2012)

interviewed students attending a faith-based institution and concluded that community support played a significant role in student spiritual growth. More recently, Davignon and Thomson (2015) completed a survey of students from 31 member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. Results led the researchers to liken faith-based schools to moral communities, where "the availability of spiritual mentors and the integration of faith and learning … allow them to play an important role in the faith development of college students" (p. 548). In the context of mentoring communities, faculty have the opportunity to encourage emerging adults when they express doubts and question their faith as they engage in spiritual questing (Hall et al., 2016; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). Indeed, a mentor-mentee relationship is the "doorway through which the emerging generations come to faith and learn what it means to live a fully integrated faith" (Horan, 2017, p. 70). Within the Christian community mentoring relationships can integrate spiritual development of emerging adults (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Mentoring Relationships in the Christian Community



Note. From *Mentoring in Christian Community: Issues of Definition and Evaluation.* [Unpublished doctoral thesis], by S. J. Heron, 2008, Queen's University, Belfast, Ireland, p. 86.

Summary

Undoubtedly, the importance and value of mentoring in society cannot be overlooked despite the lack of a strict lexicon definition and unequivocal pertinent theory. On the other hand, the richness and significance of mentoring relationships between faculty and emerging adults at Christian colleges call for additional qualitative inquiry to better understand the lived experiences of mentors and mentees in this context. The next chapter describes the interpretive phenomenological method used in this inquiry.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Neil Armstrong famously stated, “Research is creating new knowledge” (Levine, 2005, para. 15). Depending on the philosophical assumptions of the researcher, the goals, outcomes, and evaluative criteria of an inquiry may be approached in different ways. While the spectrum of ontological and epistemological suppositions is extensive, positivism and interpretivism are two polar stances of research approaches. The positivist paradigm views researchers as independent observers, whose aim generally consists of formulating and testing hypotheses of cause-and-effect variables by collecting a large amount of measurable data and deducing conclusions (Gergen, 2014). Conversely, researchers who espouse an interpretive paradigm see themselves as part of what is being observed, explore human behaviors and their meaning, undergo in-depth inquiries with small samples of participants, and interpret their findings while acknowledging their own subjectivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2010). Until the 20th century, most scientific research followed an empirical positivist approach that valued objectivity and a preponderance of measurement (Chamberlain, 2000). With the rise of the social sciences, a new research model was needed to accommodate an emic approach to studying and understanding human activities (Stake, 2010).

The rise of qualitative research has provided information in the form of thick descriptions of human experiences, motives for community intervention, reasons for program evaluations, impetus for self-evaluation, and insights into society that have led to emerging theories (Gergen, 2014; Leavy, 2017). These data need to be understood by interacting firsthand with the individuals involved in their natural setting. Since the purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of emerging adults and faculty engaged in mentoring relationships at Christian

universities, a qualitative inquiry has been chosen. In addition, this study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do faculty perceive mentorship to impact their Christian vocation and spirituality?

RQ2: How do students feel impacted in their identity, spirituality, and life purpose as a result of mentoring relationships?

In order to genuinely understand the meanings participants ascribe to these experiences, this study adopts an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which focuses on "the accounts which participants provide [to] reflect their attempts to make sense of their experience" (Smith et al., 2012, p. 4). This chapter outlines the research design and methods adopted to answer the research questions, including population and sample, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, limitations, and delimitations.

Research Design and Method

Qualitative research has been compared to "an intricate fabric comprising minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of material" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 41). Creswell and Poth (2018) outlined several characteristics of qualitative inquiry: the research is context-dependent to understand its origins and background; data are collected such that the individual experiences what is being studied; different types of data are collected, such as interviews, observations, and notes; the researcher becomes a key instrument of the inquiry rather than remain distant and uninvolved; the goal of the researcher is to learn the meaning the participants ascribe to their experience, which could result in multiple perspectives and meanings; researchers provide information about their interpretation of the inquiry and seek to

give a holistic account of the elements of the issue under investigation; and finally, inquiry itself is emergent, adapting to new information provided by the participants.

Phenomenology

One of several qualitative approaches is phenomenology, which has been described as "a complex, comprehensive, and intricate philosophy that thematizes consciousness and its functions" (Giorgi et al., 2017, p. 178). Etymologically, the word comes from the Greek *φαινομενον* (*phainomenon*), or "what appears," and the suffix *λογία* (*logía*), or "words." It refers to describing different ways in which things appear (Vagle, 2016). Philosophically, phenomenology has influenced movements like existentialism, postmodernism, and feminism, and stems from three main orientations: German philosopher Edmund Husserl's (1859–1938) transcendental idea of *wesen*, or *essence*; Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) focus on the appearances of the phenomenon; and a more recent definition of phenomenology as an encounter to understand the meaning of human experiences (Vagle, 2016).

Husserl (1859–1938) introduced phenomenology as a philosophical alternative to empiricism and positivism and as a new foundation for human sciences (Giorgi et al., 2017). According to Husserl, individuals are always conscious of something; thus, consciousness is always intentionally directed toward an object. The way people experience a particular object in their consciousness and make meaning of that experience becomes the focus of Husserlian phenomenology (Giorgi et al., 2017). Specifically, Husserl sought to study the *lifeworld* as it is lived and experienced by individuals while searching for the transcendental essence of those experiences.

One of Husserl's students, Heidegger, focused less on consciousness and the essence of phenomena but stressed a more ontological construct. He introduced the concept of *Dasein*, or

"being in the world," in the context of being with others (Horrigan-Kelly et al., 2016). To Heidegger, the meaning of human existence is not separate from society, and "phenomena are conceived as the ways in which [individuals] find themselves in the world, in-love, in-pain, in-hate, in-distress, in-confusion" (Vagle, 2016, p. 38). Heidegger's philosophy challenged not only Husserl's assumptions but also the Cartesian dualism that influenced scientific research for centuries.

More recently, researchers have applied phenomenology as a method to engage in "the search for the source and mystery of meaning" (van Manen, 2014, p. 22). Two approaches to the study of personal meaning are present: following Husserlian thought, some phenomenologists (e.g., Giorgi, van Manen) attempt to bracket all preconceptions and foreknowledge to attain a "transcendental reduction" (Giorgi et al., 2017, p. 178) while following predetermined steps to ensure trustworthiness; other researchers (e.g., Vagle) opt to remain flexible in their methodology and challenge what Chamberlain (2000) called "*methodolatry*, the privileging of methodological concerns over other considerations" (p. 285). Both orientations reflect the philosophical assumptions of the researcher and require applying appropriate methods to investigate and find answers to particular research questions (Levitt et al., 2016).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

Among several phenomenological designs is interpretive phenomenological analysis, which has been characterized as "the most participant-oriented qualitative research approach, [one] that shows respect and sensitivity to the lived experiences of the research participants" (Alase, 2017, p. 10). In IPA, researchers first describe lived experiences from the point of view of individuals who shared a common phenomenon; then they reflect on the first-person perspective of the participants and, subsequently, interpret what the experience means for the

respondents (Alase, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leavy, 2017; Locke et al., 2010; van Manen, 2014). Moreover, phenomenologists attempt to lay aside presuppositions while remaining open to where the data lead (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Finlay, 2009; Giorgi et al., 2017; Moustakas, 1994). Finlay (2009) asserted that research is phenomenological "when it involves both rich description of lived experience, and where the researcher has adopted a special, open phenomenological attitude which, at least initially, refrains from importing external frameworks and sets aside judgements about the realness of the phenomenon" (p. 8). As the researcher endeavors to make sense of participants who are also attempting to ascribe meaning to their experience, a double hermeneutic occurs (Smith & Osborn, 2015). Accordingly, to distill the essence of a phenomenon, the researcher must carefully describe it through self-reflection while attempting to reduce reality to the specific event alone. This is accomplished with ἐποχή (*epoché*), or "bracketing" (in German, *Einklammerung*), a phenomenological reduction that suspends all judgment and foreknowledge but the phenomenon to be studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Giorgi et al., 2017; Rhodam et al., 2015). However, this approach is mitigated by the understanding that the subjectivity of the researcher is inevitable: "Some would say it is precisely the realization of the intersubjective interconnectedness between researcher and researched that characterizes phenomenology" (Finlay, 2009, p. 12). Indeed, the dual role of the phenomenologist is not only to understand and describe the phenomenon as perceived by the participants but also to interpret the meaning of their experience (Larkin et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2012).

By applying IPA to the current study, a detailed exploration of the unique experience of each mentor and mentee and their meaning-making activity provided new insights into mentoring relationships at Christian colleges. Specifically, the in-depth description and

interpretation of this phenomenon expanded current understanding to how faculty-mentors and student-mentees perceive mentorship to affect their personal, vocational, academic, and spiritual lives.

Philosophical Perspective

The need to establish trustworthiness and quality of inquiry in IPA is especially important when exploring "the lived meaning of human life and existence" (van Manen, 2014, p. 17). Transparency and self-awareness are two elements the researcher can employ to provide validity, including explicitly stating philosophical assumptions that affect the interpretive framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Heeding Chamberlain's (2000) advice to avoid methodolatry and place methods above other important issues, I offer in this study my presuppositions as they relate to social inquiry.

This study was guided by a constructivist epistemology, which acknowledges that the interactions between researcher and participant create new realities shaped by experience. In this paradigm the values of individuals are respected as the researcher attempts to understand the world of the respondents and the meaning they ascribe to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From this epistemological position flows the selection of phenomenology—in particular, IPA because of its focus on the meaning-making activities of individuals in their natural context as they experience phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Finlay, 2009; Giorgi et al., 2017; Moustakas, 1994). The following methods proceeded from the chosen research design and supported its application.

Population

Researchers who adopt an IPA approach, investigate and interpret lived experiences from the point of view of individuals who have shared a common phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Creswell

& Poth, 2018; Vagle, 2016; van Manen, 2014). To obtain a homogenous group of participants, purposive sampling is employed to ensure individuals with shared experiences can provide firsthand data for the inquiry (Leavy, 2017; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Originally, several groups of participants were recruited at three Christian universities: faculty-mentors and student-mentees. Faculty were invited to participate directly by me via a telephone conversation, followed by a detailed email that described all aspects of the study (see Appendix A). Purposive sampling was then adopted by participating mentors to identify student-mentees and ask for their voluntary participation in a one-on-one semi-structured interview with me.

Study Sample

Unlike quantitative studies that require large samples to reach measurable findings, qualitative research does not depend on the size of the sample but rather on the quality of the information gathered. Levitt et al. (2016) explained that "trustworthiness of qualitative research may not come from conducting a comprehensive mapping of variation within the *population,* but rather from selecting experiences that map the variation within a *phenomenon*" (p. 12). Since IPA emphasizes a detailed account of a lived experience rather than provide generalizations for a large group of people, the number of participants remained relatively small. Smith et al. (2012) suggested a sample between three and six participants, and Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended restricting research to a few participants and focusing on in-depth inquiry. For this study, I hoped to recruit four mentor-mentee dyads.

Instruments

The phenomenon under investigation was the way faculty-mentors and student-mentees perceive the effect of mentorship on various areas of life and the meaning they ascribe to that relationship. Data were collected through the following means: in-depth one-on-one semi-

structured interviews with each participant, journaling, field notes, and personal observations of the nonverbal communication emanating from participants. Each interview was recorded to ensure access to verbatim responses, which were foundational, crucial data to understand the phenomena and one method to ensure validity (Larkin et al., 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Smith et al., 2012).

The fluidity with which phenomenological studies are conducted precluded the use of structured protocols (Chamberlain, 2000; van Manen, 2014). Nevertheless, preparing opening questions and possible probes to obtain rich accounts from participants secured congruency between the aim of the research and its design (Baillie, 2015; Smith et al., 2012). Thus, the direction of the interview was guided by the following opening prompts: How would you describe your experience as mentor/mentee? Please tell me what mentoring means to you. How has your relationship with mentor/mentee made a difference in the way you feel about spirituality? How has the mentoring relationship made a difference in the way you see yourself? (Possible probe: How would you say you have changed?). Additionally, I also journaled personal thoughts and feelings, which provided further insights (Chenail, 2011). My original intent also included the process known as *interviewing the investigator* (Chenail, 2011). To test the interview protocol, the dissertation committee chair would ask me the same questions and probes that were asked of participants. Because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to complete this step.

Data Collection

Prior to the interview, I contacted each participant by email to establish an initial rapport and to explain the details of the study, including how the data would be used and how confidentiality would be ensured by using pseudonyms. A second comprehensive email followed

to reiterate particulars and confirm interview dates and times. In addition, an email from HelloSign was sent to each participant asking for their electronic signature as proof of voluntary participation and consent to record the interview (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; see Appendix B).

Commonly used in qualitative research, semi-structured interviews comprise a loosely organized framework while allowing the interviewer enough leeway to adapt to emergent information (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; Schwandt, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Smith et al. (2012) noted, "Interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participants' responses, and the investigator is able to enquire after any other interesting areas which arise" (p. 57). The interview protocol for this study was designed to be flexible, albeit specific, with open-ended questions to allow participants to share their experiences with the most freedom, in their own words, and from their perspective (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Smith & Osborn, 2015). Smith and Osborn (2008) explained, "In this relationship, the respondents can be perceived as the experiential expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed maximum opportunity to tell their own story" (p. 59). The salience of these firsthand accounts cannot be overstated, especially if participants chose to share unpredicted areas of their experience unprompted.

A secondary method of data collection comprised memoing, field notes, and my personal observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; Schwandt, 2007). During each interview, I took short notes regarding participants' nonverbal behavior and tone of voice. After the interview, analytical memos summarized what happened, including self-reflection for possible changes in the interaction with the next interviewee. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested using an observational protocol to record rich descriptions of the physical setting,

portraits of participants, and reflective notes about the researcher's own reactions to and interpretations of observations. In addition, Saldaña and Omasta (2018) recommended writing analytic memos, or reflections, insights, questions, impressions, connections, and any other thought the researcher gathered about the study. This researcher used an observational protocol as well as analytic memos that were later coded with the rest of the data and provided significant additional qualitative information. I kept the data secure and did not attempt any analysis until all the interviews were completed to avoid personal bias and premature interpretation (Alase, 2017).

Data Analysis

Van Manen (2014) asserted, "Phenomenology is a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence" (p. 12). This reflection takes time. In fact, Smith et al. (2012) advised that qualitative research methodology is "time-consuming, labour-intensive, and both imaginatively and emotionally demanding" (p. 42). The first step of data analysis consisted of carefully transcribing each interview, including the interviewer's questions and all participant responses, even pauses and laughter (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The use of a wide margin permitted the inclusion of nonverbal behavior and other observations, which provided additional context. These descriptions were meticulously transcribed because they determined the foundation of my reflection to describe and interpret lived experience (Amankwaa, 2016; Finlay, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Once transcription was completed, participants were asked to review the transcript of their interview to further ensure accuracy. The use of MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, aided in the transcription of the interviews and field notes. Prior to reading the transcript, I engaged in self-reflection and journaled my current conception of mentoring and my expectations of the study; then I approached the first reading of the interviews aware that foreknowledge and its possible effect on

the data. Through phenomenological reduction (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Finlay, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014), I then attempted to focus on the phenomenon alone as described by the participants in their lived experiences.

A first reading of each interview provided a general sense of how respondents described their perception of the same phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Finlay, 2009; Giorgi et al., 2017)—specifically, how they perceived they had been impacted by engaging in a mentoring relationship, either as mentor or mentee. I then interacted with the interview transcripts and field notes by reading them several times to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' insights. Smith and Osborn (2008) explained, "This form of analysis is iterative and involves a close interaction between reader and text" (p. 72). The software aided in analyzing the transcripts and pointed to patterns and connections. With each subsequent reading, there emerged commonalities in the language in regard to meaning; these descriptions were marked and condensed into units of meaning (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Finlay, 2009; Giorgi et al., 2017; Roberts, 2000). After the idiographic analysis of each interview and its respective notes, I composed a textural description of what participants experienced and a structural description of how they experienced it (Creswell & Poth 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Smith and Osborn (2008) asserted, "While one is attempting to capture and do justice to the meanings of the respondents to learn about their mental and social world, those meanings are not transparently available—they must be obtained through a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation" (p. 66). To reach the essence of the phenomenon, I looked beyond the participants' explicit meanings and my combined observations while evaluating them against my own meaning-making process (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Moreover, the software identified coding frequencies across the data and even offered a visual of the analysis. The result

was a thematic synthesis of the essence and meanings of the phenomenon as experienced by participants.

Methods to Establish Trustworthiness

While the quality of research is of the utmost importance, quantitative criteria would not be well suited to assess a philosophical paradigm like phenomenology (Smith et al., 2012; Vagle, 2016; Yardley, 2017). Smith and Osborne (2012) warned against the use of structured interviews and questionnaires that deliberately limit what the respondent can talk about, and Vagle (2016) encouraged phenomenologists "to resist the urge to follow a recipe and instead embrace the open searching and crafting" (p. 104). In addition, Smith et al. (2012) explained that IPA is a creative process that calls for flexible evaluation criteria, and Moustakas (1994) posited that phenomenological research is made valid by first-person reports of life experiences. phenomenological research is made valid by first-person reports of life experiences.

Despite a lack of systematic steps to establish trustworthiness in regard to phenomenological research, several guidelines have been suggested. Larkin and Thompson (2012) proposed that quality research includes collecting appropriate data from participants who directly inform the research; maintaining an idiographic focus by emphasizing the unique personal experience of participants; richly describing the context of participants in detail; providing analysis that balances the meaning participants ascribe to their mentoring experience and the researcher's interpretation of that meaning-making process; and proposing appropriate theories to guide the research. In this study these criteria were met by completing semi-structured interviews of faculty-mentors and student-mentees, by composing rich descriptions, by engaging in reflexivity, and by relying on psychosocial and faith development theories. Levitt et al. (2016) proposed three concepts to ensure the quality of phenomenological analysis: fidelity, utility, and

integrity. Fidelity was defined as “an intimate connection that researchers can obtain with the phenomenon under study” (p. 10). This was accomplished through collection of firsthand data and writing thick descriptions of the human experience. Utility was present to the degree that the research accomplishes its purpose. Accordingly, the integrity of the current study can be found in the way that IPA supported my constructivist perspective as well as in the alignment and congruence between the research questions and the methodology (Alase, 2017; Anderson, 2017; Baillie, 2015; Leavy, 2017). Semi-structured interviews and thick descriptions of the phenomenon ensured fidelity, and utility was reached in the findings, which provided a deeper understanding of the way mentors and mentees perceived how mentorship relationships affected them. Yardley (2017) proposed another set of guidelines to ensure quality of research. Sensitivity to context included how I showed awareness of personal bias, participants’ point of view and setting, and how these affected the study. Commitment and rigor were met when I completed thorough data collection and in-depth analysis. Transparency and coherence were attained as I clearly explained how interpretation is derived from data, and impact and importance were found in the salience of the study. Finally, since the focus of this research concentrated on meaning, the use of mentor-mentee dyads brought a complex multiperspective to the sample and provided its own triangulation (Larkin et al., 2019).

Other methods were used to ensure quality of research. First, the study qualified as phenomenological because a clear human phenomenon was articulated, research questions guided the inquiry into the exploration of human experience, and the outcome communicated the essence of the experience (Alase, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leavy, 2017; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014). Secondly, participants were chosen from a context that was directly related to the research, and the sampling method was clearly described. Since first-person

descriptions of the experience served as data validation (Moustakas, 1994), interviews were accurately transcribed, and transcripts were sent to each participant to ensure accuracy within two weeks of being conducted. I journaled my observations after each interview, including dates, times, and locations, and focused on observations of setting and participants as well as personal introspection. Within 2 weeks of data analysis completion, participants were sent a copy of the findings and were asked to comment; modifications were made if necessary.

Despite the small number of participants, thick descriptions, verbatim expressions, in-depth interviewing, and clarifying definitions constituted a sufficient corpus data (Anderson, 2017). The description and interpretation of the participants' remarks stemmed from the original interviews, and each step of data analysis was documented to ensure dependability (Baillie, 2015). Also, the study was rooted in scholarly literature and offered my self-reflexivity throughout to clearly describe positionality and personal context for confirmability (Anderson, 2017; Baillie, 2015). Finally, because reflexivity is considered a "criterion of excellence" (Gergen, 2014, p. 9), I examined personal responses and motivations, and sought to remain aware of the way my philosophy and beliefs might have affected the research.

Role of the Researcher

The phenomenological researcher acted as the instrument that collected, analyzed, and interpreted data while engaging in thoughtful reflexivity and self-awareness (Finlay, 2009; Stake, 2010). Because of the subjective nature of hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation upon which phenomenology is derived, my perspective, background, and experiences became an essential element of understanding human phenomena. Finlay (2002) posited, "This way of being-in-the-world means that researchers cannot help but bring their own involvement and fore-understanding into the research" (p. 4). Thus, the challenge of phenomenologists is to

acknowledge that they know too much (van Manen, 2016) and to continually be aware of the way they are predisposed to a certain interpretation even before the study begins (Finlay, 2002). Because of the unavoidable subjectivity of interpreting the data, I committed to engage in critical self-awareness throughout the study, being conscious of how process and findings might be affected. On the other hand, personal introspection also provided valuable new perceptions stemming from my own experiences. Indeed, the very nature of IPA requires that "the researcher [engage] a dialectic movement between bracketing pre-understandings and exploiting them reflexively as a source of insight" (Finlay, 2009, p. 13). This cyclical process advanced interpretation of data while inextricably connecting me with the participants. It was this intersubjectivity that brought additional meaning from the dialogic connections included in the study.

Ethical Considerations

This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Abilene Christian University prior to data collection (see Appendix C). An email was also sent to the deans of the mentors' respective schools to inform them of the study. Both deans responded favorably (see Appendix D). Faculty members known to me were contacted directly and asked for their voluntary participation in the study.

An informed consent agreement was provided to all participants to ensure they understood they were participating in research voluntarily and could withdraw at any time; the document also detailed the purpose of the study, namely exploring the participants' lived experiences and meaning ascribed to their mentoring relationship. Procedures were also communicated, including a description of the interview process, how the data were to be analyzed and stored by me, and the assurance of confidentiality by means of pseudonyms. Also,

respondents were made aware that neither discomfort nor risk was anticipated during the study; in fact, participants might have benefitted from the research by gaining self-awareness and a clearer spiritual and vocational identity. The participant's signature indicated agreement with the document and willingness to participate in the study. In addition, I was sure to avoid pressuring respondents and exploiting them in any way and refrained from tempering of data, falsification of findings, and plagiarism. Finally, I clearly documented personal impressions, assumptions, and roles throughout the study for maximum transparency and integrity. This praxis reflected my moral values, which have been based in a lifelong commitment to the Christian faith.

Assumptions

The first assumption related to the sample was that faculty-mentors were likely to select student-mentees with whom they had already established a meaningful relationship. Instead of viewing this element as a limitation, I was even more eager to glean from first-person accounts of all participants. Secondly, I assumed that participants shared their experiences honestly and accurately. By signing the informed consent agreement, participants agreed to the terms of research and offered their insight voluntarily, with no reason to alter the veracity of their experience. Finally, my preconceived idea of mentoring as a mutually beneficial relationship could have led me to look for responses that supported my views; acknowledging this assumption was the first step in allowing the accounts of the participants to redefine my understanding, followed by reflexivity and ongoing transparency.

Limitations

In general, phenomenological studies are rarely suitable for replicability, an element that limited this research. In addition, once interviews were completed, I analyzed a copious amount of data collected under circumstances that cannot be generalized. To make matters worse,

interviews were not conducted in person because of the strict social restrictions imposed by the coronavirus, which also greatly diminished the number of participants in the original sample.

Delimitations

This study presents an exploration of the lived experiences of faculty and students engaged in mentoring relationships at Christian universities. The nature of phenomenological inquiry delimited findings to a relatively small and homogenous sample in a specific academic context. Excluded were lived experiences of mentoring dyads at public and private institutions that are not faith-based.

Summary

This chapter outlined the methodology and design for an interpretive phenomenological inquiry that explored how faculty-mentors and student-mentees at Christian universities perceived mentorship affected them personally, academically, vocationally, and spiritually. The research design was first guided by my philosophical presuppositions of social constructivism, which values individuals and the meaning they ascribe to phenomena. Flowing from that position, an interpretive phenomenological approach was chosen because of its focus on the meaning-making activities of individuals and on discovering the essence of human phenomena. One-on-one semi-structured interviews and my personal observations composed the firsthand data of this study, which also provided trustworthiness and integrity for an otherwise fluid and elusive subject.

As a professional educator, I hoped to significantly impact Christian higher education through this study. If emerging adults are at a spiritual crossroads, faith-based institutions have the opportunity to provide the holistic education that once characterized American universities. Moreover, Christian educators who become mentors have the opportunity to further fulfill their

own vocational calling. This study may incentivize faculty to become mentors to emerging adults, and it may encourage administrators to invest in mentoring programs. By providing a better understanding of emerging adults, this research may also benefit resident life directors, resident advisors, and other academic and church leaders who work with that age group.

To practice the very self-reflection here described, I must reveal that completing this chapter deepened my connection to the research questions and renewed a sense of excitement about undertaking the study. Van Manen (2007) stated that phenomenology is "driven by fascination: being swept away in a spell of wonder, a fascination with meaning" (p. 11). Indeed, completing the research has been quite captivating.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological inquiry was to explore the lived experiences of students and faculty engaged in mutually beneficial mentoring relationships at Christian universities. This study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How do faculty perceive mentorship to impact their Christian vocation and spirituality?

RQ2: How do students feel impacted in their identity, spirituality, and life purpose as a result of mentoring relationships?

Despite a reduced sample, it was possible to complete data collection and analysis following an interpretive phenomenological design that focused on the lived experiences of each participant and the meaning they ascribed to their mentoring experiences. In fact, analysis of the data uncovered compelling correlations and latent contrasts leading "to attaining the eidetic and originary meanings of [the] phenomenon" (van Manen, 2017b, p. 811). The following outline provides an overview of the chapter:

Results

I. Sample
    A. First dyad
    B. Second dyad
II. Data Collection
    A. Synchronous interviews
    B. Memos and field notes
III. Data Analysis
    A. Self-reflection

B. MAXQDA

1. Description of analytical tool
2. Meaning units
3. Themes
4. Relation to theoretical framework

C. Synthesis of meanings and essences

1. Interpretive phenomenological analysis
2. First dyad
3. Second dyad
4. The essence of the mentoring experience

IV. Summary

Sample

Originally, this study was designed to include four mentor-mentee dyads from three Christian universities. Because of the social restrictions imposed in most states to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, two dyads were procured from two faith-based institutions, one in Southern California and the other in western Washington. With state mandates prohibiting face-to-face interactions, convenience sampling was adopted to identify two faculty mentors, who then utilized purposive sampling to select student mentees, albeit under different circumstances. Despite restrictions, both dyads were later able to meet in person at both schools, donning masks and shields and maintaining appropriate social distancing.

Nonrandom, convenience sampling is often used in research that requires a homogenous population, as in IPA (Etikan et al., 2016). After months of quarantine, during which I was unable to find willing participants, I finally received emails from two faculty members accepting

my invitation (see Appendix A); both had been teaching colleagues of mine at their respective institutions. To be sure, neither convenience sampling nor IPA in general point to results that can be generalized; however, internal validity can be achieved if data are correctly collected and analyzed and if personal bias is acknowledged (Andrade, 2021; Etikan et al., 2016). While I intentionally attempted to set aside any preconceptions about my former colleagues, I found it hard to ignore my previous interactions with them during the interviews. However, I faithfully recorded my thoughts and impressions and accurately transcribed their firsthand perceptions and descriptions of their mentoring experience.

The reduction in the number of participants from the original four dyads to two dyads could be construed as a setback. However, describing phenomenological studies, Dukes (1984) proposed, "Theoretically, a sample size of one would suffice" (p. 200). Also, Smith and Osborn (2015) explained, "The small sample size of most IPA studies … enables the microlevel reading of the participants' accounts, which offers the possibility of some entree into the understanding of this elusive condition" (p. 41). In fact, the idiographic component of IPA emphasizes the particulars and the uniqueness of an individual's experience of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, even a small sample can grant access into a person's insights about their individual experience. Smith et al. (2009) explained that participants "represent perspectives rather than a population" (p. 49). Dukes (1984) posited that since "the aim of a phenomenological study is to uncover the necessary structural invariants of an experience, those invariants are fully discoverable in any individual case" (p. 200). Other scholars echoed these guidelines: Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that researchers focus on in-depth inquiry with few participants, and Smith et al. (2012) recommended interviewing between three and six respondents. Despite the

reduced sample of this study, the insights of each participant contributed to a phenomenological investigation and interpretation of their experience.

First Dyad

The first mentor–mentee dyad included a male associate professor and a second-semester female senior attending a prominent Christian university in Southern California. Since the student needed additional units to graduate on time, the professor offered his help and designed an independent study that met graduation requirements. The pair convened once a week for about 1 hour for the entire semester in the professor's office on campus. While the purpose of the one-on-one meetings was primarily academic, mentorship was also present as the professor intentionally chose study materials and discussion topics that spurred conversations beyond the subject matter. Not only was the student required to complete specific written assignments, but she was also asked to meditate weekly on topics dealing with Christian vocation and spirituality.

Second Dyad

The second dyad included a male associate professor and a first-semester male sophomore attending a Christian university in western Washington. After participating in a freshman seminar taught by the professor, the student approached him for an informal chat. Eventually, a spontaneous mentoring relationship ensued: The pair met on campus once a week for at least one hour for the entire semester and planned to continue meeting the following term. Without a specific topic in mind, yet discussing vocational issues and spirituality, this dyad best exemplified the original sample of this research; however, it was the comparison between the pairs of participants that yielded a clear distinction of individual experiences.

Data Collection

While other qualitative methodologies may require extensive data collection from multiple sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018), IPA focuses on the lived experience of participants to observe "the phenomenon of consciousness" (Giorgi et al., 2017, p. 17). Indeed, the corpus data of phenomenological inquiry is found in the words of individuals who have lived through and experienced the phenomenon (Smith et al., 2012; van Manen, 2017a). Therefore, firsthand accounts of each participant are of utmost importance because they inherently become the experts in regard to their own experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Collecting the verbal data includes posing open-ended questions that elicit rich description of the phenomenon while giving participants freedom to express their experience in their own words and as they lived through it (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Giorgi, 1997; Smith & Osborn, 2015; van Manen, 2017b).

This study was informed directly by the way participants described their unique personal experiences. However, due to the restrictions imposed on social assembly, semi-structured interviews with individual participants were conducted and recorded virtually via Zoom video calls. Both mentors and the sophomore student participated in the interview from an office on their respective campus; the senior student joined the Zoom video call from her house.

Synchronous Interviews

Each synchronous interview lasted about 1 hour and was conducted virtually via Zoom at a time that was convenient for both participant and interviewer. The recording feature on the Zoom platform enabled the precise recording of each question and answer, including pauses and laughter. Similarly, the video recording documented nonverbal demeanors and mannerisms of participants, albeit in a limited capacity compared to face-to-face interviewing.

Opening questions provided a means to establish rapport, especially with the two mentees, who had never met me. For example, students were first asked open-ended questions about their choice of institution and major as well as their overall college experience. Interviewees were allowed to share their lived experiences with the least constraint through the use of open-ended questions and flexible, yet specific, prompts void of any directional language to avert participant bias (Leavy, 2017; Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). For instance, students were asked, "If you looked at yourself in the mirror today, how would you feel differently about who you are compared to last semester?"

Because of the video component, I maintained eye contact throughout the interview, nodding often and smiling when appropriate. When the interviewee paused, I waited to see if they had more to say, then asked the next question or asked for clarification on a previous response.

The audio file of each interview was imported into the word processing program of Office 365, carefully transcribed into a Word document, and then manually edited where the program had misunderstood or misspelled a word. Wide margins provided space to include nonverbal demeanors and mannerisms. Subsequently, each transcription was emailed to each respective participant for proofing, in an effort to ensure accuracy.

Memoing and Field Notes

While participants responded, their body language and tone of voice were noted, as well as my personal impressions. In each case, it became obvious that interviewing is "a craft that depends on interviewer's skills" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 164). This enormous responsibility felt even greater since I was attempting to create the best possible environment for participants to express the essence of their lived experiences. An observational protocol was used

to record information, such as description and flow of interviews, reflections on the participants' responses, and summary for later theme development (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Figure 4 offers a sample of the observational protocol used during the interview with the professor of the second dyad.

Figure 4

Observational Protocol: Interview With Professor of Second Dyad

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
General: September 8, 2020; 1 p.m. Zoom video call with professor of second dyad.	
Place: Professor answers Zoom call promptly and comments the restrictions due to COVID-19. He wishes we could meet face-to-face.	I too feel very restricted in this virtual setting. I wonder if I'll be able to notice and recognize the nonverbal clues of participants during the interviews.
What: Professor comments on how the restrictions have impacted teaching on campus.	I detect some frustration in the requirement of donning masks during classes. I wonder how this has affected the mentoring relationship with his student: Would it create a physical or emotional barrier?
We begin the interview with general question about how long professor has been mentoring students.	The tone of the answers is relaxed yet informative—just two colleagues chatting together.
Professor reveals that just the day before he received a timely phone call from his own mentor of over 20 years, which encouraged him when he needed it and keeps encouraging him.	Professor nods several times as he recounts his phone call, grateful that his friend-mentor reached out. I wonder whether this mentor exemplified good mentoring for the professor.
Professor recalls a few examples of students he has mentored in the past and with whom he is still in contact, albeit in a different relationship.	Professor speaks of his mentees-friends with affection and even pride, as a father would brag about his kids.
Professor begins talking about the current mentoring relationship with his student. Professor focuses first on his own behavior as a mentor, his willingness first be vulnerable about himself to gain student's trust.	Professor speaks in a matter-of-fact tone; he seems to imply that making himself vulnerable to a mentee is simply what one has to do. He has done this many times before.
Interview summary: Mentoring has been part of the professor's life since he was a freshman in college.	Professor is first a mentor, then an educator; his profession is a means to fulfil his Christian vocation.

A similar protocol was applied to all four interviews. Reflective notes were jotted down quickly as participants spoke, then edited and compiled for clarification. In particular, the summary notes contributed to the identification of themes.

Data Analysis

While all phenomenological research focuses primarily on the firsthand accounts of participants, meticulously transcribing each interview, including verbal and nonverbal responses, was especially salient in this study because of the reduced sample. Disappointingly, only the second dyad met the specific parameters postulated in the methodology; even so, scholars agree that phenomenological analysis transforms any ordinary human experience into an exceptional occurrence when analyzed and understood from the firsthand perspective of participants (Alase, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leavy, 2017; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014, 2017a). Indeed, each experiential description validated the research and provided the foundation for in-depth phenomenological analysis (Amankwaa, 2016; Finlay, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Three interconnected phases compose data analysis in IPA: Thick descriptions depict the phenomenon experienced by participants from their point of view (Finlay, 2009; Larkin & Thompson, 2012), phenomenological reduction allows the researcher to reflect on the participants' experiential descriptions and to interpret their meaning (Alase, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leavy, 2017; Locke et al., 2010; van Manen, 2014), and the search for essences characterizes phenomenology as "the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the internal meaning structures of lived experience that are intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experience" (van Manen, 2017a, p. 3).

Grounded in the constructivist perspective, which values individuals and the meaning they ascribe to phenomena, analysis of data began with my self-reflection, considering personal

conception of mentoring, professional experiences, and previously held expectations in an effort to reach epoché and be free from presuppositions (Giorgi et al., 2017; Moustakas, 1994). Subsequently, analysis included the careful transcription and numerous readings of each interview and field notes, the use of analytic software, and a search for "the synthesis of meanings and essences" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 3).

Self-Reflection

Despite efforts to set aside foreknowledge and expectations, I quickly realized that having worked alongside both faculty members prevented a distancing from their accounts. Surprisingly, I enjoyed interviewing both colleagues as "social occasions" (Kennedy, 2006, para. 2), not unlike chatting with old friends who are respected and even admired.

In addition, my professional and personal experiences were hard to set aside. I have always looked upon teaching as an opportunity to mentor students beyond academics, and over the years, I have been privileged to comfort undergraduates who faced personal tragedy, debilitating illness, and spiritual doubt. One student became part of our family and lived with us for some time, another student called me when he was admitted to a suicidal hospital ward, and yet another still seeks my friendship after becoming a mother. Finally, one of my own children had the privilege of experiencing the kind of mentorship that affected his career choices, deepened his faith, and even prompted him to ask his mentor-friend to officiate his wedding. Without a doubt my foreknowledge could not be completely set aside during this study any more than subjectivity could be absent from the interpretation of qualitative research. Indeed, quoting Heshusius, Blair (2015) remarked that "researchers should embrace a participatory consciousness—recognising that they are not separate from the world in which the data are

produced" (p. 15). Also, Finley (2009) explained that phenomenology itself is characterized by the recognition of this very subjectivity.

Interestingly, while interviewing the mentees, I became aware that I could more easily lay aside my presuppositions about mentoring and fully focus on how the students ascribed meaning to their experience. It is possible that the difference lay in the fact that we had no contact prior to the interview; however, I was also aware of my desire to understand their perspective so as to better my own future mentoring of students. Undoubtedly, the analysis that follows was greatly affected by these self-reflections.

MAXQDA

Description of Analytic Tool. MAXQDA is a leading software that aids researchers in completing qualitative data analysis and mixed-methods studies. With minimal learning, I was able to import, view, organize, and categorize data as well as produce helpful visuals to analyze and interpret results. The interview transcripts and reflexive memos were imported into the program and organized by first and second dyad. Then, I read each transcript multiple times to immerse myself into the project and the responses of the participants as well as to remember my own reflections as a precursor of the coding process.

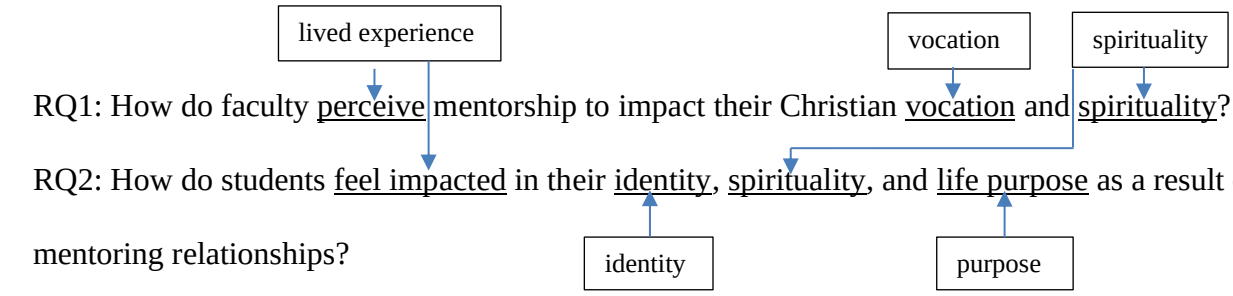
According to Saldaña (2009), "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). While the term *code* is widely used in qualitative and quantitative research, I chose the term *meaning unit* to reflect the phenomenological aspect of this study, namely the focus on the meaning each participant ascribed to their lived experience (van Manen, 2017b).

As an iterative process, coding comprises several cycles, beginning with an initial process that is repeated while moving to a deeper, higher-level analysis (Hedlund-de Witt, 2013; Saldaña, 2009). In this study, the first coding cycle was used to identify meaning units that directly addressed the research questions as well as highlight verbatim responses from the participants.

Meaning Units. After delving into the texts several more times and annotating recurring words, I was left with extensive notes. To bring some order to the data, I reconsidered the research questions and arranged words and expressions to match elements in the research questions. Blair (2015) referred to this process as template coding; it corresponds to Saldaña's (2009) structural coding, a method pertaining to the first coding cycle that applies specific topics of inquiry to data. Five expressions seemed particularly salient: lived experiences, identity, purpose, vocation, and spirituality (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Structural Coding Based on Research Questions



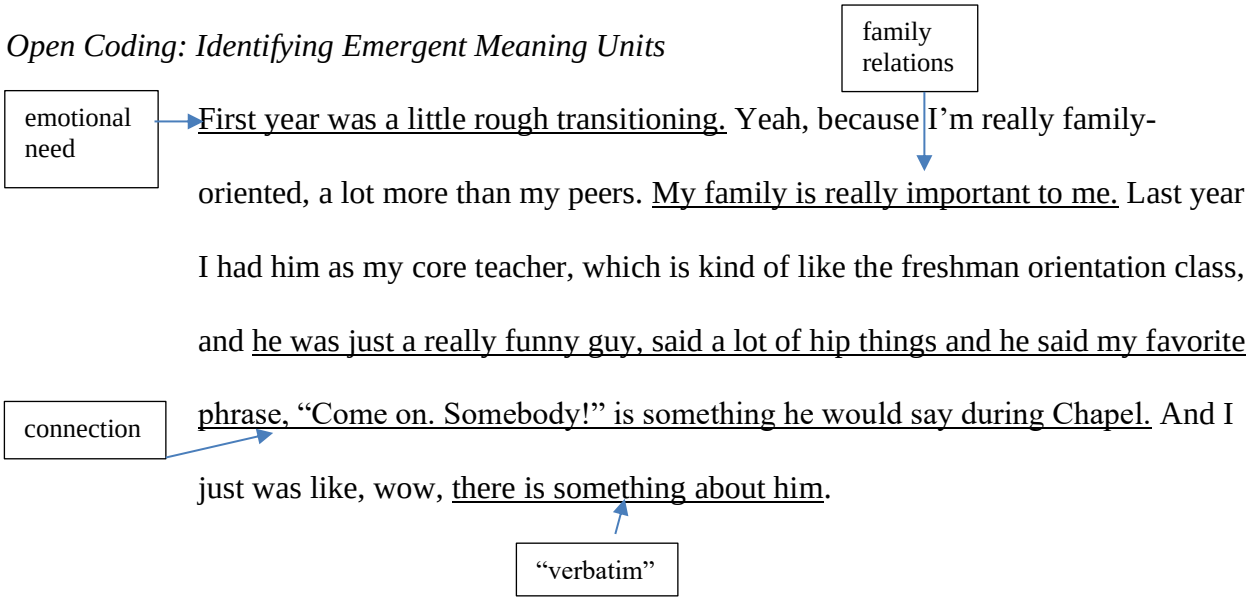
I eliminated the first meaning unit, *lived experience*, since all the interviews focused exclusively on the participants' description of their lived experience of a mentoring relationship. The remaining four meaning units were used to identify parts of text where participants

commented on their vocation, spiritual growth, identity search, and life purpose. These meaning units guided my deductive inquiry and in fact served as a priori codes.

I then proceeded to meticulously examine the texts and applied in vivo coding to tie the participants' responses to the four a priori meaning units. The combination of deductive and inductive inquiry led to further categorizing meaning units as follows: search for vocation and actualization of vocation, spiritual growth and spiritual leadership, search for identity and actualization of identity, and search for purpose and actualization of purpose. In addition, several emergent meaning units were identified by applying in vivo coding: connection, mutual trust, role model, family relations, personal satisfaction, professional fulfilment, age of responsibility, shared ordeal, empathy, generativity, vulnerability, spiritual needs, academic needs, emotional needs, spiritual benefits, academic benefits, emotional benefits, and duration. As shown in Figure 6, paragraphs were marked with labels of meaning units while also identifying verbatim phrases.

Figure 6

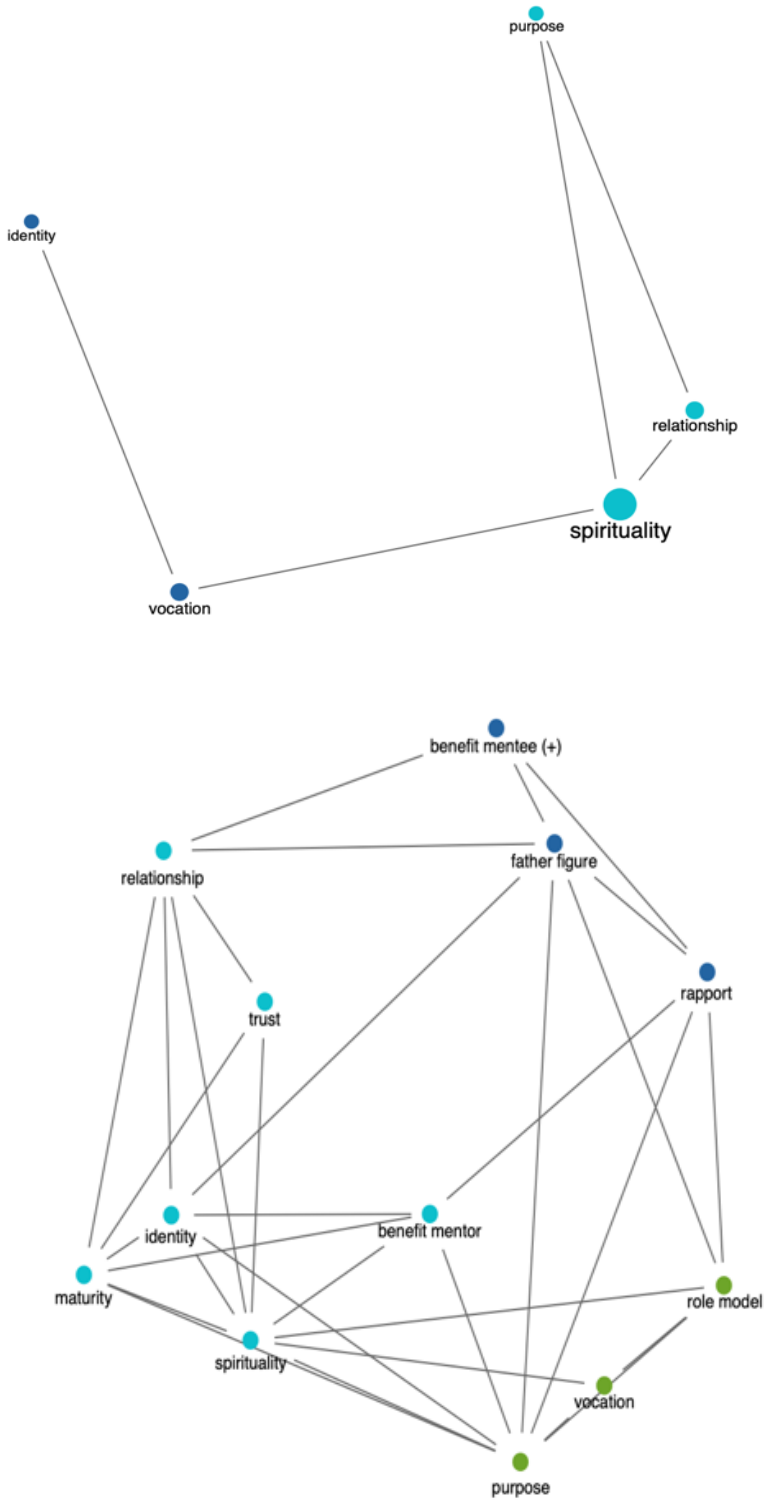
Open Coding: Identifying Emergent Meaning Units



Once coding was completed, the software provided a visual map of the relations between coded documents (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

MAXQDA: Code Maps of Dyad 1 and Dyad 2



As shown in Figure 7, participants in the first dyad sparsely shared meaning units, whereby the relationship between the mentor and mentee connected lightly to Christian vocation, life purpose, and spirituality. In contrast, participants in the second dyad shared a complex web of meaning units to reflect their mutually beneficial encounters: The benefit to the mentee began with the rapport he enjoyed with his mentor as a role model, which was also linked to the student's purpose, vocation, and spirituality. On the other hand, the mentor's benefit was directly linked to his spirituality and vocation, as an exemplar whose purpose was to impact emerging adults.

Themes. A second analytic cycle was completed by applying focused coding, which "categorizes coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarity" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 151). To unveil these themes, I continued to analyze the interviews and reflexive memos while constantly comparing them to the meaning units identified with the software.

As a reminder, the first dyad originated from the student's need for additional academic units to graduate on time and the professor's volunteering to meet that need. As the interview proceeded, the mentor clarified the relationship:

> It's an arranged course, so it's not like a mentorship in the way where I've had students seek me out, or how I sought out a student last week. … This is a student who needed a course, and it wasn't clear that anyone else was going to step up and do it. There's a little bit of a kind of arrangement that would not have arisen except for the need for her to complete some units in order to graduate on time.

The mentee also commented on her view of the relationship:

> This is the first time I've had him as a professor, and I haven't really met him outside of that space either. So it's really interesting to kind of get to know him as a professor, since

> it is a one-on-one-style class, and I wasn't able to get into it last semester in a normal class setting.

Despite the obvious and primary academic goal, the professor explained how a certain mentoring element was also present in the texts he chose for the student:

> We read Christian writers, like Dorothy Sayers; then we read someone like bell hooks who is not Christian but who's writing in ways that are complementary towards neighborly love. We looked at the last chapter of C. S. Lewis *An Experiment in Criticism*, which is not. If you didn't know he was a Christian, you wouldn't necessarily know it was from a Christian perspective. We talked about those intersections, but it's in a roundabout, maybe not a systematic way, except that I specifically chose certain texts that deal explicitly with these kinds of questions, particularly around vocation and faith.

This intentional mentoring helped the mentee reflect on her purpose and vocation:

> I think some of the pieces he's had me reading and some conversations we've had just made me a little more aware of being careful of what I am putting out into the world, making sure that I am trying to put out the best version I can that will promote values in my reader or audience that might potentially make them feel closer to God, or that would push them in the direction to find God, not in a way that would possibly lead them to be pulled away from him.

Clearly, the mentor's focus on the spiritual connection between the academic subject and the importance of serving others "made his protégée more open to finding meaning or a calling in working to achieve higher purposes that serve the common good" (Sweeney & Fry, 2012, p. 99).

Finally, the professor acknowledged the difficulty of impacting the student's spirituality in this kind of academically focused mentorship. He referred to a bumper sticker he saw that summarized his feelings:

> I saw this somewhere recently, like on Twitter or something, where someone asked, "Question: Are you a Christian? Answer: Ask my neighbor!" And so I sometimes think, I don't know. There may be ways in which we are connecting or not connecting that I am simply unaware of.

As I compared the texts with the previously identified meaning units, a few themes emerged. The first dyad was engaged in a pragmatic relationship with a clear academic goal. This placed restrictions and guidelines on the types of conversations in which mentor and mentee engaged. However, even in such a limited context, the professor attempted to impact the student toward a deeper level of spirituality and a clearer vision of Christian vocation. In return, the mentee "furthered [her] connection with writing and its connection with faith." From the experience, she concluded that "there are still ways that my writing can be used to glorify the Lord."

The second dyad, whose relationship was initiated by the student seeking the professor, was free to communicate and connect about any subject, which promoted a greater level of vulnerability and a greater impact for both participants. The mentee described the mentorship as follows:

> It started out mainly as kind of like getting a gauge for where I was at spiritually and just meeting and talking about the Bible. But then it kind of grew into a closer relationship of being able to share what we're going through and talk about who we are; and so we share things that I only have shared with a few people.

This level of vulnerability was reached after the professor deeply connected with the student:

> I try to ascertain what kind of spiritual formational practices and disciplines are in his life and kind of check in with those things. And then over time, as I really get to know somebody, then I feel a lot more able to kind of pry a little bit. I've got to earn their trust … to know them at a level where the masks come off and there are vulnerable.

It is clear that the mentor of the second dyad was intentional in relating to the student to reach the kind of honesty and transparency that allowed them to connect deeply. In turn, this connection allowed the mentor to "understand how the mentee ticks, help him and challenge him, give him advice, listen and pray, and track with them."

Despite the mentor's intentionality, the relationship of the second dyad developed organically, flowing from free-form dialogues and informal conversations while welcoming the hard questions. The professor of the second dyad explained:

> [If] they want to talk about something that's weighty or heavy, I'll tell them things like, "See the odd thing about me is that the more I get to know you, you can't possibly disappoint me. I actually like you more when you are more honest and real and genuine."

The mentor promoted student vulnerability through this accepting and nonjudgmental demeanor, which was modeled by the professor's own mentor while a freshman in college:

> I refer to [my mentor] as someone who fathered me at a time when I was 18 and really making some decisions for myself. So I think it was seeing how much someone's influence to really call greatness out of me at a time when I felt horribly insecure.

Similarly, the mentee of the second dyad considered his mentor as a father figure who reminds him of his own father, "who's so genuine and he's just pouring into me and doesn't expect anything out of it." Complementing the student's sentiment, the professor acknowledged

that becoming a mentor also met a deep personal need. As he revealed a strained relationship with his son, the mentor explained:

> I think in mentoring, it's like God gives me other children. And so in a lot of ways for me it meets a need because some of these people I've mentored are the ones who remember and call me on my birthday. And so I think it's been great to see mentoring like a parenting kind of thing.

In this profoundly personal and spiritual relationship, the student acknowledged his own spiritual growth and his search for identity. He explained:

> I'm really now starting to understand what I want to be and who I am. And [my mentor] is guiding me like, if you are a man of faith, this is how we're supposed to act, and it's really just defining how I present myself to the world. I just love getting to hang out with him and getting to talk with him and noticing the deeper kind of spiritual topics that come up. Now I'm finding myself reading the Bible more often, looking for things in my everyday life that I can see God working.

The professor agreed that over the years his many mentees developed in several ways:

> I've seen them [his protégés] grow more confident, assumed leadership positions. Come out of their shell. Merge more of an integrated person and especially, I hope, more devoted to Christ and more committed to living out their faith.

Finally, both mentor and mentee told stories to describe the effect of mentoring in their lives. The professor recalled several mentees he had befriended over the years and with whom he still kept in touch. One of them became a close friend:

> She was our kids' favorite babysitter and was in our youth group in junior high. When she and her husband got married, I performed the ceremony. My son, my daughter, and

> my wife all stood up in the wedding with them. She's now in her mid 40s and a mother of two. One of the children is on the autism spectrum, and so the fact that my wife is a teacher for children on the autism spectrum—they talk probably once a month. So, you know, this is a really close relationship that I would say is probably 30 years or more.

The student shared that he had already encouraged many of his friends to seek a mentor:

> I told them I just love getting to hang out with the professor and talk with him and noticing the deeper kind of spiritual topics that come up. I've been able to bring that up to my friends and they're like, "Wow, I want to do something like that!" So one of my friends is having lunch every Thursday with another professor on campus.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) explained that stories are literary markers pointing to concepts and themes. These accounts point to the significance of the lived experience for the participants: the mentor's life was closely interrelated with that of his mentees, even defining his purpose as a Christian educator. The mentee's story reflected his desire to emulate his mentor and impact the lives of others.

A final subtle, yet striking subtheme was the implication that faculty present on campus were more available to mentor students. The mentor of the second dyad explained: "You can read all the books you want to and pray, and whatever, but it takes intimacy and time and investment and friendship for discipleship to really occur." Similarly, this professor's mentee shared his thoughts about the characteristics of a good mentor:

> What's really important when finding a mentor is not to find just anyone but to find someone who genuinely cares about who they're impacting. I could just find Joe Blow on the street at school and just talk to him and have him talk with me, but I think you need to

find someone who deeply cares and trusts you and you trust them, because it can't just be anybody.

These conversations seem to stress the need not only for genuine mentors but also for professors who can commit a significant amount of time to mentoring students. This need is only compounded by the increasing number of adjuncts hired at Christian universities in recent years, who tend to have less time to act as mentors.

Relation to Theoretical Framework. This study was guided by Erikson's (1981) psychosocial development theory, Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of development, Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development, as well as the overarching theory of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). The findings advanced my understanding of elements of each theory and how they relate to and complement each other. In particular, results point to the direct correlation between Erikson's (1981) seventh stage of development, in which adults may engage in generative activities to invest in the next generation, and Chickering and Reisser's (1993) fourth vector, during which students, aided by significant parental figures, can develop mature interpersonal relationships, which leads to establishing identity and developing purpose. Moreover, additional insight was gained regarding Fowler's (1981) faith development theory: both mentors exemplified conjunctive faith in their desire to impact the spiritual life of their mentees, and both students described the way in which they reflected about their beliefs in light of their mentoring relationship.

Each of the four participants alluded to several characteristics that typify emergent adults between the ages of 18 and 29. The mentor of the first dyad hoped to aid his student in clarifying her vocation at a time particularly difficult for emerging adults. The professor expressed his hope that in choosing a career his student "feels at least a little more thoughtfully engaged with what it

means to study at a Christian institution, … getting a degree in English, … [and] work as a Christian." From her perspective, the student in the first dyad articulated her uncertainty in purpose and career: "[While] I've always wanted to be a writer since I was little, … it's more like a dream that would be fun, but never being reality … that's not actually going to happen. But now I feel like it's a possibility." The mentor in the second dyad recalled the significant impact of his own mentor during his freshman year at college "at [a] pivotal moment, a time when I felt horribly insecure." Finally, the mentee in the second dyad expressed his search for identity that was facilitated by his mentor: "Before [the mentoring], I didn't really know who I was as a person, [but] going through this I've been able to discern who I am and what I'm about." These exchanges confirm the findings of previous literature which characterized mentoring students as a means to help them develop personal and career goals (Lunsford, 2011; Maier, 2014) and clarify their identity (Chan et al., 2015).

Reflected in Arnett's (2000) theory, Erikson (1981) identified a period of prolonged adolescence during which individuals between 18 and 29 years old may develop a strong sense of self and form significant relationships. Additionally, Erikson (1981) posited that older adults may choose to leave a legacy by contributing to their community and mentoring the next generation. In both dyads, mentors and mentees developed relationships that revealed both stages of development, albeit to different degrees: Mentees clarified their identity and mentors positively impacted and even inspired their students. The mentee of the first dyad explained that her mentoring experience elucidated how she sees herself: "I think [in] my other classes I focused on my writing itself but not my own persona as a writer. I write things and therefore I'm a writer." The student in the second dyad also seemed to gain greater clarity:

> I definitely see my identity a lot clearer than I did before. I would say my life purpose is to help people in uncertain circumstances just being very intentional about what I say and what I do. And definitely I'm trying to be a person that is quick to listen and slow the speak, and just deeply caring for people, … being able to pour into somebody and not expecting anything in return because that's what my professor is doing with me.

The interviews with the mentees also reflected Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors of development. Despite the pragmatic goal of the first dyad, the student was able to clarify her values as a Christian writer: "There are ways to look at literature and see that there are connections to faith—that there are still ways that my writing can associate and be used to glorify the Lord." In the second dyad, the student chose to pursue a relationship with the professor, displaying a growing confidence in himself as well as recognizing his dependence on others. With an increased sense of self-identity, the mentee also developed a clearer sense of purpose in the way he interacts with people: "Being very intentional about what I say and what I do—definitely, I'm trying to be a person that is quick to listen and slow the speak and just deeply caring for people."

Finally, both dyads reflected Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development. In particular, both mentees displayed reflective faith by critically reviewing their beliefs and growing in their spiritual quest (Crisp et al., 2017; Griffin et al., 2015; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018). The student in the first dyad explained that "some of the pieces [the professor] had me reading and some conversations we've had kind of furthered my connection with writing and their connection to faith and religion as well." The student in the second dyad admitted that "before [the mentoring experience] I believed in God and went to church, but now I find myself reading the Bible more often and [have gained] knowledge and understanding about the books of the Bible."

Moreover, both mentors seemed to display conjunctive faith as they contributed significantly to the betterment of their students. Despite the academic focus of the first dyad, the professor commented, “I tried to be really vulnerable with her, in part because we can have these conversations openly, and that’s been really wonderful.” In addition, the professor explained that he intentionally shared with his student the reality of graduating with a degree in English:

> We talk about [questions like], what’s it mean to be a Christian who works? And she expresses some tensions in her writing … and some of the concerns she’s felt, you know, getting in debt for a degree in English. So I just sort of talk to her, you know, to think through those things, think through it with wide open eyes and a realistic understanding of the higher education landscape in terms of employment and other stuff.

In the second dyad, the mentor shared the way he has been able to offer God’s perspective:

> Recently, [a mentee] let me know that he slipped up and viewed pornography, and I was able to [be] that person who says, “I know you’re feeling an incredible amount of shame right now. But let me just tell you from God’s perspective. You know, if anyone being Christ, he is a new creation. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).” So you know, I try to be the voice of God and wisdom in that moment.

Also, the professor illustrated several other ways in which he has contributed to his protégés:

> I still feel like what I do is pastoring. I just pastor college students. And by being empathetic and compassionate and trying to listen and trying to get to know them, you know, I feel like I am a more approachable professor, and we’re going to have intrinsic

> rewards that we wouldn't see elsewhere by the fact that we can do this kind of work and interact with students.

In addition, both faculty members described benefits they ascribed to mentoring, albeit in different contexts. The professor of the first dyad admitted that the constraints of keeping the focus on a specific academic goal made this mentorship somewhat less gratifying compared to others:

> It's a little different from a mentorship where students seek me out to talk or even pray for me, or a student is pursuing a path and I'm concerned about that. And I seek them out. I might say, let's talk through it. I sought out a student last week who is applying to graduate programs to just sort of talk to her—you know, to think through those things, think through it with wide-open eyes and a realistic understanding of the higher education landscape in terms of employment.

This insight echoed a more traditional mentoring approach in which the mentor makes most of the decisions and imparts knowledge to his protégée (Adedokun et al., 2010; Emmanuel & Delaney, 2014; Heron, 2008) while still experiencing professional satisfaction and taking the opportunity to act as a spiritual leader (Sweeney & Fry, 2012; Zanchetta et al., 2017).

In contrast, the professor of the second dyad described his experience of mentoring as deeply fulfilling:

> I really enjoy getting to know somebody and asking the kind of questions that crack the conversation wide open. What I have discovered is that I actually really love that level of conversation, and it fits me because I'm actually an introvert who would much rather get to know one or two people really deeply. Mentoring has also fed that desire to really get to know another person and understand how he ticks and help him and challenge him and give him advice and listen and pray and track with them. Frankly, it's hard; it's an

> investment of emotion, but it enriches your life. It gives purpose to what you're doing. And these people become like family to me; they're the ones who call me and remember that it's my birthday. And I think it's been great to see mentoring like a parenting kind of thing.

These descriptions highlighted the professor's spiritual leadership, characterized by altruistic love (Sweeney & Fry, 2012), but also point to his job satisfaction (Zanchetta et al., 2017), vocational rewards (Maier, 2014), and spiritual stimulation (Maier, 2014; Sweeney & Fry, 2012).

The mentors' descriptions of their experiences provided insights into the differences between the two dyads and their circumstances. Nevertheless, the participants' responses reflected the theoretical framework of this study, underlying not only the authenticity of their experiences but also elucidating the salience of mentoring in the context of Christian universities.

Synthesis of Meanings and Essences

While the use of MAXQDA software provided useful tools to categorize the data, it also seemed to constrain the analysis to a more objectivistic perspective, which reduced the breadth and uniqueness of lived experiences. Van Manen (2017a) explained that phenomenology "differs from almost every other qualitative inquiry in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, explaining, conceptualizing, abstracting, or even attributing meaning to it" (p. 2). In fact, the focus of the phenomenologist is to distil the meaning of an experience, which is shown through examples and descriptions. What follows is an attempt to apply eidetic reduction to investigate the essential phenomenological meaning of the lived experience of mentoring.

Phenomenological Reduction. Basing their inquiry on the philosophy of consciousness, IPA researchers seek to answer the question, "What is it like to experience a particular

phenomenon?" (Giorgi, 2005, p. 80). The question pertinent to this study is "What is the primal meaning of the mentoring experience?" To answer this question, the first step of IPA is to meticulously describe the phenomenon in question through the first-person account of the participants (Giorgi et al., 2017; Larkin et al., 2006). The second step includes a reduction that transcends one's consciousness to gain "a fundamental understanding or inceptual insight into the phenomenological meaning of a human experience" (van Manen, 2017b, p. 819). Rather than applying or identifying a set of analytical codes and themes, researchers conducting IPA uncover phenomenological insights "to produce an account of lived experience in its own terms rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions" (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 41).

In this inquiry, I attempted to bracket as many of my own presuppositions as possible. Of note was the difficulty of setting aside my previous analysis using MAXQDA. In fact, as I reflected on what I had concluded with the use of the software, I realized that phenomenological reduction was needed if the essence of the experience of mentorship was to be discovered (Finlay, 2009; van Manen, 2017b). Analysis started again from scratch as I engaged in a close interaction with the texts while consciously attempting to ignore my previous beliefs about mentorship as well as my newfound knowledge from using MAXQDA. I approached each reading of the interview transcripts and my memos as a new experience waiting to be discovered, "drawing on [my] interpretative resources to make sense of what the person [was] saying, but at the same time constantly checking [my] own sense-making against what the person actually said" (Smith & Osborne, 2008, p. 72).

The descriptions and interpretation that follow are the result of my dialogical encounters with the participants, whose words and expressions enriched my understanding of the essence of experiencing mentoring. Indeed, "the creation of a richly interpreted, phenomenological account

of participant data, arising from the meticulous engagement between the researcher and a small number of participants" (Wagstaff et al., 2014, p. 10) marks the strength of IPA.

First Dyad. Once again I asked myself, "What was it like for the participants to experience mentoring in the context of Christian universities?" The answer lay in bracketing both my previously explained analyses and common sense and turning to the experiential meaning of each participant. In the case of the first dyad, the mentor described the experience as a forced relationship characterized by feelings of ambivalence. He described feeling bound to the mentee by his responsibilities and her need. For the mentee, the experience felt different from other classes only because of its one-on-one setting. She described the experience several times as "interesting," while admitting a certain progress toward defining her identity and purpose. Far from offering mutual benefits to the participants, the lived experience of this pragmatic mentorship remained superficial while meeting its academic goal.

Second Dyad. The mentoring relationship of the second dyad elicited a much different set of experiences for the participants. Organically born from a mutual interest, this mentorship was characterized by deep spiritual conversations, emotional vulnerability, and reciprocal commitment. This mentee identified with the mentor to such a degree that he considered the professor a father figure, someone to emulate, and someone who genuinely cared and could be trusted with very personal information. The mentor's description of the experience included a reciprocal sense of fathering the student after securing a trusted conversational space. From his perspective, his role as mentor transcended his teaching career and even fulfilled it. Without the added dimension of mentoring, the professor believed that "otherwise you're just grading papers and making PowerPoint slide decks and lectures, and I just don't see how that's the sum total of what we could do." At a deeper level, the professor transcended his own self-interest and defined

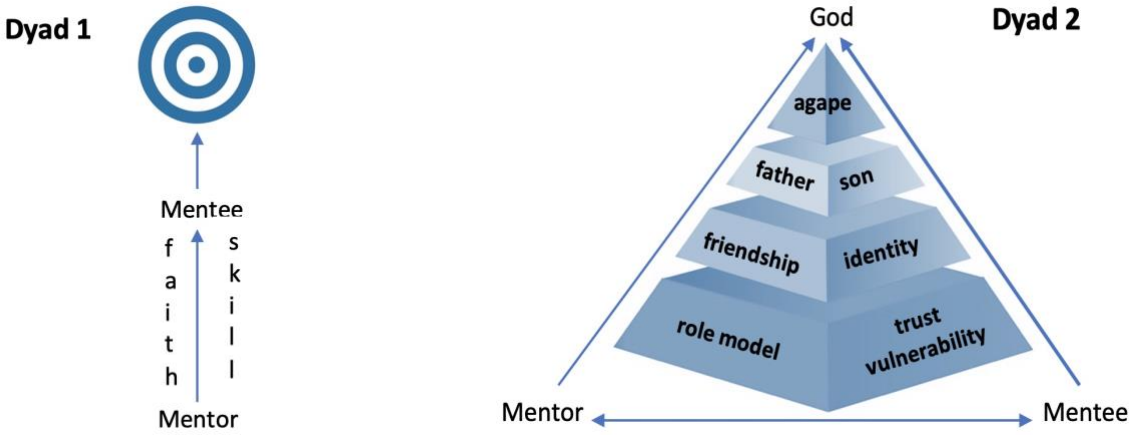
himself by serving his student, which in turn nurtured a sense of meaning and calling in his life (Sweeney & Fry, 2012).

The Essence of the Mentoring Experience. In seeking the primal meaning of the experience of mentoring for faculty and students at Christian universities through IPA, I have come to two conclusions. From analyzing the two dyads, there seemed to exist a spectrum of meaning: At one end, the phenomenology of the lived experience of mentoring could be likened to Christian discipleship. Chiroma (2015) explained that one important element of mentoring is discipleship, by which mentees learn to become more like Christ. In the first dyad, the mentor invested in the mentee, intentionally guiding her and making her aware of deeper spiritual truths while receiving little in return. In this case, the mentee received much, while the mentor primarily gained only the satisfaction of knowing he did his best within the constraints.

Further on the spectrum, the mentor also invested in the mentee just as intentionally and selflessly. However, not only did the student receive guidance and wisdom, but the mentor also achieved a deeper fulfilment of his own Christian vocation. If the essence of the lived experience of the first dyad could be interpreted as a process for spiritual formation, the essence experienced by the second dyad approximated the feeling of reciprocal agape love, through which mentor and mentee fulfilled some of their deepest needs for relationship, forgiveness, acceptance, and purpose. Figure 8 offers a visualization of the essence of meanings for the first and second dyads.

Figure 8

Essence of Meanings: Christian Discipleship and Agape Love



Summary

In the context of Christian universities, the analysis of the interviews using analytical software revealed that the mentor in a pragmatic mentoring relationship experienced some personal and spiritual satisfaction as well as professional fulfilment, while the mentee received academic and spiritual guidance about her identity and vocation. In the mentorship that developed organically, both participants ascribed to their experience meanings like family, role model, father figure, clarity of purpose, and a deeper spirituality.

Applying phenomenological analysis, I concluded that the essence of experiencing a mentoring relationship may reflect a unilateral, albeit profound, element of Christian discipleship in which the mentor helped his protegee develop Christian character. Moreover, the meaning of this experience may also reveal the sort of reciprocal, unconditional affection that believers are called to actualize. Jesus commanded, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (*New International Version Bible*, 2021, John 13:34). Indeed, the phenomenology of the organic mentoring relationship from the perspective of mentor and mentee may be interpreted as an echo

of reciprocal agape love—a taste of heaven. In the next chapter, further discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research are presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to provide a current description and analytical interpretation of the lived experiences of faculty and undergraduate students engaged in a mentoring relationship at Christian universities. Beginning with Arnett's (2000) theory of emerging adulthood, an interpretive phenomenological analysis was applied to better understand how mentors and mentees perceived they were impacted in their identity, spirituality, and life purpose as a result of mentoring relationships. Moreover, I attempted to reveal the very essence of the meaning ascribed to such exchanges. Two mentor–mentee dyads met for several weeks and were then interviewed to describe their experiences. Transcripts were subsequently analyzed with the help of software for qualitative research and by applying self-reflection and bracketing in an original phenomenological protocol to uncover the essence of meanings the participants ascribed to their lived experiences.

The challenge with adopting an interpretive phenomenological methodology was describing a phenomenon as it was lived in the moment, which, by definition, had already passed (van Manen, 2017b). This elusiveness was surmounted with the help of firsthand narratives from the participants as they reflected on the meaning of their experience of a mentoring relationship. The rich insights expressed in the interviews pointed to "the primal, eidetic, originary, or inceptual meanings that are passed over in everyday life" (van Manen, 2017a, p. 4). Indeed, the findings in this study revealed a marked difference between the meaning ascribed to a mentoring relationship guided by a pragmatic goal and the meaning ascribed to a mentorship that developed organically. The first reflected a meaning similar to Christian discipleship, where the mentor greatly impacted the personal and spiritual life of the mentee while helping her achieve an academic objective. In this case, the mentor likened his experience to being bound by his

responsibilities to the protégée for the duration of the relationship. In the second example, both participants experienced a deep connection marked by forgiveness, honesty, mutual vulnerability, and unconditional agape love, likened to a lifelong loving relationship between father and son. While the second dyad best fulfilled the characteristics and parameters of the original methodology, the comparison between the two pairs revealed insights into mentoring relationships with different goals.

The quality of this phenomenological analysis rests on the three concepts proposed by Levitt et al. (2016): fidelity, utility, and integrity. The collection of firsthand data, scrupulous transcription of the interviews and of field notes, and thick descriptions of human experiences ensured fidelity. Utility was achieved to the degree that the study accomplished its purpose: namely, to provide a deeper understanding of the way mentors and mentees perceived how mentorship relationships affected them. The alignment of research questions and methodology established integrity. Yardley's (2017) set of guidelines to guarantee quality of research was also achieved: I was sensitive to the participants' perspectives and to the way my personal bias affected the study. Thorough data collection and in-depth analysis, I showed rigor and commitment, and coherent explanations of the interpretation of data supported the findings and defined the salience of the research. Moreover, the multiperspective of the mentor–mentee dyads provided its own triangulation (Larkin et al., 2019). Furthermore, the study was grounded in scholarly literature, while my reflexivity provided confirmability (Anderson, 2017; Baillie, 2015; Gergen, 2014).

This chapter includes a discussion of how the findings relate to past literature, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for application and future research.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Past Literature

Emerging Adults

The descriptions of meanings uttered by the participants seemed to suggest that participating in a mentoring relationship with a faculty member deepened the spiritual development of both mentees. In particular, the identity and sense of purpose of these two emerging adults was impacted during these interactions. This finding echoes several extant studies, including data analysis completed by Riggers-Piehl and Sax (2018), who concluded that faculty members effectively impacted undergraduates in their search for meaning making and spirituality. Similarly, Arnett (2000) and Chickering and Reisser (1993) posited that emerging adulthood was marked by a quest for self-identity and life purpose in the journey to self-individuation. In this study, both mentees expressed being aided by their mentors in this pursuit.

On the other hand, the relational disparities between the two dyads seemed to indicate that the mentees were impacted to different degrees: While the student in the first dyad achieved a level of spiritual development related to her vocation, she did not seem to experience the deeply personal, emotional, and spiritual connection present in the second dyad. In fact, the time and academic limitations placed on the first mentorship did not allow for a more profound connection in which the hierarchy of mentor above mentee was all but erased. Such findings mirror prior conclusions in studies focused on the unilateral benefits for mentees (Adedokun et al., 2010; Crisp et al., 2017; Emmanuel & Delaney, 2014; Griffin et al., 2015; Ingraham et al., 2018; E. Parker, 2017; Riggers-Piehl & Sax, 2018; Schriner & Tobolowsky, 2018; Ward et al., 2014).

Reciprocal Benefits of Mentoring in a Christian Context

Researchers have agreed that mentoring relationships involve an element of reciprocity (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Long et al., 2010; Zanchetta et al., 2017). In this study, mutual benefits were especially present in the second dyad when mentor and mentee described their relationship as a father–son connection that met a deep emotional need for both. For the mentor, the relationship transcended and fulfilled his teaching career and offered him an opportunity to actualize spiritual leadership, deepen core values, model intimacy, and positively invest in the next generation (Sweeney & Fry, 2012). For his part, the mentee of the second dyad identified with his mentor as a role model to the point of wanting to emulate him. In fact, the student acknowledged changing his behavior and values to mirror his mentor's.

The first dyad experienced a lesser level of reciprocal benefits. Doubtlessly, the mentee received academic, professional, and spiritual guidance; she developed a sense of purpose while wrestling with spiritual questions and grew in her spiritual development (Astin et al., 2010; Bailey et al., 2016; Clydesdale, 2015; Davignon & Thomson, 2015; Liang & Ketcham, 2017; Sullivan, 2016). Moreover, the mentor described a generative experience in the way he chose academic materials and facilitated conversations to elicit spiritual awareness and what it means to work as a Christian (Maier, 2014; Zanchetta et al., 2017). In providing support and encouraging the student in her academic, personal, and spiritual development, the mentor also acted as a role model of the faith (Cannister, 1999).

Limitations

While the small sample of participants in this inquiry could be noted as a limitation of the findings, the two dyads provided ample descriptions and perspectives to inform this interpretive phenomenological analysis. In fact, by focusing in depth on the meaning units of the two

mentors and respective mentees, I avoided an overload of information. As Wagstaff et al. (2014) commented, “The IPA emphasis on individual experience data elicited in small samples [was] poignant, emotive and interesting” (p. 4). At the same time, increasing the number of participants might offer other unique revelations of meaning and an opportunity to compare them (Duke, 1984; Giorgi et al., 2017).

Another limitation was the absence of a dyad composed of a female faculty member and a female student. It is unclear whether the female mentee in the first dyad in this study was less vulnerable with her mentor because he was a man. A future IPA is likely to reveal further insights on the meaning ascribed to the mentoring experience between two women.

Perhaps the most significant limitation lay in conducting interviews virtually rather than in person. While a positive rapport between participants and researcher was achieved, it is likely that several nonverbal dynamics were lost during the video calls.

Recommendations

Future longitudinal phenomenological studies will better inform Christian educators about the meaning ascribed to mentoring relationships, especially in examples such as the second dyad, whose participants voluntarily planned to continue to meet for an indefinite period of time. Also, dyads composed of a female professor and a female student are likely to reveal further insights on the meaning ascribed to the mentoring experience between two women. In addition, it may be beneficial to compare the lived experiences of dyads that comprise full-time faculty with dyads including adjunct mentors, who in general have less discretionary time. Finally, the elusive and complex nature of phenomenology calls for more studies on this subject to uncover the meaning of lived experiences described by participants in mentoring relationships at Christian colleges and to further the mission of Christian higher education.

Conclusions

While this study and other phenomenological research do not lend themselves to generalizability, they offer insights into human experiences that are unique and significant in searching for their primal meaning. This inquiry into the lived experiences of mentors and mentees at Christian universities uncovered a spectrum of phenomenological meanings ascribed to mentorship, from likening the encounters to a means for spiritual formation to creating an environment marked by unconditional love.

These intuitions advance the understanding of mentoring in a Christian context and present unique perspectives to Christian educators. It is my hope that the salience of these findings encourage faith-based institutions to reconsider the place of adjuncts and make allowances for their inclusion in mentoring students.

Ultimately, this phenomenological study constituted a deep learning experience for me. I was confronted with the God-given opportunity of impacting the life of young people, not only academically and personally but also spiritually. This is the meaning I ascribe to my own experience as a researcher and Christian educator, my life purpose, and the essence of my consciousness.

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Appendix A: Emails to Participants

Initial Email Sent to Deans of Colleges

Greetings from Eastern Washington; I hope this finds you well.

My name is Alessandra Hansen and I am working toward an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership with emphasis in Higher Education from Abilene Christian University. I am writing because I have reached the point of original research for my dissertation and have obtained approval from ACU's IRB.

I plan to complete an interpretive phenomenological analysis to explore the lived experiences of students and faculty engaged in mentoring relationships at Christian universities. I hope to interview four dyads comprised of one faculty-mentor and one undergraduate student-mentee after they meet at least four times in an informal setting to talk about faith, spirituality, the meaning of life, and the Christian vocation. Participating faculty will select students for the study.

I am seeking to answer two research questions:
1. How do faculty perceive mentorship to impact their Christian vocation and spirituality?
2. How do students feel impacted in their identity, spirituality, and life purpose as a result of mentoring relationships?

As some Christian institutions are seemingly departing from foundational values in an attempt to be more competitive, I believe this study may offer valuable information and even provide new personal and professional motivation for Christian educators to interact with students in this fashion. Undoubtedly, mentees will also greatly benefit from these dialogic exchanges.

Aside from meeting four times, time commitment will include a one-on-one semi-structured interview of between 60 and 90 minutes, preferably in person (or via Zoom) at the participants' convenience.

I would be grateful if you would forward this request to any faculty you think might be interested in this study and/or to colleagues at other Christian institutions on my behalf.

I may be reached at XXX-XXX-XXXX

Thank you for your consideration.

Warm regards,

Alessandra Hansen

Copy of Email Sent to Participating Faculty-Mentors

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

My name is Alessandra Hansen and I am working toward an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership with emphasis in Higher Education from Abilene Christian University. ACU's Independent Review Board has already approved this study.

My goal is to complete an interpretive phenomenological analysis to explore the lived experiences of students and faculty engaged in mentoring relationships at Christian universities. I am seeking to answer two research questions:
1. How do faculty perceive mentorship to impact their Christian vocation and spirituality?
2. How do students feel impacted in their identity, spirituality, and life purpose as a result of mentoring relationships?

As the participating faculty-mentor, you will select one undergraduate student-mentee with whom you will meet at least four times in an informal setting to talk about faith, spirituality, the meaning of life, and the Christian vocation. After these meetings, I will schedule a one-on-one interview that will last about 90 minutes, at your convenience, preferably in person. After the interview is transcribed, you will be asked to review the transcription to ensure accuracy. You may also contact me with additional information after the interview is conducted.

As many Christian institutions are seemingly departing from foundational values in an attempt to be more competitive, I believe this study may offer valuable information and even provide new personal and professional motivation for Christian educators to interact with students in this fashion. Undoubtedly, mentees will also greatly benefit from these dialogic exchanges.

Please find attached an informed consent form for you to read, sign, and email back to me at your earliest convenience. If you prefer a hard copy, I will be glad to mail you the form with a pre-stamped return envelope.

Thank you for your participation in this research.

Best regards,

Alessandra Hansen

Copy of Email Sent to Participating Student-Mentees

My name is Alessandra Hansen and I am working toward an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership with emphasis in Higher Education from Abilene Christian University. ACU's Independent Review Board has approved this study.

Your professor has selected you to participate in a research about mentoring relationships between faculty and undergraduate students at Christian colleges and universities. For this study, you will meet with your professor at least four times in an informal setting to talk about faith, spirituality, the meaning of life, and the Christian vocation. After these meetings, I will schedule a one-on-one interview that will last about 90 minutes, at your convenience, preferably in person. After the interview is transcribed, you will be asked to review the transcription to ensure accuracy. You may also contact me with additional information after the interview is conducted. Kindly read and sign the document from HelloSign; if you would rather receive a hard copy, please send me your mailing address and I will send it to you with a stamped return envelope.

Thank you for your participation in this research.

Best regards,

Alessandra Hansen

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Introduction: The Reciprocity of Mentorship: Impacting Christian Higher Education

You may be able to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask the researcher any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience. You may also wish to discuss your participation with other people, such as your family doctor or a family member. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION:

This study explores the experiences of faculty and students engaged in mentoring relationships at Christian colleges and universities. The researcher hopes to gain a deeper understanding of the benefits of mentoring for both faculty and students in Christian higher education.

If selected for participation, you will be asked to attend four meetings over the course of a semester. Each visit is expected to take 60 minutes. During the course of these visits, you will be asked to participate in the following procedures: an informal dialogue about faith, spirituality, the meaning of life, and the Christian vocation. After four meetings, you will participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, which will last approximately 90 minutes. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience, either in person or via Zoom. You may contact the researcher to add any additional thoughts or comments even after the interview.

RISKS & BENEFITS: There are risks to taking part in this research study. Below is a list of the foreseeable risks, including the seriousness of those risks and how likely they are to occur: you might experience deep emotions, but that is considered a minimal risk; there may be a breach of confidentiality, but that is also considered a minimal risk; in addition, there is the potential that this study will change the mentor-mentee relationship for the worse, another relatively minor risk.

Please remember that you may end your participation at any time and for any reason, including feeling uncomfortable with the direction of the relationship without incurring any penalties.

To minimize the risk of breach of confidentiality, data will be de-identified with use of pseudonyms; the audio recording of your interview will be stored on a password-secured flash drive as a digital file, which will be placed in a safety box in my home. Upon completion of the research all paper and digital data will be destroyed.

There are potential benefits to participating in this study. Such benefits may include an increased sense of life purpose, a deeper understanding of yourself, and the formation of a meaningful friendship. The researchers cannot guarantee that you will experience any personal benefits from participating in this study. In addition, participating student-mentees will earn class credit upon completing any part of the study.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES: There may be other options available to you, which include talking about any emotions or topics that emerge from the interview.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board. Otherwise, your

confidentiality will be protected by keeping all written records in a safe and secure location; all digital files will be kept on a flash drive which will also be kept in a safe and secure location. Paper submissions will be de-identified and assigned pseudonyms, and all paper and digital data will be shredded upon completion of the study.

COLLECTION OF IDENTIFIABLE PRIVATE INFORMATION OR BIOSPECIMENS: Your data will not be used for any other research purposes other than those described herein.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Alessandra Hansen and may be contacted at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact the dissertation committee chair, Dr. Jackie Halstead at XXX-XXX-XXXX. If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Megan Roth, Ph.D. Dr. Roth may be reached at

320 Hardin Administration Bldg, ACU Box 29103
Abilene, TX 79699

Additional Information

Eight participants are expected to be included in this study. There are no risks or consequences associated with early withdrawal from the study. You may opt out at any time. Students will not be penalized if they do not choose to participate or if they withdraw from the study; non-participating students may earn class credit by completing of a 3-5 page paper detailing their opinion on the pros and cons of mentorship between faculty and students.

Your participation may be ended early by the researchers for certain reasons. For example, your participation may end if you no longer meet study requirements, the researchers believe it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions provided by the researchers, or the study has ended. You will be contacted by the researchers and given further instructions in the event that you are removed from the study.

Please let the researchers know if you are participating in any other research studies at this time.

Consent Signature Section

Please sign and date this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

Appendix C: IRB Approval Form

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

April 8, 2020

Alessandra B. Hansen
Department of Organizational Leadership
Abilene Christian University

Dear Alessandra,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "The reciprocity of mentorship: Impacting Christian higher education",

(IRB# 20-033)is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix D: Email Communication with Deans

From: Alessandra Hansen
Sent: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 7:58 PM
To: DEAN 1
Subject: Dissertation Research

Good evening:
You may remember me from when I taught in the English Department a couple of years ago.
Our family has since moved to Spokane, and although we love the snow, we miss all of our friends in the Seattle area.

I am writing because I am currently conducting research to complete my dissertation. You may remember that I plan to complete an interpretive phenomenological analysis to explore the lived experiences of students and faculty engaged in mentoring relationships at Christian universities. I have been in contact with XXX, who has agreed to participate as well as one of his students.

I attach here the approval from the Institutional Review Board at Abilene Christian University where I am enrolled. I wanted to appraise you as to the status of my study as well as request your permission to proceed.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.
Warmly,
Alessandra Hansen

On Dec 18, 2020, at 11:37 AM, XXX wrote:
Hi Alessandra,
It is nice to hear from you. I apologize for taking so long to respond. I am glad XXX and one of his students are agreeing to participate. As long as you have IRB approval from your institution this should be fine. I don't think this needs officially approval from us as any of our employees are free to be participants in studies as they want on their free time. I am assuming the name of our institution will not be in any published documents. Glad you are working on your dissertation.

From: Alessandra Hansen
Sent: Tuesday, December 18, 2020 1:33 PM
To: DEAN 1
Subject: Dissertation Research

Hello again:
Thank you for your prompt response. Indeed, the name of the institution will appear nowhere in the study.
Alessandra

From: Alessandra Hansen
Sent: Tuesday, December 17, 2020 7:58 PM
To: DEAN 2
Subject: Dissertation Research

Dear Dr. XXX:
My name is Alessandra Hansen. A few year ago, I worked as an adjunct in the Department of English and in the Department of Modern Languages.

I am writing because I am currently conducting original research to complete a dissertation to complete an Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership with emphasis in Higher Education from Abilene Christian University. I plan to complete an interpretive phenomenological analysis to explore the lived experiences of students and faculty engaged in mentoring relationships at Christian universities. I have been in contact with XXX, who has agreed to participate as well as one of his students.

I attach here the approval from the Institutional Review Board at Abilene Christian University.

I wish you a wonderful Christmas and blessings for the new year.
Sincerely,
Alessandra Hansen

On Jan 4, 2021, at 11:30 AM, XXX wrote:

Dear Alessandra,
Thank you for writing! Apologies for the delay in my reply. Thank you for notifying me of your research and attaching your institution's IRB approval.
I wish you success in your research!

All best,