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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A CASE STUDY OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILDREN AND

NON-RELATED ADULTS IN A SCHOOL-BASED MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

By

Jan Small-McGinley ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING, 2000

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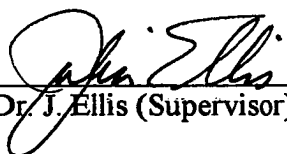material form without the author's written permission.

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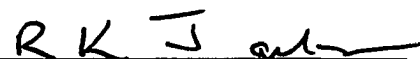
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## Abstract

This study examined the formation of relationships between non-related adults and children in a school-based, reading support, volunteer mentorship program. Mentor pairs met for one hour each week from January until April 1998. Four mentor pairs participated in this qualitative case study research. Observations and interviewing were undertaken weekly, during and immediately following the mentoring sessions.
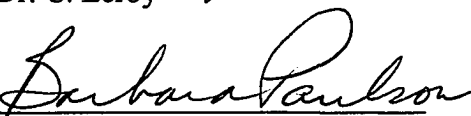
This study showed that the cornerstone of each relationship was the mentor's knowledge of the child's feelings, needs and abilities. The mentors'. abilities to read the children's feelings enabled them to interact and proceed in ways that felt sensible and satisfying. Knowledge of the child's needs gave direction and purpose to the mentor's caring and choices of activities or emphases. Until mentors had such knowledge, the activities they engaged in were directed to acquiring it. This suggests that those involved in designing mentoring programs should resist over-prescribing what transpires during mentoring sessions.

# Acknowledgements

One does not do things alone. The pursuit of my dream would not have been possible without the guidance, support and encouragement I received from a number of special people. In particular, I owe a thank you to Dr. Julia Ellis who was a true mentor to me throughout this journey. I wish to thank her for her advice, patience, support and the opportunities she created for me. I would like to express a sincere thank you to Dr. Bob Jackson who provided on going support and assistance not only as a member of my committee but throughout my doctoral program. I wish to thank Dr. Jill McClay for her support, encouragement and careful editing. I would like to express thanks to Dr. Carol Leroy for her appreciation for and genuine interest in my study. I extend a thank you to Dr. Heather Blair, Dr. Barb Paulson and Dr. David Kennedy for their thoughtful and insightful questions.

I wish to express a thank you to Dr. Jean Young for being a loyal, caring, friend who encouraged and supported me throughout this journey.

I would like to thank the mentors and the children who participated in my study and the staff at the school without whom this study would not have been possible.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Relationship includes a sense of emotional bonding between people,
characterized by a mutual recognition and understanding that
concurrently maintains and nurtures a sense of selfhood and at-oneness.
Relationships comprise the foundation of our work, family and personal
lives. Through relationships with other people such as professionals,
parents, citizens, children and adults, we come to an awareness and
understanding of who we are. Through experiencing our relationships we
create our values and beliefs, our wishes and goals, and our worldview.
(Thompson, p.1, 1991)*

As a teacher of elementary school children, I came to understand the
importance of relationship in October 1981, the second month of my third year
teaching. I'll share a story that I remember vividly because it had a profound effect
on my teaching.

*I was in a Safeway store on a Saturday afternoon buying groceries.
Suddenly I heard a high pitched shriek – it startled me, and yet sounded
familiar. I turned – Megan, a little girl in my grade 2 class yelled,
"Mom!! There's Mademoiselle Small. She eats!!! Look!! " Her mom looked at me
seeming almost embarrassed and said, "Of course she eats  - she's a person just like
me and you." I paid for my groceries and left the store. I couldn't stop thinking
about what Megan had said. In fact, I thought about it all weekend. What became
quite apparent to me was that my students didn't know me. I was their teacher –
someone who was there when they arrived in the morning and when they left at the
end of the day. To them I was someone who taught them French, social studies,
language arts, gym, and so forth. I was focussed primarily on covering the
curriculum. The following Monday all of that changed. I arrived at school with a*

*different agenda. I took a huge risk – I put the "curriculum" on a shelf behind my desk and left it there for a month. Then I called the students to the carpet. We all sat down and I began talking about myself. The students began to see me as a real person with a real life. They came to see me as safe and approachable. Students began talking about themselves. Something happened – the feeling tone of the classroom felt warmer, closer, better.*

*From that point onwards, I worked at bonding with my students in the first month of every school year. Over-night retreats and health classes organized around building a sense of community and belonging in my classrooms permeated the month of September.*

*In 1988, I was teaching grade 4. It was my first day at a new school. A male staff member loudly announced at lunch in the staff room a conversation he had had with a student when he was on morning recess supervision. He had asked the student: "How was your morning so far?" and the student replied: "We have Madame Small – all she did was talk and tell us stories all morning." I could feel eyes all over me. Part of me felt embarrassed – I was a new teacher at the school and it was the first day. I thought -- "Oh no! what are people going to think of me?" Then another teacher voice echoed, "Not me – we got right down to work. Set the tone early. School is a place to work." I looked up – people were waiting for a response. Finally, I said, "There is purpose and value behind all that talking. I promise."*

Early in my teaching career, I realized that the key to a happy, caring classroom was in taking the time to get to know the students. A comment I often

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heard myself say when I talked about my students was, " We have a good relationship."

Positive relationships between children and teachers do make a difference and need to be established in order for optimal learning to occur. When children view the teacher as approachable, they will ask for help when they do not understand assigned tasks. I began this study with a caring and personal concern for children who need more support than they receive for social, emotional, and academic growth.

More recently many teachers have faced greater challenges because they have more students arriving at school with greater needs for one-on-one assistance with their school work and social/emotional problems. Increased demands are placed on teachers to increase student achievement in the core subject areas. Teachers are unable to provide all the support that at-risk children need because of their focus on increasing achievement as well as increased student/teacher ratios. Unfortunately, many teachers are unable to help the children that need them the most. This is further complicated by changes in the nature of working conditions which make it difficult for some adults to spend enough time with their children. Increasingly, when children do not get the kinds of support and attention they need at school, they engage in serious learning disruptive behavior and become violent and aggressive towards others. Violence is described by Brendtro and Long (1995) as:

behavior that violates another individual...extreme chronic violence is a sign that something is awry in the child or the community. The most powerful restraints on violent behavior are healthy human attachments. These originate in early

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relationships of parental affection and guidance. Securely attached children learn trust, competence, self-management and prosocial behavior (p.53).

The need to address increased incidences of violence in schools has become particularly important given the recent shootings deaths of students in schools in Taber, Alberta and Littleton, Colorado. These events caused attention and shock worldwide. For weeks the media was filled with reports and articles citing the reactions of parents afraid to send their children to school, parents angry that schools are not safe places, teachers afraid to teach, clergy, school counselors, school administrators, and psychologists trying to offer explanations and efforts to provide support for students and families. Politicians expressed opinions as well. Said Jon Haverlock, Alberta Justice Minister, "We all send our kids off to school thinking, hoping and believing that they are safe places. They need to be safe." Perplexed and confused, Ron Chalmers, *Edmonton Journal* News Reporter (May 21, 1999), wrote, "The horror, grief and fear that echoed from the fatal shootings at Littleton and Taber have been amplified by an awful realization that we simply don't understand what causes such behavior, or how to prevent it."

Jon Haverstock expressed a need for crime prevention initiatives in Alberta schools. "In particular, programs promoting crime prevention and safety in our schools reflect a priority of the Alberta Government." (Edmonton Journal, May 20, 1999)

Raymond Gariepy, writer of the Alberta Teachers Association's *ATA Magazine* (May 11, 1999), asked Dr. Vicki Mather, Director of Alberta's Safe and Caring Schools Project to explain or speculate on the nature of these horrific

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shootings in our schools. She explained that there are several root causes of violence adding, "The first of which is the absence of healthy human bonding and / or caring relationships."

This study is about relationships between children and non-related adults in a school-based mentorship program. School-based volunteer mentorship programs are increasingly seen as a promising way to support both the self-esteem and academic achievement of at-risk students. Many children would benefit from the positive attention and support of another caring adult in their lives.

Freedman (1992, 1996), has written extensively about mentoring programs designed to assist at-risk children and youth. In his book, "The Kindness of Strangers", he asserts that, "An accumulation of longitudinal research suggests that adult relationships - provided not only by parents - but by grandparents, neighbors and other interested adults - are a common factor among resilient children who achieve success despite growing up in disadvantaged circumstances" (p.i). Mather (ibid) recognizes the contribution that adult role models play in children's lives with the following statement, "We believe that all the important adults in a child's life have an influence on the child's behavior and what they model and reinforce through their behavior is what they're teaching the child."

As Freedman (1992) observes,

Many adults have fond memories of a special person who played an important role in their personal, occupational or professional development. That special person, most often someone older, was a source of support and nurturing not always available from peers, parents or siblings. The older "friend" provided inspiration, acceptance,

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challenge, a sympathetic ear, career opportunities, or exposure to new activities or ideas. Today, we would call that special person a mentor. (p.6)

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## Review of Related Literature

## Introduction

The mentoring movement became recognized in the late 1980's and has become a part of diverse organizations. There are varied interpretations of mentor and mentoring depending on the context and purpose for which they are to be used. Arriving at one fixed definition of mentor and mentoring is a not a simple task. This has been demonstrated in related literature when attempts have been made to examine these terms (Gerhke, 1988/1989; Parkay, 1991, 1988/1989; Yamamoto, 1988/1989). This section explores definitions for the terms "mentor" and "mentoring" in an attempt to consider a conceptual framework for understanding what it means for a young child and an adult to be involved in a mentoring relationship in an in-school mentoring program. This section is divided into three parts. Part I discusses the characteristics that have been used to describe and define mentors. Part II deals with the concept of gift giving and receiving in mentoring relationships. Part III offers a definition of mentoring.

**Part I: Characteristics Commonly Associated with Mentorship and Mentoring**

The following story which explains the origin of the word mentor is found repeatedly in the literature. The word "mentor" comes from the Greek language and has its roots in

the terms steadfast and enduring. The story is told in the Odyssey by

Homer who gave the name Mentor to the friend whom Odysseus en-

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ing the story of the son, the seventeenth century writer, Fenelon, makes

Mentor the main character. Since then, the term mentor has been synon-

ymous in Western thought with one who is a wise teacher, a guide, or

a friend (Big Brothers, Big Sisters; In-School Mentoring Handbook, 1995,

p. 92).

**i) Mentor as wise teacher, guide, friend**

A wise teacher, a guide, or a friend are descriptors that are often used to define

mentor. Smink (1990), for example, defines mentor as:

A wise and loyal advisor, teacher or coach, any caring person who

develops an on-going, one-on-one relationship with someone in need.

A mentor encourages, listens, gives advice, advocates, acts as a role

model, and shares information and experience ( p. 1).

Smink's conceptualization of mentor includes a number of the more commonly

mentioned elements of what characterizes a mentor or mentoring. This definition is

very similar to interpretations shared by many, particularly those involved in in-

school mentorship programs with at-risk children. Freedman (1993) has been

involved in the mentoring movement for many years. He argues that if "one-to-one"

is not protected in the definition, the meaning and purpose of mentoring will loose its

significance and importance. According to Freedman (1996), mentoring is a

"sustained, close, developmental relationship between a more experienced individual

and a younger person" (p. 4).

The meanings of many terms in these definitions are not self-evident. What does

"sustained" mean in a mentoring relationship ? When does a relationship qualify as

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being "close"? When do a series of visits count as a relationship? Is it 8 weeks, 12 weeks, 24 weeks, a year, or longer ? How does trust develop and grow in a mentoring relationship between a young child and an adult?

Smink's (1990) definition identified advocacy as one of the functions of a mentor. There has been considerable discussion about whether the terms "mentor" and "advocate" need to be differentiated.

### ii) Are advocates mentors?

Advocacy has been a controversial issue in the mentoring movement and has raised questions for researchers who are concerned that mentoring has been misconstrued as advocacy (McPartland & Nettles 1991; Legters & McDill, 1995). They feel that mentoring and advocacy have been being used synonymously, and would like to maintain a distinction between them. To distinguish between mentoring and advocacy, Legters and McDill (1995) suggest that

> mentoring is commonly defined as a one-to-one relationship between an
> adult volunteer and a student who needs support for achieving academic
> or personal goals. Advocacy is defined as a continuing set of relationships
> between an adult (volunteer or paid) and members of a group of students,
> in which the adult provides support and services by intervening on the stu-
> dents' behalf, monitoring participation in programs, or brokering additional
> services (p.7).

McPartland and Nettles (1991) also argue that the two terms are different and warrant clarification. They offer the following contrasting definition;

> Mentoring is commonly defined as a one-to-one relationship between a

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caring adult and a student who needs support to achieve academic, career,
social or personal goals. Mentor-student relationships can develop natur-
ally or within structured interventions through activities designed to arrange,
sustain and monitor matches ... [whereas advocacy is] a supportive relation-
ship wherein a resourceful adult (who may be called an advocate, program
coordinator, youth worker, or counsellor) works with the same group of stud-
ents over a specified period of time and provides intensive instrumental,
material, and emotional support that can include assessing students' needs
for academic and social services, intervening on the students' behalf in schools
and other institutions, monitoring students' participation in programs and
identifying and brokering formal services (p. 568-569).

In these definitions, mentoring emphasizes a one-on-one relationship while
advocates may provide support for all members of a group of students. Is advocacy a
critical part of a mentor's role ? Does this depend upon the context of the mentoring ?

### iii) Are mentors tutors?

Some would argue that the word mentor is a glorified title for a tutor. In existing
programs, distinctions have been made between mentoring intended to improve
childrens' academic grades and mentoring intended to enhance social emotional
development in children. Is this distinction made because the first is associated with
tutoring and the latter is associated with mentoring? Should these be separated? Can
a mentor not enhance a child's social emotional development as well as the child's
academic grades? Does academic growth not improve as social emotional growth
improves? Does one not have an affect on the other? What does it mean to a child

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who is not progressing well in school to have a mentor? These questions deserve careful exploration given their significance for program development.

Confusion also arises with tutoring. What is the role of a tutor? Are all mentors also tutors? What is the difference between an advocate, a mentor, and a tutor? What is the difference between being a mentor to a child and being a tutor to a child? Flaxman and Ascher (1992) observed that when children received caring from people in remedial programs, it was fortuitous and unplanned and not considered or counted as part of the programs' effects. How far can the definition of mentorship be stretched or reduced before it loses useful meaning?

Although different conceptions of mentoring exist in current or recent programs, there are a number of characteristics that are most commonly referred to in related literature to describe and define mentors. These include someone who: advises, teaches, coaches, encourages, listens, shares information and experience; is caring, trusting, acts as a role model, and is committed to establishing a regular, on-going close relationship with a mentee. The role of the mentor may indirectly involve advocacy in the sense that advocacy implies representing someone's interests, that is, looking out for another person. It may also entail tutoring because mentors engage in a variety of activities with the mentees, one of which may include assisting with school work. Mentoring has also been described as a process which involves both giving and receiving. This dimension helps to explain what makes mentorship work, or what sustains mentoring. The following section deals with the giving and receiving in mentoring relationships.

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## Part II: Mentoring Involves Giving and Receiving

In a search for the critical attributes of mentorship, I have also encountered the idea that in mentoring relationships, both parties gain and both parties receive. This may very well be the most key feature of mentoring relationships.

Mentoring has been studied in business organizations for adult career development by Nykodym, Freedman, Simonetti, Nielson, and Battles (1995). These researchers understand mentoring as "a process whereby a person with experience and knowledge helps someone new and less experienced become acquainted with an organization" ( p.70). They also claim that "in a true mentoring relationship, both parties gain from the alliance, even though it may seem as if the protege is the only one receiving benefits" (p.170). What is gained in a mentoring relationship between a child and an adult? What does the child gain? What does the mentor gain? In an attempt to more fully understand how mentoring might be experienced this way, I turned to philosophical discussions of mentorship.

Gerhke (1988-1989) offers a philosophical interpretation of what she feels mentoring should be, using the metaphor, "gift-giving."

> The definition should capture the giving and receiving, the awakening and the labor of gratitude. The mentor's relationship with the protege can be seen as gift giving in the gift exchange economy  (p. 194).

Thus, Gerhke suggests that the relationship itself is the gift from the mentor. She also argues that mentoring relationships go through different stages.

> The first is the creation of the gift itself by the one who will ultimately be the giver. Awakening is a second characteristic phase of gift giving. The next phase...

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is the receiver's commitment to labor to deserve the gift. The final phase of work-

ing up to the level of the gift is passing the gift , now increased in worth through

one's own labor on to a new recipient  (p. 192).

How might  in-school mentoring designed to assist at-risk children be conceived of

as gift-giving? What gift is created, exchanged in the mentor/child relationship ?

What does the mentor give to the young child that inspires or enables the child to

give back or to "labour"? Is the "awakening phase" discernible?

Brendtro, Brokenleg & Long (1990), assert that while there are not 10 easily

identifiable steps in relationship building, relationships develop through action and

this action involves a process of giving.

Fromm (1956, cited by Yamamoto, 1988/1989), also thinks of mentoring as

giving. In his attempt to capture the essence of mentoring, he posed the question:

What does one person give to another? He articulated the following response.

> He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives
>
> of his life...he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives
>
> him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his know-
>
> ledge, of his humor, of his sadness - of all expressions and mani-
>
> festations of that which is alive in him. In thus giving of his life,
>
> he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of
>
> aliveness. He does not give in order to receive; giving is in
>
> itself exquisite joy. But in giving he cannot help bringing
>
> something to life in the other person, and this which is brought
>
> to life reflects back to him; in truly giving, he cannot help

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receiving that which is given back to him...in the act of giving

something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for

the life that is born for both of them ( p. 188 ).

What is born between the mentor and the child in an in-school mentoring program

when the mentor spends time with the child each week? How do the child and

mentor experience this birth? Does giving and receiving mark the point at which the

relationship has been established ? How does the relationship change from being one

of giving to one of both giving and receiving ? How does one know that it has

changed? Answers to such questions could help us make sense of what may or may

not be happening in in-school mentoring programs for young children.

A mentor has been described as a caring person who assumes the role of a wise

teacher, a guide, a friend, an advocate, a tutor, and a giver and recipient of gifts. In

this study I hope to learn what these descriptions may or may not mean for young

children and adults paired in an in-school mentoring program. The following section

provides a beginning definition for mentor and mentoring.

**Part III: Mentoring Defined**

It appears that there is not a single, accepted conception of mentoring. This

perhaps explains why many involved in the mentoring movement feel the need to

state a specific definition of mentor and the related terms, mentoring and mentorship

(Gerhke, 1988/1989; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Parkay, 1988/1989; Yamamoto,

1988/1989).

I too, have struggled with clarifying a conception of mentoring. For this study, I

have borrowed from Brodkin's and Coleman's (1996) definition of mentoring.

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Mentor, in this study, will refer to "one who provides one-to-one support and attention, is a friend and a role model, boosts a child's self esteem, enhances a student's educational experience. A mentoring relationship means meeting regularly over an extended period of time with the goal of enabling a special bond of mutual commitment based on the development of respect, communication and personal growth" (p. 21). Mentee, sometimes referred to in the literature as protege is the person being mentored.

Brodkin's and Coleman's (1996) interpretation of mentor and mentoring was chosen for three reasons. First, it uses the word children and this study is about children. Second, it is directly related to enhancing the social-emotional development of children which is another focus of this study. Thirdly, it emphasizes the personal and assumes commitment, that is, responsibility for the development of a trusting, personal relationship, and, again, this most closely parallels the concerns of my study.

## Kinds of Programs

### Introduction

Mentorship programs are developed for a variety of purposes, operate in a variety of ways, and occur in a variety of contexts. Freedman (1993) has described the mentoring movement as "highly decentralized and extraordinarily diverse" (p. 270). Flaxman and Ascher (1992) have observed that "mentoring programs range in size from ambitious national initiatives to local efforts with diverse sponsors" (p. 21). Mentorship programs, may function either informally without much structure or formally and be highly structured. Some programs are in the start-up stage, whereas

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others have been operating successfully for several years (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992; Freedman, 1992, 1993). Despite the diverse nature of these programs, they are similar in the sense that they all focus on assisting and motivating students to stay in school, that is, to complete high school or college, and to plan for the future.

This section provides an overview of the kinds of education-related mentoring programs that have been established to assist at-risk students. Part I deals with mentorship programs in the United States. Since the mentorship movement is more widespread in the United States than in Canada, a significant amount of this discussion pertains to describing the nature and purpose of American programs. Part II highlights Canadian programs. There is less literature on Canadian programs because mentorship programs for at-risk students are a relatively recent phenomenon in Canada and funding for related research may be less available. Part III addresses the operation of mentorship programs.

### Part I: Mentoring Programs in the United States

Mentoring programs designed to assist at-risk students have been operating for several years in the United States. This section presents an overview of the nature and purpose of: youth mentoring programs, programs for post-secondary students, and mentoring programs for elementary students. A review of all of the mentoring programs in the United States does not fit the scope of this study. Those which are well established and have been referred to repeatedly in the related literature are presented below.

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### i) Youth mentoring programs

Youth mentoring initiatives may be singularly focused serving a particular target group, or serve multiple purposes and multiple target groups. Parent Opportunity Program (POP), is an example of a program that serves a particular group. This program has been established to help teen mothers complete high-school. POP is a dropout prevention program run by volunteers who provide assistance to young, unmarried mothers. They provide support to the mother until the baby is 3 years old. Mentors make hospital and home visits. Classes for these women are held in churches and the local health department. Counselors from the high-school provide counseling (Rhodes, 1994). Linking Lifetimes, on the other hand, is a program serving multiple purposes and target groups. Mentors are matched with at-risk youth, potential dropouts, juvenile offenders and teen mothers. There are 11 sites in the United States (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992).

### ii) Programs for post-secondary students

Various programs have been established as intervention strategies for college students who are at-risk of dropping out of college. These include: (a) Orientation -- programs for new students, (b) Mentoring -- programs designed to improve student-teacher interactions in the classroom in an attempt to increase student retention, (c) Peer Mentoring -- programs involving peer mentors who are responsible for providing social and academic support, encouraging students to think critically and assisting students with academic choices, and (d) Multiple Strategies -- programs designed to provide various support networks for new students. One of these programs, for example, included work study, a freshman seminar, establishing a

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women's center, and so forth (Brawer, 1996). In 1991, Alma College developed the MEGA experience, a mentoring program for first year students (Perkins, Paradowski, & Hirchert, 1994). A grant was provided by the Presbyterian Church to assist with this project. Students targeted were incoming transfer students, and other at-risk students. Sixty-five students requested mentors.

### iii) Mentoring programs for elementary students

Many types of mentoring programs have been established to assist elementary students. Our Lady of the Lake University in Texas, has been involved in a mentoring initiative with an inner-city elementary school. Staudt (1995) explains that "this very successful mentoring program involves the matching of college students and at-risk elementary students in order to improve the elementary students' attitudes, behavior and self-esteem" (p. 5). Mentors and mentees engage in a variety of activities "such as reading to their students, taking them to the university, playing games. Field trips are allowed after a trusting relationship is established between the mentor and the student" (p. 7). The mentors can help the students with academic school work, however, "the mentoring program is not to be used as a tutorial program" (p. 7). On-going communication between teacher and mentor provides both mentor and teacher with strategies to meet the needs of the students. Mentoring occurs primarily at the school but not inside the classroom. The university is located one block from the school. Mentors sign-in upon arrival and wear badges for identification purposes. Written permission must be provided by parent or guardian before the mentoring process begins. According to Staudt, this program is making a significant difference to the lives of elementary students.

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The CUNY/BOE Student Mentor Program is a college based program which also serves elementary children. This program is unique in the sense that it offers course work and academic credit for mentoring. Mentoring is a component of college courses in educational psychology, sociology of urban education, field work in child/adolescent development and mentoring internships. Training occurs in classes on campus following a model which provides multiple levels of continuous support from peer groups, coordinators, and scheduled weekly mentor/mentee get-to-gethers. Academic credit serves as an incentive for mentoring (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992).

Excellent Beginnings is an early childhood mentoring initiative that resulted from a concern that children, particularly African-American, lack male role models (Walter, 1995). Teachers and members of the community realized that they need to attract more African-American males to the teaching profession. They explored ways to encourage at-risk students to stay in school as well as ways to increase the numbers of African-American male elementary teachers. High-school students were sought as mentors for elementary students. Three of the 14 schools that applied for funding for this program were chosen to participate. Consideration was given primarily to early childhood proposal initiatives that could successfully integrate the school and community. The criteria for all proposals included: curriculum and classroom management, parent involvement, high school mentors, higher education collaborative, training, guidance and staffing. One hundred African-American pre-school and kindergarten children, as well as students in alternative classes for older elementary students attending the Lincoln Center school in Ruston Louisiana

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participated in this program. Third graders and younger students were targeted because "research indicates that is a pivotal point when African-American males become turned off to school" (Walter, 1995, p. 2). Students came from single-parent families, suffering low self-esteem due to economic hardships. Early intervention and preventative programs which target children in grades K-3 are increasingly recognized as an effective means to assist at-risk children.

### iv) What are these programs designed to accomplish?

Some mentoring programs focus solely on strengthening academic skills. HOSTS - Help One Student To Succeed, for example, is a national program that helps students of all ages who are experiencing reading difficulty. Each student is matched with a trained mentor who provides "individual attention, motivation and support" (Smink, 1990, p. 12). One PLUS One is an initiative with a goal built around increasing literacy of at-risk children and youth (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992).

Other programs focus on a wide array of skills and are based on whatever the student needs. The goals have to respond to the needs of the people they serve. According to Flaxman et al, "Personalized care and attention to individual needs lies at the core of mentoring" (p. 1). KIT- Keeping In Touch With Students, is a well established program that has been operating for at-risk junior high students since 1987. In this program, teachers mentor students. At the beginning of each school year, each teacher is assigned to a group of students who become their mentees. They are responsible for maintaining weekly contact with these students to provide personal tutoring or counselling. Visits are recorded and are scheduled before or after school. The goals are to improve academic performance, discipline and

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attendance; enhance self-esteem and increase the amount of counselling time the student receives.

Career Beginnings, one of the first and largest projects, targets "tenacious youth -- high school juniors and seniors who come from low income families, have average attendance and grades and have demonstrated their motivation and commitment beyond school activities but who are not certain to make it on to college or good jobs" (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992, p. 21). Each One Reach One is a mentoring program that serves 260 children in Detroit and 380 in Greensboro. It works on the premise that "each child has a right to a role model" (ibid, p. 22). The WDCU program in Washington, pairs elementary students entering the fourth grade with mentors. "The school's administration chooses the students for the program focusing on youth who are struggling academically, having attendance problems or getting into fights. The mentors begin working with youth during the summer prior to the fourth grade; they get together with the boys on Saturdays for tutoring and one-to-one conversations" (p. 22). Project Mentor, another large program (in Texas) manages on the simple premise that "giving young people consistent, one-to-one support and attention -- that is, serving as a friend and role model-- boosts self-esteem, increases work quality, and most of all improves school attendance" (Freedman, 1993, p. 6). The above discussion illustrates the varied purposes of mentoring programs designed to assist at-risk students.

**Part II:   Mentoring Programs in Canada**

Although the largest and most widely recognized programs for at-risk students are in the United States, Brown (1995) recently surveyed Canadian mentorship

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programs in Ontario. This section presents a brief overview of these programs. According to Brown, each program is unique in terms of purpose, context and age of mentors. "Prime Mentors, for example, is an in-school enrichment program for elementary high-risk, creative youth (ibid, p. 4). Big Brothers, is an out of school initiative which matches boys from single-parent families to men. Big Brothers, Big Sisters (BBBS) , has recently developed an In-School Mentoring Program, which is a partnership program between the BBBS and the Board of Education in Hamilton Ontario. This is a highly structured program developed after the BBBS model. Community Mentoring is an initiative which involves community volunteers acting as mentors in North York School. Intergenerational programs are working very effectively. These include: The Seniors Independence Program which involves matching adults with at-risk youth in Scarborough, Toronto and North York; The Volunteer Grandparents Program which links grandparents to 2-6 year olds and The Toronto Intergenerational Project, a pilot project linking seniors with elementary students identified as at-risk. Intergenerational programs are expected to be beneficial to both mentors and mentees.

In Canada, mentoring programs are increasingly recognized as a means to assist at-risk children and youth. In-school mentoring programs have been in operation for three years in Alberta. The Alberta Mentor Foundation for Youth in Calgary is an initiative which involves mentoring junior high and high school students. Its mandate is to keep students in school. Individual elementary schools in Edmonton have established mentoring programs. In both the Calgary and Edmonton programs, each student spends one hour a week with his/her mentor. An exhaustive survey of

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Alberta mentoring initiatives has not been done and therefore is not found in related literature.

**Part III:  Operation of Mentorship Programs**

This section deals with the frequency of contact between mentor pairs, the mentoring concept of one-to-one, the goals and activities of programs, recruiting mentors, matching mentor pairs, orientation and training of mentors, monitoring matches and staffing mentorship programs. This information has been collected predominately from American mentorship programs.

**i) Is there variation of frequency of contact between matches in  mentorship programs?**

Frequency  and duration of contact between mentor and mentee varies considerably within  mentorship programs and within mentorship relationships.   Some mentoring is intensive and long lasting. A number of programs, for example,  require a time commitment from mentors (Flaxman et. al., 1992;  BBBS, 1995; Freedman, 1993). I Have  A Dream, the first and most influential project in the United States, was initiated by Eugene Lang, in the 1980's. He promised to take responsibility for poor children. He recruited mentors by advertising on billboards, in local newspapers and on television. Mentors had to commit 6 years to this program. Lang returned to his East Harlem elementary school and  gave hope to grade six students. He found mentors for all the students who committed to the program.   He promised to pay for their college education if they completed high school and were admitted to college. Lang argues that the program's  " real significance lies in emphasizing continuity of caring over a six year period as well as  concentration of caring, through providing

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an array of adults with an interest in the young person's life" (Freedman, 1993, p. 53). Project RAISE another well established program began in 1988 with seven community sponsors: two churches, two universities, two large businesses and one fraternity. Their mission was to provide support for at-risk students starting at the time they begin grade 6 through completion of high school (McPartland, & Nettles, 1991; Freedman, 1993). "The basic RAISE strategy is to create on a large scale the kind of sustained, caring connections which can make a dramatic difference in the lives of very high risk children" (McPartland & Nettles, 1991, p. 570). "RAISE expects to improve student self-esteem and school related behavior and progress and to reduce high-risk behaviors such as substance abuse and teenage pregnancies" (ibid, p. 571). The goal of this project is to reduce the dropout rate of at-risk students by 50%.

BBBS asks its mentors for a commitment of four hours every 2 weeks. They originally asked mentors to meet every week over the course of at least 1 year, ideally 2-3 years, but this proved too difficult to enforce. The average length of the match is 2-3 years. UNCF/Citibank Fellows Program requires that mentors and mentees make telephone contact at least twice a month, over a 4- year period. The Harlem-Dowling Program requests one afternoon a month over a 6 month period. A survey of the New York City School Volunteers Program showed that of a sample 379 mentors, 19% had been volunteers in the school for more than six years and 20% were volunteers for 3-5 years.

The Education Initiative sponsored by the Urban League, asks its mentors to spend one year with their match. The expectation is that the mentor serves as a role

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model and helps "them [mentees] to recognize the importance of education, broaden their life experiences and develop goals" (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992, p. 22). This program also supplies "an after school tutorial program that engages local college students as tutors, as well as a training program for mentors and staff support" (ibid). It has been in operation for over three years and 100 students have received mentors.

Project ASPIRE, is an initiative that attempts to develop in its youth "the attitudes necessary to succeed in an academic program and to provide routes to personal development and success. ASPIRE asks mentors to stay with students for 5 years, from ninth grade through the year following high school graduation" (ibid, p. 23).

Project Mentor is based on the premise that "giving young people consistent one-to-one support and attention, that is serving as a friend and a role model boosts self-esteem, increases work quality and most of all improves school attendance" (ibid, p. 23). Approximately 200 students are matched with employees from Wisconsin Electric Power Company. Employees are provided release time to serve as mentors. They are asked to contact mentees once a week for at least one year. "Activities include tutoring students, taking them to special events, exposing them to the workplace and talking to them about their interests, concerns, problems, goals, expectations" (ibid, p. 24). Most school programs last the school year because they are too difficult to schedule and monitor over the summer .

One-to-One is a program which grew out of a concern that 50% of children were dropping out of school. It targets children from low income neighborhoods who are

deemed by teachers as at-risk. The original mission of the One-to-One was to "connect every at-risk person with a mentor and through that mentor to a caring society" (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992, p. 25). Columbia University's Talent Search includes in its handout to potential mentors the statement that: "Mentoring is truly useful when it is on-going. It need not be daily, weekly; monthly or bi-monthly will do just fine." ( ibid, p. 38). A goal of most programs "is to have successfully completed relationships within the confines of mentors' and youths' availability and schedules" (Flaxman et al. ibid).

**ii) Is mentorship restricted to mean a one-to-one relationship between two people?**

Although mentoring is thought of as a one-to-one relationship between a mentor and a mentee, and although when individually interviewed, program directors unanimously agreed that ideally, mentors are matched with one mentee, variation exists in this area as well (Flaxman, & Ascher, 1992). Some mentors, have more than one mentee. Classroom, Inc., for example, brings high school students to the offices of both private and public employers for 2 to 1 mentoring. The ratio can go as high as 5 to 1. West Side High School is an alternative school for at-risk youth which offers a program called Expanding Options for Teen Mothers. The ratio of mentor to mentee in this program is 15 to 1 . The New York Alliance for the Public Schools' Program has 3-4 mentors, all are assigned to one classroom. The Harlem-Dowling West Side Center for Children and Family Services recruits mentors to work with entire families. A case worker is sometimes involved as well (Flaxman and Ascher, 1988). The " intention [is] to provide the personalized attention and

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care we usually associate with a good interpersonal relationship. If a youth needs a tutor, a tutor is found, if an entire family needs help in adjusting, then they should receive it" ( ibid, p. 16). As pointed out earlier, mentoring programs respond to the needs of the people they serve. Flaxman sums it up this way: "Personalized care and attention to individual needs lies at the core of mentoring, regardless of the actual ratio of mentors to youth" (ibid).

### iii) What are the goals and activities of mentorship programs?

There are as many goals of mentoring as there are programs. According to Flaxman et al (1992), the purpose of mentoring is to "guide the younger person in terms of specific goals" ( p. 16). The type of guidance and assistance differs and is dependent upon the philosophy and goals of the program. There is variation in terms of whether these programs want to "steer youth in a particular direction, provide them with options, or simply offer help for whatever they need" (p. 16). Arlene Mark, a long time mentor with the I Have A Dream Program insists that "mentoring has to be whatever the kid needs" (ibid). Psychologically, the goals may include "building confidence, self-esteem, trust and role models as well as providing simple support and friendship from an adult" (p. 18).

Activities are typically based on the goals of the program and range from being very specific and highly structured, to loosely stated without structure. Programs which have goals that are narrower, are more specific about the attitudes required to attain their goals. The directors of these programs "speak somewhat disdainfully of open-ended mentoring" (Flaxman et al, p. 18). One interviewee from an academically structured program commented "This is not a feel-good, touchy-feely

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program" (ibid). The goals of these structured programs include: upgrading academic skills, increasing career awareness, and setting realistic career goals in order to increase civic responsibility. The Capital American Stock Exchange's Career Mentoring Program view their goal as "aculturing students to a business environment and the world of work" (p. 18) Students of this program meet their mentor at the mentor's workplace. Expanding Options for Teen Mothers teach mentees how to handle family responsibilities. Structured programs demand that the goals are stated early in the program and that specific activities are engaged in, in order to meet these goals. According to Eadie Shanker, program director for CUNY/BOE Student Mentoring Program, "With structured mentoring, you have to have something in mind, a notion of the activities that make a difference" (p. 18).

Goals which are related to building social skills are generally more flexible and typically include: playing games together, talking, laughing, reading, walking in the school playground, eating lunch together, going on fieldtrips, attending cultural events and so on. Psychologically, the goals may include "building confidence, self-esteem, trust and role models as well as providing simple support and friendship from an adult" ( ibid p. 18). In the BBBS programs, the focus is on the psychological domain and they claim to work with the "whole person" and a "variety of activities help reach this goal of personal transformation " (Flaxman et al, p. 16). Mentors in this program are allowed flexibility and choice of activities; in other words, to do whatever it takes to reach this goal. Activities are not dictated to mentors unless it's a highly structured, academic program. The successful mentor will find out as much as (s)he can about the mentee and cater activities to the mentee's interests.

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### iv) How are mentors recruited?

Mentors are recruited in a number of ways. Some schools recruit mentors from the surrounding community; churches, businesses, seniors living in community senior centers and so on. Recruitment of mentors is always a challenge. There are more children in need of mentors than there are mentors (Freedman, 1992, 1993; Flaxman & Ascher, 1992). Women are much easier to recruit than men. Recruiting is easier and more successful when it is done through a voluntary organization, private firm, or public institution than when it is done individually. Corporations often use the corporate newsletter to attract mentors.

Individuals that have worked with youth are sought after as mentors. Safety checks are always considered when selecting mentors (BBBS, 1995; Flaxman & Ascher, 1992; Freedman, 1988). Mentors are carefully screened, yet programs vary in the screening process. While some people who want to become mentors must provide references, and undergo interviews, legal checks, and fingerprinting, other programs use less formalized screening processes.

### v) How does matching occur?

Matching is a relatively informal process. Most programs work with the information on the questionnaires that are completed by mentors and mentees. Questionnaires stress interests, hobbies and goals as well as age, gender, ethnicity and address. Questionnaires do not promise to provide perfect matches, which is why some programs try to provide as much contact between mentor and mentee in the early stages of the relationship. Some programs host several orientation evenings prior to the actual match which are attended by those either wanting to become mentors or

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those wanting mentors. At the end of this series of meetings/activities, the coordinator asks the mentees to select one or two mentor(s) they feel will work. Once the selection is made, the mentor is contacted and the mentoring relationship begins.

### vi) Do all programs have orientation and training for mentors?

Training and Orientation varies from program to program. Some programs have compulsory training for both mentors and mentees. Training and orientation, however, are generally informal with the exception of BBBS (BBBS, 1995; Flaxman & Ascher, 1992; Freedman, 1993), The Harlem-Dowling Program (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992) and The New York City School Volunteer Program (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992; Freedman, 1993). BBBS offers extensive training in the area of stages of child/adolescent development, communication, role clarification, cultural and ethnic considerations, child abuse prevention and planning mentor/mentee activities. These are covered over the course of several meetings and hours. The Harlem-Dowling Program also has an extensive training program. The New York City School Volunteer Program provides mentors with 10-12 hours of training. Most training and orientation sessions are initiated by program coordinators or directors. Although formal training and orientation are recognized as valuable and worthwhile, many programs do not have funds to hire the personnel to organize and conduct these sessions.

### vii) Are mentoring programs monitored?

Monitoring relationships and activities between pairs is critical to all mentoring programs. Monitoring varies greatly. Some programs have no reporting system,

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while others schedule monthly mentor meetings to discuss their experiences, share concerns and so on. In some programs, monitoring involves random calls made by directors, or contact sheets which are filled in by mentors and mentees after each session. The BBBS is one program which monitors relationships carefully. Another program sends surveys by mail to all mentors to find out how often contact is made, type of activity, and how the relationships are progressing. Some programs offer regular, large group activities, and Christmas parties for mentors and mentees. This is one way to keep track of mentor/mentee pairs. A number of programs send newsletters to all mentors with suggestions for activities, outings, and some even offer free tickets to events.

Monitoring is important for a number of reasons. It provides the director or the coordinator with feedback about the matches and the program. It prevents potential breakdown of relationship between matches. If, for example, the mentor is concerned about some aspect of the relationship, or the behavior of his/her mentee, the coordinator can offer advice, suggest ways to resolve the issue, or simply provide the support the mentor needs. Mentors also need to feel recognized, they need to be reminded that the work they are doing is valuable. Monitoring is a means of recognizing the contribution that mentors are making to mentees' lives.

### viii) How are mentoring programs staffed?

Staffing of mentoring programs varies considerably. Some operate with one coordinator who recruits, matches, and orients pairs and works to ensure that regular contact occurs. Programs without coordinators are often run and supported by volunteers such as school personnel, retired people living in the community of the

program and so forth.    BBBS is a well staffed program. It is also a very well established program, it has been in operation for over 90 years.  The staff of this program includes an executive director, a program director, a director of community education services, a fund-development director, and 5 case workers - each of whom looks after 40 matches.  "Obviously, the amount of staff available determines the amount and kinds of support that can be given to mentoring pairs" (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, 1995, p. 43). BBBS has a reputation for having one of the most seriously thought out programs.   Mentorship programs that have substantial available staff to provide support to matches as well as access other needed services such as counselling and health care, include New York City Mentoring, Career Mentoring, CUNY/BOE Student Mentor Program, and The Children's Aid Society's Project LIVE (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992) . Programs that do not rely solely on volunteers have a greater likelihood of survival. Hired staff generally have a vested interest in the program, and are, therefore, more committed to a program's success or continuation.  They also have time to effectively operate their programs, whereas, volunteers often have full-time jobs, families of their own, or other commitments to which they must attend .

## Conclusion

From the above discussion of the largest Canadian and American mentoring initiatives, it is evident that mentoring is extraordinarily diverse, that programs are unique, and operate in a variety of ways to attempt to address the needs of the groups they serve. The following section provides an overview of the findings from

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studies of these programs, as well as the issues, concerns and questions that require further exploration.

## Findings Generated from Evaluation Studies

This section presents the findings from evaluation studies of mentorship programs for at-risk students. The section is divided into two parts. The first part describes the kinds of studies that have been done in the mentoring field as well as the findings from studies which are most closely related to this study. This study sought to understand how the child and the mentor experience the mentoring relationship in an in-school mentoring program. Therefore, findings from studies that are most closely related to that particular aspect of mentoring are presented here. The second part highlights issues that have been raised as a result of these evaluations of mentoring programs.

## Part I: Findings from Related Evaluation Studies of Mentoring

There has been limited rigorous research conducted in the area of evaluation of mentoring programs. Brown (1996) recently conducted an extensive review of the literature on the effects of mentoring programs for at-risk students. He reports that there is little understanding of how mentoring affects different proteges as they move towards adulthood because of the lack of longitudinal, follow-up studies. He also found that evaluations using pre and post-test measures with a control group and an experimental group are scant. This is supported by Jacobi (1991) who claims that there is "a lack of empirical studies linking mentoring and academic outcomes; furthermore the few empirical studies that have been published tend to be fraught with methodological weaknesses that seriously limit both internal and external

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validity" (p. 10). Lee, and Cramond (1999) studied the effects of mentoring on self-efficacy, aspiration and possible selves using empirical measures. They stated that "further replicative studies using various research designs are needed to confirm" their findings. They further argue that a longitudinal case study designed to examine the long-range benefits and influences of mentoring is required. Rhodes (1994), claims that "an understanding of mentoring with at-risk youth rests on a base of observational data and very few empirical studies " (Rhodes, 1994, cited by Philip and Hendry, 1996, p. 190). Observational data does not refer to data collected using a planned data collection process. Rather, it is a response to casual questions raised by funders concerning the overall operation of programs. An informal question, for example, might be: 'How is the mentoring program going?' These are not on-going, session by session observations of mentor pairs. Descriptions and explanations of the dynamics of how the mentoring relationship unfolds are needed to understand the essence of the mentoring relationship. Flaxman and Ascher (1992) have suggested that the amount of time the mentor gives to mentoring largely determines how good the mentorship can be. Given the importance of the quality of the relationship in mentoring, they also empathize that more qualitative studies are needed to clarify or verify the nature or intensity of mentorship relationships. Attempts to study the interaction between a mentor and a child in order to capture the essence of the mentoring relationship in in-school mentoring programs has not been done.

Research on mentoring programs has primarily addressed the organizational stages of program development. Brown (1996) studied the organization of mentoring programs and found that there are typically three organizational stages.

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These include an assessment of needs, a detailed development stage and an implementation stage. An evaluation stage has not yet been included as a stage in the organization of mentoring programs. Organizers of mentoring programs are primarily focussed on getting the programs up and running and evaluation has not been included in the planning process. And, although evaluation is recognized as important, once the first three stages have been addressed, there are often no available funds for evaluation.

Evaluations of in-school mentoring programs have involved questionnaires and surveys designed to measure changes in students attitudes and behaviors. These have been administered to students and/or mentors in the Fall, at the onset of the program and again in the Spring, at the completion of the program. Changes in students' attitudes and behavior according to the mentors and/or the students have been identified by scores on a Likert scale. Evaluations that have focussed on achievement have measured changes in achievement scores. The rationale underlying these types of evaluations is that growth is measurable. Evaluation conducted this way is considered important because it demonstrates changes in achievement, attitudes and behavior in a large number of students. Students' growth is deemed an indicator of success and this is what allows and supports programs' continuance. The following is an example of a large scale evaluation using this type of measuring instrument.

The evaluation of Making A Difference (Freedman, 1996), which involved 1000, 10-16 year olds, found significant differences in youth who were matched one-to-one with adult mentors. Surveys were administered to all students. Students

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selected from predetermined responses on a likert scale. Differences were found in behavior, attitudes and performance. Absenteeism was reduced by 52%. Violent behavior was reduced by 33%. These children did slightly better at school and related better to family and friends. A control group consisting of youth waiting for mentors was used for comparison. Results were overwhelmingly positive. Freedman attributes this critical difference to persistence. Matches met three times a month, three and a half hours each time, totaling 126 hours a year. The findings of this study are related to findings from other studies that found that the duration of the program affects the program's success. Mentoring programs that had the greatest success rate were those that lasted two years (Slavin and Wasik, 1991; Slavin, Karveit and Wasik, 1992/92). Persistence and duration are related to trust which was one of the findings from Excellent Beginnings. It was pointed out in this program that students developed trust in their mentors. According to Walter, (1995), "Children confided things to mentors they would not tell anyone else" (p. 22). Freedman (1993) also found trust to be an important ingredient in mentoring relationships.

In another large scale study, Van Bockern (1998), stated that external supports, e.g., a mentor, help protect students in a high risk society. Bensen (cited by Van Bockern, 1998), conducted a study which involved 47,000 students in grades 6 – 12. He found that as the number of internal and external supports increased, risk indicators such as alcohol, anti-social behavior and school failure decreased.

Many studies of mentoring involve youth. Studies of mentoring programs involving children are basically non-existent. The research that has been conducted

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involving children that is most closely related to this study is in the area of early

intervention and prevention. Studies of early intervention initiatives are significant

to this study because mentoring is viewed increasingly as an approach to early

intervention and prevention of school failure (Freedman, 1993; Flaxman and Ascher,

1992). Most early intervention programs use IQ, language proficiency and

standardized achievement tests scores to measure effects of early intervention and

prevention programs (Slavin, Karveit and Wasik, 1992/93).

Slavin, Karveit and Wasik's work deals with preventing early school failure.

They studied early intervention initiatives extensively in an attempt to address the

question; What Works?. They reviewed longitudinal studies of Pre-School, Full

Day kindergarten, Retention, Developmental Kindergarten, Traditional First Grade,

Class size, Instructional Aides, Non-graded primary programs, One- to-One

Tutoring, Improving Curriculum and Instruction, and Success For All, using

measured increases in students' achievement scores on pre and post tests. As a

result of this review they concluded that "The most effective by far for preventing

early school failure are approaches incorporating one-to-one tutoring for at-risk first

graders" (p. 14). According to Slavin et al, " Such programs not only have the

greatest immediate effects on reading achievement, but they are also the only

programs known to have lasting effects, at least through the third grade. Other

interventions have positive effects that are either smaller or short lived" (p. 8). This

is consistent with findings by Cohen, Kulik and Kulik, (cited by Legters, 1995) who

studied youth mentoring programs and reported that

One-to-one tutoring is a powerful strategy for providing extra help to

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youth at all levels. With the recruitment of adult volunteers and various peer-tutoring strategies, school systems are able to provide many under-achieving students with the type of one-to-one instruction formally avail-able to more privileged segments of society (p. 9).

Slicker, and Palmer, (1993), argue, however that further "research is also needed to determine the effects of early intervention in the form of elementary or middle school mentoring and its longitudinal effects" and "that greater delineation of the activities that constitute effective mentoring would be useful for mentor training " (p. 333).

While there is concern over the lack of quantitative studies of mentorship, there is even greater concern over the lack of studies which attempt to understand the students' interpretation of the mentoring experience. Mentoring programs have not generally been studied phenomenologically. Thompson (1991) did, however, explore the essence of the relationship of Bigs and Littles in the Big Brother Big Sister program. While this is not an in-school mentoring program, the findings contribute valuable insights into the field of mentoring . Thompson found in her review of the literature that "the phenomenon of relationship development between non-related adults and children is hardly researched" (p. 5) and that this is why "it is not clearly understood or conceptualized by professionals, educators or practitioners who work with children, youth and their families" (Anglin, 1990; Austin & Halpin, 1987; Fewster, 1991; Ricks, 1992, cited by Thompson, p. 6). The three themes that emerged from this study of three matches in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Big Brothers program include change, risk and gain. The relationships changed over

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time, the Bigs and Littles began taking risks, and both Bigs and Littles gained from the relationship.

Lee, and Cramond, (1999), state that a shortcoming of the studies of mentoring have involved students in middle school through high school (grades 6 – 10). They assert that "little is known about the effectiveness of mentoring with younger children" (p. 173) and ... "whether individuals who are in a mentoring relationship for a long time accrue more benefits than those who have been mentored for a short time" (ibid).

Philip and Hendry (1996) also argue that there is a need to try to understand how the mentees' experience mentoring . They were referring to youth when they pointed out that there "is little understanding of how the mentoring process works from the young person's perspective" (p. 189), adding that there have been few "accounts given by young people themselves about their experiences, expectations and understanding of such processes " (p. 190). They further claim that the perspectives of youth could contribute unique data "on both the potential and disadvantages of mentoring relationships and how these fit into adolescents' existing social networks" (ibid). Mentor pairs involved in an in-school mentoring program have not been followed for extended periods of time to help understand how mentoring is experienced from the mentor's and mentee's perspectives.

The findings from the abovementioned studies raise a number of issues about in-school mentoring programs designed to assist children. These are presented in the following section.

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**PART II: Issues Raised in Mentoring Literature**

This part presents issues about in-school mentoring programs that are directly related to this study. Each issue is presented followed by a brief explanation.

**i) Studies of mentorship lack phenomonological understanding.**

The voices and experiences of participants in mentoring programs are missing. The stories of mentors, mentees, parents, teachers and administrators would facilitate understanding of what is really happening in a mentoring program. Pre and post test scores which measure academic performance and questionnaires which measure attitudes and behaviors do not illuminate how the mentor or the child is experiencing mentoring. The interpretations of participants in a mentoring program would provide insight into the mentoring experience. This might help others understand more fully how mentoring is experienced and whether or how mentoring is beneficial to the program's participants.

**ii) There is a need to study how the mentoring relationship develops and transforms between a young child and an adult mentor.**

Studies of mentorship involving children have not addressed how the relationship between the child and the mentor develops and transforms over time. Studies of mentorship have not focussed on understanding the mentoring relationship between a child and an unrelated adult as a process that is developmental in nature.

**iii) There has been limited research done on the effects of mentoring young children.**

Most of the research on mentoring involves youth and college students. Studies of children involved in mentoring relationships in in-school mentoring programs needs

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to be explored (over a period of time). Also, except for early intervention, there are few specifically mentorship programs for children in grades K-3.

**iv) Success of mentoring programs needs to be measured in a variety of ways.**
Success of mentoring programs has been based on results of standardized scores that measure achievement or questionnaires and surveys that measure changes in attitudes. If mentorship involves intense or special relationships, we need more ethnographic kinds of studies to evaluate the quality of these relationships that we label as mentoring ones (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992). An understanding of the meaning and value of mentorship programs might be better informed by learning from the participants themselves how they feel mentoring has benefited them.

**v) Rigorous evaluation of mentoring programs is limited.**
When mentoring programs are developed, evaluation is not considered a stage of program development or organization. Evaluation of mentoring programs is important because it leads to an understanding of what contributes to a program's success or failure.

**vi) Longitudinal studies of the effects of mentorship programs with control groups have generated interest amongst researchers working in this area.**
Longitudinal studies require large scale funding and support as well as time before all the results come in. We do have studies which have identified non-family adult mentors as having made a critical difference to the resiliency of at-risk students (Barr and Parrett, 1995; Flaxman & Ascher, 1993; Freedman, 1988, 1992, 1993; Philip & Hendry, 1996). Research indicates that "naturally occurring" mentors help these students. Most programs are for students in grade 4 and older (youth) after

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difficulties are apparent. We need to understand what they do and how they work when "assigned" as prevention versus intervention.

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# Chapter 3

## Research Approach

In the past, programs for at-risk children have focussed primarily on intervention after the children are past grade 3. Remediation has generally been offered to children after they have a history of performing unsuccessfully in school, usually around the 4th grade. Slavin (1994) has noted the importance of children learning to read in the early grades. Longitudinal studies have shown that disadvantaged third graders who have failed one or more grades and are reading below grade level are extremely unlikely to complete high school (Lloyd, 1988; Kelly, Veldman, & McGuire, cited by Slavin, 1994). Remedial programs that begin after grade 3 have few, if any, effects (Kennedy, Birman, & Hayduk, 1981, cited by Slavin, 1994). An assumption underlying this study was that prevention is more promising than remedial intervention in the later grades.

Intervention and prevention programs, however, require special funding and are expensive to operate. The costs of such programs are equivalent to the cost of hiring another full-time teacher for each grade 1 class (Slavin, 1994). The mentoring movement represents a shift in vision from past anti-poverty efforts (Flaxman & Ascher, 1992). At a time of economic challenges, the mentoring movement is a form of prevention that offers a low cost way of supporting children in an effort to help them experience success at school and stay in school. Mentorship programs for younger children (as opposed to highly structured tutorial programs) are new but potentially promising. There are real questions, however, about whether assigned,

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short-term mentor pairs in in-school mentorship programs can qualify as mentoring relationships. Flaxman and Ascher (1992) are concerned that the amount of time the mentor gives to mentoring will affect the intensity of the relationship. In addition, research on how non-related adults and young children form relationships is scant.

The purpose of this study was to examine and seek to understand what transpires in the formation of relationships between children and non-related adults paired in an in-school volunteer mentorship program.

### Research Questions

The main research question that guided this study was: **How are the mentoring relationships experienced by the participants in an in-school volunteer mentorship program?** This study sought to describe the nature of relationship formation in mentor pairs in this context. Other related questions that were of interest to this study included:

What was the meaning or the significance of the sessions for the participants?

How did the participants describe and define these relationships?

What are the concrete practicalities of how mentors and children in a school-based mentorship program form relationships?

How long did it take for the relationships to become meaningful, comfort-able, or mutually satisfying?

What were indicators of growth in relationships for such mentor pairs?

Are there any global general dynamics that undergird how the mentoring relationships work?

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## Significance of the Study

This study is significant for a number of reasons. The findings from this study were intended to clarify whether mentoring relationships can achieve the goals of both supporting satisfying relationships while supporting students' reading. The study should thus contribute to our understanding about how relationships are formed and recognizable as mentorship relationships in such program contexts. As well, the stories and analyses from this study can inform program development and evaluation practices. Finally, the study findings provide direction for further research and development for in-school mentorship programs for young children.

## Research Site

This study took place in a single school in a large school district in a major city in Alberta. This school was identified by the school district as one with a focus on early literacy. The school identified one of its goals to be increased literacy for all children and particularly children in grades K-3. In January of 1997, Dr. Julia Ellis and I worked with the school staff to initiate a volunteer mentorship program to support the childrens' literacy development. Adult mentors were recruited from the school community, from businesses in the surrounding community, from personal contacts such as friends, retired teachers and principals, relatives, and from students in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Mentors were assigned to all grade 1 children, most of the grade 2 children, and a few of the children in grades 3 and 4. The school principal and the teachers had responsibility for matching mentors with children.

Mentors attended an orientation session and were given support materials for their work with children. Mentors arrived at the school on the same day each week at the school lunch hour and began the mentoring session by sharing lunch with their mentee. After eating lunch and visiting over the past week's events, each mentor pair typically played a game, made a craft, shared books and engaged in writing activities. The children selected books to bring to the sessions and mentors also brought books. Mentors made a genuine effort to get to know the child and engage in activities that were enjoyable for the child. Mentors followed the childs' interests and selected books accordingly. Some mentors stayed until the end of the school year and returned the following year. A number of the university students finished at the end of April because of work commitments or to leave the city to return home.

In both the fall of 1997, and in January 1998, mentors were again recruited for the mentorship program at this school. My pilot study was conducted with the group of mentors recruited in the fall. This study began at the end of January with a new group of mentors and continued until the end of April 1998. This schedule was put in place because many of the mentors are university students and have work commitments at the end of the university term or are from out of town and return home for the university break. Mentors are however, welcome to mentor the child until the end of June if their schedule permits them to do so.

There were four mentor pairs in this study. Two of the four children in this study had a mentor in the fall and a new mentor by the end of January 1998. The other two children did not have mentors in the fall. Also, two of the mentors mentored the children until the end of June. When I spoke with one of the mentors in

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April 1999, almost one year later, she was still in a mentoring relationship with her student.

This site was chosen for the research for a number of reasons. Firstly, school-based mentorship programs are not widely used in Alberta. There were, therefore, no other sites available. Secondly, since I had been involved in this program since it began, I was comfortable in the school and had established rapport with the students, mentors and staff.

## Participants

The methodology of this study entailed developing case studies of four mentor pairs in this school-based mentorship program from January 1998 to April 1998. Initially, various mentor pairs were observed. In selecting the four pairs, an attempt was made to ensure some diversity among mentors and children. As mentioned earlier, mentors included parents and other members of the school community, retired teachers, and university students. An effort was made to include a diverse group. Selection was also based on the rapport I had established with the pairs and whether the mentors and the children's parents had provided written permission to participate in this study. The participants chosen were one retired grandmother, three university/college students, two girls in grades two and three, and two boys in grades two and six.

Tiara was a third year university student enrolled in a teacher education program majoring in second language education. Tiara mentored Joel, an 11-year-old, grade 6 boy in a split-literacy class. Students in the split-literacy class were

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Division II students, that is, students in grades 4 – 6, functioning below grade level in Language Arts. This school was a school district site for this program. The class size was small and the focus and the goal of the program was to improve basic literacy skills. Joel does not live in the school community. He transferred to this school in September 1997 to attend the split-literacy class. Tiara was Joel's first mentor. Division II students who had mentors were selected from the split-literacy class as they were discernible as high needs children.

Tiara and Joel shared a number of similar life experiences. They were both only children and had experienced their father's departure at an early age due to divorce.

Tiara mentored Joel until the end of April. She went to a French Immersion bursary program in Montreal for a period of six weeks. When she returned in mid June, she resumed her mentorship with Joel.

Carey was a third year university student in a teacher education program. Carey had attended a small private Christian school in the United States for grades K- 12. She mentored Dustin, a 6-year-old boy who initially presented much older than his years. Dustin was involved in the mentorship program during the pilot study. Carey was Dustin's second mentor that year. Carey had a job in the city for the duration of her university break (May – August). She continued to mentor Dustin until the end of June.

Kristen was a second year student attending a Lutheran college. She came from a large family and was raised in a small town in western Alberta. Kristen mentored Cascandra, an 8-year-old girl in grade 3 who was a new student in the

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school. Cascandra experienced the arrival of a first sibling during her mentorship with Kristen.

Cascandra was involved in the mentorship program during the pilot study. Kristen was Cascandra's second mentor. Kristen was unable to complete her mentorship with Cascandra and did not stay for the duration of the program. Her last visit with Cascandra was on March 19.

Eileen was a retired grandmother and widow living in the school community. She mentored Narissa, a 7-year-old girl in grade 2. Her mentor stated that Narissa's parents do not speak English. Narissa does not speak her parent's language.

Narissa did not have a mentor during the pilot study because she did not stay at the school during the school lunch hour (except on days when she was involved in the school music program). The available mentors did not suit Narissa's schedule at the time of the pilot study. Eileen mentored Narissa from late January until the end of April. This was the commitment Eileen made at the onset of the program.

Initially, I thought that I would interview the children after each mentoring session. In previous research, as an evaluation of the first term of the mentorship program, Dr. Ellis and I interviewed all of the children in the mentorship program "round robin" style, 3 or 4 at a time (Ellis, Small-McGinley, & Hart, 1998). This worked out very well. In this study, interviewing each child after each session was not feasible. First, it was immediately after the sessions that I interviewed the mentors. Second, two of the students, that is, Joel and Narissa, were quite shy at the beginning of the study. Joel was even too shy to have his picture taken with Tiara. For the longest time, Narissa would not even look up at me. I did not feel

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comfortable asking Narissa to talk about the mentoring relationship. When I interviewed Joel, he would not sit still and gave me short answers such as "Yes, I like it. It's fine. Uh huh, um, yes" and so forth. Although Cascandra and Dustin were not shy, when I interviewed them, I did not get depth or lengthy responses. Interviewing the children felt invasive and awkward. As well, it was difficult to ask the teachers to allow me to take each child from class immediately after interviewing the child's mentor each week. I therefore, focussed on interviewing the mentors because they were cultivating the relationships with the children and were comfortable and willing to talk about the mentoring relationship.

## Descriptive and Interpretive Purposes of the Study

This study was descriptive and interpretive in nature. Descriptive research enables us to more clearly understand processes, situations and people. The relationships of the mentor pairs are described in the case studies (chapters 4 – 7). In this study, an example of a descriptive question was *What happened in the mentoring relationships ?* whereas, when I asked *What does this mean about relationships between children and non-related adults in an in-school mentoring program?* I was asking an interpretive question.

A variety of mentors and children from diverse backgrounds increased the opportunity for interpretive work. Interpretive research is valuable because it offers insights that refine and elaborate existing knowledge, identify problems and clarify complexities (Peshkin, 1993). As clarified by Packer and Addison's (1989) discussion of hermeneutics, interpretive inquiry starts with a question, a caring or a practical concern. My study was based on a caring and a practical concern about how

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relationships form between children and mentors. I entered the hermeneutic circle with a genuine question about how relationships develop and transform over time between children and non-related adults in a volunteer in-school mentoring program.

Ellis (1998) explains that:

in the forward arc of the hermeneutic circle, projection, one

uses 'forestructure' to make some initial sense of the research

participant, text or data. That is, one uses one's existing precon-

ceptions, pre-understandings or prejudices-- including pur-

poses, interests, and values – to interpret; this initial approach

is unavoidable (p. 26)."

My pre-understanding of mentoring relationships was based on what I believed mentoring relationship should or could be. These expectations were also influenced by my years of experience as an elementary school teacher working with young children. This pre-understanding influences interpretations that take place in the forward arc of the hermeneutic circle. My initial interpretation of the mentoring relationship was influenced by my own assumptions and beliefs about forming relationships with young children. As Ellis (1998) reminds us, however, "One must begin by acknowledging that one does not know the answer or that one does not know what to do to be helpful." (p. 18).

The return arc of the hermeneutic circle entails the evaluation of the original interpretation. This involves going back to see what I did not yet see with more deliberative questions and analyses about the relationships and about patterns in and across the case studies. Each of the deliberations with a specific question in focus,

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can be understood as a separate component of the study in its entirety. "To track the progress or development of an interpretive inquiry project, one can find it helpful to visualize the process as a series of loops in a spiral. Each loop may represent a separate activity that resembles 'data collection and interpretation'." (Ellis, 1998, p.19).

In this study, going through the backward arc involved a re-examination of interview transcripts, field notes, informal conversations with the students' teachers and the school principal, and photographs of mentor pairs. Reminding myself that "one does not know the answer" (Ellis, 1998, p. 18), I revisited the data over and over again searching for something that I was unable to see earlier.

Going back also involved using Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern's (1990) key concepts about what contributes to the development of positive relationships as focusses for analyses. These analyses enabled me to look at the data in a more focussed way. Using their ideas, I broke down the complex whole of each case study into smaller parts and then could see differently what transpired in and across each of the four relationships. Ellis (1998) explains that "To understand a part, one must understand the whole, and to understand the whole, one must understand the individual parts." (p. 16). With Brendtro's et al's key ideas in mind I asked myself new questions of the case studies. For example, they stated that relationships are not a feeling but rather an action and that this action involves giving. I asked myself - *What did giving look like in each of the four cases? What did the mentors give to the children? What did the children give to the mentors?* They also assert that adults must be able to offer warmth and stability to the individual

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they are helping. I then asked myself – *Was there stability in these relationships? If so, what did stability look like? Was there warmth? How was warmth experienced by the children? Expressed by the mentors?* Asking these kinds of questions enabled me to understand with greater clarity how the relationships worked, how they were the same and how they were different. This approach allowed me to pursue my research questions further. With the finely tuned analysis of the four case studies, it was also possible to discern key dynamics which appeared to undergird all four of the relationships in spite of their differences. Finally, I often contacted Dr. Julia Ellis, my dissertation advisor to discuss what transpired in the interviews and my initial interpretation. Given that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, one must revisit and test out ideas with different questions. Ellis (1998) asserts that "Re-examining the data is a deliberative process" (p. 27). A concerted effort was made to develop the most adequate, plausible interpretive account possible. As stated by Ellis (1998), "The search is for an interpretation as coherent, comprehensive, and comprehensible as possible" (p. 27).

## Data Collection Procedures

The primary data collection procedures for this research included observation and interviewing. Data was collected from each mentor on a weekly basis during and/or after their mentoring sessions. Data sources also included fieldnotes, photographs of mentor pairs engaging in activities, cards and letters exchanged between the mentors and children, and journals that the mentor and child kept or that the teacher used for communication purposes with the mentor.

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## Qualitative Case Study Research

This research can be understood as a qualitative case study. Merriam (1998) has described case study research as the intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, institution, person, process or social unit. Its purpose is to enable the researcher to acquire in-depth understanding of the situation under study and its meaning for the participants. Rich description is important. As Stake (1995) explains "To develop vicarious experiences for the readers, to give them a sense of 'being there,' the physical situation should be well described" (p. 63).

Consequently, qualitative case study research focuses on process rather than outcomes, on context rather than variables, and on discovery rather than confirmation. The value of case study research lies in its ability to increase understanding of the perspectives of the participants in an attempt to improve practice. The findings generated from case studies can inform policy, practice and future research. "The end product of a case study is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study" (ibid., p.29).

Stake (1995), asserts that, "insights into how things get to be the way they are can be expected to result from case studies" (cited by Merriam, 1998, p. 30). "Yin suggests that for "how" and "why" questions, the case study has a distinct advantage" (ibid., p. 33). The intent of this study was not to prove theory or predict behavior. Rather, it was to describe and to better understand how relationships are formed and transformed between non-related adults and children in an in-school volunteer mentorship program. Given that "case study is a particularly suitable

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design if you are interested in process" (Merriam 1998, p. 33), it was deemed both appropriate and effective for this study.

In case study research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection. Therefore, the quality of the case study research depends upon the breadth and depth of the data collected and how well the researcher worked to understand and represent the participants' meaning and experience. Given that a primary means of data collection for this study was observation, the researcher needed to be cognizant of what she was doing and the developmental stages one goes through as a novice researcher.

**Observation**

In describing his own observation experience, Boostrom (1994) has alerted us to the different stages an observer can go through. In the early stages the researcher could be described as **video camera**, liken to an "almost inert receiver of visual and aural stimuli" (Boostrom, 1994, p. 53). At this stage I took everything in. I wrote down everything I saw and heard the mentors and the children say and do. In other words, everything the participants did and said seemed significant at this stage.

The researcher could then start experiencing the research site as a **playgoer**, drawn into the lives of the participants. This stage is characterized by sharing of emotion and experience. At this stage I was getting to know the participants – the characters of the play. I was getting involved in the play and became increasingly consumed with the details of the story. As Carey became more comfortable with Dustin, I cheered for her. When Eileen did not return Narissa's hug, I was upset with her. Yet when Eileen brought Narissa an Easter surprise, I forgave her. When Tiara

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said of Joel, "I love him already," I was overwhelmed with joy. As Kristen brought crafts to create the space for natural, relaxed talking with Cascandra, I congratulated her. At the same time, when she left without officially saying good-bye to Cascandra I was disappointed in her.

In Boostrom's next stage, the researcher is described as an **evaluator.** In this stage the participants might view the researcher as an evaluator and the researcher might have evaluative thoughts of what is being observed. At this point, I found myself thinking about and unconsciously evaluating how the mentors mentored the children. I recall thinking to myself — *Laugh Carey — relax, don't worry so much about whether or not he likes it! Hug her back, Eileen. Can't you see — she wants and needs a hug! That's not how to share a book with a child!*

Up to this point in the research I was not satisfied with the data being collected because as the researcher I was drawn into the story. To go beyond or to get past the story, the researcher starts asking questions about the significance or the meaning of people's actions. Once I changed my focus from following and judging the story to asking questions about and being interested in understanding the meaning underlying the participants' actions and behaviors, I had moved into a **subjective inquirer.** This stage requires a more focussed in-depth examination of the data. At this stage I was interested in understanding the meaning underlying what was happening in the mentoring relationships. This was reflected in the interviews when I asked the mentors to explain to me *why* they did something or when I asked them to talk about *how* something happened. When I asked these kinds of questions, I was interested in learning the significance of their actions.

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Boostrom's next stage describes the researcher as an **insider,** moving into the events she is trying to describe. Moving inside does not mean losing one's identity as a researcher. Moving inside is the point at which the researcher finally "gets it." I finally saw very clearly and very concretely the relationships among the parts and how the relationships worked as wholes. It was during the analysis that I began to put the puzzle together. As an insider I finally saw how and where all the pieces fit.

At Boostrom's last stage, that is **reflective interpreter,** I was able to comment on the meaning or the significance of the puzzle pieces. I could write about how the relationships worked because I could finally see the puzzle as one, as whole, but with awareness of its parts and dynamics. As a reflective interpreter, I could talk about the meaning of what happened in the relationships as a whole in a more comprehensive, coherent, holistic, reflective way. This was the result of the work undertaken in the backward arc of the hermeneutic circle with its search for the most adequate interpretation, one that I had not seen earlier and which helped me achieve a more satisfying understanding of what had transpired in the mentoring relationships. Using Brendtro, Brokenleg and Von Bockern's (1990) key ideas about relationships I revisited the data with different interpretive frameworks and asked myself, *Will I be able to see new patterns when I ask these new questions?* As a result of revisiting the data and trying on and testing different frameworks, I was able to find an interpretation that enabled me to see the sensibleness of what mentors did and that helped me understand how all the mentors could proceed very differently from each other and yet could all be effective. It also made their different actions more sensible to me.

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One does not move cleanly and clearly through each of these stages. The first three stages, that is, video camera, playgoer and evaluator were all present and overlapped during the data collection process. I experienced myself as a video camera, playgoer and evaluator during most of the data gathering process. In fact, I was almost forced to remain in the playgoer stage while collecting my data because the purpose of this study was to write case studies. In order to tell the story, I had to watch it unfold. This allowed me to stay involved in what was going on. Although all three stages were present during data collection, their emphasis changed. At times I found myself more of a playgoer than an evaluator. Other times I found myself back to video camera. As well, I was at different stages with each of the mentor pairs. I most often felt like a playgoer because I was emotionally drawn into each play.

**Practical Aspects of Observation**

"Observations work the researcher toward greater understanding of the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 60). In this study, I visited the school 3 times a week during the school lunch hour. Mentoring sessions took place for 3 of the 4 mentor pairs during this time. Observations for these mentor pairs occurred at this time. A fourth mentor pair met on Thursdays at 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. immediately after the school lunch hour. Observations were less frequent for this pair because although the mentor was happy to meet for interviews after the sessions, the mentor expressed a concern that she preferred to be alone with the child during the sessions.

As a researcher, I took on the role of passive observer because I observed the mentor pairs during their mentoring sessions but did not assume the role of mentor. Spradley (1990) describes this role of a researcher as one who is " present at the

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scene but does not participate or interact to any great extent" (p. 59). In a case study

the researcher would ideally "get inside the perspective of the participants"

...however..." full participation is not always possible" (Merriam, 1988, p. 93).

As a researcher, I was aware that the very fact that I was studying the mentor

pairs had the potential effect of changing them and the program. By studying the

mentor pairs, I was showing interest in them and I was giving them extra attention. I

was cognizant that this may have caused them to reflect more about what they were

doing as mentors. Or, this extra attention may have caused them to behave

differently. The mentors, for example, might have been more enthusiastic during the

sessions or during our interviews. I was aware that by studying something I change

it. Since this was unavoidable, I took steps to address this issue. I often observed and

occasionally engaged in informal conversations with other mentor pairs. I asked

them how their sessions went, what they did, and so forth. When I hung around

outside the classroom door waiting for the children to come out at lunchtime, I

carefully observed how other pairs greeted their children and how the children

greeted them. I also hung around the library, took a seat at a table and observed the

mentor pairs that happened to be there. One of my mentor pairs always had their

sessions in a corner in the music room. Other pairs that I was not studying worked in

other corners of the music room at the same time. I often took this opportunity to

observe and visit with them. I took pictures of all mentor pairs rather than only the

pairs that I was studying carefully. These measures helped me to determine if my

case study pairs had become exceedingly different from other pairs. I often shared

my observations with the principal and the students' teacher to verify and clarify my

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interpretations. From doing this, I learned that the pairs that I was studying had not become exceedingly different than other pairs involved in the mentorship program.

As an observer I wrote notes in my fieldnote journal both during and after the sessions. During the pilot study, which was conducted from October to December 1997, I always walked around the school with my pad and paper writing notes, and I sat in on mentoring sessions writing notes. I repeated this practice for this study which was conducted immediately after the pilot study (from January to April 1998) because I learned from the pilot study that this writing and hanging around did not bother anyone. In fact, it would have probably been more unusual to them if I were not taking notes. I recorded details from my informal conversations with the children, the teachers, the principal, the mentors, and other members of the school staff. These notes of detailed conversations helped link together the many seemingly unrelated pieces about the relationships that developed between the children and the mentors. They proved invaluable in terms of filling in the gaps when I read and reread my notes and listened to the taped conversations.

As an observer, I made a genuine effort to avoid the appearance of an evaluator. From the pilot study, I learned that the mentors were particularly sensitive to feeling that their performance as mentors was being evaluated. In October 1997, for example, when mentors were asked if they would agree to having their sessions video-taped, those who did not agree to this would not because they felt that their performance as mentors was being evaluated.

As an observer, it is important to learn how to observe and what to observe (Boostrom, 1994). As Stake (1995) reminds us, "We can only look at a few

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aspects." (p. 60). When I began my pilot study of the mentoring sessions in October, everything the mentors and children said and did seemed significant and worth recording. I frantically wrote down everything the mentors and children said and everything I saw them do. As time passed, as I gained experience, I became more selective in terms of what I recorded and shifted "from a 'wide angle' to a 'narrow angle' lens" ( Merriam, 1988, p. 97). I began to notice patterns, consistencies, and inconsistencies. I noticed, for example, one mentor pair experiencing greater comfort with one another. Playfulness and teasing became more commonplace for this pair which was a change from their initial sessions. I was also able to sense when there was an unusual quiet in a room or when there seemed to be a happy music playing (a description I gave to the sounds I heard in the mentor room).

Finally, it is important to describe significant events, rather than aimlessly record all events (Boostrom, 1994). It is the focus and depth of this description that enables others to understand and visualize the nature of the mentor pairs interactions.

### Interviewing

Interviewing was a major source of data collection for this study. Interviewing is a method of collecting "descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96). I wanted to understand how the participants experienced or understood the mentoring relationship.

Interviews took place weekly in an attempt to gain insight into how the participants perceived their mentoring relationship to be changing over time as well as their perceptions of the impact of the sessions. The interviews that were audio-

taped were transcribed. This served to increase accuracy of the data. It also allowed me to focus on what the mentors were telling me rather than focusing on writing down what they were saying.

Interviews were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews allowed the mentors to "define their world in unique ways" (Merriam, 1988, p. 73). Stake (1995) explains that "One needs to have one's mind organized yet be open for unexpected cues. Research questions should be carefully developed in advance and a system set up to keep things on track." (p. 68). I needed a starting place and began with an open-ended question about the mentoring session (see Appendix A). "An open-ended question, unlike a leading question establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participants to take any direction he or she wants" (Seidman, 1991, p. 61). Since "the interview structure is cumulative" (ibid., p. 59), opening questions for follow-up interviews were based on what transpired in the previous interview. The opening question I most frequently used was: "How did your session go today?"

This opening question was frequently followed by a reminder of something that I wanted to follow up from the previous week, for example, "Last week you said that you were going to bring your needles and teach Narissa to knit... "

Opening questions and reminders served to open up dialogue and contributed to the interview feeling more like a conversation between the mentor and myself. According to Patton (1990), "effective interviews should cause both the interviewer and the interviewee to feel that a two-way flow of conversation is going on" (p. 327). Bogdan and Biklen, (1992), describe good interviews as "those in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely about their points of view" (p. 97).

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Good interviewing involves being a good listener. Merriam (1998, p. 23) asserts that "the good qualitative researcher looks and listens everywhere." Seidman (1991, p. 56) states that "Listening is the most important skill in interviewing." Rather than interrupting or making comments based on judgments about what the participants were saying or about how they were feeling, as a good interviewer I simply focused on listening to what the participants were saying and actively demonstrated genuine interest in their experience and acceptance of their point of view. Further, "hearing, what is not explicitly stated but only implied, as well as noting the silences, whether in interviews, observations or documents is an important component of being a good listener" (Merrian, 1998, p. 23).

Stake (1995) points out that "The purpose for the most part is not to get simple yes and no answers but description of an episode, a linkage, an explanation" (p. 65). During the interviews, I used questions to get the participants to elaborate when I did not understand what they were telling me. For example, I often heard myself asking for elaboration, for clarification "I'm not sure I follow what you are saying, could you explain that to me?" and "Can you give me an example of when that happened?" After each interview, I studied the audio-taped interviews and identified ideas that were not clear on tape. These points were raised, that is, followed up in the next interview. When one mentor expressed concern about the different way her child behaved during one session, I made certain that I followed up on that the following session.

## Managing Entry and Ethics

"Gaining entry into a site begins with gaining the confidence and permission of those who can approve the activity" (Merriam, 1988, p. 91). Early entry into the research site is important. "Opportunity should be taken early to get acquainted with the people, the spaces, the schedules, and the problem of the case" (Stake, 1995, p. 59). Since I had been involved in this program since it began, I was very comfortable in the school. My involvement began in January 1997 and extended through to June 1998. I began visiting the school 2 – 3 times a week from October 1997 to December 1997, at which time I conducted the pilot study in preparation for this study. Stake (1995) asserts that "one of the principal qualifications of qualitative researchers is experience" (p. 49). During the pilot study I observed, took field notes, took pictures, tape-recorded mentoring sessions and interviewed mentors and children both individually and in groups.

The staff knew me. I was not viewed as a threat to them. The students were accustomed to me hanging around during their mentoring sessions. Children knew me as Jan, someone from the university who was doing research about the mentoring program. I was also someone who showed interest in them, someone who came to chat with them when they were with their mentor, or someone who chatted with them informally in the school on days when their mentor was not there. They also knew me as someone who wrote notes in my journal or took pictures of them with their mentor. To the children, I was someone involved in the mentorship program. I did not appear to be a threat to the children either.

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The majority of the mentors knew me because I was actively involved in recruitment and I had attended and spoke to them at the orientation evenings which were held for all mentors. If I saw a mentor in the school whom I had not met, I always introduced myself and explained what I was doing there and my role in the program. As well, I was a constant – always there, offering to assist in any way. New mentors witnessed the students, staff and other mentors greeting me in a friendly way. I was not viewed as a threat to the mentors.

As well, to diminish the effect of my presence, I was present during the mentoring sessions but I did not sit in on sessions for the entire hour each time because I learned quickly that the mentor pairs wanted their privacy. In fact one mentor preferred that I did not sit in on her session with the child because she experienced this child to be easily distracted and concentration was lost when someone else was in the room. I was sensitive to and appreciative of the fact that in order to develop a natural relationship mentors and children needed and desired their personal space and time alone. A conscious effort was made to not overstay my welcome.

This study involved human participants. Interviewing is a moral and ethical act. When I asked my participants to meet with me each week for an interview, I acknowledged and valued their importance and significance to my study. Participants are vulnerable to misrepresentation of the study purpose, betrayal of trust, and risk exposure of what readers may view as undesirable personality or character flaws. I entered the study with an awareness of these constraints and an understanding of

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power relations which can be inherent in interviews. Efforts were taken to treat my participants with respect and reciprocity.

The following additional measures were taken to avoid risk or harm to the participants of my study.

**i) Written consent**

Written consent was acquired from all participants. Mentors completed the form themselves. The parents or guardians of the children provided consent. Consent forms included a brief description of the nature of the study (see Appendices B and C).

**ii) Assurance of anonymity**

Participants were assured of anonymity. Participants' names were not used in my writing. The school has been described in my writing, but the name of the school has not been identified.

## Data Analysis Procedures

In qualitative research data analysis is ongoing. Data analysis was ongoing throughout this study because I interpreted the data as it was being collected (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). This involved reading and rereading my field notes from my journal. As I read through them, I wrote down my thoughts and reflections on them. This also involved listening to the taped interviews between interviews. When I did this, I looked for patterns, surprises, or themes in an ongoing way in order to provide direction for subsequent interviews and observations. I also re-analyzed all the data at the end of the study in order to revisit earlier data with questions or themes identified towards the end of the study. In the end, one attempts to construct a

comprehensive, coherent, and plausible interpretive account of the events studied (Ellis, 1998).

My interpretation was originally shaped by my understanding and beliefs about what mentoring relationships should be or could be. As I read and reread my transcripts and field notes, and my responses to them, I searched for and began to see patterns, gaps, and contradictions, which were not self-evident in the beginning.

There were two major parts to this data analysis. The following two sub-sections highlight the procedures used to analyze the data. The first sub-section describes the steps involved in constructing and writing the four case studies. The second sub-section describes how I conducted the second level of analysis using Brendtro, Brokenleg and Von Bockern's (1990) key ideas about relationship formation.

**Writing the case studies with "stages" identified**

The purpose of the first analysis component was to construct, compose and write four case studies with the discernible stages of the relationships identified. A substantial amount of data was collected. The following description provides a detailed explanation of the procedures I used to analyze the data in order to compose the case studies.

After I read through all of my transcriptions, I recall feeling overwhelmed with the amount of data and concerned about how I would write the case studies. In my reflections I wrote

I studied the transcripts over and over again. How do I make sense of these relationships? What does all of this mean? Carey, Eileen, Tiara and Kristen are all so different – how am I going to write each story and capture the uniqueness of each

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experience in a way that makes sense to others? How can I write this so that others can come to understand what it really means to mentor a child? ...Their backgrounds are so different – somehow the backgrounds seem really important ...I'm starting to think that I learned more about their backgrounds than I learned about the mentoring relationships...(May 15, 1998). I realize now that I learned lots about the relationships through the mentor's backgrounds (May 18, 1998).

I thought a lot about the mentors' backgrounds and the effect these had on

how they approached mentoring the children. Examples of my reflections are

included below

Did Tiara and Joel connect immediately because their life histories are so similar? Are there implications here for matching? (May 18, 1998). Tiara's sameness and immediate connection to Joel enabled her to care and feel empathy for Joel. Tiara's awareness and understanding because of her own lived experience made it easier for her to understand Joel in a more intimate, compassionate way right from the beginning (May 19, 1998). ... But all the mentors all so different. How am I going to write this up?

The first step in writing the case studies was the written reflections about

how I felt about the data, how I would approach writing the cases, how I would make

sense of or even think about the data. I spent a few days reading the transcripts over

and over again and writing reflections about the data. Also, I highlighted words or

key phrases that stood out as being related or relevant to the development and

transformation of the mentoring relationships for all of the cases. For example –

*Trust is the most important thing...I want him to like it – that's the most important thing. Respect is really important. He respects me and I respect him.*

The next step in the data analysis for the writing of the case studies involved

the use of coding categories. Coding categories were used to organize the data. Key

words and phrases became my coding categories. Bogden and Biklin, (1992) assert

that this is a practical way to sort descriptive data. For each mentor pair, I noted key

words or groups of words about the relationships in the right margins of the

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transcripts for each mentor pair. I made a numbered master list of key words for each

mentor pair (see Appendices D, E, F & G ) The following are examples of key

phrases and key words from all of the master lists -

*he's just my little friend ...we just understand each other...respect...empathy,*
*compassion...mentors' story / background...he's always on my mind...school*
*improvement...getting to know him ...breaking the ice...I want him to like it...I want*
*him to like me...mentor planning...trust ...both parties gain...asks for*
*help...comfortable...following needs and interests...improvement in school...its*
*good for me...the one-on-one is important...continuity ..caring*
*concerns...intimidated...friendship...student admits not*
*knowing...modeling...giving...he likes me...*

For each mentor pair I had a numbered master list that ranged from 15 to 26

items. Numbers were then placed in the margins of the transcripts in order to more

efficiently work with the data. I went back to the transcripts and searched for

groupings that might fit together for each mentor pair. I needed a starting point for

writing the case studies. I searched for parts of the data that might go together as a

way to begin writing about the beginning of the case. Doing this was complex

because mentors reflected on earlier times in the mentorship in most interviews right

to the end. Since a story has a beginning, a middle and an end and because I thought

about each of these cases as a story about how the relationship developed and

transformed over time, I used this approach to begin writing the story of each mentor

pair. I began to use "beginning", "middle", and "end" as coding categories. On the

transcripts I wrote in another color marker the word *beginning* on the sections that I

believed were related to the beginning of the relationship. The following words and

phrases were included or grouped as a way to write about the beginning of Carey's

and Dustin's case –

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*Finding a place together... getting to know each
other...intimidated...awkward...Carey's background.*

Over time, other key words and phrases were added to this *beginning* category or

grouping, and some were deleted. This gave me a starting point for writing each

case. At first I thought that I might write the *beginning* for each mentor pair. I soon

realized that it made more sense to write the whole story for one pair, then move

onto a second pair, a third and then a fourth. Once I got started I did not want to

interrupt the flow of the story. As well, during the construction process, I was totally

consumed with each pair and could not possibly entertain the interference of another

story. I lived -- ate -- slept, each pair as I constructed each case.

This procedure of grouping of key words and small phrases from the master

list was used to group together the ideas that would form the second stage of the

relationship. At that time I didn't realize that these were going to be the "stages" of

the relationships but it made sense to group together the ideas and events that came

naturally after a beginning stage. After the beginning, for example, the pairs (with

the exception of Tiara and Joel) became increasingly comfortable with one another. I

went back to the master list and to the transcripts. Words and small phrases from the

master list were grouped together. For example --

*she is comfortable with me now... Cascandra feels in control...the effectiveness of
mentor planning... transition from stage 1 to stage 2...she is beginning to trust...she
is sharing her life with me...*

This procedure was also used to write the third stage of the relationships.

Examples of key words and small phrases in the third stage included

*modeling...student admits not knowing ...student asks for help...the music... child
says what s/he thinks, giving and receiving...very comfortable...wants to give back to
the mentor... intimate... friendship... mentoring means intuitively 'just knowing'...*

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After a first draft of all four of the cases were constructed I took a step back and thought about them. With a pen and paper, I asked myself : *What are these relationships about? What do they mean? What commonalties exist amongst and across the cases? What patterns are there, if any?*

I began writing all of the key ideas that came to my mind when I thought about the case studies together. I did this to find out if there were any new patterns. This brainstorming activity resulted in a page full of ideas, some of which I already had, some which were new. Some of these ideas included –

*caring...sharing...giving...receiving...consistent...continuity...increased self-confidence...commitment...mentors see themselves as helpers...our time is special...teaching new things...student enjoys learning...trust...recognition and praise...respect...hugs...warm feelings...feedback...security...laughter and teasing...intimate...careful planning...flexibility...friendship... connection...concern...creativity...concern for following child's interests...getting to know the child is very important...one-on-one is important...personalizing the mentoring...*

These words and phrases represented something deemed significant about relationship formation. Next I re-read each case study. I made a list of all of the key ideas which were included in and across the four master lists and added the new ones which resulted from the brainstorm activity. These key ideas became coding categories. The list blended some ideas such as intimidation, awkward beginnings, getting to know the child into one category and blended other ideas into other categories, that is, planning, flexibility, following the child's lead and interests. These coding categories which came from the transcripts and the case studies later became common themes.

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I then created a chart with all of the mentors' names (Appendix H). I divided the page into four squares. Tiara's name went into one square, Carey's into another, Kristen's into another and Eileen's name into the fourth square. Next, I transferred the themes onto this chart under each mentor's name. It was quite readily apparent which themes did not belong under mentors' names. Tiara and Joel did not experience an awkward beginning whereas Carey felt quite intimidated in the beginning of the mentorship with Dustin. This theme was removed from Tiara's list. Eileen did not talk deliberately about trust whereas Kristen's beliefs about trust were very strong. Next I went back to the chart and wrote examples of comments made by mentors which were indicative of the theme with a red marker. Under Eileen's name, for the theme of increased self-confidence, I wrote with my marker, "reads with authority" because this was something Eileen said about the changes she had witnessed in Narissa's reading. This provided a more manageable format and enabled me to look at the data for each mentor pair in a more focussed way. Then I re-read all of the case studies, went back to the chart and starred the themes for their significance, (i.e., minor/major) in terms of relationship formation. I did this because the comments made by the mentors although they were about the same topic, were of varying degrees of importance. For example, initially, Tiara spoke a lot about friendship and respect in relation to her mentorship with Joel, whereas Kristen spoke about the importance of trust in her mentorship with Cascandra. Carey spoke a lot about wanting Dustin to like the sessions and Eileen repeatedly stated that it was important that she help Narissa. Further, as the relationships changed, so did the

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significance of certain themes for mentors. Over time, for example, friendship became more important to Carey.

Then I was able to look across all of the data together in a compare/contrast way. I went back to the drafts of the case studies and wrote another draft. This draft attempted to incorporate these common themes across the cases in order to provide some commonality of structure. While I did not intend or wish to impose a structure which could possibly destroy the uniqueness of each case, three stages of how the relationships developed and transformed over the course of the mentorships were discernible.

After the initial construction of each case, each case was rewritten various times until I was satisfied with the story quality. I wanted each case to be described sufficiently so that my readers could follow the story, understand how the relationship transformed over time, and to feel like they were there when they read the cases.

Other data used to write the case studies. The fieldnotes contributed to the construction of the four cases. They were read, re-read and included in the coding categories. Frequent informal conversations with staff at the school also contributed to my interpretation of the data. Such conversations with the teachers of the students involved in the program, the teachers who taught these students last year, and the school principal helped me understand the children better and the child/mentor relationship. In one case, for example, I met the child's mother. This helped me understand how the child experienced the mentor. I recorded details of these conversations and my reflections on them. Conversations with these other adults

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proved invaluable as they helped me to better understand, and to bring increased

clarity to my interpretation of the relationships that developed between the children

and mentors. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) affirm that "individuals interpret with the

help of others"... and "through interaction the individual constructs meaning" (p.

36). A researcher always uses all that one knows about a situation to inform

interpretation. A holistic description of the events that transpired between each pair

are presented in chapters 4 through 7.

**Searching for an answer to the research questions about how relationships work**

For the major component of analysis, the purpose of which was to do a more

finely tuned analysis about how the mentoring relationships developed and

transformed over time, I sought literature on relationships. I turned to Brendtro,

Brokenleg and Van Bockern's (1990), work because they have been involved in

reclaiming efforts for children and youth who are in conflict with family, school and

community for over three decades. They use the Circle of Courage as a framework

for this reclaiming work. Within this Circle they have identified children's four basic

developmental needs to be belonging, mastery, independence and generosity or

attachment, achievement, autonomy and altruism. Attachment is understood to foster

achievement, autonomy and altruism. This model made a lot of sense for this next

level of analysis because it emphasizes children's and youth's attachments to non-

related significant adults.

They identified a number of key ideas about relationship formation. Firstly,

relationship is not a feeling, but rather is something that results from action and this

action involves giving. A second key idea they emphasize is that a strong sense of

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belonging or attachment makes young people more receptive to guidance from adults. A third key idea they offer is that adults who are engaged in a helping role must be able to offer warm and stable attachments. Brendtro et al also recognize and support Fromm's (1956) model of the elements of positive attachments which includes caring, respect, responsibility and knowledge.

Given that there was considerable diversity amongst the mentors and children in terms of age, gender, race, backgrounds and so forth, I needed a framework to use to revisit the data in order to see if there were any patterns in and across the four cases that were not self-evident in the beginning or in the **playgoer** mode of analysis needed for the case study construction. Using Brendtro's et al's ideas allowed me to look at many aspects of relationship formation, one at a time, in a more systematic way. I revisited the case studies with questions about the manifestation of each of these key ideas for each of the case studies. I looked for indicators or examples from each of the four cases that most adequately exemplified the key ideas articulated by Brendtro et al about forming positive relationships. This enables a systematic examination of how the relationships actually worked between each mentor pair. As well, this framework helped me to do a more finely tuned analysis. This then made possible an interpretation about what was the same about the case studies in spite of their differences. With answers to questions about the role of each of the key ideas about relationships in each of the case studies, it was possible to see each case study as a collection of parts and then to see the relationships among the parts in the operation of the whole.

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# Chapter 4

## Structure of the Case Study

The mentorship between Tiara and Joel began on January 30, 1998. Tiara met with Joel once a week during the school lunch hour. There was a six-week break in their mentorship (May 3 - June 17) during which time Tiara was studying French in Quebec. Their mentorship resumed on June 17 and it is my understanding that the mentorship is currently ongoing. I saw Tiara towards the end of April 1999 and she told me that she still mentors Joel. They go on outings such as swimming and to McDonalds together. I had a total of 10 interviews with Tiara. Interviews took place on the following dates: January 30, February 9, 25, March 11, 18, 25, April 6, 15, 24, 29. Three of the interviews were audio-taped.

Tiara is a third year university student in the faculty of education in a large city in western Canada. She enrolled in university immediately after completing high-school. Joel is an eleven-year-old boy who attends a special literacy class and is in grade 6.

To write the case study I have formed three sections to portray how Tiara and Joel experienced the mentorship. The final section presents a summary of the development of the mentoring relationship between Tiara and Joel.

## Stage #1 - Comfortable and Close

Tiara and Joel connected from the onset of the mentorship. They did not experience an awkward stage or an uncomfortable beginning. Tiara's description of this immediate comfort with Joel is included below. I witnessed comfort and closeness expressed by both Tiara and Joel. This section includes Tiara's explanation

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of what it means to her to spend time with Joel. She also shared that she asks Joel for his advice on her completed assignments. Finally, Tiara described how she approached Joel the first day she met him. She offered a glimpse into what she thought Joel might be experiencing upon meeting his mentor for the first time.

**"I met my little guy today. We have so much in common"**

It was a snowy Tuesday afternoon in January (Jan. 30). I was sitting in my office on campus getting ready to go to class. I heard a knock on the door. I got up, opened the door. Tiara was standing there. She said "Hi! Jan, can I come in for a minute?" Tiara was a third year university student. She signed up to be a mentor in the mentorship program. She was also a student in the second language methods course I was teaching that term.

"Of course, Tiara, come in", I said, opening the door wider, motioning for her to take a seat.

She took off her coat, plopped her knapsack on the floor, sat down and began talking

I met my little guy today. He's older. He's in grade six.

I told him that my grandma lives a block away from the

school and that my mom went to that school. So it was

kinda neat going there and telling him that. (Jan. 30).

"What's his name?" I asked. She began, "Oh! I didn't even tell you. It's Joel. And we have so much in common." Although she did not come in for a scheduled interview, I grabbed a pad of lined paper, my tape recorder and said, "Do you want to talk about it? Mind if I tape this, take notes?" "Sure Jan. I don't know if I have

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anything important to say. I just met him. But, I did sign that sheet [the consent form]. So, it's okay. I don't mind." I said "So, I want to hear all about it".

She began

> We have so much in common. His parents divorced when
>
> he was seven months old, same as mine. Except I was six
>
> months old when my parents divorced. But it's the same
>
> thing. He remembers sitting by the window at 6:00 and
>
> 7:00 o'clock Saturday morning waiting for his dad to get
>
> him for the weekend – just like me, and his dad never
>
> showing up, just like mine. He knows about broken
>
> promises, lies, lies and lies. We really understand each
>
> other. We have so much in common (Jan. 30).

"Interesting", I said. "Start from the beginning. Was this your first visit to the school? What happened when you got there?"

She began

> Well, yes, except for the first night, that Orientation session,
>
> you know, you were there. There were no kids there that
>
> night. So yes, it was my first actual time to the school, when
>
> there were kids there. When I got there I had no one to mentor;
>
> I had no idea if I was going to get one [ a student] or anything
>
> like that. And then there was this little boy running around the
>
> room, and I didn't even know; I just thought it was this kid. I
>
> wasn't sure why he was running back and forth, but I guess he

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was waiting for his mentor, and he was this cute little Grade

6er, just adorable, and we clicked; we totally clicked. I found

out that we were both only children, and our parents were both

divorced. And just everything: We like the same sports, and

we like the same movies, and it was mostly just, we found

out about each other (Jan.30)

"Tiara, that's wonderful. I'm so happy that you clicked like that. I want to talk to you

more about this [mentoring Joel]. Can we meet – have an interview after your

sessions," I asked.

"Sure," she agreed.

## "I Love Him Already - Our Time Together is Special"

The next week (Feb. 9) both Tiara and I were at the school during her

mentoring session. I was interested in meeting Joel. I went into the library, they

weren't there. I went into the mentor room, they weren't there either. I tried the

music room next and there they were. Tiara saw me and called for me to come over

to the corner where they were sitting. She said "Joel, this is Jan. She is my teacher."

I greeted him, "Hi Joel, nice to meet you." He smiled and said "Hi." I asked them if

I could take a picture of them together. Joel raised his eyebrows, smiled and put his

head down. "He's shy. He doesn't like his picture taken, Jan." "That's okay," I said.

"I'll leave you two alone," and then I left the music room.

Joel is older than the majority of the children in the mentorship program. He

is in the literacy class. Students in his class were selected after all the children in

grades K, 1, 2 and 3 had mentors. The school decided to assign mentors to the

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students in the early grades first and if they were lucky enough to still have mentors after matching all the K – 3's, they would involve students in the high need category from Division II (grades 4-6).

When I met Tiara for an interview after their session, I asked her how the session went and she began

> I love him already, Jan. he's so sweet – such a nice kid. He's
>
> shy. And he doesn't like having his picture taken. Last week,
>
> someone came in, I think it was a teacher, and wanted to take
>
> our picture and he hid, put his head down, so that's why he
>
> did that. I applied for the French Bursary program in Montreal
>
> and I really want to go. But if I get it I will miss him so much.
>
> So, I don't know what to do. And, Oh - today, we read and we
>
> got through so much of the book that the teacher was even
>
> surprised, so it was really good. We had fun. Our time together
>
> is special. We've only known each other, seen each other twice.
>
> But our time together is special (Feb.9).

At this early stage in their mentorship, Tiara and Joel appeared to be very comfortable together. In fact, the following week I learned that Tiara and Joel made provisions to reschedule their session in the event that either Tiara is unable to come or Joel is absent from school because of illness or for any other reason. We work out our mentoring schedule together. I didn't meet with Tiara the following week. When I went to the school, they were nowhere insight. I asked his teacher if

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she knew anything and she told me, " I haven't seen Tiara today. And Joel, Oh, Joel, he's away today".

The next time I met with Tiara (Feb. 25), I asked her about the previous week. She explained that Joel called her and told her that he would not be at school, "So I came another day instead." She explained that

Joel comes [stays] for lunch every day because he comes on the

bus. He doesn't live in the community. He comes here for

the special literacy program (Feb.25).

At this time she explained that if there's a day that she can't come or that his school is going on a fieldtrip, they let each other know and then together they work out an alternative time for their weekly session.

Joel is old enough to plan and schedule dates for his mentoring sessions. This frees the teacher of this responsibility. With the children in Division I, it is the teacher who telephones the mentors when the children are away from school.

"She always brings me something." During my visit to the school that day, I poked my head in the music room, saw the two of them sitting close in the corner and went over. Joel was not quite as shy this time. He greeted me, "Hi! Do you want one?" offering me a Skittle [candy]."Oh no thank you," I said. He beamed and said, "She brings me something, she always brings me something. She gives me everything," poking her in the shoulder. "Ouch, Joel!" she giggled, poking him back. "She always brings me stuff. You're soooo nice" he said leaning his head on her shoulder. "You're right, she is nice," I said, adding, "Can I take a photo today?" Tiara looked at him; "It's fine with me... Joel?" His head still rested on her shoulder; he didn't

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look up, but agreed "Sure, I don't mind." I took the picture, said goodbye to them and left. They were enjoying their time together and preferred to be alone.

**"We really understand each other - It's just being together that's important"**

This sub-section illustrates how Tiara tried to describe what it means and how it feels to be with Joel in this special mentoring relationship.

When I met with Tiara after their session, I asked her "So, how did it go today?"

She looked at me, smiled and said, "I just love him so much. We really understand each other." She had said this before. I wanted her to talk more about this. Reminding her of what she said before, I reiterated - "I like the way you said: *We don't have to say words, we just understand each other.*"

She took the cue

> Yes, we don't. I know that he's reached his limit in reading,
>
> he doesn't have to say, *I don't want to read anymore,* and
>
> I don't have to say, *Do you want to read some more?* I
>
> say, *Oh, okay, lets go on to something else.* It's not like a
>
> formal thing with us. We get along good (Feb.25).

I was interested in hearing her talk about their session. I asked her, "What did you do today?" She didn't answer for a few seconds, she was thinking about this. Then she said

> It's hard to explain, Jan. It's not what we do - it's just
>
> being together that's important. Just being there, sitting

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there, talking about stuff, all kinds of stuff. It's really,

the just being there together. We just want that

time together where we can just be. I can't really explain,

Jan. You would have to  [experience it] – I don't know (Feb.25).

"What does it feel like?" I asked.

She said, "You'd just have to be there, to feel it to know, to truly understand. Do you

get it? We just clicked."

"What do you mean you clicked?"

She began

It just felt like – I feel something like I'm his sister or

something. I felt actually more like I related to him the

same way I relate to my little cousins and I'm really

close with my little cousins, and so I don't have a

cousin-cousin relationship with my cousins, I have a

sister relationship or a brother relationship with them,

and that is the same way with him.  He's got more of

like an adult personality, and I think maybe too because

he's had to be grown up. It's hard when your parents are

divorced, and he'll understand things; he'll joke about

things (Feb.25).

In the following interview excerpts, Tiara explains what she means when she

says he is grown up. Tiara told me that Joel was mature as a person. I asked her what

she meant by that. She told me

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He was wearing a Kokanee beer T-shirt, and this is Joel.

And for other kids I'd question, why are they wearing this

T-shirt? But with him you don't. He's mature – maybe not

educational-wise he's not mature beyond his age, but as a

person he is (Mar. 11).

Tiara provided an example which served to illustrate Joel's maturity. She explained

that Joel can tell if she is upset and that he cares about how things are going in her

life.

She said

You could talk to him; he knows if you're not happy or

something like that. He knows that (Mar.11).

I asked her, "How can you tell that?"

She said, "Just he's like, *Are you okay? Sure you're okay?*

Yes, I'm fine. *Okay*".

These interview excerpts illustrate the comfort, acceptance, and genuine interest that

Tiara and Joel experienced with each other.

Getting feedback from Joel about her assignments. Over the course of the

mentorship, Tiara shared her completed assignments (for methods courses) such as

games, picture files and so forth with Joel before she handed them in.

She said

For my assignments even, if I'm there, I'll show him what

I have to hand in and he always gives me his opinion on it,

so he's just like my little friend. We get along really good;

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I think we get along really good. I showed him my French

assignments. My games, I asked him, *What do you think?*

*Do you like it?* And he goes *Yes, Yes. They're pretty!*

*They're cool!* (Apr. 6).

Curious about the reason behind showing Joel her assignments, I asked her if she

thought that showing him her assignments made a difference.

She responded

Yes, because he knows I'm still a student and I'm still

learning, and it brings me down a level too, I think. But

it also gives me an insight: Are these games appropriate

for a grade 6er? (Apr. 6).

"He just acts older." Tiara explained that Joel acts older than other kids his age that

she knows

He just acts older, like he's kind of like one of the jocks at

the school I think. And with girls. Girls will walk by and

he goes " That girl likes me." So he's funny. And other

people [mentors] would be like "Well, now, Joel, we're

not talking about that. Don't say that. And I'll let him tell

me stuff like that because why should I be strict about it?

This is his lunch hour and he's doing homework; that's more

than most kids are doing on their lunch hour (Mar.18).

This example shows Tiara's willingness to let Joel be himself with her.

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**"I did make some jokes to make him relax"**

Tiara had been mentoring Joel for six weeks. Right from the beginning, this pair seemed so natural together. I was curious about how that came to be. Tiara had already told me that they had so much in common. But I wondered about the way Tiara approached Joel that very first day. I asked her to talk about how she felt about mentoring Joel then compared to the beginning. Her answer was, "The same basically".

She talked about their first session together –

> Totally at ease. He laughed at my jokes and he said,
>
> "You're funny" and I think that made him – I did make
>
> some jokes to make him relax. Then we were reading the
>
> book *The Titanic*, and he hadn't seen the movie yet, and
>
> I was telling him about the movie, and he seemed to want
>
> to know more. And I was telling him about some of the
>
> funny parts of the movie, and then we'd go back and we'd
>
> read some more. And he's asking questions: *Why is the ship*
>
> *like this? Or Why is that?* And I'd tell him, *I don't know,*
>
> *but what I do remember from the movie ...* and it was just
>
> really comfortable. Everybody else [the other mentors]
>
> seemed to say that they took a couple of weeks just getting
>
> comfortable with their little mentor person, and I got
>
> comfortable right away (Mar.18).

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I was interested in how the mentoring relationship develops and transforms over time. So I pursued this

Okay, so you got comfortable right away, so there was no

sort of awkward stage that maybe the other people

[you mentioned] were saying and talking about, and that it

took them two weeks to get comfortable. So you were

comfortable right from the beginning, but has it changed

from that? (Mar.18).

She said, "I think it's only gotten closer; we've gotten closer".

I was still curious about how it was that they came to be comfortable straight from the beginning and at a later date (April 15), I brought up the topic again

You mentioned at the very beginning that some people

took a longer time to get to know their student or to

feel comfortable with their student, and that that didn't

happen to you and Joel.

She explained how she approached this mentorship. She talked about what she thought would be going through Joel's head upon meeting her the first time.

I knew he was going to be, *Who's this stranger coming into*

*my room?* I knew he was going to be like that. I knew he

was going to be wondering, *What does she want out of this?*

Little kids think like that: *What's this person getting out of*

*this? Why are they doing this? Why are they taking their*

*time out to help me?* And I knew he was going to be scared;

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I knew he was going to wonder. And I thought ; *Okay. Make*

*a couple of jokes, relax him up a little bit.* And it was fine,

we got along great. And he knows that I'm there for him. But

if somebody comes into your room and you don't know them –

and I was scared too [the first time]. I'm in a school I've never

been in before and especially when I didn't know the teachers.

I didn't even know who I'd be placed with. I just followed the

other mentors, followed where I was supposed to go. What else

could I do? I had no idea. But my main goal was I wanted

a Division II student and I got somebody that I totally love,

so that's good (Apr.15).

"You totally love him?" I asked. "Yes," she replied, " He's just adorable."

## Stage #2 - A Genuine Friendship

Tiara often used the word friendship when she spoke about her relationship

with Joel. This section describes Tiara's understanding of the mentorship between

her and Joel, the way in which she relates to children, the role of respect in relation

to this mentorship and examples of how Tiara and Joel spent time together.

### "We don't have a teacher-student relationship - We just have a friendship"

Tiara often referred to Joel as her little friend. She explained to me how she

understands, that is, how she makes sense of her relationship with Joel.

We're just so comfortable with each other. I feel like I'm his

teacher, but I know that I feel like a teacher, he knows I'm like a

teacher, but we don't have a teacher-student relationship;

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we just have a friend relationship (Apr.6).

I asked her to talk more about that, about the teacher-student relationship.
She began

> I don't know. Myself, as I teacher for myself, I make myself
>
> known to the students; I let them into my life. But not all
>
> teachers are like that; a lot of teachers are *Keep back. I'm*
>
> *the teacher* . People say to me *-I think you have to separate*
>
> *yourself more from the students. You can't become so attached*
>
> *to them; I'm over here. You're the student. You're over there.*
>
> And I can't do that. And I can't do that because that's not me;
>
> that's not the way I operate. And so for me as a teacher, I'm
>
> always warm. I think that's the way I am. I'm always there for
>
> my students. No matter who they are - whether they're Joel
>
> or the kids during my practicum or the kids at the school that
>
> I volunteer at, if they're upset or something, I sit there and I
>
> talk to them about it. If they're happy, I let them tell me why
>
> they're happy. But that's just me. Other teachers are like, *I'm*
>
> *the teacher. You listen to what I have to say. You respect me*
>
> *because I'm the teacher.* I gain that respect because of the
>
> way I am. I don't demand it, I get it anyway. With Joel. I'll
>
> let him joke around with me, I'll let him say silly things or
>
> whatever; whereas if I were a teacher I wouldn't let him do
>
> those things and that's why it's a little different when you're

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a mentor. You're more like a friend, you're a big friend to

the kid. And there's certain lines he could cross (Apr.6).

In this way, not only did Tiara bring clarity to what she means by friendship, but she

also helped me to better understand Tiara as a person.

**Respect works both ways**

I was interested in hearing what she had to say about respect. She spoke

about respect not only in relation to how Joel respects her, but also in terms of how

she respects Joel. I asked her to talk about respect. "Could you talk about that respect

in relation to Joel?"

She began

He respects me as a mentor. He knows that I'm going to be

a teacher and he's excited. He *says You're going to be a*

*good teacher.* Yes, stuff like that. We have a good relationship,

and he listens to me. If I tell him, *Okay, Joel we have to get*

*back on this,* or a lot of times he'll tell me, *We have to get*

*back on topic here,* but when I tell him *We have to get back*

*on this*, he'll listen right away. He listens and basically he does

what I want or if I say, *Let's go sit in here today*, he'll be like,

*Okay, yes that's good.* He doesn't say, *No I don't want to go there.*

He doesn't argue with me about anything. And I respect him.

And I think that's probably more important than anything. I

respect his differences; I respect his difficulties; I respect his

limits, what he can and can't do; and I build on that. We'll do

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things that if I know it's hard for him, I'll push him, but I won't

push him too much. For example, I'll tell him *Okay, you don't*

*understand? You don't know what that word is?* I won't tell him

what it is; I'll try different ways of having him sound it out or

looking at it, maybe looking at the picture to try to figure out

what the word is. If he still can't get it, I'm not going to make

him look like an idiot; I won't do that. I'll just say, *This is the*

*word*, then five minutes later I'll go back and I'll say, *Do you*

*remember what word that is?* And it's good because I've

respected his boundaries, because I've respected what he can

and can't do. But I think that you just need to be there and show

that even though you're an authority figure, you're still a friend

(Apr.6).

Through this discussion, Tiara clarifies how she and Joel both give and receive

respect with each other.

## A mentor is a friend

Tiara sees herself as a friend to Joel. I wanted Tiara to clarify for me her

understanding of the word friend. When I pointed out that she's used the word

"friend" many times during our interviews, she explained what the term friend means

to her said –

Yes because as a mentor you are, even as a teacher you

should be, not the student's friend; it's not a friend, because

its not, *Let's go partying together,* its not that. But it's just

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kind of *You can come to me if you have any problem.* And

I know students can whether it be Joel, whether it be any-

body, they come to me if there's anything; that's just the way

I am. If somebody needs me to be there for them, I'll put their

needs right ahead of my needs, and I'm like that with my friends,

with anybody; I'll always be there for them before I'll be

there for myself (Apr.6).

For Tiara, being a friend to someone means being there for the other person

in whatever capacity required. As a friend, Tiara also got pleasure out of bringing

treats for Joel.

I bring him things. Tiara likes to bring a treat for Joel each week. She explained that

she does this because it makes her feel good. She told me

The first day, I took him candies, cookies or something;

I can't remember, and he said, *Why did you bring me*

*something? You don't have to bring me something.* And

I'm like, *Well, I want to,* and he goes, *But you don't*

*have to. I feel bad.* I'm like, *Don't feel bad.* Maybe he

doesn't get extra things sometimes. So, I'll take him a

package of M and Ms or Skittles. I took him Valentine

cookies and I took him cookies when I made them at home

(Mar. 11).

Tiara brings Joel other things as well. She told me

My cousins went to the Drillers game, and they got these

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posters, and I gave him one of them. I got them to bring

me one for him because he loves soccer, and he said he

put it up in his room (Apr.6).

She was aware of Joel's interests, favorite sports and hobbies and selected surprises

according to his interests.

## Spending time together

Tiara often talked about how she and Joel spent time together. Sometimes she

reiterated conversations that she had with Joel. I witnessed and participated in some

of their conversations and I came to appreciate how close this pair had become. The

following excerpts from interviews are included to help the reader envision Tiara and

Joel together.

He enjoys reading now. Tiara told me that over time, Joel came to enjoy reading. It

was often him that kept them on track.

And like I said, he wants to, even if sometimes we're reading

and we get off topic, and we talk about things, and he'll be,

*Okay, we've got to get back to reading,* and he enjoys that

[reading] now (Apr. 6)... and he feels comfortable to tell me things.

And I feel comfortable enough to tell him things. And I know

what he likes and he knows what I like, and I know what he

doesn't like and [I] stay away from the things he doesn't like

(Apr. 6).

She initially was talking about reading. I was curious where she was going with this.

She continued, again referring to reading

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In terms of reading. I know what kinds of things he doesn't

like to read, and even in terms of subject areas, talking about

things (Apr. 24).

He tells me things, I tell him things. I repeated a comment she had made because I

wanted to learn more about it. "You said he tells you things, and you tell him

things."

She took the lead

Like just personal things that we did over the weekend, and he'll

tell me about the time he'd spent with his dad and stuff like that,

when he goes over to his dad's house for the weekend. Actually,

I started a little journal with him, and sometimes we forget to

write in it because we're so busy with other things, but it's

usually he'll tell me what he did on the weekend and it just

so happens that it's the weekend he's been with his dad, so

he'll tell me what him and his dad did. And just things just about

that he's done and about where he's gone, or family life, where

his grandma is going. And I tell him things too... I told him about

my relationship with my dad and how I don't see him; he thinks

that's not good, and stuff like that (Apr. 24).

Tiara is having a big party when her mom's away. I went into the music room (Mar.

18) to observe Joel and Tiara. Joel motioned for me to come over to them. When I

got closer to them, he began -

Tiara's mom is leaving for Montreal this morning. She is having

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a big party at their house!

He looked at Tiara, who appeared surprised that he was telling me this. She said

"Joel!!!". He said, "Oh, yes. A party which she has told her mom about."

"That's nice, who's going?" I asked, looking at both of them. Joel took the lead,

"Half the university." I looked at Tiara, and said, "What !!??" Tiara put both hands

up, as if to surrender, then began, "Okay, okay. No, I invited half the faculty though.

Mom knows I'm having it, nothing crazy or wild happens. I'm really responsible."

Joel couldn't contain himself, "Yeah and she loves chips and natcho chips, so

she's having them. Or, no you're not because it's Lent and you can't have them still,

right?" I asked Tiara, " Oh? Is that what you are doing for Lent, Tiara?" "Yeah", she

admitted. Joel continued, "Yeah, because she loves chips. Why not have pretzels at

your party instead?"

I confirmed my upcoming interview with Tiara and then left. I could tell that

they were enjoying themselves, visiting, sharing the past weeks events, sharing

upcoming events and I did not want to interfere with their time together.

**"You need an extra person around – just someone you can talk to"**

I kept thinking about my recent conversation with Joel and Tiara in the music

room. Tiara shared with him what she is doing for Lent. She also told him about the

party she was going to have. Later that day, when Tiara and I were alone, I said,

"You talk about lots of stuff with him?"

And she said "Yes", and explained that

> I think that it's important, because teachers don't have that –
>
> sometimes you need just an extra person around that's not

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your parent or not your aunts or your uncles, just somebody

you can talk to. And often that person is to be the teacher,

but the teacher doesn't have time for it. And I know for me,

I come from a very, very big family, and so we have that strong

support system where if I was upset or if I wanted to talk or see

somebody about sports and my mom wasn't there to talk to me

about sports or whatever, I know I could always go to my uncle,

and my uncle will be there, and with Joel I know he comes

from a close family, but I think the extended family is not really

that much there. So we just talk, not just about school things,

about life. And like I said, I'm more like a big sister, I feel to

him. I don't know how he feels, but we seem to get along

really good, actually (Mar. 18).

Tiara described how she sees the role she plays in Joel's life. Tiara is that extra

person, someone that Joel knows will be there just for him.

### Stage #3 - "I've formed a bond with him – We come from the same place"

At this stage of the mentorship Tiara and Joel had reached a point where they

did not want to be apart. This section includes a series of conversations I had with

Tiara in an attempt to capture what this intimacy and connectedness is like for them.

On April 29 I spoke on the telephone with Tiara about Joel. I knew that she

was going to the French Immersion Bursary program in Montreal soon. I also knew

that she was very happy when she was accepted. She called, concerned -

I feel really bad about going to Montreal because I won't see him.

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I missed him on Spring Break [a week in the Springtime when

there is no school for students]. He gave me a letter that said *I hope*

*you can mentor me next year.* I just love him. It means so much to

him and his mom is really happy about the program. I asked him

*How does your mom feel about you having a mentor?* And he

said, *She loves me having a mentor.* I've formed a bond with him

in a way that others can't. It's hard to explain, Jan! We just

understand. We don't talk about our parents being divorced.

We talk about sports and doing things. But, we just understand

each other . And I think it's because we come from

the same place. I think that he sees me and he thinks – *Well,*

*her parents are divorced, we came from the same place and*

*she's made it. So maybe I can make it too* (Apr.29).

Tiara did her best to help me understand the importance she places on this

mentorship with Joel.

**"He should have had a mentor a long time ago"**

Tiara explained how a mentor could have made a difference in terms of

helping Joel with his school work at an earlier point in his school career. She also

talked about how it bothers her that Joel has learning challenges.

I think it's kind of sad that he's in a basic split class [literacy in

the morning, regular program in the afternoon] which see, that

bothers me, because I think, How could a student be in grade 6

and have problems reading? Because I've never been exposed

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to that. I was reading when I was 3 years old. I was reading books,

reading at home, and so I think that he should have had a mentor

a long time ago (Apr.6).

"So you think he should have had a mentor from way back?" I asked,

She said

Oh yes, totally, totally. You have to get students wanting to

learn, and if you spend one-on-one with them you get them

wanting to learn. They want that; they like that special

attention, and they do extra things to get that special attention,

I think. He'll pick out the books; he'll pick out two or three

books and bring them over. I help him with math too, and

sometimes I think he just pretends he doesn't know the math

questions just so I'll help him with it. And then he does really

well. And it's too bad because he's in grade 6 and he's going

into junior high next year. Is he going to always be at the

bottom of the class because nobody noticed that this little

boy has had problems reading until now? (Apr.6)

In interview conversations such as this one, Tiara showed her awareness of Joel's

academic abilities and needs and her concern about them.

**I'm going to miss him when I go away"**

During our later interviews, Tiara (Apr. 6,15), was focussed primarily on how

leaving for the French program in Montreal would affect Joel. She also told me that

she was trying to find someone to spend time with Joel while she was away.

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She told me

> I'm going to really miss him when I go away, I know that much;
>
> really, really miss him. I hope I can find someone to be his mentor.
>
> I'm going to talk to my friend, because he deserves that, deserves
>
> somebody to be there with him once a week (Apr. 6).

Tiara was trying to find a way to fill the void, to fill in her absence while she was away.

### "I don't want to disappoint him or let him down"

Again Tiara talked about how it bothered her to be away from Joel for this 6 week period. She knew that she was helping Joel and did not want to break their rhythm.

> . What am I going to do? I don't want to disappoint him or let him
>
> down. One of my friends said he's interested in being a mentor,
>
> so I'm going to see if he could do that for the six weeks that I'm
>
> gone [May 1 – June 15] and I'll come back and finish up the last
>
> two weeks before school is finished because his teacher – even the
>
> principal said, Yes, she's noticed an improvement in him. I just
>
> feel like I'm letting him down by not being there. But that's the
>
> one time – rarely, do I put myself above everybody else; this is
>
> the one time that I have to. I'm going to try and find somebody
>
> and if I don't, I'm still going to go back there for those last two
>
> weeks when I come back. I've already arranged it at work, that
>
> I won't work until after [school gets out]. And probably our last

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day we'll go play soccer outside or something. Do something fun.

And if he wants to get his other friends to come play too, that

would be great (Apr. 15).

Tiara had indeed formed a bond with Joel. She was upset that she was leaving him

for the 6 week period while she was studying in Quebec. But she was committed to

being Joel's mentor and did return before the end of the school year.

*4 months later...*In September Tiara came to my office. She told me all about

Quebec. She also told me that she did mentor Joel when she returned and that she

still has a relationship with Joel. He calls her when he wants to go swimming and

they still do things together. They also write letters back and forth.

## Summary of Tiara and Joel

The mentorship between Tiara and Joel did not begin with an awkward stage

and then progress to a comfortable stage. During their first session together, Tiara

and Joel learned that they had a lot in common. They have no siblings. They both

experienced the departure of their fathers at an early age. They are both sports fans,

like the same sports and even the same team players. Such common life experiences

and similar interests contributed to the immediate bond that was formed between

them. This mentorship went smoothly right from the beginning. In fact, early in the

mentorship Tiara said that she loved Joel and that their time together was special.

When Tiara was asked whether they went through an awkward stage, she said that

over time they just became closer.

Tiara and Joel enjoyed spending time together. Tiara described their

relationship as a friendship rather than a student-teacher relationship. Tiara and Joel

were supportive of one another and could talk freely to one another about sensitive, private issues in their lives. Respect was important to Tiara and she felt that respect was reciprocated in their mentorship.

There was a break in their mentorship for a period of six weeks. Tiara attended a French Immersion bursary program in Montreal. She had reservations about going to Montreal because the relationship was so important to her. While in Montreal, Tiara wrote to Joel. When she returned she continued to mentor him. The last time I saw Tiara (April 1999), she told me that she and Joel talk on the telephone often and that they still see one another. When together, they go swimming, to the mall, and to McDonalds. Tiara and Joel are genuine friends - a natural match.

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# Chapter 5

## Structure of the Case Study

The mentorship between Carey and Dustin began early in February 1998 and continued until the end of June 1998. Carey met with Dustin once a week during the school lunch hour. I observed them on the following dates: February 6, 13, 20, March 6, 13, 20, April 3, 10 and 17. I had a total of seven interviews with Carey, three of which were audio-taped. Interviews were conducted on the following dates: February 20, March 6, 13, 20, April 3, 10 and 17.

Carey is a third year student in the faculty of education in a large city in western Canada. She spent most of her life in a small town in the United States and moved to Alberta after completing high-school. Dustin is a 6-year-old boy. He is in a combined grade 2/3 class living in the same city.

In writing the case study, I have formed three sections which highlight the stages that were discernible in this mentoring relationship. This is followed by a section focussing on Carey's interpretation of mentorship, its meaning and what it involves. The final section summarizes the development of their mentoring relationship.

## Stage #1 - Getting to Know Each Other

I had been observing Carey and Dustin for a couple of weeks when I decided to ask her if I could talk with her about mentoring Dustin. She looked up, and responded without hesitation, "Sure - right after, at 1:00 o'clock, that'd be great" (Feb. 20). As soon as Dustin had gone to class, she started talking. I had not sat down, turned on my tape recorder or asked her a question. I was trying to get my

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tape recorder set up, and at the same time trying to capture everything she was saying in my fieldnote journal.

At this stage of the mentorship, Carey was primarily focussed on whether or not Dustin enjoyed the mentoring sessions. During the first and second interviews with Carey, she told me that it was important to her that Dustin enjoy spending time with her. She also expressed self-doubt about not helping him with reading and about not being an authority on topics that were Dustin's knowledge and interest areas. This section describes Carey's preoccupations with Dustin enjoying the mentoring sessions and her expressions of self-doubt and intimidation about the mentoring in general. A description of Carey's background is also included in this section.

**Enjoying the mentoring sessions**

At this stage of the mentorship, Carey was preoccupied with what Dustin thought of her. Excerpts from interviews with Carey are presented to illustrate three of Carey's main concerns; "I want him to like it"," I want him to like me," and "I want to do something he likes."

"I want him to like it." One comment that I heard repeatedly in the first interview with Carey was "I want him to like it." She told me that for her -

In order of importance, it's: I really want him to enjoy it. So that's the most important thing. I want to be able to visit with him and have fun with him. And I don't know if I'm getting done everything I'm supposed to be doing (Feb.20).

Carey wanted Dustin to enjoy the mentoring sessions. In order for this to happen, some of their time would be spent visiting. At the same time she was concerned about whether or not she was accomplishing the goals of the mentorship program.

"I want him to like me." She also wanted Dustin to like her, pointing out that academic improvement was secondary, or of less significance -

> But see, the biggest thing to me is I want him to like it. *I want him to like me,* and I want him to enjoy it, but I also want him to improve in his reading and writing (Feb.20).

"I want to do something he likes." Carey recognized the value of accommodating likes and dislikes of the student and was concerned about making the sessions enjoyable for Dustin.

> I'm not sure what other people are doing, but *I want to do something he likes* (Feb. 20).

This emphasis was repeated during our interview the following week.

> I want to do something he wants to do (Mar.6).

The above examples illustrate Carey's preoccupation with Dustin's enjoyment of the mentoring sessions. This stage was also characterized by Carey's feelings of self-doubt and intimidation. This is discussed in the following sub-section.

**Expressing self–doubt and intimidation**

At the beginning of the mentorship Carey expressed self-doubt and intimidation about mentoring Dustin. These feeling of self-doubt and intimidation stemmed from her lack of knowledge in Dustin's interest areas. Also, Carey

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attended a small, private Christian school for grades K-12 and was not exposed to the same or even similar school experiences as Dustin.

Computers? Automotives? Hummers? During our first interview Carey expressed self-doubt about her competence as a mentor when she learned of Dustin's interest and knowledge areas. In this excerpt from a later interview, Carey reflects on her initial feelings of intimidation.

I wasn't sure where I'd start with him, and he's smart, really smart at things that I'm not that great at. I never saw a computer till I was in grade 10 or something, so I don't know much about it. But there's things, I don't feel competent in. But it's gradually gotten better (Feb. 20).

When I asked her, "How did you start with him? What was it like the first time you saw him?" she said,

The very first time I asked him what kind of books he liked; I was just curious. He said, *Do you have anything on automotives?* And I thought, Oh no! I don't know! I'm not that into cars!! Like, I have a little car; who cares? And I thought, Oh no!! and he said *Oh like Hummers.* He said something else that I didn't even know about; I've never heard of it!! And I asked him again what it was (Feb. 20).

" I wonder if I'm meeting his needs." Carey also expressed concern about the way she was trying to provide academic support in the sessions, telling me that

I try different things to give him different strategies that maybe he would use to help him and stuff, but I wonder if I'm doing enough, I don't know exactly... (Feb. 20). I wonder if I'm meeting his needs (Mar.6).

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Carey expressed concern about whether or not the academic activities she planned

for Dustin were genuinely helpful to him.

<u>"Dustin seems old."</u> Carey repeatedly expressed concern that Dustin is not into

the same kinds of things that other children his age in the mentorship program are

doing. For example, she said

> But sometimes I look at what other people are doing and I think it's hard
>
> because Dustin is at an age where you don't want to do things that make
>
> him feel like a baby, like younger-type things like different crafts. He's
>
> really into cars so I think, okay, I want to do something he likes. (Mar. 6)

She went on, describing and comparing herself to another mentor pair,

> Carmen's little girl loves flowers and butterflies and doing different
>
> little things (Mar.6).

Carey told me that she couldn't bring Dustin a Kinder Surprise (candy packet)

each week as other mentors do because, as she put it,

He wouldn't like that. He's into Hummers, automotives

and stuff like that (Mar.6).

She said twice that Dustin "seemed old", and that

> He doesn't want to do these little things really - like he's just
>
> mature a bit. So this is good for me - because I need the
>
> experience with kids like him (Mar.13).


<u>"I wonder what he's going to think of me!! "</u> Again Carey mentioned that Dustin

seems old, and at the same time expressed concern for how Dustin was reading

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her.

> And he seems old. And he's talking about kind of how the girls
>
> liked him, and he's just -- wow!! Maybe I've just lived a really
>
> sheltered life, he seems really smart and just like -- he was talking
>
> about his new computer games. He has Quake and he has a mouse
>
> and I don't know much about them because we don't have a good
>
> computer. And I thought -- I wonder if I'm going to make it fun for him.
>
> He seems like he is used to a lot, and **I wonder what he's going to**
>
> **think of me!!** (Mar. 6).

Dustin surprised Carey because he did not fit her preconceptions, that is, her expectations in terms of characteristics of a 6-year-old boy. (Dustin is a big boy, that is, physically big for grade two, he is the largest student in the class. He is athletic, solid, strong. He dresses in long black oversize T- shirts and baggy jeans. His head is shaved.) Carey was reading Dustin as a child who is much older than his age. Her comments suggest that she was concerned about interacting with him appropriately given his apparent sophistication and "old for his years" self-presentation.

**Understanding Carey**

This last sub-section focusses on Carey's life experience to shed further light on how Carey was experiencing her mentorship with Dustin. In interviews, Carey described the life she knew as a student growing up in a safe, secure, Christian community.

<u>Carey's school experience</u>. It was during our first interview (Feb. 20) that Carey told me about herself and her own school experience. Carey has lived a school experience that is different from many people's, particularly her peers at university. Because I was interested in understanding the mentoring relationship, Carey's discussions about her own school experiences helped me make sense of how she was experiencing mentoring, and the concern she expressed about how Dustin was experiencing mentoring.

She began

> He has a totally different life than I've had, and so that's the big thing
>
> for me. I look at this school even, and it's a wonderful school. I look
>
> at the stuff they're doing; just from the hall I can see what they're doing,
>
> and I think my life was totally different, I wouldn't give it up, what I
>
> experienced too because I love that life (Feb. 20).

I asked her, "Can you tell me about that life. Why is it different? "

She began

> Yes, it was totally -- see in the U.S. the private schools get no govern-
>
> ment funding. And see there, they don't get money, so all of our books
>
> were old. And we didn't have a gym for our school, so 'till grade 10,
>
> I didn't have a gym (Feb. 20).

When I asked her what they did for physical activity, she said

> We had recess, and we did whatever. I loved recess. We did a lot of
>
> soccer. But our church, the Ladies Circle raised money to get different
>
> things but we were always poor. We never had anything the same as if

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we went to a different school. But we played a lot of just games, games

that we could make up and stuff (Feb. 20).

She didn't stop talking. I tried desperately to jot down questions that were coming

to my mind as she spoke because she simply went on and on, not pausing or

stopping for a breath.

And I never had gymnastics. And then in my EDEL course [a methods

course in the teacher education program] they were trying to get us to do

cartwheels, and I said; I'm not doing it!! And it's because I didn't learn

at the right age. And so when you're older, you don't dare! And I think

why would I want my head below my feet? It just does not make sense.

Your feet are supposed to be on the ground!! And to me, I have a fear -

that I'd get down and I'm ready to do it and I just can't do it. And so there's

just certain things that we didn't do (Feb. 20).

She described how Art was taught in her school.

And we didn't have paint, we didn't have any paint!! I didn't know what

tempra was. I asked her [her EDEL instructor] the other day, What is

tempra? and she said; It's a water based paint. I had water colors in

high school because I took one half semester of art. I had a hard time

too because I had no experience - nothing!! We drew!! (Feb. 20).

"Can you talk about that? ", I asked.

She went on without hesitation

What my teacher would do is draw something on the chalkboard and say,

Everybody draw this and color this. That's all we did. She would draw a

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dog or something, and we'd draw the dog and color it. We didn't even

have the stereotypical activities [celebrating the holidays] (Feb. 20).

Carey's life style was different than Dustin's and her peers. She attended an

elementary/junior high school with less than 40 students, much like a one-room

schoolhouse, with several children in various grades.

Carey's high-school experience was different from her peers as well. This is

how she described it

It was a Christian reform high school and was bigger. It was private, but it

was pretty big, maybe a couple of hundred (Feb. 20).

Growing up...safe and secure. She described the town in Minnesota in which she

grew up with her mother, father, sister and brother with whom she currently lives.

The town is really religious. How do I explain it? Out of the people -

there's a thousand and one hundred people, so that's like a thousand people.

There's six churches in that town. It was Dutch, so there was a big

windmill in the town and it's just really Dutch. So you figure how many

people there were and how many churches (Feb. 20).

She went on, describing how safe and secure she felt during her childhood

growing up in a small town.

And we could do anything. Ever since I was little, we could take our

bikes wherever we wanted in the whole town. There's no crime, no nothing.

So when we were little, we'd go Oh, I'm going to go buy candy. We could

go uptown and buy our own candy and do whatever and go to the swimming

pool, take our bike. We'd do whatever and we had fun and I loved it. But

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then I move here and it's really different for me (Feb. 20).

Carey moved here immediately after completing high school. Her father is a pastor and they moved here because of his work in the church.

As I listened to Carey talk about her childhood, her family and her life in school, it became increasingly apparent to me that in order for me to understand how she was experiencing mentoring I had to understand her - her life. Once I better understood Carey, it made more sense to me that she may be concerned that she is not meeting Dustin's needs or that she cannot offer Dustin enough because she doesn't feel that she has the experience to draw from. Also, when I asked her "is this the first time that you worked with a child one-on-one?" she replied "Yes, so that's what I mean. It's like a really new experience for me" (Mar. 12).

### Stage #2 - Carey and Dustin Connected

As I observed Carey and Dustin together during the passing weeks, I noticed and even felt a change - they no longer sat across from one another at the round table. Instead, they sat beside each other and close together. I also heard laughter, teasing and joking back and forth. Dustin's behavior had given Carey reason to feel that Dustin liked her and enjoyed spending time with her. She seemed pleased and almost relieved by Dustin's response to her. Recalling the recent expressions of intimidation and self-doubt, I was curious about what contributed to this change.

*Did Dustin change? Was Dustin putting on a show for Carey when he first met her? Did Carey change? Did she relax? Was she initially overly focussed on whether or not he liked her and the sessions? Did she feel that because of her*

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*background - her "different" school experience that she might not be able to please or connect with him?*

I wanted to learn about Carey's understanding of what contributed to this turning point in the mentoring relationship. This section includes a description of the second phase of the mentorship between Carey and Dustin. It is divided into the following sub-sections: Comfortable and Connected, and, "He Likes Me."

**Comfortable and connected**

This sub-section explains how Carey and Dustin located themselves — how they found their special place together. It was after they had spent three sessions together that this feeling of intimidation and self-doubt disappeared and the sessions were then characterized as comfortable. What contributed to the relationship turning comfortable? Carey said a number of things during our interviews that helped me to make sense of this.

He's not so different after all. As Carey got to know Dustin, she realized that he was not such a sophisticated boy at all. This is how she explained it

> And it's gradually gotten better. As I got to know him, I
>
> see he's not this genius boy; he's average, and he's nice
>
> and he's fun (Mar. 20).

In the beginning, when they were in the process of getting to know one another, Carey was intimidated by Dustin's apparent precociousness. Consequently, the relationship felt awkward and Carey questioned herself and experienced self-doubt about mentoring Dustin.

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<u>I want to do something he likes – Hummers, Prowlers, Hockey?</u> Carey wanted to

please Dustin. She made a special effort to find out what Dustin likes to eat, what

he likes to do both in school and outside of school, what sports he likes and so

forth. Then, she set forth to tailor the mentoring sessions to Dustin's interests.

He's really into cars and so I think okay, I want to do something he likes and so

I ask him [what he likes], I look for stuff - on books, like about Hummers (Mar.

20).

Carey wanted Dustin to like her and to enjoy the mentoring sessions. She felt

that in order to make the mentorship work, she had to find out what Dustin likes

and then find ways to support and perhaps strengthen that interest. Carey realized

that this involved knowing her student well and becoming engaged in his

interests. This meant putting aside her interests and plans for the mentoring

sessions and following his lead. She realized very quickly that in order for Dustin

to like her and to enjoy the time they spend together, that she had to find some

common ground when there seemed to be no pre-existing common ground

because of their diverse interests and different backgrounds. How did she

approach this challenge?

For Carey, this involved some serious searching and in-depth learning. It

meant spending time at the library learning about dirt bikes, Hummers, Prowlers

and hockey. It also meant asking others questions. Carey told me

So I asked people What's a Hummer? What's a Prowler?

I think they are cars. What is icing? Why do they only

sometimes start the game in the center? (Mar. 20).

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Admitting to others that she did not know about these things might have been a humbling experience for Carey, as it would be for many people. Determined, she set forth finding out everything she could about dirt bikes, Hummers, Prowlers and hockey. Carey even watched a few hockey games on television to learn more about the game. In no time at all, she took a genuine liking to hockey and the Oilers. In fact, once she started, she never missed a game. On one occasion, she wore a hockey jersey to the mentorship session.

Another time, she brought Dustin a special poster. Carey's father went to a boat show at the Agricom. There, he found a poster of a Prowler, Dustin's favorite car. It was even florescent purple, Dustin's favorite color. He brought it home and gave it to Carey. This is how she described her reaction

> So I thought, Perfect for Dustin!! I wanted to bring him stuff before too,
>
> but he seems so mature, like he wouldn't want little-kid-type-things.
>
> He likes cars and stuff, and you look in stores and there are all these
>
> new-type-hotrods, and he likes Prowlers, so it was just perfect! It
>
> worked good, yes!!! (Apr. 3).

I reassured her, "Yes, he liked that."

She went on

> Oh yes, he liked it, yes!! I could tell he liked it. Right away he was like,
>
> *I bet it's a poster of the Titanic,* and I'm like, No. I hope you like it
>
> as good as the Titanic. And then he opens it and he's like, *Oh, cool !!!*
>
> and I'm like, Do you like it better than the Titanic? He's like, *Oh*
>
> *Yeah!!!* He liked it better than that, so I was glad (Apr. 3).

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This moment was magic. Carey carefully waited for the perfect moment to give it to him. Finally, towards the end of the session, when they were totally alone (except for me sitting nearby) she said to Dustin; "I have something for you", and handed him the poster, carefully rolled up with an elastic band around it.

He was thrilled, I wasn't sure who was happier, Dustin or Carey. She was so happy that he liked it, and he was so pleased and immediately ran from mentor pair to mentor pair, down the hallway to teacher, to parent, to principal - showing it to everyone he could see. And after their session, Dustin came back three times to say good-bye to Carey even after the bell rang. Three times, he came back and poked his head in the door where we were having our interview, looked at her and said "Bye Carey and thanks for the poster." Obviously that poster made a real difference. She won him over that day.

**He likes me.**

Carey started to feel that Dustin liked her and that he enjoyed the sessions. This increased her confidence and she began to relax and like Dustin even more. Descriptions of what contributed to making Carey feeling this way are cited below.

Carey told me that she could tell that Dustin liked the sessions by the way he was with her when he first saw her. As soon as he came out of his class for lunch. If he ran up to her and started telling her something that he had done during the week when they were apart, this was evidence to her that he liked her and that he was happy to see her. This is how she described it.

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I think he enjoys it too [the visiting], because just the fact that right when

I come, he comes up and says, *I'm doing this.* That makes me feel happy,

because it means - instead of just ignoring me - he could just come out of

the classroom, get his lunch, and come in here; but he comes up right away

before he gets his lunch, and he says stuff. Just the fact that he does that,

it makes me - every time I'm waiting outside that room before he comes

out I think, okay - you always have this feeling like - I hope he's glad I'm

here. At least that's how I always feel. And then you see right away that

thought is gone, because I can always tell. He'll be like; *Hi !!* He always

has something to say, it seems like (Apr. 10).

Once Dustin began to eagerly talk to her about things that he was doing away

from school, she felt that he liked her and wanted to spend time with her. As time

passed in the mentorship, I noticed that Carey began to talk more about what they

were doing, that is, about the details of their activities rather than about whether

or not Dustin liked the sessions. Her focus had changed from concerning herself

with wanting to please him, to becoming engaged with Dustin himself and all that

she was learning about or experiencing with him.

Carey experienced both verbal and non-verbal feedback that indicated that he

liked her. The absence of feedback from other adults also served to reassure Carey

that the mentoring was going well. When I asked her how it was going, for

example, she said

And I think it is going fine, and nobody's complained or anything

(Apr. 10).

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And reminded me -

I've never worked with a student like this (Apr. 10).

Carey interpreted the absence of complaints from the principal and Dustin's
home room teacher to mean that what she was doing with Dustin must be okay.
She found this to be reassuring.

But it was the feedback from Dustin that was particularly reassuring for Carey.
Carey spoke often about how Dustin "always has something to tell her when he
sees her", and how "You can tell that he is excited to tell me about it." Again, the
way he greets her, the smile on his face when he sees her, his willingness to go
with her, and the things he tells her about how he spends his time away from her
with his family all serve to reassure her that the mentorship is going well.

### Stage # 3 - The Music Plays Harmoniously

The culminating stage of the relationship I have coined "the music" stage
because when I observe a pair together I hear laughter and their voices remind me
of peaceful, pleasant, happy music playing. They look and feel comfortable,
connected, content. They don't notice other people, they hear no other voices.
They are close, intimate and totally engaged with one another. The child feels safe
to take risks, admits not knowing the answer(s) to questions, and rather than skip
word(s) that s/he doesn't understand, asks the mentor for help. Also at this stage in
the mentoring relationship, the child is honest about his/her feelings when it
comes to activities suggested by the mentor. If the child, for example, doesn't
want to do a particular activity that the mentor has planned, s/he feels safe to tell

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the mentor that s/he would prefer to do something else, often bringing his/her own agenda, that is, things s/he wants to do and has planned for the mentoring session.

This section includes excerpts from interviews during the music stage to illustrate how it was experienced by Carey and Dustin. In the first sub-section, Carey talks about what Dustin is like when he first sees her each week. This is followed by a description of how sharing was experienced by her and Dustin. It was during this stage that Carey noticed that Dustin began to ask for help with his learning. Finally, this stage is characterized as natural and spontaneous because Dustin has let his guard down and he is just himself. This has helped Carey to feel more relaxed with and closer to Dustin

**He's happy when he sees me**

At this stage that Carey described Dustin as always being happy when he sees her, and "skipping when we walk down the hall together."

She said

I don't know if you've noticed that every time he walks, **he's**

**skipping, and he's happy and I love him**; I really enjoy it.

So that's the most important thing I've seen. I want to make

sure he's happy. The other thing is that when he comes out

of class and I am standing at the door waiting for him, **he**

**comes out beaming, bursting with news to share with me**

(Apr. 17).

For Carey, the happy face, the bounce, the skip in his walk tells her all she needs.

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## Sharing involves giving and receiving

This final stage is also characterized by sharing. Carey talked about how they learned from one another and how sharing was experienced over the course of the mentorship. Dustin also began to share his fears with Carey. He told her when he was bothered by something. Excerpts from interviews with Carey are included in this sub-section to illustrate how sharing was experienced during this stage of the mentorship.

### "There's so much that you could learn from them or they could learn from you."

Carey talked about how she learns from Dustin, that is, that Dustin teaches her new things.

> He has different magazines and stuff, and he is excited. He doesn't even
> read them though, because they are for older people and that's why it's
> so funny he gets them. He just mostly looks at the pictures and stuff. But
> hey, I can learn from that too (Mar. 13).

Then I asked her

> So do you think the mentor helps the student and the student helps the
> mentor? Is that what you're saying? (Mar. 13).

She responded

> Yes, yes, I think so because I learn a lot. It's a lot different to be on your
> practicum and work with a class than to work with one student. Just the
> relationship is totally different because you can focus on them, and they
> have a lot to offer, because that's what I really felt bad about on my
> practicum. They'd have stories and you'd have to say *Not now*. There's

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so much that you could learn from them or they could learn from you and there's so much that you can't let happen because you have to get through the curriculum. And there's so many kids that you can't just focus on one kid. So in this way, I can learn a lot from him and anything he has to offer, I take in. But he talks about stuff he's doing and I think Wow! yes ! I wanted to know certain things about computers. He was telling me that his computer was all black and I've never seen a black computer (Mar. 13).

I also observed sharing reciprocated between Carey and Dustin. On more than one occasion, Carey told me that when she was waiting outside the classroom door for the lunch bell to ring, that Dustin would come bouncing out and immediately begin telling her about something that they had done together or talked about during the previous session. For example, "My dad really loved the poster. He is buying me these rods with strings to hang it up in my room so that it won't get wrecked or ripped." (Apr. 10) Showing her pleasure that he remembered or that he returned to the topic, Carey said, "I was so happy when he said that because I didn't even think he would remember or anything. And I am so glad that his dad is going to hang it up for him - so that he'll always have it, so it won't get wrecked." Dustin's words also reaffirmed his appreciation for the poster.

Carey was pleased that Dustin shared his happy news with her. She was also glad that he chose to confide in her about unpleasant events or feelings. She told me a story about Dustin going to a farm for the weekend. Before he left, he was

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really excited about going. The following week, after their session, Carey told me about Dustin's farm experience.

> I think he remembered he told me he was going to go there
>
> [the farm] because he said it wasn't fun. He goes; *I didn't*
>
> *have fun,* and I'm like, *Why* and he goes, *Oh, these two mean*
>
> *boys came, and they kept trying to get us or chase us.* And
>
> I said, what?..... (Apr. 10).

Dustin was sharing his life with Carey and remembering what they talked about from week to week. Dustin trusted Carey and felt it safe to tell her that he was scared. This is interesting because I recall at one point early in their relationship she described Dustin as a boy who seems old and as a child who has had a lot and seen a lot. As the relationship developed, however, he felt free to tell her about feeling afraid or vulnerable.

Carey stopped saying that Dustin seemed old. She came to realize that Dustin only at first seemed old, and that the cool, reserved, image he initially wore on the outside, was just that. Finally, he let his guard down and let her in. She came to know the real Dustin - under his mask of acting old. With her, he was finally just himself.

The relationship with Dustin was special for Carey. In fact, she told me that on Friday mornings, she does "nothing but think about and anticipate my time with Dustin. I can't study or focus on anything. On Thursday night, I think, I get to go see Dustin tomorrow" (Apr. 3). She also said that, "I tell my boyfriend everything about Dustin. I'm always thinking about him" (Apr. 17).

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**Helping Dustin learn - writing is not so hard after all**

The other observation that I made is that it was during this stage in the mentorship that Dustin felt secure and safe with Carey, safe not only to admit that big boys were bothering him, but also safe to take risks required for further learning. It wasn't until this point in the mentorship that Carey felt that Dustin was ready to ask for help and to work on skills, areas that he felt and knew that he needed to work on. Carey waited for Dustin to come to her - to ask for help. She didn't push him at all. If he wanted to look at magazines and simply "talk, joke and stuff", that was fine with Carey. In fact, this is what she enjoyed the most anyway. The following is an example of how Carey talked about and experienced Dustin's request for help.

One day during the music stage, when I asked Carey to talk about today's session, she said that she "didn't have to coax Dustin to write at all !!" (Apr. 10) This both surprised and pleased her because she told me many times that "Dustin does not like writing." Today, however, was different. This is how she described it

> And he began right away. And he wanted to write this time right away.
> And I usually sometimes have to give him ideas or a way to start a
> sentence, and he just started going, by himself. It even surprised me
> because I thought it would be a hard time to get him going . It did
> surprise me (Apr. 10).

Carey found this curious because Dustin typically did not enjoy writing - he struggled with writing and openly admitted that he didn't want to do it. He either

enjoys writing more now because she is there to help him when he gets stuck, or

he feels that his writing is improving because she has been helping him,

encouraging him, and praising him for his efforts. But, the most important point to

be made here is that he is not afraid to take risks and that he has grown to quite

enjoy the writing process.

**More like friends now - mentoring naturally...**

It was increasingly apparent from the way Carey talked about her time with

Dustin that the relationship had changed from being somewhat awkward, to

comfortable, to very natural, that is, the music. As I watched Carey with Dustin, I

noticed how much more relaxed she was. The anxiety had disappeared; she was

no longer focussed on or overwhelmed with whether or not Dustin was enjoying

himself and what he was thinking of her. Instead, she just went with the flow and

let mentoring sessions happen naturally. The following excerpts from interviews

serve to illustrate what mentoring naturally looks and feels like.

One day, Carey had planned on writing a story with Dustin. They had just

started and he said to her, "Why don't we just read and stuff ?", and she said

"Okay." Carey was really comfortable with that - for two reasons in particular.

The first reason is that she feels strongly that as a mentor, she has to follow the

student's interests and wishes. For Carey, good mentoring or effective mentoring

involves following the child's initiatives and interests and allowing the child to

have a voice in the mentoring activity. The child needs to feel in control - as an

equal participant in the mentoring relationship. Carey told me numerous times;

"You have to follow the student's interests, it has to be what he wants to do."
Carey always has a plan, but allowed the session agenda to become whatever
Dustin wanted. In other words, she had a plan to follow but allowed that plan to
change in whatever natural turns it took. The second reason is that " read and stuff
" means read and visit. And this works well for Carey because she likes that best
anyway.

A second example was in the chitchat I often heard between Carey and Dustin
- chitchat as you would expect to hear between friends. Carey often shared these
conversations with me after the mentoring sessions. One day, for example, Carey
asked Dustin about shooting gophers because he had told her the previous week
that he was going to a farm and he was going to shoot gophers. Carey had told
him that she "didn't want him to do that." The next week, Dustin told her "And we
didn't end up shooting any gophers." Carey said "And so I was happy." She
added –

> He goes *'we just shot pop cans'* and I said *Okay that's good.*
>
> And he talked a bit about that. And then I told him how when
>
> I was little I never wanted to shoot animals. So I was telling
>
> him I used to just shoot tomatoes and just watch it all spurt
>
> out and he thought that was funny (Apr. 10).

Carey shared the details of her conversations with Dustin. Perhaps as she went
over the conversations; telling me these stories word for word, she was reliving
the experience.

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As well, there was more flexibility and spontaneity in their mentoring sessions, whereas in the beginning, she was more concerned with adhering to a plan. Carey explained it this way

> We sort of spontaneously do things. You never know what to expect
>
> because he always wants to do different stuff. And it surprises me,
>
> he always wants to write this story, because sometimes I say, Do
>
> you want to read? and he always says, *No, I would rather do this.*
>
> And generally he doesn't like writing, he likes reading better,
>
> that's what he's always told me, but its kind of crazy, I can't
>
> understand it (Apr. 17).

Carey did not understand this change in Dustin. Writing, which was initially distasteful for Dustin, blossomed into something he wanted and even preferred to do.

## Carey's Interpretation of Mentoring

Carey spoke often about what it means to be a mentor, that is, what it means to Carey to be a mentor. This section describes Carey's interpretation of mentoring. The following excerpts from interviews with Carey illustrate three themes in her discussions about being a mentor: "I am his," "He can talk about what he wants to talk about", and Mentoring involves friendship.

### "I am his."

For Carey, being a mentor meant being there for Dustin in whatever ways he needed and wanted her to be.

> By being his mentor, I'm the person that's just for him. Nobody else

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in the class knows me the way he knows me; I am his. And so we

can talk about stuff, and he can tell me what he's doing and stuff

like that (Mar. 20).

The one-on-one to Carey meant that "she is his", a special person just for him.

**"He can talk about what he wants to talk about"**

Again, Carey is someone that Dustin can talk to freely about whatever he

chooses.

And yes, I'm the person that -- it's different than like a

teacher even, because **he can talk about what he wants to talk**

**about,** even as we are working. He can say something out loud -

I don't care if he's writing and all of a sudden he thinks about

something (Mar. 20).

She was referring to the numerous occasions when Dustin was working and then

he would get an idea and spontaneously share it out loud. Carey says that children

are not allowed to share an idea that comes to their mind while they are working

in the classroom because teachers find this disruptive, distracting. She explains

Dustin, well all children cannot do that in a regular class during class

time. And that is one of the differences about spending time with

a mentor.

**Mentorship involves friendship**

When I asked her what she meant by that comment, she told me that a mentor

is a friend.

She explained

In the classroom you wouldn't be able to do that. And even with a kid

it wouldn't be that same relationship. A mentor relationship is different

than teacher and the child and the kids, their relationship to each other;

it's just something different, and I like it a lot, I want to help him learn,

but I also just want that friendship to be there (Mar. 20).

Then I asked her –

So you would characterize the mentor relationship as a friendship?

She answered

A friendship, but also I do want to teach him some things too, because

I can see he has some problems in some of his reading. I think the main

thing is probably just the friendship, because that's what I enjoy the

most, is just that you don't feel that pressure that there's tons of curriculum

you have to get through or there's all this stuff. It's more relaxed, but

also you can teach things (Mar. 20).

For Carey, it is the term mentor that makes a difference. There is a

responsibility attached, that is, mentor comes with responsibility - a responsibility

to Dustin, to get to know Dustin as a real person.

She went on

I'm so glad I decided to do this because I thought about doing the study-

buddy thing and this is more a friendship. The study-buddy thing is more

you're like a tutor and that type of thing, and this is different. Its more a

friendship too (Mar. 20).

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Then I asked her if there was a difference between a tutor and a mentor and she replied

> Yes, I think it is the friendship. It's just, you share more. You have that
>
> opportunity. You don't have to do this right then because - well that's
>
> why I wonder if I'm doing this right because I spend a lot of time just
>
> blabbing with him or joking (Mar. 20).

Mentoring for Carey was about being his, was about being that someone he could talk to, and, about friendship. She also wanted the one-on-one preserved in this mentoring friendship. Time alone with Dustin was very important to her. She told me about how on one occasion, she took Dustin to the skating rink across the street from the school and there were other students there. This is how she described it

> It wasn't even like a mentor session for me, and that was fine, I don't
>
> mind if it was just once in awhile, that only happened once and I
>
> loved it. And you know how kids are together. And I don't see that
>
> side of him much because it is just me and him. But I don't think
>
> I'd really like it [if it was like that all the time] because it doesn't
>
> seem like we have very much time [together] anyway (Mar. 12).

At that point, I then asked her if she thought the mentoring should be one-on-one. She replied

> Yes. I think so because the focus of this is to develop that -- it's a mentor

program (Mar. 12).

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The mentorship between Carey and Dustin went through three phases. It began with an awkward, getting to know you stage. This stage was characterized as careful with concern for how to proceed with one another. During this stage, Carey was focussed on how Dustin was experiencing the mentoring and whether or not he liked her. Carey felt that if Dustin liked her, the mentoring would go well.

During this stage of the mentorship Carey experienced self-doubt and feelings of intimidation because of Dustin's "old for his years" self-presentation. Dustin had different interests than Carey and other children that Carey had met Dustin's age. Also, Carey attended a small, private Christian school for grades K-12. She had an entirely different school experience than Dustin who attended a public school. Dustin not only had sophisticated interests but was also quite knowledgeable about his interest areas. Dustin knew a lot about hummers, prowlers, hockey and computers and could talk about them at length.

Carey refrained from bringing Dustin "age appropriate" gifts and treats such as a Kinder Surprise and gifts she witnessed the other mentors giving the children. She also refrained from engaging Dustin in craft-like activities because she knew that he would not enjoy them either. Carey was determined to find appropriate personalized gifts for Dustin and engage in *Dustin appropriate activities.*

In order to do this Carey had to learn about Hummers, computers, Prowlers and hockey. Carey went to the library to locate information about these topics. As well, she acquired information about Dustin's interests from her friends, her

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boyfriend, her father, her peers at university and the other mentors. She began to watch hockey games on television and even bought an Oilers jersey which she wore to her mentoring session. On one occasion Carey brought Dustin a poster of a Prowler – his favorite car, also in his favorite color.

Carey's efforts to learn about and be able to talk about Dustin's interest areas brought them closer together. There was intimacy and physical closeness between them. They sat beside one another rather than across the table from each other which is what they did in the beginning of the mentorship. Teasing and joking with one another became commonplace. This characterized the second stage of their mentorship.

Spontaneity and friendship marked the "music" or third stage of the relationship. On mentoring days Dustin came "bursting out" of the classroom to see Carey. He greeted her with a smile and couldn't wait to share his news with her. Dustin excitedly told Carey about the events that transpired in his life during the week when they were apart. He told Carey, for example, that he was afraid when the big boys chased him at the farm. Towards the end of the mentorship Dustin began to take risks required for further learning. He initiated writing activities – something he had not done and even avoided doing in the beginning of the mentorship.

Dustin had let his guard down and let the real Dustin shine - he no longer *seemed old* to Carey. Carey was pleased with her mentorship with Dustin. She felt that Dustin liked her and that they had become friends. This mentorship was important, special and meaningful to both Carey and Dustin.

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# Chapter 6

## Structure of the Case Study

The mentorship between Kristen and Cascandra began early in
February 1998 and continued until the third week in March 1998. Kristen met
with Cascandra once a week at lunch hour. I observed them on the following
dates: February 5, 12, 19, March 12, 19. I had a total of four interviews with
Kristen, three of which were audio-taped. Interviews were conducted on the
following dates: February 12, 19, March 12, 19.

To present the case study I begin with a section that provides an
introduction of Kristen and Cascandra. This is followed by three sections which
portray the stages that were discernible in this mentoring relationship. Next there
is a section focussing on Kristen's reflections on mentorship; its meaning and how
it works. Kristen's beliefs about the importance of trust in relationships are also
highlighted in this section. This is followed by a section that addresses the closure
of this relationship. The final section summarizes the development of their
mentoring relationship.

## Introducing Kristen and Cascandra

This section includes a description of Kristen and Cascandra in an
attempt to provide the reader with a snapshot of their backgrounds.
Cascandra is presented first. This is followed by an introduction of Kristen.

### "I have a new mentor!"

It was Thursday, February 5. I was walking down the school hallway
and had just stopped to read childrens' poetry on the wall outside the grade

2/3 class when I felt an arm around my waist and heard a familiar child's voice. "Hi Jan! I want a hug." Cascandra was standing beside me sporting a smile that stretched from ear to ear across her round, full face. "Hi Sweetie!! How are you?" I said. "Guess what!" she blurted out excitedly. " I have a new mentor. " I said, "That's wonderful!! What's your mentor's name?" "Kristen - and she's in there," she said pointing down the hall towards the mentor room. "She's waiting for me, I just had to get something from my cubby to show her." She ran off - a book under her arm. She stopped, turned, and looked at me - "Want to meet her? Come here. Come with me." She ran back towards me, grabbed my arm and led me towards the mentor room. She opened the door and still grasping my arm said "See, I told you! This is my mentor." Cascandra had just introduced me to the second mentor she'd had this year. She had a mentor from October to December 1997 as well.

**About Cascandra**

This was Cascandra's first year at this school. I met her in October. She was 8 years old and an only child. Since I've known her, she has had an on-going preoccupation about a first sibling. All she ever talked about each time I saw her from October to December was the new baby that her mom was expecting after Christmas, sometime in February. She told the story this way

I went to BC for the summer and stayed with my grandma. When I came back, mom and dad moved to a new building and mom is pregnant. She is going to have a baby (Oct.8).

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The baby was great news for Cascandra. She was absolutely thrilled about this baby. When she told people about this baby, she had this habit of putting her hands up, shrugging her shoulders, and with a smile stretched across her face, she would say, "I don't know, it might be the 16, the 17 or the 18. I don't know for sure, but around then." She was excited about having a sibling and longed for a sister -

I hope it's a girl!! I want a sister !! Oh, I hope it's a girl!! Do you think it's a baby girl? (Oct. 15).

In summary, Cascandra underwent a number of transitions in a short period of time, such as anticipating a first sibling, moving to a new school, a new apartment building, meeting new neighbors, new friends, new teachers and a principal.

**About Kristen**

During our first interview (Feb. 5), Kristen told me a lot about herself. She was born and raised in a small town in western Alberta. She moved away from home immediately after completing high school to enroll in post secondary studies. Kristen is in her second year of college in a large city in western Canada. She lives in the residence on campus. Education and psychology are her focus areas. She plans to select one main focus area and transfer into either the faculty of education or the faculty of arts at a university in the same city next year.

Kristen is a serious student and very conscientious about her studies. Living in residence has been "a disaster for her." She explained that

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The girls stay out late and drink too much. When they get home,

they are loud - so getting enough sleep is a real challenge. But, I

feel fine today because I stayed at my aunt's place last night

because it is closer to here [this school] (Feb.5).

Immature behavior such as "drinking and fooling about is

irresponsible", says Kristen.

She talked at length about her family. Her family is extremely important to

her. She misses her siblings and parents very much and goes home as often as

possible. She is the second born in a tightly knit family of seven; two parents

and five girls. At a young age she assumed a motherly role at home with her

younger siblings. She told me that -

When I was little I knew I would have to help my mom with the

babies. I was five years old when the twins came, and my older

sister, who was six, we learned to change diapers and carry

babies and bring them to my mom, because she had her fourth

C-section and was in a lot of pain. So right early on we learned

to do all this kind of stuff (Feb. 12).

Kristen spoke in detail about how her mother prepared her and her older

sister for the birth of her three younger siblings.

But my mom knew that she wasn't going to have a lot of time

with Sara and I - just to spend one-on-one with us - Sara's my

older sister - when the babies came. She prepared us for that; she

talked to us and said, *There's two of them coming, and it's going*

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*to be hard*, and she talked to us from day one when she got

pregnant with them, explaining how there's going to be another

baby, and there's not going to be time for us to watch *Little*

*House on the Prairie* with her; we're not going to be able to sit

on her lap as much. And she sat down and explained it to us and

said that *They're going to sit on your lap, and you're going to*

*hold them.* And she kind of turned it back [to us] and said, *Now*

*you're responsible for someone too,* and said, *You've got to help*

*me out here* (Feb. 12).

Kristen talked about the relationship she has with her little sisters

and caring for her sisters during her childhood years -

And I'm very close with my little sisters, and even when they

were little, they weren't dolls; they were little babies that I had to

take care of and I cared for more than anything. Dolls didn't

mean anything to me anymore, because there were babies there.

And I still remember thinking the absolute world of those

kids...(Feb.12).

Kristen then told me about the effect of her mother's teachings and about how

her older sister assumed the *motherly role* when Kristen was in a serious car

accident.

When I was in my car accident my mother was in the city with

me for ten days, and my older sister was back home in her grade

12 year, and she was getting ready for the prom, buying her

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dress and things like that. And I got in the car accident and she

put everything on hold, took care of the kids. She took that

motherly position automatically, made sure they got where they

were going; made sure they had money; made sure that if they

were going to go to their friend's house, they had a ride there,

they were going to get back, she knew what time they were

going to get back. Took care of everything, took that position

like you wouldn't believe it; put her whole world on hold...

(Feb.19)

These stories highlight how Kristen experienced "being responsible"

at an early age. Kristen values responsibility in herself and others and this has

affected how she approached her mentorship with Cascandra.

### Stage #1 - Finding a Way to be Together

Before mentoring Cascandra, Kristen was preoccupied with what it

would be like to mentor a grade 2 student. She talked at length about her

wonderings about the mentorship, speculating about what the mentorship

would be like and wondering how it would work. She also talked about what

she did in advance and during the initial stages to prepare for the mentoring

in order to establish a feeling of ease and comfort with Cascandra. She later

talked about the initial feelings of trust that she and Cascandra began to

share.

This section describes the first stage of the mentorship between Kristen and

Cascandra. It highlights Kristen's wonderings and describes how her wonderings

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moved her from one place to another with Cascandra and the mentorship and how they found a way to be together as a mentor pair. It is divided into four sub-sections: "How is this going to work?" "How to feel comfortable together?" "She had to get used to me and I had to get used to her," and "Now she trusts me a little bit."

### "How is this going to work?"

Kristen anticipated an awkward phase in the beginning of this mentorship. This is what crossed her mind before beginning the mentorship

This is the first time I've been in a mentor program or anything like it. I just didn't know what to expect going into this and seeing that it was a little grade 2 girl and thinking, *What am I going to talk to her about? How am I going to sit here for an hour? What are we going to do? What are we going to talk about? What am I going to tell her? What is she going to tell me? How is this going to work?* (Mar. 12).

Kristen thought carefully about being a mentor before becoming involved in the mentorship program. Before even meeting Cascandra she had questions, preoccupations about what it would be like to mentor an 8-year-old child. As she explained-

And I had to do a lot of thinking about it before I came here to work with her ... I thought, if I'm going to do this, then I'm going to do it right, and I'm going to have fun with it, and I'm going to want her to have fun with it too. So I did think about it a lot. I did think about how to do this, how to go about it, how to be comfortable with her, how she's going to be comfortable with me, because I love her a lot (Mar 12).

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### "How to feel comfortable together?"

Kristen's preoccupations about mentoring led to pre-planning. Pre-planning for mentoring Cascandra involved an interview with her mother and spending time with her 5- year-old cousin. Kristen shared her mother's wisdom - a teacher aide who works with "kids who have a lot of learning disorders and behavior problems." Repeating her mother's words, she said

> If you want these kids to work, then you have got to be at a level with them where it's a relationship where they feel comfortable with you. If they're not comfortable with you, then they're not going to be able to do the work. They're not going to be able to trust you to say, "Can you help me?" (Mar.12).

Kristen explained how she rehearsed for mentoring Cascandra.

> ... and right before, actually right before I started this program, I went back home, and I've got a little 5-year-old cousin, and I baby-sat her for actually four days before this. I could sit there and talk to this little girl for an hour, and I was thinking, *If I can talk to a5-year-old for an hour, then I can talk to a Grade 2er for an hour; it's just a matter of her knowing me.* And then once we [Cascandra and Kristen] got past that, then we were fine. So since I went and saw my little cousin, that's what really passed it over for me, gave me the confidence of I could sort this out and kind of gave me the idea of how I was going to do it and things, because my 5-year- old cousin, I sit down and I'll help her read and things like that, and she'll tell me stories, that kind of thing. So I thought, that's what I'm going

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to have to do. So that's how I related it; she kind of needs that... I didn't know what to do, and then going back and seeing my little cousin did it (Mar. 12).

Kristen recognized that there could be work involved to make this mentorship successful and she wanted to understand the nature of that work and be confident that she could be able to do it. The time spent with her cousin, her own desire to *do it right*, the advice from her mother, and her own beliefs about children, relationships, and life were the guiding forces behind how she would approach mentoring Cascandra.

**"She had to get used to me and I had to get used to her"**

Kristen described her thoughts and what it felt like to be a mentor to Cascandra in the initial stage of the mentorship. Kristen spoke about the beginning -

...for awhile there, it was really hard - because I didn't know anything, and I went in there thinking, I didn't know what to do, and then going back and seeing my little cousin did it. (Mar. 12).

In spite of the clarity gained from the experience with her 5-year-old cousin, Kristen still experienced initial discomfort. Kristen discussed the discomfort at the beginning of the mentorship sessions and how the interactions evolved from there -

And then we just had to get past that [uncomfortable] stage and figure out what works best for us. It was kind of a little bit hard [in the beginning], yes, because I didn't know what to say to her. And it's just because I didn't

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know what to expect...The first two times it was just kind of uncomfortable, the kind of stage when you ask her about herself. Then the third time is when I started talking to her about myself. And then this time was the time that she really started to bring out herself...It was just, I know with all kids that there's a time where they have to get to know you, and they have to get to trust you, and that uncomfortable stage is when two people – it's just like two people sitting there, when they don't know each other, and they have to kinda spend an hour together. So at first she was just kind of, you know, and I was uncomfortable too, because I'm not quite sure what we were going to do and not sure how it was all going to work out and everything, so we just kind of had to get past that. And then once we started to talk to each other more comfortably, and then she comes up and hugs me now and that kind of thing, once that started to happen, then things really smoothed out. But it was that first little bit when we didn't know each other; she had to get used to my looks, she had to get used to my talk, different things like that. She had to get used to me and I had to get used to her; that's what it was. But that worked out fine (Mar. 12).

Kristen recognized that there would be an initial period of discomfort and took steps to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. In the following subsection, Kristen explains how she got past this "uncomfortable stage" with Cascandra.

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## "Now she trusts me a little bit"

Kristen stated that telling Cascandra about herself was the key step in getting over the initial discomfort

Actually, it was me telling her about myself, telling her about what I was like. I'd tell her about when I was little and when I was in her grade, memories that I have... then she'd come back and tell me stuff too. And then I told her what I was taking in school and how I was thinking of being a teacher, and she's really interested in that kind of thing. And now she has a big interest in me, just as I have got a big interest in her, and we just both know each other at that level. She can ask me questions about my family and when I grew up and where I came from; she can ask me who my second grade teacher was and that kind of stuff, and that's more comfortable for her. And I remember all that stuff, so I can share that, so it's nice...Yes, it's nice, because we're very comfortable with each other now...(Mar. 12). It was kind of a little bit hard, yes because I didn't know what to say to her. And it's just because I didn't know what to expect... And then I brought pictures of my family and my boyfriend and she got a big picture of her little sister, and I asked her what she was doing over Spring Break, and she's just like, *I don't know*, kind of thing. But I find that she's much more willing to come out with things now. I'm going to miss her when I have to go; on my last day it's going to be hard to leave. I'm getting pretty attached to her (Mar. 19).

When asked to describe the changes or stages that happened after the "uncomfortable beginning", Kristen stated

There was almost like one stage where she was getting comfortable but not completely kind of trusting me, I guess you could say. But there was that stage where she was really still unsure, but comfortable enough to sit down and talk to me, and that was actually quite an interesting stage, because she was very, very - wanted to tell me jokes, wanted to make me laugh, wanted to make me happy. That's what I found with her, and she was an absolute sweetheart there. And then the next stage I've seen, that's what it's been like. And now she trusts me a little bit, tells me about her grandmother, tells me about her little sister and things like that (Mar. 19).

Before beginning this mentorship with Cascandra, Kristen experienced uncertainty, as she put it, "I didn't know what to expect." In order to deal with these feelings, she took steps to put herself at ease. These included; talking to her mother, spending time looking after her 5-year-old cousin, and telling Cascandra about herself, something she found to be really effective in helping them to get past that uncomfortable stage.

### Stage #2 - The Development of Trust

Kristen spoke a great deal about the importance of trust in all relationships. Kristen then related trust to her mentorship with Cascandra and spoke about the importance of trust in her mentorship with Cascandra. This section presents Kristen's observations about how trust was established in the

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mentorship with Cascandra. These are included in the following sub-sections:

"She is willing to open up to me more," "She really watches my responses ...

and just trying to feel me out," and Art, talk, and childhood memories.

**"She is willing to open up to me more."**

Kristen described how Cascandra began to open up, share her life with

her. For Kristen, this was an indicator of trust. As Kristen explained

> I just find that she is willing to open up to me more now, which is good.
>
> The trust aspect is really coming out, because at first she was a very
>
> friendly and very positive little girl, but she still did not want to tell me a
>
> lot about herself. So, okay, no problem...And I just started telling her
>
> about my parents, something about my sisters and about my friends, and
>
> then she starts telling me about hers, so it's working out good (Mar.12).

As the relationship evolved towards a stage Kristen referred to as the

trust stage, Kristen noticed that Cascandra was telling her about herself and

her family.

Kristen also noted one other pre-disposition that Cascandra moved

through. This is described below.

**" She really watches my responses...and just trying to feel me out."**

Cascandra began to watch Kristen carefully and look for Kristen's

responses to her behavior and comments. As Kristen explained

> Now, I noticed, she really watches my responses... She really kind of sits
>
> there, and she's not necessarily actually looking at me, but listening for
>
> each tone in my voice, I could just tell, when she tells me about things,

just to find out what I think about it, whether it's good or bad or that kind

of thing... She really does watch me and really listens to what I'm saying

and how I'm saying it, and just trying to feel me out still, just kind of how

I'm reacting to this (Mar 12).

When Cascandra began to tell Kristen about her family and watch her

reaction to comments she made during their sessions, Kristen interpreted

these movements in particular to mean that Cascandra was beginning to trust

Kristen.

**Art, talk, and childhood memories.**

In subsequent interviews with Kristen, (Mar. 12, 19) she explained how

she used art as a space for the talk that supported the development of the

relationship. Kristen shared special childhood memories, and told me that she

deliberately borrowed from them to guide her mentorship with Cascandra.

Drawing from examples she remembered from her life as a child, Kristen

stated

> And I find when we do art projects and that, there's a lot more socializing,
>
> where you're sitting there and you're working and talking at the same time.
>
> But I think that's a good thing, because if we get into big [deep]
>
> conversations we can talk about something as simple as school. Today we
>
> were talking about the games that she plays at recess too, and we can talk
>
> about that or else we can talk about anything she wants, and those are the
>
> times that kids will really open up, and those are the times that they will

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remember too, because you remember sitting there talking to people
(Mar.12).

Kristen was keen on doing art and craft type activities with Cascandra.
As she recollected –

> I remember, I was quite young, sitting at the table with my mother and
> older sister, who's a year older than me, and we were sitting there doing
> these little art projects, just sitting there with my mom, and the babies
> were all in bed, and my dad was at work, and it was just the three of us.
> And we were just sitting there doing these art projects and talking away,
> and now I'm really into art just because we did so much when I was
> little…it [art] always did [encouraged conversation] with me and my
> mom, because you're sitting there and you're working with your hands
> and, *Okay, pass me that,* and then you get into conversations, and then you
> can talk and work at the same time with that; whereas if you're reading,
> we're just reading a book and concentrating on the book. Reading is an
> excellent thing, but it doesn't give you that time to talk (Mar.12).

Kristen read Cascandra a book that her own mother read to her when she
was a child. Kristen told this story

> There's this book, it's called *I Love You Forever* that's in the library, and
> my mom bought it just because she liked it; she ended up reading it to all
> of us girls when we were little, and I wasn't even that little at the time and
> I loved to sit there and listen to her read it. There's a little song in it and

everything and we sat there and looked at the pictures in the book and how cute the book was, and I told her [Cascandra] about when I was little and I used to read the book. And that was nice because it was an interaction there [between me and Cascandra] when she was paying attention (Mar 19).

These examples serve to illustrate how Kristen drew from her own childhood experiences to guide her mentoring relationship with Cascandra.

### Stage #3 - The Mentor is a Safe Place

This section describes the third phase of the mentorship between Kristen and Cascandra. During this stage Cascandra began to think of Kristen as a safe person, someone she could go to with her insecurities about how she learns. This is described in the first sub-section; "I'm not a very fast learner." She also found in Kristen a safe place to talk about how she experiences comments from her peers about her physical size. This is shown in the second sub-section; "I don't like it when people call me fat." In the last sub-section; Sensing trouble and wanting to help, Kristen also talked about how she was later able to detect changes in Cascandra's temperment.

**"I'm not a very fast learner."**

Kristen realized that Cascandra was starting to experience her as a person who was safe to tell her true feelings and troubles to. She now saw her mentor as someone she could go to for help. It was during an art activity that Cascandra displayed insecurity about learning and asked Kristen for help. Kristen brought art materials to make Easter baskets. She was teaching

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Cascandra how to do paper weaving. Cascandra asked her ; "How do we do

this?" She explained that she cut off some strips and was showing her

explaining -

> It's really easy to do; it's no big deal, and she said, *I'm not a very fast learner.*
>
> And I said to her, Yes, you are. I said, Don't say that! It's no big deal. I'll sit
>
> there; I'll help you out if you need help, I said, but you're fine. You're really
>
> very good. I said, You have nothing to be ashamed of. You should be proud
>
> of yourself. And you seem to be a very fast learner, and she says, *No, I'm not*
>
> *a very fast learner, so I'm going to need a lot of help* (Mar.19).

This comment from Cascandra surprised Kristen. In fact, she was

quite shocked -

> And I just looked at her and I was like, I've never seen that in her before;
>
> never once has she said that to me; *I'm not a very fast learner!* Never once
>
> has she shown that lack of self-confidence ! (Mar.19).

**"I don't like it when people call me fat."**

Cascandra told Kristen that it bothers her "when people call me fat." Again,

Cascandra was revealing her true feelings about herself (Mar. 12). These are

examples of Cascandra feeling increasingly secure with her mentor, safe

enough to ask her for help. These were discomforts that Cascandra could

express, that is, Cascandra had a vocabulary to talk about these troubles. The

next sources of discomfort were even more troubling for Cascandra because

she did not even have the vocabulary to talk about these troubles. There was

an unsayable sense of trouble.

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**Sensing trouble and wanting to help**

As Kristen got to know Cascandra, she became accustomed to Cascandra's usual manner, her behavior and responses to different things. Kristen was able to easily detect behaviors or responses that signaled that Cascandra was bothered about, concerned or preoccupied with something. Noticing this led to extra alertness on Kristen's part or further probing. Four weeks into the mentorship, for example, Kristen noticed that Cascandra was distressed and tried to figure out what it was about. She tried to describe Cascandra's behavior

> She kind of seemed out of sorts today for some reason. She usually talks a lot and she didn't do a lot of that. And she usually helps me pick everything up and takes her books and goes and things like that. Today it was like she was in a big fluster when the bell rang, and I said *Are you going to take your books?* and 'Oh yes my books' and she takes her books and forgets her lunch bag, and I had to get her to come back and get her lunch bag. Usually she's very well thought out on what she's doing, but today she was just running in circles, it seemed. She just seemed in a frenzy almost (Mar. 12).

I wondered if she had ever been like this before. Kristen answered

> Not really. She was always very involved in the interaction of the two of us. But today, she got pulled away very easily. And she was quite quiet. Usually she's talking to me all the time - constantly, but today it was more like me asking her questions and trying to get her to come out, so I don't

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know what's going on there, whether she's starting to [worry], about her grandma leaving. I'm not quite sure. But she's just is a bit off today, so I picked up on that and I'm going to have to watch her next time and see her quite closely (Mar. 12).

The next time I saw Kristen she was even more concerned, telling me -

I picked up on that right when she came in, because she hugs me every day when she comes in. And we sit down and start talking, and she'll tell me about little things that are happening in school, things like that, but there's not really any of that today (Mar. 19).

When I asked Kristen if she knew what might be contributing to these changes in Cascandra, she explained that she was increasingly concerned that Cascandra's baby sister was getting all the attention at home and that this was having a negative affect, it was upsetting Cascandra. When Kristen asked her how the baby was doing Cascandra's response was not at all enthusiastic. She simply shrugged her shoulders and said, "Oh good."

According to Kristen -

Usually she'll tell me how big she is and what she looks like and things like that, but now it's just - didn't really say much. And then she started telling me about her grandma and her grandma leaving, and I said, *Oh, that's too bad and So are you going to miss her a lot?* and she said "Oh Yes!" with emphasis, really meaning it. I remember having a big shock, a lack of time with my mother when my little sister was coming. I

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think she's going to feel it too. And her grandmother's leaving in a couple

of days ... once her grandma's gone I think it's going to be quite the

shock... (Mar.19).

Kristen noticed that Cascandra was preoccupied -

She seemed almost off somewhere else today. I had to kind of talk to her

and bring things up with her, before she'd talk to me. Usually she rambles

on, tells me about what she did at recess, tells me about her class, tells me

about this, tells me about that; and today she was just really mellow.

(Mar.19)

I started to ask her if she can now detect changes in Cascandra's mood, she

interrupted with

Yes, when she's a little bit off, not sitting and talking to me as usual. With

Cascandra, she's very very comfortable with - she'll touch my hand, and

she's laughing and very, very caring, very physically caring and things like

that, hugging me all the time (Mar. 19).

Cascandra openly displays affection to Kristen which is why Kristen

thought it odd when she behaved differently towards her. Kristen was not

offended, nor did she take it personally. Instead, she was concerned.

### Kristen's Reflections on the Mentorship

This section includes Kristen's reflections on the mentoring sessions and

describes how she and Cascandra spent time together, Kristen's response to

Cascandra and the mentorship, and Kristen's reflections on key elements of

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the mentoring relationship. Kristen spoke a lot about the importance of trust in relationships. Kristen's beliefs about trust are highlighted in this section.

**Spending time together – catering to Cascandra's needs and interests.**

According to Kristen, mentoring activities have to be whatever Cascandra wants and needs. She catered the sessions to Cascandra's interests, taking into consideration Cascandra's strengths. Kristen explained-

Sometimes she'll read to me and sometimes I'll read to her, but it depends on what she wants to do. So I ask her, What do you want to do? instead of saying; *Okay, today we are going to do this* (Feb.19).

Kristen's favorite part of mentoring is chatting and visiting with Cascandra. However, she recognizes that mentoring is very individual, that each mentorship is different, and that it is her responsibility to assist Cascandra by strengthening her strengths or weaknesses.

In my situation of mentoring, I think a personal level is much more important, but I also think that you have to bring in the reading and the writing and make sure that she's [Cascandra's] up on that kind of thing. If I was working with a student who was lower in reading and writing, we would still go on to do art projects and things like that, because you've still got to have fun; you've still got to have that fun (Mar.12).

Kristen is aware that as a mentor her role is to be there for Cascandra in whatever capacity Cascandra needs her to be and that this will vary from session to session.

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### Kristen's response to Cascandra and the mentorship

Kristen described Cascandra as being relaxed and at ease with her and
shared her feelings about Cascandra as a person. Referring to Cascandra,
Kristen made the following comments

> Smiles and talks, and she can rattle on about nothing. And I was like that
> when I was little too. I'd sit there and talk about nothing forever. So that's
> nice, that's nice. I really like working with her. I really like her; I really do.
> I find Cascandra is a very, very well spoken child. She's very well-put-
> together. She seems very stable. She seems to be a very well-put-together
> child, so I really like her, I really do. She's a sweetheart. She just has a
> very sweet kind of air about her (Mar. 12).

Kristen grew fond of Cascandra and became increasingly comfortable
with her.

### Reciprocal Encouragement

Kristen stated that mentoring Cascandra had an influence on her. Kristen
wanted to be viewed as a positive role model for Cascandra. She stated that
mentoring Cascandra encouraged her "to do better." Kristen made the point
that they influence one another in a positive way. In terms of encouragement,
she explained

> The way I see it is, that encourages me to do better; it encourages me to be
> a good role model for her so it's [I'm] someone that she can actually look
> up to. And so it encourages me to do better in school; it encourages me to
> follow through with what I want to do; it encourages me to get an

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education; it encourages me to just get things done so I can get there and I can do that, and I can help kids like her more; I can just get in there and do more. And I almost feel helpless right now because I'm not in education but I want to be there, I'm not in psychology but I want to be there. And I come into these schools and I see these kids and some of them really need a lot of help...(Mar.19).

Encouragement can play a significant role in terms of supporting a person's aspirations and motivations. Kristen talked about the role of encouragement in relation to this mentorship. In terms of mutuality, Kristen explained how they positively influence one another -

She's an influence on me and I'm an influence on her, so both of us. I guess I influence her by saying *Good Job I'm very proud of you.* And that encourages her to do more. I'm sitting with her and taking time with her, and just that main encouragement, that ability to tell her that she is doing a good job and I'm proud of her and I'm happy with what she's doing and I think she should do it more often. And that gives her the confidence to continue to do what she's doing - continue reading, continue doing art – if that's what she wants to do. And it's very much a similar influence on me as well, so it kind of breaks down to about the same thing (Mar. 12).

Kristen's comments suggest that there is an accrued benefit in this mentorship, that is, that both parties benefit.

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### "Trust is the most important thing – it is the foundation of all relationships"

Kristen spoke a lot about the importance of trust in relationships. For Kristen, trust is the glue that holds relationships together. This helps explain why she was focussed on earning Cascandra's trust. This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first part includes excerpts from interviews with Kristen which serve to illustrate Kristen's beliefs about the role of trust in relationships. The second part examines how Kristen's beliefs about trust played out in her relationship with Cascandra.

Kristen's belief about the role of trust in relationships. Kristen shared her beliefs about trust which stem from her childhood experiences. She explained how trusting in someone can lead to greater feelings for another person. She then shared her beliefs about children and trust and how trust leads to greater self-confidence.

Referring to her childhood experiences, Kristen stated

> I was raised trusting my family and getting love from them, and trust is where it starts, and that's where everything begins, sort of thing. You break the trust, and you break everything. So that's the way I see it. And if the child can trust you, that's probably one of the biggest compliments you could really get. That's the way I see it because it's very easy for them to trust people because they're not judgmental, but to hold that trust and to always have it, that's something to be proud of (Mar.12).

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It was important to Kristen to have Cascandra's trust. She believes that once trust is established the relationship grows deeper.

Yes, the trust, for her to trust me [is the most important thing], because I believe once you have trust with someone, then you can go on to love someone, to care for someone. It is the foundation of all relationships. That's the way I've always seen it. If you have a good relationship, any kind of relationship, if you have trust in it, everything is built on trust in relationships (Mar.12).

Kristen shared her views about children and trust, again drawing from her lived reality.

And children should be able to trust people and should have that relationship and be confident. I had a lot of trust; my parents trust me a lot, and I trust in them a lot. And they taught me to be proud of myself, to be confident, and if I didn't have that trust, if I didn't have them trusting me and that trust [in them] that they were going to be there for me, then I don't think I would have everything that I've done with my life... That's the way I've always seen it. (Mar.19) It's very important, because trust is what gives you confidence; it's what gets you through life, trusting other people and them trusting you, and it's just where all the foundation comes from (Mar.12).

How Kristen's beliefs about trust played out in the mentorship with Cascandra. As time passed, Kristen noticed that Cascandra told her more about herself and her life. She also noticed that Cascandra let her guard down

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and was taking risks with her. Kristen's beliefs about trust led her to believe that this was because Cascandra's trust for her had increased. The following excerpts from interviews serve as examples of what Kristen viewed as indicators of increased trust in their mentorship.

I think telling me about her life itself, whether it be at school, whether it be at home, is beginning to trust to me. When you start to tell about your home life and about your family, about your relatives and things like that, that's when it starts to be a trust stage, because she was telling me about how much she cares for her grandmother [very personal stuff]. That's not something you just tell anybody, even with little children. Little children do talk a lot and can tell you a lot of stuff, but it's something that they tell you after they know you a little bit, after they recognize you and know your responses and recognize that kind of thing, and feel a lot more comfortable with you (Mar.12).

According to Kristen, children start to share their lives with someone after they have gained trust in that someone. This is when they begin to take risks with their mentor because they feel safe to do so.

She then talked about how Cascandra told her things that happen in school that upset her. It was pointed out earlier that Cascandra admitted her insecurities about learning and told Kristen that she knows she is overweight and that when kids tease her it bothers her a lot. For Kristen, these were indicators that Cascandra trusted her. Cascandra was looking to Kristen for

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support and for comfort. Kristen felt that Cascandra was increasingly comfortable with her. Kristen commented

Actually it's going really well now. Now that she's starting   to get to know me a little bit better, she's much more comfortable with me (Mar.12).

Earning Cascandra's trust was important to Kristen. She stated that in order for trust to happen, she had to create spaces that lent themselves to a comfortable relaxing atmosphere where visiting was commonplace.

The relationship reached a stage where Cascandra trusted Kristen enough to openly admit her true feelings about how she saw herself as a learner and how others saw her. What Kristen perceived as a lack of self-confidence was in fact a sign of security, feeling safe with her mentor to allow her true feelings to come through. It was only then that Cascandra felt secure enough to tell Kristen her fears, to share that she did indeed feel inadequate in certain areas.

## And it was Over ... Without Closure

This mentorship came to a rather abrupt end. In fact, there was no official closure to this mentorship. Kristen left early and was unable to say good-bye. Kristen was undergoing a number of challenges in her life as well. She telephoned the school on three occasions, and left messages for Cascandra. On two occasions, she explained that she was not coming because of final exams. On another occasion, she was unable to come because she was moving out of the college residence.

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The last time I saw Kristen at the school she had to leave in a hurry. She explained

I have no time for an interview today because I have to get to my class.

I have an exam. Here is my phone number – you can call me (Mar.26). I tried calling her many times. There was no answer and no answering machine to leave a message. After that, there was a recording stating that the number was no longer in service. I continued to visit the school on Thursdays for a number of reasons. I was hopeful that Kristen would return, I had scheduled interviews with Cascandra and other children, and I was still observing other mentor pairs. This abrupt ending to the mentorship bothered Cascandra. She told me that when her mentor doesn't come, even though she phones; "I feel bad. I cry a lot. I miss her" and that "Raelene and Suzie [another mentor pair] let me go with them, but it's not the same" (Apr. 16).

In spite of Kristen's good intentions, and her understanding of the fragile space that Cascandra was in at that time because of the things going on at home that were unsayable, she was unable to be there for Cascandra. As Cascandra's need for Kristen increased, there was less of Kristen available for Cascandra because of mounting pressures that she was experiencing in her own life, pressures that pulled her away from Cascandra. Despite Kristen's understanding and knowledge of the potential effect of leaving Cascandra, she still could not be there.

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In June, I unexpectedly ran into Kristen and her boyfriend in her hometown. We chatted casually about the weather, the event we were both attending, and briefly about the mentorship between her and Cascandra. Referring to the mentoring, she said-

It's a good program. I really enjoyed it. I didn't get a chance to say good-bye because of all the stuff that was happening – finals, plus I moved, and other stuff [raising her eyebrows, looking over at her boyfriend].

That was the last I saw of Kristen.

## Summary of Kristen and Cascandra

The mentorship between Kristen and Cascandra moved through three stages and an abrupt ending. It began with an awkward, getting to know one another stage. Kristen thought carefully about how the mentorship was going to work and what it would be like to mentor a young child. Realizing that she and Cascandra could experience an initial discomfort, she went to her home town for a weekend and spent time with her 5-year-old cousin. While at home, she also sought advice from her mother, a teacher aide, about mentoring Cascandra. It was during this stage of the mentorship that Kristen deliberately began to share her life with Cascandra. She told Cascandra about herself, her family, her boyfriend and college. Such careful planning was effective in helping both Cascandra and Kristen get over this initial discomfort. As Cascandra learned about Kristen and her life, she began to share her life with Kristen.

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Kristen spoke a lot about the importance of trust in relationships. In the second stage of the relationship Cascandra started to trust Kristen. Kristen created opportunities that lent themselves to natural, relaxed conversation. She brought craft-like activities and as they worked they talked. Cascandra began to open up to her and they became closer.

It was during the third stage of the mentorship that Cascandra felt safe and secure enough with Kristen to tell her things that troubled her. Cascandra told Kristen that it really upsets her when people call her fat and that she views herself as "not a very fast learner." As well, Kristen began to be able to read Cascandra's mood, changes in temperament and so forth. Cascandra underwent a number of transitions in a short period of time. In September, prior to meeting Kristen, she moved to a new neighborhood, started a new school, and made new friends. During the mentorship with Kristen, Cascandra experienced the arrival of a first sibling and experienced less time with her mother because the baby required a lot of her mother's time and attention. Also, Cascandra's grandmother who traveled from another province to help out with the baby was leaving soon. Being able to read Cascandra, Kristen knew that Cascandra was troubled and was experiencing some difficulty with these transitions. At this time, Cascandra found it particularly comforting to have a mentor, someone she could talk to, someone she could trust.

Unfortunately, the mentorship ended without proper closure. Kristen was experiencing her own personal troubles and did not complete the

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mentorship with Cascandra. This most likely heightened Cascandra's feelings of loss and rejection.

# Chapter 7

## Structure of the Case Study

The mentorship between Eileen and Narissa began late in January 1998 and continued until the end of April 1998. Eileen met with Narissa once a week from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. I had a total of eight interviews with Eileen, five of which were audio-taped. Interviews were conducted on the following dates: February 12, 19, March 12, 19, March 26, April 9, April 16, 23.

To present the case study I begin with a section that provides an introduction of Eileen and Narissa. This is followed by three sections which portray the stages that were discernible in this mentoring relationship. Next there is a section that presents a new development that caused a challenge for Eileen during the mentorship. The final section summarizes the mentoring relationship.

## Introducing Eileen and Narissa

This section begins with a description of my first encounter with Eileen and Narissa. This is followed by a brief overview of Eileen's and Narissa's backgrounds.

### My first encounter with Eileen and Narissa

There was a buzz in the air. This was the sound that I usually heard around 1:00 p.m. in the school hallway. A group of mentors stood together talking to one another sharing the highlights of their mentoring session. I always hung around to hear what they had to say (Feb.12).

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It was then that I noticed a tall, mature-looking woman who I had never seen before walking towards the mentor room with a frail-looking little girl. A cream-colored canvas bag hung on the woman's shoulder. The little girl carried two books under her arm. They walked together silently and then entered the mentor room. Curious, I followed them into the mentor room.

"Hi!" I smiled, "I'm Jan. Are you a mentor?" I asked the woman. She looked at me with a puzzled look on her face. "Yes," she said. I continued, "We haven't met before." She replied "No, we haven't, I'm Eileen Chapman. This is Narissa. I come at 1:00 o'clock — you know - for the mentor program they have here." "Yes, yes. Mind if I stay - if I sit in on your session? " There was an awkward silence. Then I heard, "Umm, umm." She was obviously uncomfortable with this request. I jumped in "No, no. That's okay. Can we meet after your session? I just want to chat with you about the mentoring you are doing with Narissa." "Well, I don't see *that* as a problem," she said. "I'll come back at 2:00? Is that okay?" "Okay," she agreed.

At 2:00 o'clock, I returned to the mentor room. Narissa was just getting up to leave. Eileen stood up as well. She was walking her back to class.
I couldn't help but notice the contrast - how different they looked walking alongside one another. I wasn't sure if Eileen was unusually tall or if Narissa was particularly small, or if it was the age difference and the silence between them that was staggering. There appeared to be such an obvious contrast. There was something that I couldn't quite figure out.

After my initial interview with Eileen I felt unusually tired. I didn't know why — and couldn't put my finger on it. Something felt different. And yet, she was pleasant,

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friendly, willing to talk to me, open to sharing her thoughts. In fact, when I asked her

if we could meet for an interview after each session with Narissa, she readily agreed.

But, it just felt somewhat odd compared to the interviews that I had had with the

other mentors. I realized during our interview the following week that it wasn't odd

after all, just different – probably just me. Eileen was an up-front, straight-to-the-

point, matter-of-fact kind of person. Most things were simply black and white to her.

**Eileen's background**

Eileen is a community mentor. This means that she lives in the community

surrounding the school. She has lived in the community for years. One day, when she

drove past the school, she saw the sign that the principal put up when the school was

recruiting mentors. She was curious and inquired about becoming a mentor. When

she found out that mentoring involved engaging in reading with a child, she signed

up because she values reading. She put it this way, "If you can help a child – I love

to read, and I can't imagine a child or a person not being able to read or to enjoy

reading." Eileen sees the value of helping children learn to read because she feels

that for people to live and function productively in a society, they have to be literate.

She also feels that volunteering in some capacity "is the right thing to do." She

further explained

> I hope the program gets made much larger for other schools, because
>
> I think it's a great asset. They're our future generation, and when
>
> you hear the statistics of how many can't read and can't write – they
>
> were talking about that on the news today, that - I think it's a shame –
>
> they were saying the ones in the prisons even, most of them can't

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read or write. Terrible. And today you have such an opportunity

to go to school. For myself we had to pay for everything. And

even for my daughter, she would have gone to kindergarten; we

couldn't afford to send her to kindergarten, because you had to

pay in those days, and it was very costly. So the kids today have

every opportunity of continuing with their education, and I think

it's a shame if they don't do it, because they're never going to make

it through their working life span; they'll be just job hop, job hop,

job hop. It's a shame (Feb. 12).

In terms of a volunteering endeavor, the mentorship program was a good choice because it made sense to Eileen.

Eileen lives alone. She has two grown children; one daughter and one son. She is retired and loves to golf. Although she says that she is committed to mentoring Narissa one hour a week, and genuinely wants to "help her improve in her reading and writing," she made it very clear to me that she does not want to be involved beyond that.

> I have raised my own children and they are very successful.
>
> I'm happy to mentor Narissa, to help out. But, I have already
>
> raised my children. I am happy to help out, to spend time
>
> mentoring a child, one day a week – but that's all. As long as I
>
> come to the school and do it, that's fine. I have my life. It's
>
> taken me awhile - my husband died 2 years ago you know
>
> and it's taken me awhile. But I am 76 years old, I have

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raised my children. (Feb 19).

Although Eileen began mentoring Narissa because she feels that volunteering, that is, helping others is the right thing to do, she does admit that she quite enjoys it. It was during the first interview with her that she said " I quite enjoy it; I look forward to it, actually, yes." I said "You do?" and she went on "Yes, I do. I quite enjoy it. So, I'll see it through and maybe next year be back again if they want me, so I find it interesting." Although there was reservation in her voice, and the qualifiers, that is, the words 'actually', 'quite' and 'maybe', reinforced that reservation, I believed that she did enjoy it.

**Narissa's background**

The first time I met Narissa was the day I saw her walking down the hall with Eileen. She goes home for lunch every day except Thursday because she has choir on Thursday. Since I'm usually at the school during the lunch hour, I hadn't run into her before. Also, Narissa's teacher, told me that she is very quiet and that she keeps to herself.

> She's not like Michael and some of the other kids [that] you
>
> know - she doesn't go out of her way to talk to people [that]
>
> she doesn't know. Some kids see a new face in the school,
>
> doesn't matter if it's an adult, an older student, a baby, a
>
> workman, and they go up to them - *What's your name?*
>
> *What are you doing here? Are you a sub?* Not Narissa,
>
> she basically stays to herself, it's hard getting anything out
>
> of her. I think it's her family, her culture, you know. Nice

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girl, though (Feb.19).

Eileen pointed out that Narissa is well-behaved in school, that "she doesn't cause any problems for the teacher." Although she appears shy, quiet, and timid with most people, she is more talkative with Eileen. According to Eileen, "She likes to chat, to talk. I think she likes the time spent [with her mentor]."

I was pleased to hear that because when I first met Narissa I couldn't get her to even look up at me, let alone make any verbal response. She hung her head low, clung to Eileen's arm. Her long shiny, black hair covered most of her tiny face. I tried to be friendly, ask her about the books she held tightly under her arm. When she finally looked up at me, her big brown eyes didn't smile back. Instead, they appeared vacant. She spoke quietly – telling me the titles of her books. She kept fussing with the neckline of her T-shirt that kept sliding to her right shoulder. The short sleeve shirt hung loosely on her, accenting her slight frame and her long, thin arms that seem to hang endlessly from her shoulders.

Narissa lives with her parents and siblings. Eileen initially told me that Narissa has three siblings; a younger brother in Kindergarten and two older sisters in high school. She later told me that "she has five brothers and sisters back there" and that "Narissa doesn't speak the language, she doesn't speak [parents' language], because she was three when they moved to Canada" adding that "Narissa's parents do not speak English" and that at home they speak "that tongue, I guess; always their tongue. But Narissa says she can

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speak a little bit of it to her mom. But I asked her if her mom spoke English at home at all, and she says *No, her tongue,* [parents' language]." (Mar.12).

When Narissa and Eileen were together, Eileen often inquired about Narissa's family. She did this because she felt that "it helps me understand Narissa better if I know about her family." She told me that when she asked Narissa where her father was born, she said –

> Where I was. My brother's the only one that wasn't, so he
>
> was born in Canada. But, he's brown like we are. (Apr. 9).

Eileen said that she thought this comment from Narissa was interesting and comical adding that

> I guess she thought if you're born in Canada you change
>
> color [laughs]. It's her reasoning. (Apr.9).

Eileen has learned a lot about Narissa's background. Each week when they are together, she spends some time "chatting about Narissa's family. She just rambles on and on." Eileen enjoys this part of their sessions and feels that Narissa does as well.

The brief descriptions of Narissa and Eileen presented above were provided to give the reader a snapshot of this mentor pair. The following section deals with Eileen's explanation of the initial stage of the mentoring relationship between her and Narissa.

### Stage #1- A Shy Beginning

Narissa was quite shy in the beginning of the mentorship. This attempts to convey how Eileen experienced her initial sessions with Narissa. This section

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is divided into the following three sub-sections: "At first she was quite shy",

"She's coming out of her shell" and "She likes the time spent."

**"At first she was quite shy"**

I was curious about how the mentoring relationship began and how it

transformed over time. When I asked Eileen to talk about her sessions with

Narissa, I simply asked her:

> How did your session go today? Was there was anything
>
> different about today's session?

Eileen began by pointing out that Narissa was shy at the beginning with her.

> At first she was very shy. She's come out of her shell a bit more with me.
>
> When she sees me she hugs me around the legs, and [says] *Hi there*. And
>
> when it was Teachers' Convention, she'll say, *I missed you*. So she does
>
> show emotion, which is nice (Mar.12).

Eileen then told me about how Narissa expresses her feelings towards her.

> She's a very nice little girl; I quite enjoy her. Before I went on
>
> my holiday she wrote and gave me the cutest little poem –
>
> *Roses are red, violets are blue* – and she's got a couple of
>
> sentences at the bottom [and then] *Love Narissa*. And when
>
> I got that letter from the school last week [recognizing mentors],
>
> she had a drawing at the bottom. She had myself and herself,
>
> but I'm taller and she the shorter one, and she drew the table [that they
>
> work at], and she even had my [mentor] bag on it. She puts in great detail,

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and the book and the chairs, and wrote a few nice words at the bottom.

So, yes, she is a delightful child. (Mar.19).

Then she paused, and repeated,

I quite enjoy her.

**"She's coming out of her shell"**

Eileen talked about the changes she noticed in Narissa in the initial stage of the mentorship. She began -

Yes, she was [shy at the beginning], and always talked

sort of with her chin down – you know how kids do when

they're shy. But she's got her head up now, and she looks

at you more and so on. So she's coming out of her shell

which is good. Takes awhile for a child to bond, and

besides, I'm a lot older. I don't know. But no, I think

she's come out of her shell a lot; I feel she has (Mar.19).

I was curious about what she felt might have contributed to Narissa's coming out. So I asked her about this. She answered -

No, I don't. I think she just felt more comfortable with me;

that's what I would say. I would think, for a child that age,

that I'm tall and she's short; [and] they are told - *This is your*

*mentor*; and you kind of intimidate them, I think, almost

because she's so little; I don't think she weighs thirty pounds.

So it would take a while to bond or to get used to me, so I just

continue on the same way (Mar. 19).

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Initially Eileen experienced Narissa as shy. Rather than change her approach with Narissa, she remained consistent, unchanged.

**"She likes the time spent"**

Eileen made a comment twice that I wanted her to talk about so that I could better understand what she meant. She said, "Narissa likes the time spent." I asked her what she meant by this, the time spent, and she explained

> Yes, she does. So it's nice, I quite enjoy it. She was a little
> maybe shyer [in the beginning]. As I told you, I am tall, and
> there she is, this little girl standing down there, and her parents
> aren't as tall or anything. I'm not that much taller, but I'm still
> taller, and I'm White, I guess. And looking at me. So she did
> whatever you said, but as I say, she didn't project any personality.
> It seems to me that her personality is coming out a bit more all
> the time, which is good. I'm glad she feels at ease (Apr. 9).

I was curious about this. I asked her when she noticed Narissa starting to feel more at ease.

She told me

> I guess about the third time. About the third time she really
> settled in, and then she'd begun to talk a lot more to me, and
> I'd say about the third one she started to tell about her family,
> and I'd ask questions, and she'd tell me more about them. Yes,
> I'd say it took about three times (Apr. 9).

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The first two sessions that Eileen spent with Narissa she was quiet, shy and almost withdrawn. Eileen attributed this to her size, her age and Narissa's possible feelings of intimidation.

### Stage #2 - Winning Narissa Over with Mentor Planning

Eileen talked about the special things that she does for Narissa, things that she perhaps does not realize may have contributed to Narissa coming out of her shell and may have made Narissa feel more connected to her. In this stage of the mentorship, Narissa was increasingly comfortable with Eileen. Careful mentor planning most likely contributed to winning Narissa over.

This section is divided into two parts. The first part includes examples of what Eileen did that could have served to win Narissa over. Included in this section are the following sub-sections: Giving gifts for special occasions, Recognizing good work, Teaching Narissa how to knit, and Buying things for her mentor bag. The second part of this section describes Narissa's responses to Eileen's gifts and careful planning. Included within this section are the following sub-sections: An Easter card for Eileen, Giving Eve a hug and "You are the best mentor."

**Giving gifts for special occasions**

Eileen explained how she approached giving gifts to Narissa.

Eileen stated that -

Every once in awhile, and only for special occasions – I just

thought it was kind of nice to give them something. I don't

know whether they [Narissa's family] observe it or not. It's

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just something I give, certain days. Not a habit – of course

with my daughter I could not give my grandkids something

every time; I was not allowed to do that. You know how you

see these grandparents, every time the kids come, it's a

[big thing] and she wouldn't let me, just once in awhile

and things like that. And I guess the way I feel, just bring it

for special occasions. Probably the year end I'll bring her

some little thing (Mar.26).

Eileen provided an example of a gift she brought for Narissa while on vacation,

how she recognized special days such as Valentines and Easter.

Before Valentines, I bought her some Valentine cookies, and

when I came back from Hawaii – she loves stickers - I bought

her some stickers and a little cuckoo-shell necklace. She was

very pleased with it. She was pleased with the stickers because

they are different than you buy here, and they were kind of

fluorescent. She told me that she liked flowers and birds on

stickers – this was when I first started with her. So that's what

I was looking for. I found them hard to find over there. I probably

wasn't looking in the right place, but they don't have the Dollar

Store or the K-mart; they're all these tourist stories. But

anyway, she was very pleased with it. A nice little girl (Apr.16).

Eileen took into consideration Narissa's love for stickers with birds

and flowers and carefully selected a gift that she thought Narissa would like.

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Also, at Easter time Eileen bought Narissa a decorated, chocolate Easter egg. When I commented to Eileen that "Narissa looked so pleased," she said

Oh, yes, she was! *Oh,* she says, *It's pretty. Now,* she says, *I'll have to get my sister to buy you something.* I said, *No, no no. I gave this to you....* .I don't know, she seems to think that her sister has lots of money, but she only works at McDonalds, and she's going to school, so I don't think she has that much money.... (Apr. 9). I don't know how much English her sister speaks. I should ask her (Mar. 26).

The following week Eileen told me about Narissa's Easter.

She [Narissa] said the Easter bunny didn't come to her apartment because the doors were locked [laughs]. So Iguess the parents didn't get any eggs there, because she said, *that's because the doors were locked.* No Easter egg hunt or anything like that. I know my kids used to love them (Apr. 16).

When I commented that it was nice of her to bring Narissa the Easter egg, she said

I'm glad she enjoyed it; her face lit up. I said to her, did you eat your Easter egg? She says, *Yeah!* Her face just lit up. So, she didn't say whether she shared it with her brother or not, so more power to her. But she is a cute little kid, very polite and she likes approval (Apr. 16).

Narissa appreciated the Easter surprise. Approval was another means of winning Narissa over.

**Recognizing good work**

Eileen talked about the effect approval has on Narissa.

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Eileen cited the following examples –

> Just if I say, *You know Narissa, you're* reading really well, and she looks
> up and her face just beams. And when she did her math I said – You did
> really well. So, I said to her – *We'll have to put one of these [stickers] on.*
> I said – *Which one do you want to choose?* So she chose that one and she
> just beamed (Apr. 16).

It made Narissa happy that Eileen commented on her reading and math and
rewarded her with stickers.

**Buying things for her mentor bag**

In anticipation of mentoring Narissa, Eileen put together a collection of
things to use when she works with Narissa. She keeps them in her canvas mentor
bag.

> I bought some crayons and I've bought a coloring book, and
> my daughter was clearing out her desk and she found these
> stickers, and some of them are "Looking Good, and "Good
> Going" and so on. Some of her pictures I was starting to put
> some of these stickers on, and the rest of them I'll just give
> to her and she can take them home and play with them (Feb. 19).

Putting together a mentor bag is an example of mentor planning. She
thought about what to include based on what she understood of children
Narissa's age.

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### Teaching Narissa how to knit

One day Narissa said to Eileen – "I'd like to know how to knit." Eileen took

the lead and offered to show her – "I can knit; I'll teach you how to knit."

Eileen explained to me how she planned to teach Narissa to knit.

> I think next week I will try and bring some wool and knitting needles and
>
> we can spend fifteen minutes and then I'll just put it away until she gets
>
> used to it, and then she can always take it home and practice with it (Mar.
>
> 19).

Eileen was indicating a willing and able responsiveness to Narissa's

interest in knitting.

These examples of bringing Narissa gifts on special days, of providing

approval for work well done, and of following her interests, serve to illustrate

the things that Eileen did to win Narissa over.

### Reciprocity – winning Eileen over

Narissa demonstrated her appreciation to Eileen in various ways. I pointed

out earlier that Narissa wrote a poem (with lots of detail) for Eileen at the

bottom of the school appreciation letter that was given to all mentors, and

that she wanted to ask her sister to buy Eileen something for Easter.

This part includes examples that serve to further illustrate how Narissa

expresses her gratitude to Eileen.

An Easter card for Eileen. The week after Eileen gave Narissa an Easter egg,

Narissa made Eileen a special Easter card. Eileen shared it with me – "Look

at the work she put into it." On the card, she had written – *Thank you for the*

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*Easter egg. It was good. Happy Easter Mentor! I hope you have a great day. Sincerely, Narissa.* I noticed something else written on the card - *Happy Easter Eve!,* and a sticker beside it. And I asked her if Narissa had ever called her Eve before.

She replied

> Isn't that cute, yes. No, no. But she asked me, and I said, It's Eileen, but you can shorten it to Lene, L-E-E-N. And she drew the bunny. She says, I'm not very good at drawing bunnies. And the heart. I think it's lovely. I told her I had the one she gave me before on my fridge, and I'll put this on my fridge (Apr. 16).

I asked her about the one Narissa gave her before, "She gave you another card?"

Eileen answered,

> Once before, yes, before I went on my trip. It was the cutest, *Roses are red, Violets are blue, Honey is sweet, and I love you. Narissa.* It was so cute, yes.

Narissa feels more secure with Eileen. She is beginning to share her feelings and take risks.

<u>Giving Leen a hug.</u> Narissa also showed her appreciation to Eileen by reaching out and hugging her. Eileen explained that when Narissa gets up to leave at the end of the mentoring sessions, she gives Eileen a hug.

> When we stood up, she put her arms around me and walked out. She likes to touch.

I asked if that was new and she explained that

No, no. I think from the third time I was here she did. She's so little, and

then I feel this little hand come around; it's more just below the hips. Yes,

she does. Yes, so, I'm glad, yes (Mar. 12).

Narissa had become increasingly comfortable with Eileen.

*You* are the best mentor. Narissa wrote kind messages to Eileen. At the end of

the session one day Narissa wanted to play *Hangman*. She was explaining to

Eileen how to play –

She said *I'll just show you.* And at the end she said, *No, you didn't get the*

*words right.* She said because, *I put you down*, and then she puts [writes],

**You are the best mentor**. Oh, she does, she often says that (Apr. 9).

I commented, " Isn't that sweet?"

She said

Yes, it is. So I try to help her and that, but I think she likes the time spent

as much as anything (Apr. 9).

This feedback from Narissa, that is, the cards, the hugs, shortening

Eileen's name to Leen, and the written compliment, have made Eileen feel

that Narissa enjoys her sessions with her. As well, Eileen told me

I think that she looks forward to it [the sessions], I really do.

I said to her, *I'll see you next Thursday, Narissa,* and she says,

*Yes,* happily. So it's nice. I do think that I've bonded with

Narissa. She always seems happy to see me and likes to

tell me about things in the past week (Apr.16).

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This stage of the mentorship was characterized as a coming together for Eileen and Narissa. Although Eileen did not say she was trying to win Narissa over, her actions had this effect. Narissa responded well to Eileen's gifts, her careful planning and her recognition of good work.

### Stage #3 - Providing Academic and Social Support for Narissa

Eileen commented repeatedly that she saw her role as "a helper", that is, helping Narissa learn, helping her to improve in school. Eileen also had a positive effect on Narissa's social development. This stage is characterized by the different ways Eileen helps Narissa. Within this section are the following sub-sections: Improvement in reading, reading with authority, improvement in math, and learning to tie shoes.

**Improvement in reading**

Eileen noticed an improvement in Narissa's reading. When I asked her how working with Narissa is different now than in the beginning, she explained

She's improved in her reading; I've got her to slow down, so she quit missing words. I think she thought she was supposed to impress me, and by impressing, she read fast. So, I told her, *Narissa, you have to slow down. You're missing words. Later on when you have to learn grammar and form sentences that are correct, if you start missing all these little words, you'll have problems.* So she doesn't miss words now, and she has slowed down. She has improved, even if I do say so myself. She has progressed, but I want to stay with it too; I don't want to just sit chatting and not staying with the reading. But I think she's doing very well, I don't

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know about what [her teacher] thinks, if she can see an improvement or not (Mar.12).

Although Narissa's teacher had not stated that Narissa had progressed in reading since Eileen began mentoring her, Eileen herself noticed an improvement. In fact, the improvement in reading had a spin off on Narissa's self-confidence. Eileen stated -

I think Narissa has a little more self-confidence in her reading now (Apr. 16).

I asked her if this was since she began working with Narissa.

She explained -

Yes. I feel she has, because I think slowing down has helped her a lot, to begin with and it flows better, because she's reading all the words. If you're reading and then you miss the to and the from, and the or and so on, it doesn't make a sentence; whereas by slowing down, the words flow, and I think she understands the story better too. That's my opinion; I may be wrong. I'm not a teacher and my kids have been gone for so long and I'm just flying on my own sort of on it. I feel it does help her because it's [the sentences are] not chop, chop, chop. (Apr. 16).

While Eileen acknowledges that she is not a teacher, she noticed progress in both Narissa's academic and self-confidence.

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## Reading with authority

Again Eileen brought up the subject of Narissa's reading, noting that Narissa was reading with confidence and even authority. The following were comments Eileen made on two subsequent interviews.

She read well today, and a little louder, not sort of the whisper

she'll get sometimes (Apr. 16). But can I ever see a difference in her

reading! She's reading with so much more confidence! Before

she was very quiet when she was reading. But now she speaks

out with a fair amount of authority, shall we say, when she's

reading. You can hear it; you're not sort of having to watch her

do the words to be sure that she's reading correctly (Apr. 23).

She mentioned before that Narissa self-confidence had increased since she had been working with her. I asked if she thought she was reading louder because of the increased confidence she has in herself.

She answered

Yes, yes it is. And she's not hesitating as much and things like that. Yes,

so I could really see that today (Apr. 23).

As Narissa experienced a greater sense of comfort around Eileen, her reading improved and her self-confidence increased.

## Improvement in math

Eileen also helped Narissa improve in math. Narissa's teacher told Eileen that Narissa was weak in math. The next time that she saw Narissa she asked her

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How are you in math? She says, *Not very good. I have trouble with it. I'll show you what I have trouble with* (Mar.26).

Narissa proceeded to write down a group of three numbers, and then another three. Then she began to count on her fingers. Eileen was shocked, and commented

> You can count on your fingers today? We got the ruler! They let you? Oh yes, probably, because she's having so much trouble. She's probably letting her take the easiest way out... I don't mind helping her in math, not at all. As long as it isn't the new math, I don't know the new math (Mar. 26).

Realizing that it was basic facts that Narissa was having trouble with, I said,

But the basic facts –

She answered

> Oh, heavens, yes! Heavens! It wouldn't be any problem at all. I could easily make up some at home and then help her a bit with it. It's a long way to go to get through school, to get a career or whatever she plans [without knowing her basic facts] (Mar. 26).

Eileen was responsive to helping Narissa in areas with which she experienced difficulty.

**Learning to tie shoe laces**

Eileen also took responsibility for helping Narissa when she learned that Narissa was unable to do something for herself such as tie her own shoe laces. Eileen talked about teaching Narissa how to tie her shoe laces.

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You know, I noticed a little boy in the hallway with his shoes untied. I

taught Narissa to tie her shoelaces. She didn't know how, you know. And

I showed her. In my day, we made sure our kids could tie their shoes

before they went to school. I showed her how to tie her shoes, you know.

And the next time I saw her, she came up to me and reminded me - *I can*

*tie my shoes all myself, I remembered how you showed me.* And she

remembered that, you know. So I let her show me and she did it just like I

showed her. There's a lot of little things that mentors do that are not

reading and writing but that still help, you know, that help the child in

other ways (Apr. 9).

I said, "Isn't that wonderful! Isn't that nice! How does that make

you feel?"

She replied

Well she has to know how, and if I can help her, I will. You know, I

probably talk more to her than anyone. Her mom can't speak English and

she doesn't speak her mom's tongue. Can you imagine? (Apr. 9).

Eileen felt that a mentor's main role is to help the child. She said

repeatedly – "As long as I'm helping her, that's the main thing." She received

feedback from Narissa that she is helping in the ways I've described. She also

received feedback from her son. She telephoned her son after each session

with Narissa. He reassured her that she is making a difference. She often

reminded me

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He's a school principal, at the high-school, you know, my son said – *Mom,*

*I'm sure you are having quite an impact on a little girl like that* (Feb. 19).

She would also like feedback from Narissa's teacher. As she told me – "I was

going to ask [her teacher] if she's seen any improvement in her reading and

things like that" (Mar. 19).

Narissa and Eileen had reached a stage of connectedness in this

mentorship. Narissa saw Eileen as a helper and asked her for help. Eileen

helped Narissa with her reading and math. She taught her to tie her shoes.

She was someone for Narissa to chat with. Narissa was warm and friendly

towards Eileen and openly displayed affection and appreciation to her.

### A New Development in the Mentoring Relationship

While the sessions went reasonably smoothly between Narissa and Eileen,

there was a challenge that briefly interrupted the rhythm of their mentorship.

It's probably important to point out at this time that I did not sit in on

mentoring sessions with Narissa and Eileen. Eileen felt that onlookers were a

distraction. I waited in the staff room for Eileen to finish her sessions with

Narissa. Eileen preferred to mentor Narissa in private - in the mentor room

with the door closed. She told me that she didn't like distractions and that "

[the child's teacher] told me that she has a short attention span" and that she

has noticed that "she starts to twitch a lot" [when people are around].

Sometimes she let me stay for a few minutes at the beginning, or come a few

minutes early at the end to chat with Narissa. I respected their privacy, and,

quite frankly, preferred to stay away.

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This section presents a distraction that challenged the rhythm of the mentoring sessions for a brief period during the mentoring relationship. It is divided into two sub-sections: Meeting Narissa's mother and Back on track.

**Meeting Narissa's mother**

At 1:55 (Mar.12) I went to the mentor room door to wait for my scheduled interview with Eileen. I stood quietly by the locked door, and waited for Eileen and Narissa to come out. The door opened and three people came out. Surprised, I greeted Eileen and Narissa and put forward my hand to the woman standing alongside them at the door's entrance. "Hi! I'm Jan," I said, smiling. The woman, not uttering a sound, extended her hand, and smiled a friendly hello. The three of them walked down the hall towards Narissa's classroom and stopped at the classroom door. The woman continued down the hallway. Eileen turned and came back towards me. We entered the mentor room for our interview.

"How are you?" I asked Eileen. She looked at me, raised her eyebrows ... and, eventually smiled. "How did it go today?" I asked her. She responded, "It was a little difficult with her mother here." Then she explained that the woman with them today was Narissa's mother, and that

> She picks her little brother up, but she came early to meet me, because they want me to go to their place some weekend to visit. They wanted my phone number – her dad wants to meet me (Mar. 12).

"That's nice", I commented casually. She did not respond. After a long pause, she agreed, "Yes, it is", and added

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Yeah, she didn't leave, and so it was a little difficult, and I think it was kind of hard on Narissa, because I had got some books that were a little harder, like four lines instead of two line books [four or two lines on a page], so it was too bad I had chosen those. I didn't realize her mother was here [to visit when I selected the books from the school library] (Mar. 12).

She explained that her mother thought that she was behind in her schoolwork and that is why she has a mentor. She tried to explain to her mother, telling her that –

*No, no, she's not behind. Everybody in her room has mentors.* Now whether she understood, I don't know. It's too bad because her mother is hard to understand. I don't know what her father is like; I hope he's a bit easier (Mar. 12).

She went on to explain how she generally spends time with Narissa - talking, reading, playing games - Snap [a card game] and Hangman. She also pointed out –

She just loves to talk about her family. We usually have a session just sitting and talking, but I couldn't today; it was a little difficult with her mom sitting here (Mar. 12).

Our interview was short. Her mind was somewhere else. She seemed preoccupied with this distraction. I knew that Eileen preferred to mentor Narissa alone. She made it quite clear to me that she is uncomfortable when other people are with her when she is mentoring Narissa.

The following week (Mar. 19) I was waiting outside the mentor room door for my scheduled interview with Eileen. I remembered that Narissa was going to learn to knit today, so, I was interested in finding out how that went.

At 2:00 o'clock, the door opened and three people came out; Narissa, her mother and Eileen. I greeted them. Narissa and Eileen said "Hi". Again, her mother smiled, a wide smile and, like last time, proceeded down the hall towards Narissa's classroom. I took out my tape recorder, checked to make sure it was working, got out my field note journal, and got comfortable in the mentor room and waited for Eileen to return.

When she entered the room, I said, " So, how did it go today?" Eileen explained that Narissa was distracted and that the presence of another person interfered with the one-on-one and that it also interfered with what she was able to accomplish during the mentoring sessions. She seemed upset and preoccupied with this during our interview.

Concerned for both her and Narissa and the mentorship, I said, "But it's nice doing the mentoring?" She replied

I enjoy it, I honestly do. And if I'm any help, then that's what you want to be. But Narissa's attention span is not there ... (Mar. 19).

Eileen comments suggested that it was more comfortable for both her and Narissa to spend time alone. Narissa was able to concentrate better and talk freely to Eileen when it was just the two of them.

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## Back on track

Within two weeks the mentorship resumed its normal rhythm. Narissa's mother began volunteering in the school gym on Thursdays during Narissa's mentoring sessions. Eileen and Narissa had their one-on-one time together. Eileen was pleased with the way the sessions went. When I asked her how the mentoring session went, for example, she replied, "Very good, **very** good. She read well today. I gave her math questions and she got them" (Apr. 9).

The following week (Apr. 16), I went into the school and poked my head into the gym. Narissa's mom was in the gym putting stars up on the walls. She was decorating the gym for the *Celebration of Learning* event that was taking place at the school that evening. When she saw me, she smiled broadly, nodded hello, and proudly went about decorating the gym walls. Later that month, the school put on a *Volunteer Tea* to recognize mentors and other people who volunteered in the school during the year. It was also held in the school gym. I attended. So did Narissa's mother. I took a seat beside Eileen. When Narissa's mother entered the gym, I motioned for her to come over and sit with us. She joined us. Greetings were exchanged between Eileen and Narissa's mother.

The mentorship program was over for the year. On sunny days, Eileen was on the golf course. One rainy afternoon she called me on the telephone (June 11). She told me a story about a day she had visited the school to drop off her consent form for her participation in the mentorship program research. She saw Narissa in the school playground, climbing on the monkey bars.

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Narissa saw her and called out to her: "Can I come out and give you a hug?" Eileen motioned for her to come down. Eileen's last comment to me about Narissa was, "She came from a student who was mediocre to a student who wanted to learn. So, I think it [the mentoring] helps."

## Summary of Eileen and Narissa

In the beginning of this mentorship, Narissa was quite shy, almost withdrawn. She came to enjoy - to look forward to her sessions with Eileen. Eileen recognized that Narissa was shy and she took steps to win her over. She brought her gifts for special occasions. On Valentine's day, Eileen brought Narissa Valentine cookies. For Easter, she gave her a decorated chocolate Easter egg. She brought Narissa special stickers from her trip to Hawaii. Praise was offered for work well done. Narissa showed her appreciation towards Eileen by making her cards, giving her hugs, and by telling her she was the best mentor.

Eileen saw her mentor role as one of helper. Her goal was to help Narissa. Eileen helped Narissa with reading and math. Over time Eileen noted that she had seen improvements in Narissa and that Narissa was reading with confidence. She helped Narissa in other ways as well. When she noticed Narissa's shoelaces untied, she willingly taught her how to tie them. When Narissa expressed an interest in learning to knit, she offered to teach her.

Eileen often said, "Narissa enjoys the time spent." Narissa enjoyed having an adult to help her with her with reading and math. She also enjoyed

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playing Hangman and Snap and having an adult to talk to. Eileen was aware of this and sensed a difference in Narissa when another person was present during the mentoring sessions. Eileen felt that it is important to spend time with children – "We used to watch our kids too and made sure they did their homework, and they've both been very successful, so I think it pays off. It's never time wasted, as far as I'm concerned, with children, teenagers, whatever. You have to spend time with them."

Eileen took mentoring seriously, followed the suggestions and package of ideas in the mentoring folder which was provided for each mentor when they began mentoring a child in the mentoring program. Eileen felt that she had accomplished her goal – she had helped Narissa in a number of ways. And Narissa's responsiveness to her had made it enjoyable for Eileen.

# Chapter 8

## Making Sense of Relationships

This study was prompted by the desire to understand how non-related adults build positive and satisfying relationships with young children in the context of weekly one-hour visits in a two or three-month mentorship program at the child's school. In previous research with the program (Ellis, Small-McGinley & Hart, 1998), interviews with children and mentors near the end of the program suggested that potent relationships do develop within this framework. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into how this happens. The previous chapters presented case studies of four mentor-child pairs in one school's mentorship program. This chapter provides an analysis of these case studies using guiding ideas identified by Brendtro, Brokenleg, and Van Bockern (1990).

Larry Brendtro and his colleagues have long been involved in efforts to reclaim children and youth in conflict with family, school, and community. As a framework for this reclaiming work, they use the Circle of Courage with its identification of children's four developmental needs—belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity or attachment, achievement, autonomy, and altruism. In this conceptual organizer, attachment is understood to foster achievement, autonomy and altruism. Their work is informed by Native American tribal wisdom (Brokenleg, 1998), Eric Fromm's *The Art of Loving*, Bowlby's (1980) research on separation, anger

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and anxiety, other related research, and their own work with violent youth for over three decades (Brendtro & Long, 1995).

The Circle of Courage model is a promising one for this analysis since it links children's achievement to their attachments to significant adults and emphasizes attachments to significant adults who are not the child's parents. In their elaboration of this model, Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990) have focussed on how to put it into practice with children and youth who are already in conflict with family, school and community. The more general ideas they offer can serve as a starting point or set of interpretive ideas for beginning a similar elaboration for primary prevention programs in which non-related adults mentor young children. Thus ideas from their model can be used to guide investigation of the case studies and what is learned from the analysis can serve to provide further elaboration of these ideas. Since the purpose of this study is understanding relationship development, the ideas about attachment in the Circle of Courage will be the focus in the analysis.

**Attachment – The Spirit of belonging**

Adults who work with youth have long been aware of the awesome power of relationships. This was a dominant theme of the early writings in education, counseling and youth work. However, as professional literature became more scientifically oriented, relationships were increasingly ignored. Now there are signs of a renewal of interest in the

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synergistic power of human relationships. (Brendtro, Brokenleg and
Van Bockern 1990, p. 58)

An increasing body of literature in psychology and sociology has
demonstrated that attachment is a powerful universal human need Brendtro,
Brokenleg and Van Bockern 1990, 1998). Everyone, young people in
particular, has a deep need to belong, to feel connected to others. Brendtro,
Brokenleg and Van Bockern (1990, p. 60), argue that "The most potent
behavioral influence that an adult can have in the life of a child comes when
an attachment has been formed." (p. 60) People find a sense of belonging and
connection in relationships. Moreover, it is the quality of human relationships
in schools and youth service programs that makes a difference. Further, these
authors have observed that the quality of relationships may be even more
influential than the specific interventions or techniques that have been
repeatedly tried and tested (Brendtro et al.).

While asserting the potency of relationships, Brendtro et al (1990)
acknowledge that there remains an affective vagueness about this concept.
They have, however, specified a number of key ideas about relationships.

One key idea is that relationship is not simply a feeling but rather is
something that results from action and this action involves giving. They
emphasize that a strong sense of belonging or attachment makes young
people more receptive to guidance from adults. They note that adults who are
engaged in a helping role with young people must be able to offer warm and

stable attachments. They also agree with Eric Fromm's (1956) model of positive relationships which shows the four common elements to be caring, responsibility, respect and knowledge.

These ideas about relationships are very global ones. Brendtro et al acknowledge that there are not ten easy steps to relationship building, there is no cookbook approach that can be thoughtlessly followed. One has to be fully present to build a relationship. By revisiting the case studies with these general ideas as lenses, this analysis will undertake to clarify the quality or character of the relationships and the ways in which they developed.

**Relationship results from action and this action involves a process of giving.**

Over the course of the mentorships, expressions of giving were enacted in numerous ways. The different kinds of giving that occurred appeared to be related to the stage of the relationship, the child's characteristics, the mentor's characteristics and the child/mentor combinations.

This section provides a classification of the different forms of giving that were discernible in the four mentorship case studies. This analysis is followed by a brief summary of each case study in terms of examples of giving that were identified. The relationships formed in very different and complex ways as a result of many influences and through many kinds of giving, giving that made sense for the mentor pairs involved. Revisiting the

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case studies through the framework of forms of giving highlights the uniqueness of each pair's relationship, illuminates the diversity among pairs, and attests to the boundless creativity of human care and connection.

**Classification of Forms of Giving**

In an examination of the four case studies, the following kinds of giving were identified for mentors.

- The giving of general age-appropriate treats

- The giving of personal gifts related to the child's interests

- Giving personal information about one's own life

- Giving the child the prerogative in determining the activities for the sessions

- Giving the effort to become knowledgeable about the child's interest areas

- Giving opportunities for the child to talk and to become increasingly comfortable talking to the mentor (taking time for this, showing interest in the child's talk or planning activities that would provide the space for free-ranging talk)

- Giving recognition and praise for the child's work

- Giving parent-like or friend-like care in noticing and responding to the child's needs for support whether emotional or practical (a shoulder to cry on or learning to tie one's shoes)

  The following kinds of giving were identified for the children.

- Giving expressions of affection or their happiness to see their mentor (smiles, hugs, handmade cards, or oral statements of affection or admiration).

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- Giving expressions of appreciation for mentor's gifts or efforts

- Giving up other activities to be with the mentor

- Making efforts to amuse the mentor

- Showing not only willingness but eagerness to tell the mentor their news

- Giving personal information about their lives and feelings

- Giving trust in revealing self-doubt, fears or troubles

- Being interested in the mentor's news and life

While the various forms that giving took may not appear surprising or unexpected, what is noteworthy is the degree to which some forms were more dominant in one pair than in another. Each pair was unique in terms of what each person brought to the relationship, needed from the relationship, and was able and inclined to give to the relationship. While the diversity among the pairs was considerable, giving in one form or another was prevalent.

Tiara and Joel. Tiara, who was a student teacher, always brought Joel, a grade 6 student, weekly treats such as Skittles, M & M's, or the Valentines cookies she had baked. They shared a common interest in sports. In fact, they not only liked the same sports but had the same favorite teams and even the same favorite players. They both liked the Drillers soccer team and as a personal gift, Tiara gave Joel a poster from a Driller's game. Early in the mentorship, however, Tiara and Joel learned that they shared an even more significant commonality; both were children of divorced parents and had

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experienced the departure of their fathers at an early age. Consequently, they often told each other what it felt like to experience their parent's divorces and how they related to their fathers. Because of this common experience, this relationship began rather than culminated with both parties giving each other personal information about their lives and feelings. Once their "soul mate" relationship (Tiara's description) was initiated by this discovered commonality, they added other layers of friendship behavior by sharing their news with each other. Tiara told Joel what she was giving up for lent. She also showed him her assignments for university and invited his opinions or judgements, which he gave.

Joel, for his part, gave up his position on traffic patrol in order to spend his Wednesday lunch hours with Tiara. From the beginning of the mentorship, he talked to her about his concerns and feelings about his father's departure. Joel showed his trust in Tiara by admitting that he did not know words when they were reading together. Finally, Joel showed interest in Tiara's life. He asked how Tiara's university assignments were progressing, he was excited about the party she was having when her mom was away, and he expressed interest in finding out what was wrong when she appeared bothered by something.

Carey and Dustin.   Carey, who was a student teacher, had never worked with a grade 2 student before. She wanted to spend time engaging in activities that Dustin wanted to do. Carey followed Dustin's lead. She gave him the opportunity to decide on how their time was spent together. Early in the mentorship, Carey perceived Dustin as being older than his years. She judged

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that Dustin would not appreciate a Kinder Surprise, or other "age-appropriate" treats she saw mentors giving the children. She continued to give him her time and attention and began directing her energies to becoming knowledgeable about Dustin's identified interests which were Hummers, Prowlers and hockey. To support Dustin's interest in hockey, Carey learned about hockey, learned how to talk about the game, and wore an Oiler's jersey to the mentoring sessions. Later in the mentorship, Carey gave Dustin a poster sporting his favorite car. The poster not only reflected his personal interest in Prowlers, but was also his favorite color.

Dustin, for his part, showed Carey that he liked her by looking happy to see her and by spontaneously sharing news about his weekly activities with her. Dustin also showed Carey that he liked her when he joked with and teased her. On the day Carey gave Dustin the poster, he expressed his appreciation by coming back three times during our interview to say goodbye and to thank Carey. The following week, Dustin talked about the poster again, telling her that his dad liked it. He showed further appreciation for the poster by telling Carey how he was going to look after it by hanging it up with special rods and strings.

Finally, Dustin showed trust in Carey by asking for help with schoolwork that was difficult for him. He also began taking risks and even initiated writing activities whereas in the early stage of the mentorship, he refused to even try writing tasks because he found them so difficult. Dustin also showed

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trust in Carey when he revealed that he did not enjoy his visit to the farm because the big boys were bothering him.

<u>Kristen and Cascandra.</u> Kristen, a second year college student, shared her life with Cascandra, a grade 2 student, by telling her about herself, her family, her boyfriend and college. Kristen purposefully gave Cascandra the space to talk by planning craft-like activities that lent themselves to comfortable relaxed chatting. Kristen brought supplies that she bought from the dollar store to make these crafts.

For Cascandra, giving took various forms. In the beginning of the mentorship, Cascandra told Kristen jokes and attempted to amuse her. As time passed, Cascandra shared more about her family, and events at school. At a later stage in the mentorship, Cascandra asked Kristen for help with the Easter basket weaving that Kristen brought for the mentoring session. At that point, she showed trust in Kristen by revealing self-doubt about how she sees herself as a learner. Finally, Cascandra also displayed trust in Kristen by telling her that it bothers her when people call her fat.

<u>Eileen and Narissa.</u> Eileen, a retired widow living in the school community, brought special surprises to Narissa, the grade 2 student. While vacationing in Hawaii, Eileen searched at length until she found stickers with flowers and birds because she knew that Narissa liked them. Eileen recognized Valentines Day by giving Narissa a Valentine's treat. At Easter time, she gave Narissa a chocolate Easter egg. Eileen also offered recognition and praise for work well done, telling Narissa that she read well or by letting Narissa select a

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sticker to put on completed work. As time passed, giving also took the form of spontaneous helping. Noticing Narissa's untied shoelaces, Eileen took the initiative to teach her how to tie them. Responding to Narissa's interest in learning how to knit, Eileen offered to teach her.

Early in the mentorship, Narissa attached herself to Eileen. Eileen reported that Narissa's mother does not speak English and Narissa does not speak her mother's language. This may have influenced Narissa's strong desire for this attachment . Narissa's grandparents do not live in Canada. Narissa seemed to prize Eileen as someone she could spend time with, an adult she could talk to, and a special person just for her.

Narissa sincerely appreciated whatever gifts Eileen had to offer and expressed this appreciation by making Eileen cards, giving Eileen hugs, and expressing affection and admiration towards Eileen. On one occasion, Narissa told Eileen that she was the best mentor. Another time she told Eileen that she missed her when she was away.

**Discussion**

These summaries have highlighted the forms of giving that were easily identifiable in the case studies. Who the mentors were and who the children were at the time of the mentoring relationships appeared to have much bearing on what was given by all parties. In one form or another, however, giving can be seen to be a central, active dynamic in the development of whatever relationships evolved.

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The mentors gave in ways that made sense to them based on their understanding of the child and children in general, their life experiences, and their life space at that particular time. Fromm (1956, cited by Yamamoto, 1988/1989), offered the following description of what it means to give in a mentoring relationship. Referring to the mentor, he stated -

> He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives
> of his life...he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives
> him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his know-
> ledge, of his humor, of his sadness - of all expressions and mani-
> festations of that which is alive in him. In thus giving of his life,
> he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of
> aliveness. He does not give in order to receive; giving is in
> itself exquisite joy. But in giving he cannot help bringing
> something to life in the other person, and this which is brought
> to life reflects back to him; in truly giving, he cannot help
> receiving that which is given back to him...in the act of giving
> something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for
> the life that is born for both of them ( p. 188 ).

While this section began with a classification of observable acts of giving, it is appropriate to close with a reflection on Fromm's more phenomenologically expressed understanding of the nature of giving in mentoring relationships. Such a statement reminds us of the vitality that was inherent within and beyond the easily describable acts of giving and receiving. What the mentors observably gave or did not give to the children, varied considerably. Each of the mentors gave what she thought was important to give. Beyond their discernible expressions of giving, however, they gave their very presence, their aliveness, and all of their nuanced responses to the child's aliveness. By giving to the child's life, they also gave to themselves, enriching their own lives. It is through two lives coming

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together in this intentional and focussed way that giving can occur spontaneously and even in spite of intentionality, and relationships or attachments can grow.

**A strong sense of belonging makes young people more receptive to guidance from adults.**

An adult who is liked and admired is also an effective role model. Youth who admire an adult will also attempt to imitate that adult's values and behaviors. In discussing the pivotal role of attachment in supporting the development of achievement, autonomy and altruism, Brendtro et al. (1990) and Jongyeun and Cramond, (1999), remind us of theories pertaining to social reinforcement and role models. If an adult has status in the child's eyes and has a positive healthy relationship with the child, the elements are in place for the adult's social reinforcement and modeling to be effective. The child will value the adult's approval and opinions. The child will also seek to imitate the values, attitudes, and behaviors of the adult. Thus, Brendtro et al have argued that once a bond is firmly established between an adult and a younger person, the younger person more readily receives guidance from the adult.

This study seeks to examine the nature of the relationships that developed as well as how they developed. The previous section identified forms of giving that occurred as part of the action of developing the relationships. If significant attachments were formed, one would expect to find that the children became increasingly receptive to guidance from their mentors. One

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would also expect to observe examples of the children modeling the mentors' values and/or behaviors.

**Children's receptivity to guidance from their mentors.**

In general, children's receptivity to guidance from mentors showed itself as listening and responding to suggestions and advice of the mentors, asking mentors for help with schoolwork, and seeking help from the mentors with personal troubles.

Tiara and Joel. Early in the mentorship between Tiara and Joel, (the "soul-mate" relationship with a grade 6 student) Tiara stated that Joel listened to her and did not argue or complain about doing schoolwork during mentoring sessions. She said that he complied when she suggested that they do something. An example she provided was when she suggested that they sit in another place for a mentoring session. His response to her was, "Okay, yes, that's good." It was then that Tiara said that Joel does not say, "No I don't want to go there" adding, "He doesn't argue with me about anything."

Carey and Dustin. In the mentorship between Carey and Dustin, Dustin told Carey that he was going to shoot gophers when he went to the farm. Carey expressed disapproval and told him that she did not want him to shoot gophers. When Dustin returned from the farm, he volunteered that he did not shoot gophers, stating that he "just shot pop cans." This met with Carey's approval. She told him that when she was little, she didn't want to shoot animals and that she "used to just shoot tomatoes and just watched it all spurt out." Dustin thought this was funny.

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<u>Kristen and Cascandra.</u> In the mentorship between Kristen and Cascandra, Cascandra sought guidance from Kristen by asking her for help with the Easter basket weaving that Kristen had brought for them to do together. It was at that point that Cascandra told Kristen that she was not a very fast learner. Referring to the weaving, Cascandra stated, "How do we do this?" adding, "I'm not a very fast learner." Kristen was surprised with this comment and immediately reassured Cascandra that she should be proud of herself and that she seems like a very fast learner. Cascandra then said, "No, I'm not a very fast learner. So I'm going to need a lot of help."

Cascandra sought guidance from Kristen when she was told her that she was bothered that her grandma was leaving. Cascandra's grandma, who had traveled a long distance to help her mom with the arrival of the new baby was returning home soon. Grandma was helping with such things as preparing meals, making Cascandra's lunches for school, and helping with housework. Cascandra said that she was going to miss her grandma when she left.

<u>Eileen and Narissa.</u> In the mentorship between Eileen and Narissa, at Eileen's request Narissa began to read more carefully. Eileen asked her to slow down; explaining that she would not skip words if she slowed down. Narissa asked Eileen for help with her math, showing her the type of questions she had difficulty with. Eileen showed her how to do them and then gave her a page of questions to practice, which Narissa did.

While it could be argued that a child might comply with the requests of an adult because of the adult's authority, a number of these examples show that

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the children also actively sought the guidance, opinion, or approval of the mentors.

**Students modeling mentors' values and behaviors.**

Modeling can take very subtle forms and of course, children have a number of role models. Consequently, attributing children's behavior to modeling of their mentors involves considerable speculation. However, in revisiting the case studies with the question of modeling in view, it was interesting to note and consider the following examples as possible manifestations of modeling.

<u>Tiara and Joel.</u> Tiara and Joel had a lot in common and spent a great deal of time visiting. In the beginning of this mentorship, Tiara took responsibility for getting them back to their task. Over time, it was Joel who reminded Tiara, a student teacher, that they had to get back on track after a period of chatting. Using her very words, he reminded Tiara, "Okay, we've got to get back reading."

<u>Carey and Dustin.</u> Early in the mentorship between Carey and Dustin, Carey, a student teacher, learned that Dustin did not enjoy writing tasks. Nevertheless, Carey continued to try to engage Dustin in writing because she wanted to help him improve in this area. Dustin was not responsive to writing tasks in the beginning of the mentorship. Later in the mentorship, he surprised Carey by actually initiating writing activities himself.

<u>Kristen and Cascandra</u> In the mentorship between Kristen and Cascandra, it was not until Kristen, a college student, shared stories with Cascandra about

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her family, her boyfriend, her childhood experiences and her experience of the arrival of new siblings that Cascandra began to share stories about her life with Kristen.

<u>Eileen and Narissa</u>  During the initial stage of the mentorship between Eileen and Narissa, Eileen, a retired grandmother, read aloud to Narissa. Eileen read with expression. As time passed in the mentorship, Narissa "came out of her shell" and "read with authority." Not only had Narissa's confidence increased, she also appeared to model Eileen's reading style.

Since the behaviors described above tended to occur in the later stages of the mentoring relationships, it is conceivable that they do in fact represent instances of the children modeling the mentors' behaviors and values.

**Helping adults must be able to provide warmth and stability.**

In discussing the development of relationships, Brendtro et al have emphasized the importance of warmth and stability on part of the adult in the helping role. Adults who can offer warmth and stability can more effectively cultivate intimacy and provide safety for such intimacy. This section examines the case studies with the purpose of exploring how the notions of warmth and stability can extend understanding of the case studies and how the case studies can inform understanding of warmth and stability on the part of the non-related adults working with young children.

**Warmth**

In psychological terms, warmth can be understood as a state or a trait. In everyday understanding of the term, one hears the expressions: "So-and-so is

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a very warm person" or "She greeted us warmly." For the purpose of examining the case studies it is perhaps most useful to think of warmth as a state and as a person's communication of an "I-like-you" feeling.

Much of the expression of warmth is non-verbal and the intended recipient is the judge of its authenticity. Thus while observations of mentors' words, actions, and reflections may be of interest, the responses of the children to mentors are perhaps of greatest interest in determining whether mentors' warmth was experienced by the children. The first sub-section below reviews whether and how mentors experienced and acted upon an "I-like- you feeling" towards the children. The second sub-section highlights indications that children experienced warmth from their mentors. And the third sub-section identifies children's observable expressions of warmth towards their mentors.

**Mentors thinking and communicating "I like you"**

Although warmth is very much a feeling and much of its expression may be non-verbal, the case studies reveal a number of mentors' efforts and actions that are consistent with or can communicate an "I-like-you" feeling. These efforts or actions took a number of forms:

- actions taken specifically to befriend the child,
- being physically close to the child,
- "talking, joking and stuff" with the child,
- efforts made to make the child comfortable,
- careful planning of activities for the child,

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- reflections or statements revealing positive feelings towards the child.

Tiara and Joel. Tiara, a third year university student in a teacher education program, thought carefully about how to put Joel at ease. Before meeting him, she stated that she asked herself questions that, in her words "might be going through a grade 6 boy's head" upon meeting her. From the beginning, she said that: " I let him into my life by sharing my life with him" and that "he [Joel] is my little friend." She also stated that she was not "an authority figure" [her words]; instead, she was someone Joel could "go to with his problems." Telling Joel that she considered not going to Quebec to study French because she did not want to interrupt the rhythm of their relationship and telling him that she would miss him when they were apart also told him that he was important to her.

Interview statements made by Tiara such as "I love him already - Our time together is special," and "We don't have a teacher-student relationship, we just have a friendship," further suggested the warmth that she felt towards Joel.

Carey and Dustin. In the beginning of the mentorship between Carey and Dustin, expressions of "I-like-you" were displayed by Carey, a student teacher, when she followed Dustin's interests and allowed the sessions to become whatever Dustin wanted to do, despite the plan she prepared. During the second stage of the mentorship between Carey and Dustin, chatting, giggling, teasing, and sitting close together rather than across the table from one another became the norm. At a later stage in the mentorship, Carey used

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the word friendship to describe her relationship with Dustin. She explained that; "As I got to know him, I see that he's not this genius boy; he's average, he's nice and he's fun." Carey's warmth towards Dustin was accepted and returned with warm gestures. Describing how Dustin greeted her each week, Carey stated; "He's skipping, he's happy and I love him; I really enjoy it." Friendship was the result of giving warmth and inspiring its reciprocation.

Kristen and Cascandra. Before the mentorship between Kristen and Cascandra, Kristen, a second year college student, thought carefully about how to be a mentor to a grade 2 child. Kristen returned to her home town and sought advice from her mother, a teacher aide. She also spent a weekend with her young niece in an attempt to see what it would be like spending time with a six-year-old. Initial planning involved taking deliberate steps to put Cascandra at ease as well. Kristen told Cascandra about her life when she was a child Cascandra's age, the school she attended, and about her grade 2 teacher. Relying on her fondest childhood memories to guide the mentorship with Cascandra, she read Cascandra her favorite book, "I Love You Forever", one her mother read to her when she was Cascandra's age. She engaged in crafts with Cascandra, something else she had done as a child with her mother. Such activities created the space for natural, relaxed chatting, which was the desired effect. Kristen revealed her feelings towards Cascandra, stating; "I love her a lot," "I'm going to miss her when I have to go. I'm getting pretty attached to her" and "I really like her; I really do. She's a sweetheart."

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<u>Eileen and Narissa.</u> In the mentorship between Eileen and Narissa, Eileen, a retired widow living in the school community, often stated that she wanted to help Narissa. She was prepared to invest in helping Narissa. She talked about this as a contribution to the community. Eileen showed warmth by spending time visiting with Narissa and by bringing her gifts and treats. Eileen reported that Narissa parents and grandparents do not speak English and Narissa does not speak her parents' language. Narissa's grandparents do not live in Canada. Eileen speaks English, has grandchildren and is Narissa's mentor. Eileen's simple, reliable presence each week seemed to be enough to make Narissa believe that Eileen liked her. Early in the mentorship, Narissa always hugged Eileen around the legs as soon as she saw her. Eileen acceptance of Narissa's physical affection was the main observable physical manifestation of Eileen's warmth. In interviews, Eileen's verbal manifestations of warmth included; "Narissa is a nice little girl," "a delightful child," and " I quite enjoy it [mentoring]." Such statements reveal a warm "I-like-you" feeling on Eileen's part.

These case studies and the few examples taken from them here, illustrate diverse ways that warmth can be acted upon and communicated by mentors in this kind of program. While the more intimate non-verbal expressions of warmth are more difficult to adequately report in words, it is evident from the examples reviewed here that warmth gives direction to action and spontaneously reveals itself in mentors' conversations with other adults.

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### Children's response to mentors' warmth

In their own ways, each of the children came to show that they believed that their mentors liked them. Intimacy was possible. The mentors were safe people to tell things to. They could be themselves with their mentors in a more unguarded and spontaneous way.

Tiara and Joel. In the mentorship between Tiara and Joel, the bond was strong from the beginning because of their similarities in background. Joel was comfortable telling Tiara about the divorce of his parents when he was very young, and about his relationship with his father. His willingness to share such personal details of his life with Tiara showed that he viewed Tiara as safe and accepting.

Carey and Dustin. For Carey and Dustin, although Dustin was a grade 2 student, Carey initially experienced him as seeming older than his years. As time passed, they became increasingly comfortable together. Dustin began to trust Carey. Admitting that he did not have fun at the farm because "these big boys were chasing us," meant that he felt safe enough to tell her that he was afraid of the big boys, despite the cool, older-than-his-years self-presentation.

Kristen and Cascandra. Kristen and Cascandra experienced an awkward beginning because Kristen did not know what to expect going into the mentorship. During this time Cascandra always appeared happy. Later, if Cascandra was not happy, she did not pretend to be. Over time, Cascandra trusted Kristen enough to tell her secrets such as, "I'm not a very fast learner", and "It bugs me when people call me fat."

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<u>Eileen and Narissa</u>  Eileen experienced Narissa as quiet in the initial stage of the mentorship. Eight weeks into the mentorship, Narissa made another card for Eileen and for the first time, addressed it to "Leen", a nickname she had given her. This represented a shift for Narissa who initially appeared withdrawn and shy.

The children's expressions and actions towards their mentors show that they felt safe and comfortable enough with their mentors to take risks required for further intimacy such as referring to one's mentor by a nickname, sharing personal details of one's life, or admitting fears and insecurities, and so forth.

**The children's expression of warmth**

Each of the children in the case studies observably expressed warmth to their mentors. They gave their mentors personal compliments, greeted them enthusiastically or affectionately when they arrived, and expressed affection towards them physically. These expressions of warmth on the part of the children can be understood as reciprocation of the warmth they had experienced from their mentors.

<u>Tiara and Joel.</u>  Joel told Tiara, a student teacher, that he was excited about her becoming a teacher and that he thought she was going to be a good teacher. In a letter to Tiara, Joel wrote, "I hope you can be my mentor next year." These compliments were important to Tiara because she has a strong desire to be a good teacher, and to be a good mentor to Joel.

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Carey and Dustin. Carey, a student teacher, often commented in the beginning of the mentorship that she had never worked like this with a child before. She wanted Dustin to like her and to enjoy their time together. During the second stage of the mentorship, Dustin looked happy to see Carey. As she put it, "He doesn't ignore me. He comes running out, beaming, bursting with news to tell me."

Kristen and Cascandra. Kristen, a second year college student, noted that Cascandra was "always very physical." Cascandra sat close beside Kristen, held her hand and gave her lots of hugs.

Eileen and Narissa. Eileen, a retired grandmother, living in the school community, stated that after the third session together Narissa greeted her with a hug and did the same when they parted. In a hand-made card that Narissa made for Eileen, she had written, *Roses are red, Honey is sweet and I love you.* Also, when Narissa showed Eileen how to play Hangman, the message Narissa wrote to Eileen was, *You are the best mentor.*

The last two sub-sections have reviewed indicators that the children experienced warmth from their mentors. In the second sub-section there were examples showing that the children trusted that their mentors, liked them and that there was the safety for intimacy. The third sub-section presented examples of the ways the children expressed warmth to their mentors. These expressions can suggest that the children were responding to the warmth they had experienced from their mentors.

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Warmth itself may be a gift given, a way of interacting, or a state of being that resists definition. The first subsection explored warmth on the part of the mentors by identifying some of the mentors' "I-like-you" behaviors and thoughts. These actions or efforts by mentors can be seen to be congruent with warmth or even as extended expressions of the same. Parents are sometimes advised to keep warmth in their relationships with their children by prefacing any command or request with a term of endearment as in "Sweetie, please put your things away." The mentors' specific "I-like-you" actions and efforts outlined in the first subsection may function as metaphoric terms of endearment prefacing later requests for cooperation with academic tasks.

**Stability**

In examining the form and function of stability on the part of the mentors in the case studies, one can begin to appreciate why mentors can be so different from each other and yet all be effective in establishing relationships with the children they work with.

In other words, stability on the part of the mentor would mean that she is consistent, reliable, and predictable. Each of the four mentors were consistent and reliable in coming at the same time each week and treating the children in the same way each week. Although each mentor emphasized different activities or forms of giving as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, each was consistent in what they did or emphasized. Thus while the mentors' preferred activities or ways of proceeding were different, each mentor's

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consistency had the same effect. Each child came to see his/her mentor as a safe place, someone that s/he could go to, someone that s/he could trust. The children repeatedly demonstrated this by telling their mentor secrets, by going to mentors for help and so forth. This sub-section highlights the manifestations of stability on the part of the mentors over the course of the mentorships.

**How the mentors offered stability**

<u>Tiara and Joel</u> Tiara, a third year university student in a teacher education program, displayed reliability to Joel when she treated him the same way each time she saw him. She brought him something each week such as M & M's, Skittles, cookies she had baked, a poster and so forth. She always shared what transpired in her life during the week when they were apart. She consistently read books with him, helped him with his math and other assignments. Tiara's reliability was also established when she returned from Quebec unchanged. When Tiara returned, she and Joel picked up where they left off. Tiara stated that nothing had changed between them. Tiara continued to mentor Joel until the end of the school year, i.e., she did not stop mentoring Joel when the university term ended in April. She continues to demonstrate reliability by continuing to be his mentor today. Tiara became and remains a consistent presence in Joel's life.

Carey, a third year university student, like Tiara, demonstrated predictibility to Dustin by arriving on the same day of each week and at the same time each week. Despite the uncertainty and the lack of feedback she

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experienced in the beginning of the mentorship, she treated Dustin the same way each time she saw him. She often wondered if she was "doing it right" or if Dustin was enjoying the sessions.

She continued to follow Dustin's lead, she continued to follow his interests. Carey witnessed other mentors bringing their students treats and engaging them in crafts. While challenged with what to bring Dustin, she didn't give up and buy him a Kinder Surprise, or try to engage him in craft-like activities which she didn't believe he wouldn't enjoy. Instead, she remained unchanged. By adhering to her convictions about personalizing gifts and activities, she manifested a reliable and predictable way of relating to Dustin. And Dustin was able to become accustomed to Carey's way of being.

Kristen and Cascandra  Kristen, a second year college student, like Tiara and Carey was reliable for Cascandra by coming at the same time and on the same day each week. She consistently shared stories about her family, her boyfriend and college. She always brought craft-like supplies each week so that they could engage in craft-like activities together. Cascandra came to enjoy such activities and even began to expect Kristen to bring a craft with her. The expectation of a weekly craft activity seemed to give continuity to the weekly sessions.

When Kristen detected changes in Cascandra's mood or in her behavior towards her, Kristen stated that she remained the same towards Cascandra, i.e., unchanged in terms of her mood, temperament and so forth. Because

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Kristen's good will towards Cascandra was reliable in spite of Cascandra's mood changes, Cascandra could experience Kristen as a safe, reliable person who could be trusted.

<u>Eileen and Narissa</u> Eileen, a retired widow living in the school community, like the other mentors was predictable for Narissa by arriving on her scheduled day and on her scheduled time each week. She was consistent in terms of bringing Narissa treats and presents for special occasions. In the beginning of the mentorship, Eileen said that Narissa was shy and withdrawn and that her response to this was that she remained the same, and as she put it, "I just carry on."

Eileen did just carry on. Her behavior was consistent. While Eileen did not initiate hugging, she did not reject hugs. Eileen claimed that she did not seek emotional investment since she had already raised her own family. She saw her helping role with Narissa more as a kind of civic duty. Thus while Eileen at 76 years old was purposeful in not being demonstratively affectionate, her "helping" behaviors and manner was consistent and reliable. In response to this constancy, Narissa demonstrated more and more fondness of Eileen.

There are perhaps more mysteries than there are answers to questions about relationships. To what is the child actually responding when s/he gives trust and affection to a non-related adult? Perhaps there are no words that can in fact capture the answer to that question. And perhaps it is in fact only the joy and relief of one adult paying positive attention just to that child,

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repeatedly, week after week. Certainly, there was considerable diversity among the mentors in the case studies. What was common was that each mentor was consistent in whatever they were doing or whoever they were being. If one hopes that children will connect with mentors that they see for one hour once a week, it seems reasonable that it must be easier for them to zero in on and connect with a stationary rather than a moving target. Thus stability on part of the mentors as it has been explored in this sub-section may be a very key support for the development of relationships.

## Caring, Responsibility, Respect and Knowledge

Drawing upon Eric Fromm's work in *The Art of Loving*, Brendtro et al (1956), have identified caring, responsibility, respect and knowledge as four elements that are common to positive relationships. This section revisits the case studies with a view to examining them for the presence, forms or manifestations of these elements in the relationships. It makes sense that positive relationships should be characterized by these elements. This section asks what these elements look like within the constraints and opportunities of a once-a-week mentorship sessions between adults and young children.

### Caring

Brendtro et al defined caring as "concern for the life and growth of the person in the relationship." Simply by coming to serve as mentors in this program, the adults in these case studies showed their willingness to care about the life and growth of another person. As reviewed in the first section of this chapter, the mentors gave to the children in a number of observable

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ways that could support the children's comfort, responsiveness, and sense of
worth. In interviews, the mentors also discussed their concern about the
children's lives beyond the mentorship sessions themselves, thus revealing
the caring that provided direction for their activities in the mentorship
sessions.

Tiara and Joel. Tiara and Joel's relationship was unique in that they
connected so quickly. Joel was older than the other children in these case
studies, a grade six student, and both Tiara and Joel had experienced the
departures of their fathers due to divorce. As Tiara said, "We just connected"
and "We come from the same place."

Beyond this easy identification with Joel, however, Tiara's comments in
interviews showed her concern for Joel's life, growth and road ahead. She
was concerned about the future of Joel's education. Joel was to enter junior
high the following September. At the time of the mentorship he was in a
split-literacy class, a special class for grade 6 students who were below grade
level in reading and language. Tiara said it bothered her that Joel was in a
special literacy class and expressed the following concern.

How could a student be in grade 6 and have problems reading?...I think
he should have had a mentor a long time ago...Its too bad because he's in
grade 6 and he's going into junior high next year. Is he always going to be
at the bottom of the class because nobody noticed that this little boy had
problems reading until now?

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Tiara cared very much about what would happen to Joel and what his life would be like.

Carey and Dustin. Carey perceived that it was important to Dustin's life and growth to have a person who was there especially for him—someone he could talk to about what whatever was on his mind. She said, " By being his mentor, I am the person that's just for him. Nobody else in the class knows me the way he knows me; I am his. ...I'm the person that--it's different than a teacher even because he can talk about what he wants to talk about." Dustin was the grade two boy who seemed older-than-years, was interested in Prowlers, Hummers and hockey, and who was excited about the prospect of shooting gophers. Carey came from a very religious background. Perhaps she intuited that she had to join him where he was in conversation and show interest in what was meaningful to him in order to support his continuing growth through her attention and their dialogue. This appeared to be happening as he took pleasure in reassuring her that he had shot cans and not gophers when he went to the farm.

Kristen and Cascandra. Eight weeks after their mentorship began, Cascandra's usual happy demeanor evaporated. Her grandmother, who had come out to visit after the birth of Cascandra's baby sister, was leaving. Kristen was very concerned about Cascandra's sense of loss. In interviews, Kristen talked at length about how her own mother had carefully prepared her for the arrival of new siblings in her family. She remembered how she felt when her baby sisters were born and the effect that it had on her time with

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her mother. Kristen wanted to support Cascandra through these transitions. She said that it bothered her to see Cascandra upset. She described Cascandra as being "just really mellow."

Eileen and Narissa. Over the course of the their mentorship, Narissa began to show progress in reading. Eileen, a retired widow and grandmother saw her mentor role as one of helper and she cared about performing that role well. To her, this meant helping Narissa improve academically. Once she saw results from her support, she wanted to continue in order to increase Narissa's achievement even further. Gains in reading were important to Eileen because she believes that one needs to be literate in order to function and contribute to society in general. Eileen was concerned about Narissa's scholastic performance and she wanted to help her improve in school. As she stated, "She has improved...She has progressed... But I want to stay with it too; I don't want to just sit chatting and not staying with the reading." Eileen's focus on helping Narissa improve in school work may also have been related to her belief that Narissa's parents didn't speak English. Eileen once said, "You know, I probably talk to her more than anyone. Her mom can't speak English and she doesn't speak her mom's tongue."

As time passed, Eileen learned that Narissa had difficulty with basic facts in math and she offered to help her learn them. She volunteered, "I could easily make up some [questions] and help her a bit with it. " Showing concern for Narissa's life and growth, she added, "It's a long way to go to get

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through school, to get a career or whatever she plans without [knowing her basic facts]."

A willingness to care brought each of the mentors to the door of this program. Once they knew the children better, their caring became very focussed on what they preceived to be the most pressing needs for the life and growth of the children they worked with. Tiara cared about Joel's chances of success in later grades and was still continuing her relationship with him after the school year ended. Carey saw Dustin needing another significant adult to talk to and she worked hard at learning about hockey, Hummers and Prowlers in order to be an engaging conversation partner for him. Kristen was concerned about the sadness in Cascandra's life as she adjusted to having a new born sibling and she worked hard to support Cascandra in having a happy time with her in their sessions. Eileen was concerned about Narissa's future if there was no help with academics at home and so she focussed on school work with her rather than just sitting and chatting. In each of the relationships, the focus of the caring gave direction to the use of time in the sessions.

**Responsibility**

Brendtro et al (1990, p. 62) defined responsibility as being "ready to act to meet the needs, expressed or unexpressed, of another human being." Thus being responsible, in this sense, means both being capable of responding in an appropriate or helpful manner and being able to discern the needs of the

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other person. Below, the case studies are revisited to highlight ways in which mentors appeared to manifest responsibility of this kind.

Tiara and Joel. Tiara, a student teacher, was responsive to both Joel's expressed and unexpressed needs. Joel did not have to express his needs to Tiara. She had an intuitive way of knowing what these were. As she stated, "We just understand each other. We don't talk about our parents being divorced. We talk about sports and doing things. But we just understand each other." Tiara knew what to do and what not to do without being told. She and Joel had a way of knowing, a way of being responsive to one another. On another occasion Tiara said, "I know what he likes and he knows what I like, and I know what he doesn't like and [ I ] stay away from things he doesn't like." In terms of topics for reading or just everyday conversation, she said, "I know what kinds of things he doesn't like to read, and even in subject areas, talking about things."

Tiara perceived the importance of being available to talk to Joel because she recognized that teachers do not have the time to be there for children on a one-on-one basis all the time. As she said, "sometimes you just need an extra person around that's not your parent or your aunts or your uncles, just somebody you can talk to... So we just talk, not just about school things, about life. I'm more like a big sister, I feel, to him."

When Tiara was leaving for the French bursary program in Montreal, she said, "I just feel like I'm letting him down by not being there... I'm going to try and find somebody [someone to mentor him for the duration of the

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course in Montreal]." While Tiara was in Montreal she kept her promise to Joel by writing him letters. When she came back, she kept her promise by returning and remaining his mentor. Tiara showed Joel that she was someone he could count on, someone he could depend on to be there for him. After the school year ended, Tiara continued to see Joel to go swimming and other recreational activities. Perhaps, even in this, she was responding to his need to not have an important person leave his life at this time.

Carey and Dustin. When Carey met Dustin, she was taken aback by the differences in their life experiences. She wasn't knowledgeable about his experience and interest areas. She even wondered out loud, "I wonder if I'm meeting his needs." But Carey perceived Dustin's need to have a significant adult to talk to so she set about equipping herself with the background knowledge that could make her a more satisfying conversation partner for this boy.

Carey thought that Dustin came across as older than his years, more cool or sophisticated. Consequently, she purposefully refrained from offering the age-appropriate treats and craft activities that the other mentors used with their children in the program.

Carey was also responsive to Dustin's expressed needs or wishes. When Dustin asked Carey if she had any books on dirt bikes, automotives and so forth, she sought out these materials for him. She was also flexible with her plan for the mentoring sessions. For example, one day Carey had planned a writing activity and just as they started it Dustin said "Why don't

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we just read and stuff?" Carey complied. On another occasion, Carey said, "Would you like to read?" and Dustin answered, "No, I would rather do this." Again, Carey complied.

Kristen and Cascandra  Kristen believed that Cascandra would need to feel safe and comfortable talking to her if she was ever going to talk to Kristen about anything that was important to her. Consequently, Kristen consistently planned and prepared for craft activities that would provide the space for comfortable free-ranging talk. Kristen explained that it was when they engaged in art projects that they got into, in her words, "big conversations." She said that while she recognized the value of reading with Cascandra, spending time talking was also important. "Today we were talking about games that she plays at recess too, and we can talk about that or we can talk about anything she wants, and those are the times that kids will really open up, and those are the times that they will remember too..." Kristen either guessed or sensed that Cascandra might need to "open up" to someone sometimes. As time passed, Cascandra did open up when she asked for Kristen's help with making the Easter basket and described herself as not being a "fast learner." Cascandra also confided her distress about other children saying that she was fat, and about her grandmother leaving. As a general support to Cascandra, Kristen stated that she was provided encouragement by complimenting her for work she had done well saying "Good Job!" and "I'm proud of you."

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Kristen also responded to Cascandra's explicit wishes about how their time would be spent together. Kristen explained, "Sometimes I'll read to her and sometimes she'll read to me, but it depends on what she wants to do. So I ask her, *What do you want to do?* instead of saying, *Okay, today we are going to do this.*"

Eileen and Narissa. Aside from a focus on Narissa's academic work, Eileen, a 76-year-old retired widow, did not discuss Narissa's needs at length. In fact, Eileen expressed a reluctance to become emotionally invested given that she had already raised her own family. She did however observe that when she said to Narissa, "You know Narissa, you are reading really well," that Narissa "just beamed" with happiness. Eileen offered approval because she genuinely recognized the work Narissa did to be good work.

Given Eileen's somewhat undemonstrative manner, it was a poignant moment in the research when she decided to teach Narissa how to tie her shoelaces. And after Narissa had given Eileen a hand-made card, Eileen remembered to tell Narissa that she had put the card on the fridge. By saying this to Narissa, Eileen was telling her that she valued the card, that the card and Narissa meant something to her. Although Eileen did not consciously set forth to be responsive to a wide range of Narissa's expressed and unexpressed needs, her actions or responses were satisfying for Narissa.

In their own wonderful ways, each of the mentors showed the magic of the responsiveness and play between two people as they read each other's intentions, signals and needs. The examples in these case studies suggest

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how counter-productive it could be to rigidly prescribe how time should be spent by two people in a one-on-one mentoring situation.

**Respect**

Brendtro et al (1990, p. 62) explained respect as having the ability to see an individual as s/he is and to allowing that person to develop without exploitation. Below, each of the case studies are revisited to examine examples of the ways in which the mentors manifested such respect for the children they worked with.

Tiara and Joel. Tiara, a third year teacher education student, brought up the topic of respect in relation to her mentorship with Joel. She stated, " And I respect him", adding "respect is probably more important than anything." Not only did Tiara respect Joel, she was respectful of him when she said," I respect his differences; I respect his difficulties; I respect his limits, what he can and can't do; and I build on that." Tiara allowed Joel to develop and grow without exploitation. She built on what he knew without putting him into an awkward or embarrassing situation. Tiara explained how she worked with Joel on content he found challenging. Tiara stated, " We'll do things that if I know it's hard for him, I'll push him, but I won't push him too much." By doing this, she was respecting his boundaries. She would then ask him if he did not understand a word and would help him to understand it. As she explained,

> For example, I'll tell him *Okay, you don't understand? You don't know*
> *what that word is?* I won't tell him what it is; I'll try different ways of

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having him sound it out... If he still can't get it, I'm not going to make him look like an idiot; I won't do that. I'll just say, *This is the word*, then five minutes later I'll go back and I'll say, *Do you remember what word that is?* And it's good because I've respected his boundaries, because I've respected what he can and cannot do."

Carey and Dustin. Carey, a third year teacher education student, demonstrated respect towards Dustin by waiting for Dustin to ask her for help on skills and areas that he knew he needed to work on. Carey was aware of Dustin's weaknesses and his limitations in writing, but she did not push him. She waited until he was ready to request help from her. It was at a much later stage in the relationship that Dustin asked Carey for help. When he did, Carey was there to help him.

Kristen and Cascandra. When Kristen, a college student, and Cascandra were in the process of getting to know each other, Kristen said, "At first Cascandra was a very friendly and very positive little girl, but she did not want to tell me a lot about herself. So, okay, no problem." Kristen was not bothered by the fact that Cascandra did not immediately open up to her. Instead, Kristen allowed the relationship to develop without exploitation, despite her desire to become comfortable with Cascandra. Kristen gave Cascandra the space she needed and waited until Cascandra was comfortable with her. She later said of Cascandra, "She is willing to open up to me more."

Eileen and Narissa. Eileen, a retired grandmother, respected Narissa's initial display of shyness. Eileen recognized that it could take awhile for Narissa to

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get used to her. Eileen stated that it could be intimidating for a child when the child is told, "This is your mentor." Eileen's response to Narissa's shyness and possible feelings of intimidation was, "So, I just continue on the same way." She respected what Narissa was able to contribute in the initial stage of the mentorship.

In each of these relationships, the mentors' respect entailed perceiving the child's limits, accepting the child's boundaries, and preserving the child's comfort. It often took the form of waiting and displaying acceptance of boundaries. Mentors were very self-conscious about refraining from prying, pushing too far, or causing embarrassment. Each of the mentors were very able to articulate these sensibilities and each spontaneously talked about this aspect of mentorship in their interviews.

**Knowledge**

Brendtro et al (1990, p. 62) explained that, as a key element of positive relationships, knowledge "is not a superficial awareness but genuine understanding of the other's feelings, even if they are not readily apparent."

This section includes examples of how each of the mentors demonstrated knowledge of their child by understanding the child's feelings.

Tiara and Joel. Tiara, a student teacher, learned a lot about Joel during their first session when they discussed their commonalities in family history. She continued to deepen her knowledge of him throughout their time together and this showed in the way she discussed how she worked with him. For example, she showed her ability to read Joel's feelings when she commented,

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"I know that he's reached his limit in reading, he doesn't have to say, *I don't want to read anymore* and I don't have to say, *Do you want to read anymore? I say, Oh, Okay, let's go on to something else.*"

Carey and Dustin. Carey had to work hard to become more able to understand Dustin and his feelings. She had to become knowledgeable about his passions-- Hummers, Prowlers, dirt bikes and hockey. Carey in fact developed a genuine interest in hockey. Once they shared this enthusiasm, Dustin began to let his guard down and became more self-disclosing. For example, he told Carey about being afraid of the big boys who were chasing him and his friend at the farm. After Carey had worked to share his passion, Dustin became more willing to share his fears with her. Then Carey was finally able to say of Dustin, "He's not so different after all."

Kristen and Cascandra. Kristen, a second year college student, intentionally used craft activities to create opportunities for relaxed conversations so that she could get to know Cascandra. At the beginning of the mentorship she felt awkward with Cascandra and sensed that Cascandra also felt awkward with her. Thus the getting-to-know-you conversations were important. Until Cascandra began to open up, Kristen tried to make her comfortable by talking about her own family and sharing stories about what her life was like when she was in grade two.

When Cascandra's grandmother was leaving soon after the birth of her baby sister, Kristen noticed her mood changes and could understand how she felt about these changes in her life. Both in interviews and with Cascandra,

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Kristen talked about her own experience of losing time with her mother when her baby sisters were born.

Kristen also offered reassurance, encouragement, and praise when Cascandra described herself as not being "a very fast learner" or complained about other students calling her fat.

Eileen and Narissa. Eileen, a retired widow and grandmother, was interested in knowing about Narissa's family. As she said "it helps me understand Narissa better if I know about her family." This showed a desire or predisposition to try to make sense of Narissa.

Eileen also showed awareness of Narissa's feelings when she commented on her shyness at the beginning and later noted that Narissa was liking the time they spend together and was beginning to feel at ease with her. Eileen also showed understanding of what made Narissa feel happy when she talked about how Narissa experienced praise for work well done and how appreciative Narissa was of anything special that Eileen did for her.

In revisiting the case studies with the idea of "knowledge" or "the understanding of the other's feelings" as a lens, it becomes more apparent just how important it was to mentors to feel that they did understand the feelings of the children. It seemed that they realized that without such knowledge they couldn't proceed in an intelligent way—in a way that made any sense. Tiara's statements about knowing how Joel was feeling about reading at any given time without asking him showed how pervasive this kind of knowledge is in guiding the action of the mentor. Carey's statement,

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"He's not so different after all," perhaps expressed her relief that she could expect to understand Dustin's feelings. In revisiting the interview transcripts it becomes clear that it is difficult for the mentors to talk about the children at all without also talking about their perceptions of the children's feelings. Mentors are the initiators of the action in the sessions and they are always "reading" the children to determine whether their actions are welcome, appropriate or helpful. Carey and Kristen showed us the efforts mentors can be inclined to make when the children they are working with are difficult or confusing to "read."

## The Dynamics of Mentorship Relationships

In this analysis of case studies of four mentorship program pairs of non-related adults and children, Brendtro et al's (1990) key ideas about relationships were used both to gain insight about what happened in the relationships and to provide elaboration of the meaning of these key ideas in programs such as this one. The key ideas were that:

- A relationships is not a feeling, but results from action and the action or process entails some form of giving

- If helping adults are liked and admired by young people, the young people will be more receptive to the adults' guidance, seek their approval, and be inclined to imitate their behaviours and attitudes

- Helping adults must be able to bring warmth and stability to their attachments

- Common elements of positive relationships are caring, respect, responsibility and knowledge

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Using the key ideas served as a strategy for looking at each case study or each relationship in terms of its parts. Seeing the parts more clearly also provides the opportunity to better understand the whole. In other words, by having the opportunity to discern any relationships among the parts, one can better speculate about the workings of the whole.

Some of the analyses served to highlight the diversity among the four mentorship relationships. For example, there were considerable differences among mentors in terms of what each one observably *gave* to the child and there was great variation in their "I like you" behaviours and actions that were identified in the section on *warmth*. All four of the mentors were shown to be characterized by *stability* in that each one came at the scheduled time and showed consistency in their approach to their child and way of proceeding in each session. Each of the children showed that they experienced their mentors as *role models* by seeking their approval, being receptive to their guidance, and imitating some behaviour of the mentor. And each of the mentors were shown to *respect* the limits of the children they worked with.

The remaining key ideas of caring, knowledge, and responsibility seemed to be the ones that inspired and gave direction to all of the mentors' actions and efforts that were described in the sections on "giving," "warmth," "stability," and "respect." These key ideas also clarify why it makes sense that each of the mentors could do very different things with children and yet each could be equally successful in forming a positive relationship with the

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child. Each of the mentors cared about the life and growth of the child (caring) and each responded in some helpful way to the needs of the child (responsibility)--if the feelings and needs of the child were known. This caring and responsibility gave direction to the way time was spent and what the mentors chose to give to the children. If, however, the mentor could not read the child's feelings (knowledge) and did not have knowledge of the child's life and growth needs (the focus of caring), the focus of efforts and activities became the acquisition of such knowledge. This emphasis was identified in the case studies of Kristen and Cascandra and Carey and Dustin. Both of these mentors made concerted efforts to get to the point where they could more confidently read the child's feelings (knowledge). Without being able to read children's feelings, mentors cannot make sense of what they are doing with the children; in other words, anything they are doing with the children is "nonsense." Thus, without being told to, mentors' first priority is to get to a place where they can understand what the child is feeling (knowledge). Mentors come to a program because of their willingness to care about the growth and life of a child. Thus they remain alert to or constantly seek out knowledge about the life and growth needs of the child to give specificity to their caring. The knowledge of the child's needs and the ability to read the child's feelings constantly inform the mentor's activities and ways of proceeding. To a large extent, this may explain much of the consistency shown by each mentor, the difference among mentors in terms of

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what they were doing, and the fact that each child responded positively to whatever his or her own mentor was doing.

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# Chapter 9

## Closing Discussion

Although volunteer in-school mentoring programs are not widely developed in Alberta, there have recently been a number of efforts to begin such programs. Research has shown that mentors can contribute to the resiliency of at-risk students and can improve students' attitude, self-esteem and achievement in school (Barr & Parrett, 1995; Flaxman & Ascher, 1992; Freedman, 1988, 1996; Lee & Crammond, 1999; Nobes, 1996; Philip and Hendry; 1996; Slavin, Karveit & Wasik,1992/3; Smink, 1990).

Disadvantaged third graders who have failed one or more grades and are reading below grade level are extremely unlikely to complete high school (Slavin, 1994). Volunteer in-school mentoring programs are a form of prevention that offers a low cost way of supporting children in an effort to help them experience success in school and stay in school. In-school volunteer mentoring programs are promising and offer a preventative alternative to past poverty efforts.

Freedman (1996) asserts that mentoring is most effective with very young school aged children. Enthusiasm for learning and increased achievement were found in an evaluation of Excellent Beginnings (Walter, 1985). Studies of school-based mentoring programs have cited increases in student achievement (Flaxman & Ascher, ibid, Lee & Crammond, ibid.). As students spend time with their mentors they develop trust in their mentors. A trusting relationship with a mentor can offer a student a base of support, safety, and

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encouragement for taking risks required for further learning. Mentors serve as role models because when students like their mentors, there is a greater likelihood that they will begin to imitate their behaviors, values and attitudes. Mentorship programs provide the organizational structures for adults in the community to care more collectively for all children and youth.

This study was intended to examine how relationships between non-related adults and children involved in an in-school mentoring program develop and change over time. There are real questions about whether short-term mentor pairs participating in volunteer in-school mentoring programs can qualify as mentoring relationships. Flaxman and Ascher (1992) have suggested that the amount of time the mentor gives to mentoring largely determines how good the mentorship can be. They also emphasize that more qualitative studies are needed to clarify or verify the nature or intensity of mentoring relationships. Lee and Crammond (1999) have observed that research on how non-related adults and young children form relationships is scant. In school-based mentoring programs the timeline of the school year affects the scheduling of the mentorship program, i.e., October to December, and January to April. There are time constraints inherent in such programs, for example, one lunch hour a week with the possibility of missing one or two sessions due to school Professional Development days, Teachers' Convention, school field trips, student/mentor illness. Given such constraints, can mentoring relationships develop?

An additional question about the nature of the relationships devolves from

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possibly diverse understandings of the program's intent. Given that mentors read with children and assist children with school work as part of their session, confusion can exist over the difference between mentoring and tutoring. Can mentoring relationships develop in a period of 8 weeks? Is "mentor" a glorified title for "tutor" ? One issue to be explored was whether or not mentoring programs can both embrace the goals of both forming relationships and supporting reading.

The mentoring relationship is worthy of study given its expected contribution to a child's self-esteem. This helps to explain why tutoring alone is not a sufficient goal or conception of such programs. Freedman (1996) asserts that when the meaning of mentoring is talked about, it is important to protect the one-on-one because without the one-on one, the purpose of mentoring will loose its significance and importance. He states that mentoring is a "close developmental relationship between a more experienced individual and a younger person" (p. 4). Freedman states that by attending to the whole child, and through providing the kind of caring and commitment that the child needs, the mentors serve the children's needs. Thus, findings from this study are intended to contribute to our understanding about how the relationships are created and sustained and how programs work in these contexts.

In this chapter I review what was learned from the analyses and interpretation of the four case studies of mentor pairs and explore implications for program design and support. Directions for future research

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are also included in this chapter. Further, I discuss how the study's findings

relate to other literature regarding self-esteem and young children. Finally, I

share my reflections on the research process and the transformation of my

own understandings about how non-related adults develop relationships with

young children.

## Review of Findings

The four case studies can be understood as stories about what happened in

each of the mentoring relationships. Polkinghorne (1995) has argued that

narrative configuration can be the form of reporting research results. At first

glance the four case studies show how differently each of the mentor pairs

proceeded in terms of their use of their time, favored activities, and the

mentors' intentions and preoccupations. In spite of the differences, each of

the relationships reached a point of being satisfying for both parties.

In order to search for any patterns within and across the four case studies, key

ideas about the formation of healthy attachments taken from the work of

Brendtro, Long and Van Bockern (1990), were used to form questions to ask

of each case study.

Brendtro, et al. have identified a number of key concepts about the formation

of healthy attachments. They caution, however, that there is not a cookbook

or a 10-easy-step approach to relationship building. They assert that

relationship is not a feeling, but an action and this action involves giving.

They claim that a strong sense of belonging fosters children and youths'

receptivity to guidance from adult role models. They also state that warm and

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stable attachments offered by helping adults contribute to the formation of healthy relationships. Finally, they agree with Fromm's (1956) model which shows the four common elements of positive relationships to be caring, respect, responsibility and knowledge. The analysis questions were:

- How was giving enacted by the mentors and the students in each of the cases?

- How did the students show that they were receptive to guidance from their mentors?

- What examples of modeling mentors' behaviors were discernible?

- How did adults provide warmth and stability to the students?

- How did the adults communicate an I-like-you feeling to the students?

- What were the non-verbal manifestations of warmth on part of the mentors and the children?

- How did the students express warmth towards their mentors?

- How did the mentors manifest stability?

- How was caring expressed by the mentors?

- How was responsibility towards the student demonstrated by the mentors?

- How did mentors show respect to the child?

- How did the mentors demonstrate knowledge of the child?

Using these questions to examine the case studies facilitated a thorough and systematic search for patterns, consistencies, contradictions, gaps, and dynamics within and across each of them.

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One outcome of this analysis was the elaboration of each of the key ideas about relationships. Brendtro et al (1990) have provided such elaboration in discussing how helping adults work with children and youth who are in conflict with family, peers, or school. This study has shown how the key ideas about relationships can be manifested in the context of a volunteer in-school mentorship program which is a primary prevention program for all students. Thus, the analysis of the four case studies identified the forms of giving mentors practiced, the ways in which they offered warmth and stability in the relationships, what respect entailed, examples of the mentors' abilities to respond to the childrens' needs, the ways in which the mentors cared for the life and growth needs of the children, and the knowledge mentors had of the childrens' needs and feelings. The analysis did not stop, however, at listing the many different ways in which mentors cultivated the relationships and supported the children. Had it done so, there could be a temptation to use these lists prescriptively or at least as "idea starters" for new mentors. More importantly, beyond this elaboration of the key ideas about relationships, the analysis made it possible to discern a coherent dynamic that operated in all four of the relationships and explains why each relationship could be successful and yet all could be so different from each other. It could be argued that the cornerstone of each of the relationships was knowledge, defined as "not a superficial awareness but genuine understanding of the other's feelings, even if they are not readily apparent" (Brendtro et al, 1990, p. 62). It was knowledge of the child's needs and the

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ability to read the child's feelings that determined the content and rhythm of the mentorship sessions. Once acquired, knowledge, understood as defined above, gave direction and purpose to the forms of giving, warmth, stability, caring, respect, and responsibility demonstrated. And, whether or not mentors articulated it in this way, until knowledge was acquired, mentors' activities were focussed on establishing such knowledge. Without knowledge, they could not proceed in a way that could be satisfying. Two of the mentors, Tiara and Eileen, more quickly and readily felt that they had knowledge of the child they were working with and planned activities to both support the child's obvious needs and to keep such knowledge building. Eileen maintained the emphasis on reading even though Narissa seemed shy at the beginning. She also encouraged Narissa to talk to her about her family as part of each session. Tiara kept reading central but preserved friendly, comfortable talk as a large part of each session.

The other two mentors, Carey and Kristen, found it more challenging to establish knowledge of their children and spent a long time being focussed on activities that could help them to build knowledge. Carey worked hard to learn about Dustin's interest areas of Hummers, Prowlers and hockey. This enabled her and Dustin to talk about topics of common "interest" and through the conversational relationship thereby established, Carey was able to acquire knowledge of Dustin. Kristen focussed on doing art or craft activities with Cascandra to provide the opportunity for informal getting-to-know-each-other talk. Cascandra, always wearing a happy-go-lucky face, was hard to

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read for a long time. Kristen's efforts were successful and Cascandra finally

began to share self-doubts and feelings both verbally and non-verbally.

In general, mentors gained knowledge of their children by making a

concerted effort to learn about the child's needs, interests, likes, dislikes and

so forth. This occurred at the onset of the mentorships. The mentors'

knowledge of the child gave direction to the personalized giving that

transpired over the course of the mentorship. At the beginning of the

mentorship the mentors found it somewhat awkward or challenging to work

with a child they barely knew. They therefore, put their energies and efforts

into getting to know the child. As they spent time with the child, they better

understood the child and were soon able to read the child because of the

feedback they received from the child. As mentors became able to read the

child's feelings and needs, they were able to identify and respond to the life

and growth needs of the child. Once the children felt safe with their mentors,

they began to tell their mentors secrets, tell their mentors things that bothered

them, share their fears with their mentors, ask their mentors for help and so

forth. Mentors' knowledge of their children gave direction to how their

sessions were spent. For example, if a child wanted to just sit and talk, that is

what they did.

     As the mentors became able to read the children, they were able to

direct caring in ways that made sense for the child. In other words, in order to

show caring to the child, the mentor had to engage in activities that were

helpful to the child. As well, it is because the mentors had acquired

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knowledge of the child's feelings and needs, that they were able to respect

the child by honoring the child's limits -- the boundaries in terms of topics,

activities, or challenges.

## Implications for Program Design

This section addresses implications for program design and support.

1. Mentors need to focus on acquiring knowledge of the children they are

mentoring.

The dynamic that undergirded the relationships was that the mentors had to

have knowledge of the children in order to create and sustain a true

mentoring relationship. In order for the mentor to acquire understanding of

the child's needs and feelings, the mentor has to be allowed the freedom and

flexibility to find the way with the child. This means that those involved in

designing mentoring programs must resist the temptation to over prescribe

what transpires during the mentoring sessions. The relationship will find its

way if the mentor acquires knowledge of the child. The mentors in this study

were very good at responding to the child's needs, at personalizing giving to

the child, at caring for the child, at respecting the child and so forth. They did

so in appropriate and yet very different ways. Once a bond is formed and the

relationship is working well, the child will take the risks required for further

learning. Dustin who initially did not like writing tasks later initiated them.

Joel, who initially preferred to sit and talk to Tiara, began to remind her that

they had to get back to work after a period of chatting.

2. Reliability serves to provide stability for the children. To further support

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the relationship, the mentors provided stability for the child by being predictable and consistent. The mentors arrived each week on the same day at the same time and treated the children the same way. The children came to experience their mentors as reliable people they could count on to be there for them.

3. Mentors need debriefing, validation and reassurance. Support for the mentors is also important in school-based mentorship programs. Mentors need to be reassured that the activities they engage in with the children are valuable, important and worthwhile to the children's growth and well being. As well, mentors need to be reassured that time and attention they devote to building the relationships with the children is very appropriate and beneficial. A program coordinator could provide this support.

4. Communication support serves to provide consistency and continuity of mentoring sessions. Mentoring programs require communication support in order to ensure consistency of mentoring sessions. The continuity and rhythm of weekly sessions is adversely affected when sessions are cancelled for school Professional Development Days, Teachers Convention, field trips and mentor and/or child illness. A program coordinator could be responsible for canceling and rescheduling sessions to prevent disruption to weekly contact between the mentor pairs. A coordinator could also encourage mentors to contact the school when they are unable to come for their scheduled sessions.

Communication support could also involve the establishment of rituals for proper closure in the event that a mentor has to conclude the

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relationship earlier than planned. When a mentor cannot complete the program, both the child and mentor may need assistance to arrange a way, a time, and a place to mark the closure of their relationship.

5. Places within the school need to be identified for mentoring sessions. To further support the mentoring program, mentors need to have a place in the school where they can mentor the children. A number of spots in the school could be allocated to mentor pairs for their sessions. These spaces should be free from distractions in order to preserve the pair's one-on-one time together. The library, the music room, the resource room, a loft area or stage are possible spaces that could be designated places for the mentorship program.

6. Mentoring programs are intended to enhance, not replace, other resources needed for students' programs. While this study highlights the potential of volunteer mentoring programs for improving student learning and self-esteem, such programs should not be understood to fill the gap that should be met by other resources such as adequate program funding and staffing to support the educational and material needs of students in schools.

### Directions for Future Research

This section addresses implications for future research in this area.

1. The benefits to mentors and the school community deserve careful exploration. This study examined how the mentoring relationship developed and transformed over time. Many of the benefits to the children were made apparent in the case studies. Further research could examine the outcomes

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for mentors, the community, and the students within the school and community. In what ways do mentors benefit from their involvement in a school-based mentoring program? Do they change their understandings or views about children or young people in general ? Does the community itself move to an acceptance of a more shared responsibility for children and youth? What is the impact of a mentorship program on the climate of a school and on students' experience of school?

2. Mentoring programs need to be studied in other demographic contexts. This study was not conducted in a high needs school with a high level of ethnic diversity. It would be useful to conduct similar studies of mentoring programs in inner-city, high needs schools and in more ethnically diverse schools.

3. Duration of the mentoring relationship. In this research, mentoring relationships were studied in an 8 to 10 week program. It would be informative to study similar mentoring relationships that have a longer duration.

## Supporting Children's Self-Esteem

*One of the most important components of fostering a positive self-image in children is to accept them for who they are and not for what we want them to be, that is, to accept and respect their individuality (Brooks, 1991, p. 39).*

This study has focussed on the nature of the relationships between mentor pairs. Given that the relationship itself is expected to enhance a child's self-

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esteem, part of this closing discussion will consider how the findings of this study relate to some of the other literature about supporting children's self-esteem. Brodkin and Coleman (1996) define a mentor as "one who provides one-to-one support and attention, is a friend and a role model, boosts a child's self-esteem, enhances a student's educational experience" and mentoring as "meeting regularly over an extended period of time with the goal of enabling a special bond of mutual commitment based on the development of respect, communication and personal growth" (p. 21). Lee and Crammond, (1999) state that "a mentoring relationship constitutes a social capital that is critical to human development, because it enables students to develop the necessary attitudes, efforts and conception of self that they need to succeed in school and as adults" (p. 172). While support for both self-esteem and achievement are emphasized in these definitions, actual programs can vary in their emphasis on one or the other. Programs emphasizing the goal of supporting the child's self-esteem typically insist that time with the child or youth be used for recreation and visiting rather than for helping with school work (e.g., Project Mentor, Excellent Beginnings). Thus it is instructive to consider how the relationships in the case studies in this research supported self-esteem even though they were situated in the context of a reading support program.

Brooks, a faculty member of the Harvard Medical School, and Director of the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychology and Psychoeducation in McLean Hospital in Belmont, MA., has conducted numerous self-esteem workshops for educators who work with children over a period of several

years. In his book , *The Self-Esteem Teacher,* Brooks (1991) presents a

framework and strategies for nurturing self-esteem in students. He asserts

that, "If we are to reinforce a child's self-esteem, it is essential that we

attempt to recognize and respond to the unique qualities of each child" (p.

39).

In *The Self -Esteem Teacher,* Brooks describes various strategies teachers

can use to enhance the self-esteem of children. One key idea that he

highlights is the value of establishing an "alliance" with students, particularly

young children. "Alliance" is a term used by Brooks to refer to connection or

attachment. The building of an "alliance" with the child fosters a closer

relationship. Teachers have repeatedly told Brooks that the most effective

way to establish this "alliance" is by arranging individual meetings with the

children in their classrooms. These one-on-one meetings are deemed

powerful in terms of making the child feel special. When children feel that

they are special, there is a greater likelihood that they will learn. When

children feel special this reinforces the feeling of self-respect and belonging.

Brooks asserts that "The meetings fosters a sense of security and attachment"

(p. 52).

Further, when teachers make themselves available to spend time with their

students it provides an opportunity for them to "listen actively and respond

effectively to what their students are communicating" (p. 52-53). This

knowledge of the child enables teachers to establish an "alliance" with each

child. Once this "alliance" is formed between the teacher and child, the

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children begin to go to their teacher for help and take the risks required for further learning. As Brooks reminds us, students with high self-esteem take risks whereas students with low self-esteem flee from risk taking situations because of past experiences with failure.

Other related ideas about building self-esteem in children discussed by Brooks include:

- the creation of a classroom where students feel empowered,

- providing students with choices about their learning,

- offering opportunities for student involvement in decision making,

- respecting the individuality of students,

- the creation of an atmosphere the promotes a sense of belonging,

- providing special times for all students,

- providing praise and positive feedback to all students,

- provisions for psychological space for all students,

- teaching students how to solve problems and help them learn to deal with mistakes.

In the four case studies in this research, each of the mentors deliberately used the mentoring sessions to support and empower the children. Mentors allowed and encouraged the students to participate in decisions about how the sessions would be spent, i.e., the kinds of books to be shared, the kinds of topics to be discussed, and the kinds of activities they would partake in together. By providing the children with the opportunity to make decisions that directly affect them, the children came to think of the time spent together

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as "special." By showing up on the same day and at the same time each week, the children felt that they were special and important to the mentor. The mentors respected the students' boundaries and gave them the space and time they needed to open up and become comfortable with their mentor. The mentors provided praise and recognition to the students when they put forth a positive effort or when they succeeded in some aspect of their school work or leisure activities. The mentors in this study used the mentoring sessions to provide the children with the specific kinds of support, attention and interactions recommended by Brooks.

Kennedy (1989), an early childhood specialist, and past Director of the Berea Children's Center and of a Head Start program, has written about self-esteem and children. Synthesizing a large body of literature related to self-esteem and young children, he identified a number of strategies that contribute to enhancing children's self-esteem, some of which include the following expectations of caregivers:

- be warm towards the children,

- listen to children,

- respect the children and honor their personal privacy,

- recognize children's feelings,
- learn to recognize non-verbal warnings and signals in children,
- deal directly with their fears.

Kennedy's ideas about building self-esteem in young children closely parallel the ideas put forth by Brendtro et al about the formation of positive

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relationships between children and adults. These ideas about warmth, respect, responsibility, giving, caring and so forth were shown in the analysis chapter to be manifested in the ideas and actions of each of the mentors. Thus the findings of this research are congruent with the major ideas of researchers and scholars in the area of self-esteem. This work has shown concretely how, in the context of an academic support program, given the expectation of forming a relationship as a "mentor", non-related adults can spontaneously proceed in a way that supports a child's self-esteem.

## Reflections on the Research

Before I undertook this study I was aware that as a result of engaging in this research my thinking and understanding should be transformed in some way. I had no idea however, that examining the relationships between children and non-related adults in a school-based mentorship program would effect me is such a profound way. When I began this study I had pre-conceptions about how a good mentor should mentor a child. These pre-conceived notions were based on my experiences as a teacher of elementary school children. I thought of a good mentor as a special someone who would care for and respect the child, be a good listener, a friend, a helper with problems and/or school work. A good mentor was someone who would help the child and be there for the child in whatever ways the child needed him or her. The literature reviewed for this study gave further support to these convictions about what constitutes a good mentor. A good mentor could be an older, wiser adult who served as a role model, teacher and friend. A good mentor

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should care, show up each week and on time, and spend quality time with the child. If a mentor was "being" or fulfilling the role or the definition of "mentor" that would mean that s/he was a good mentor. The literature on mentoring relationships was scant – but I had a sense that a mentoring relationship meant that the mentor pair bonded in some special way.

It wasn't until after I wrote the four case studies and began the second level of analysis that I began asking myself what the definition of mentor and mentoring relationship really meant. *Reclaiming At-risk Children and Youth – Our Hope for the Future,* a book written by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Von Bockern informed my deliberations about the meaning of these terms. Brendtro et al identified key ideas about the formation of positive relationships. As I unpacked each case study detail by detail using their ideas as a framework for the analysis, I gained greater understanding of what forming relationships really entails. It became much clearer, for example, what it really means to give to a child in a mentoring relationship and how giving needs to be so different and individual for each mentor pair combination. I saw the powerful impact of having knowledge of the other person in the relationship and how having that knowledge impacts on everything inherent in the relationship. I understand what it can mean to care, what it can mean to feel and experience warmth and how respect can look and feel so different among mentors but still mean respect.

The descriptors and definitions of "mentor" and "relationship" are words I have used for years without giving too much thought to articulating what they

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actually mean. As a result of this experience they have taken on new, larger and more complex meaning. Words can perhaps describe attachment or what it means to bond with another person, but there is something much deeper than words when two people are truly connected.

Before beginning the data collection process I remember thinking about moving through Boostrom's stages systematically, one at a time. I expected to be a video camera, then a play-goer, an evaluator, followed by a subjective inquirer, an insider and finally a reflective interpreter.

I found myself in the first three stages all at once. I was confused and wasn't sure that this was the right way to proceed. As well, I was at different stages with different mentor pairs. During the pilot study, I wanted to write down everything the mentors said and did. Much like a video camera, I felt compelled to capture every word, every moment -- every incident was deemed significant. The pilot study was beneficial because not only did I gain experience observing and interviewing, but I learned that some events were more noteworthy than others. The pilot study also gave me increased confidence with interviewing and observing.

During data collection, I did not feel that I was ever <u>not</u> a play-goer. Moreover, I was comfortable being a play-goer and found it hard distancing myself or going beyond this stage. During the evaluator stage I was guilty of judging how some mentors were spending their time with the child. I recall feeling annoyed, disappointed when mentors said or did something that I would have done differently. I even remember fighting the temptation to

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interrupt a mentor when she expressed a different point of view than my own. On another occasion, I wanted to jump in and tell the child that her mentor did not mean it when she told her that she had not read well one day. When another mentor left without saying goodbye to the child I wanted to protect her from the loss. I remember feeling that I wanted to tell the mentors what to say and do during this stage. When I was in subjective inquirer mode I was more concerned with the "why" and "how" of what was happening and my questions reflected this. As an insider, I could finally see how everything fit together. At this stage I was no longer disappointed in the little segments of conversation that seemed to bother me as evaluator because as an insider I was able to see how all the little pieces belonged and worked as a whole. I found this quite settling and/or comforting. As a reflective interpreter I was finally able to understand the meaning or the significance of how the relationships worked. At this point, I realized how wonderful each relationship was despite the different approaches tried and tested with the children.

It felt awkward moving from writing the case studies to analyzing them using the key ideas from Brendtro et al. When I wrote the case studies, I was concerned with telling the story in a way that would engage my readers. I wanted the readers to feel like they were there. There was a lot of data – I wanted to include everything, similar to video camera I thought that each and every piece was important and worth including. It was hard to discern what parts to include and what to leave out. I recall asking myself – *If I include*

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*this, what will it actually add to the story? If I leave it out, what will be taken away from the story?* The case studies were written over and over again until I felt that each story was told as completely as it had to be so that others could understand what I saw take place over the course of each relationship.

The second level of analysis forced me to take each story apart and try to make sense of the fragmented parts. This felt awkward – much like changing scripts. In order to do a more finely tuned analysis, I had to look in and across each piece in each case in a compare/contrast sort of way. It felt as though I was deliberately deconstructing a very carefully crafted art form. I came to understand that the analysis had to be two-fold -- the first part was descriptive, i.e., *What was it like? What did it feel like? What did it look like?* The second part involved greater depth, that is, going beyond merely describing and telling the story. At this level I was asking myself, *What does this all mean?* I was questioning some of the evaluative feelings I had had about some of the mentors' actions. I came to view them more sympathetically, to recognize each good thing each one had done, and to see the sensibleness of the dynamics of each relationship.

Mentoring relationships are about love, patience, compassion and understanding. They begin from a willingness to care for another. Knowledge of the child is then needed to give meaningful focus and direction to the caring. The way in which these mentors worked with the children is a testimony to the human solidarity that is within the capability of our communities.

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**Appendix A   Sample Interview Questions**

1. How did your session go today?

2. How was the session today different that your session last week?

3. Follow up questions, i.e., Last week you said that (student's name) was interested in/talked about /was concerned about (as related to each case). Would you like to talk about how that went?

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## Appendix B  Mentor Letter

| University of Alberta | Department of Elementary Education |
|---|---|
| Edmonton | Faculty of Education |

Canada  T6G 2G5

551 Education Building South
Telephone (780) 492-4273
Fax      (780) 492-7622

September 24, 1997
Dear (volunteer mentor),

I am a professor in the Elementary Education Department at the University of Alberta and am working with a research team to promote and research volunteer mentorship activities in school communities. You are currently a volunteer mentor in such a program at High Park School. I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to participate in our research on this Program.

At this stage our research is exploratory in that we are trying to determine which data collection approaches will in fact help us see or understand how such programs work and what their discernible benefits are. The following are examples of possible research activities:
- interviews with you
- observing the mentor activities
- asking you to keep a log about the mentorship sessions
- inviting you to share with us reports which you may write for university course work about this experience with the student
- video taping an interview with you
- video taping the mentorship activity in progress

We would confer with you about appropriate occasions or times for observing, interviewing, or video-taping. You would be free to change your mind or withdraw from the research at any time.

In written reports on the research, the actual names of children or adults would not be used. Any videotapes would only be viewed in their entirety by the researchers. Brief excerpts from these might be used in workshops with teachers when presenting on the topic of volunteer mentorship programs.

Can you please complete and return the attached consent form to indicate your decisions about your participation in the research. If you agree to be photographed or video taped, can you please complete the attached release form. Thank you for considering this request. If you have any questions about this project please call me at 436-9714 or 492-4273 x238.

Sincerely,

Julia Ellis
Associate Professor

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**Appendix B    Consent Form**

Name                _____

Address             _____

                    _____

Telephone           _____

      Are you in a university or college course with:
          Heather Blair      Yes___ No ___
          Sherrill Brown     Yes ___ No ___
          Jill McLay        Yes ___ No ___

I do agree to participate in Dr. Ellis's research on Volunteer Mentorship Activities. This entails:

Please check ___ Yes or No:

Yes ___ No ___ Being interviewed
Yes ___ No ___ Having the activity observed by a researcher
Yes ___ No ___ Completing or sharing written records of my
              experience/observations
Yes ___ No ___ Being video taped or photographed in the activity or an interview

Signature _____ Date _____

OR

I do not agree to participate in Dr. Ellis's research on Volunteer Mentorship Activities

Signature _____ Date _____

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**Appendix B   Release Form**

Re: "Volunteer Mentorship Activities"

Location:      High Park School

I hereby authorize and give full permission to the Julia Ellis research team to make and reproduce such audio and/or visual recordings of my self, whether by still photograph, motion picture film, videotape or other mechanical as may be available to record me and consent to the use of this film or videotape for viewing and publication purposes.

Date:                _____

Signed:              _____

Name (please print):   _____

Witness:             _____

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## Appendix C     Child Letter

University of Alberta
Edmonton

Department of Elementary Education
Faculty of Education

Canada  T6G 2G5

551 Education Building South
Telephone (780) 492-4273
Fax          (780) 492-7622

September 4, 1997

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a professor in Elementary Education at the University of Alberta and am researching volunteer mentorship programs that provide enriched instruction in elementary schools. Since January 1997 we have been working collaboratively with High Park School to provide volunteer mentors for as many students as possible and to research these program activities. I am writing to ask whether your child can participate in our research this year.

To do the research we may occasionally interview your child, your child's mentor and your child's teacher. We may also wish to videotape some of the work sessions your child and child's mentor have together. We want to study how teaching and learning take place in these sessions, how the children experience their time with mentors, and what the benefits are.

If your child is shy or unwilling on the day of an interview or videotaping, he/she will not be made to participate. In any written research reports, we would not use the real name of the students, teachers, or mentors. Only the researchers would view any videotapes in their entirety. We may wish to use short 2-minute excerpts from some videotapes in workshops we conduct with teachers to teach them about these programs. You or your child would be free to change your mind and withdraw from the research at any time.

Can you please complete and return the attached Consent Form to indicate whether you give permission for your child to participate in the research. Can you also complete the enclosed Release Form if you give permission for your child to be video taped. If you have any questions about this research please call me at 436-9714 or 492-4273 x238. Thank you very much for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Julia Ellis
Associate Professor

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**Appendix C**         **Consent Form**

Name                _____

Address             _____

                    _____

Telephone           _____

I do give permission for my son/daughter _____ to
participate in Dr. Ellis's research on Volunteer Mentorship Programs.

This entails:

Please check ____ Yes or No:

Yes ____ No ____   My son/daughter being interviewed
Yes ____ No ____   My child's partner in the activity being interviewed
Yes ____ No ____   My son/daughter being videotaped in the activity or an interview


Signature _____ Date _____

OR


I DO NOT give my permission for my son/daughter to participate in Dr. Ellis's
research on Volunteer Mentorship Activities.

Signature _____ Date _____

## Appendix C  Release Form

Re: "Volunteer Mentorship Activities"

Location:    High Park School

I hereby authorize and give full permission to the Julia Ellis research team to make and reproduce such audio and/or visual recordings of my minor child_____, whether by still photograph, motion picture film, videotape or other mechanical as may be available to record him/her and consent to the use of this film or videotape for viewing purposes in educational workshops or conferences.

Date:              _____

Signed:            _____

Name (please print):   _____

Witness:              _____

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**Appendix D     Master List of Key Words/Phrases from Tiaria's Transcripts**

May 26, 1998

*In a nutshell: A match made in heaven – he's just my little friend – We just*

*understand each other*

1. We just clicked
2. We just understand each other
3. When you mentor a child, you get to know him like a person (connection – similar to Kristen and Dustin
4. He's just my little friend
5. Getting to know Joel – how tiara broke the ice
6. Comfortable – music- intimacy
7. Tiara felt comfortable right from the beginning
8. Respects him
9. Mentor versus teacher
10. Tiara's story - background
11. He's always on my mind
12. Genuine concern for him
13. Feedback from Joel
14. Empathy, compassion
15. School improvement

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May 26, 1998

*In a nutshell: I want him to like it*

1. Time is a constraint
2. "I want him to like it"
3. Follow his interests – it varies, follow his needs
4. It's good for me – I benefit too
5. Intimidated – Stage 1
6. Improve in school
7. Mentor concerns – mentors need someone to think out loud with, need for a program coordinator (recommendations)
8. How she gets feedback that Dustin likes it – how she interprets Dustin's experience
9. The one-on-one is important
10. Dustin in another context – it is good to see him in another context (interested in the whole child)
11. Don't prescribe our sessions – don't tell us how to spend the hour – flexibility, spontaneity (once comfortable, they don't want to be told how to mentor)
12. What it means to be a mentor
13. Friendship
14. Kristen's background – describe Kristen through her own eyes – how 2 people from such diverse backgrounds can be so well matched, how they find a place together
15. Distraction – group
16. Continuity – chit-chat, catch up
17. Planning the sessions
18. He is always on my mind
19. Modeling
20. Student admits not knowing
21. Mentoring means intuitively "just knowing"
22. Being a caring mentor involves being sensitive to the feelings and sensitive re. Asking about life/personal stuff – being nosy – mentors don't want to be perceived as nosy. Mentors trod gently when it comes to family/home stuff
23. Music – the child says what he thinks, giving and receiving, very comfortable, wants to give back to the mentor, intimate
24. Transition from Stage 1 to Stage 2
25. Mentors feelings – how the mentors experience it

May 26, 1998

*In a nutshell: Trust is the most important thing – trust is the foundation of all relationships*

1. Comfortable – she is comfortable with me now. Indicator – because Cascandra is sharing her life with her, her family, personal life, this is how Carey interprets Cassandra's level of comfort
2. How Carey did it. How this happened – how, why the relationship took off. Carey showed her pictures of her sisters. Carey needed this to happen right from the beginning, this was her focus
3. Mentor planning – thinking about how she will spend the time with Cascandra, Flexibility – anticipating Cascandra
   the effectiveness of mentor planning, how she responds to what Carey brings in,
4. Trust – how she was okay with that – how she didn't push, force it
5. Stage 1 – Uncomfortable – Awkward
6. Carey's background, how Carey interprets the world, Carey's story and why she interprets life / the world the way she does
7. What it means to Carey to be a mentor. Carey's conception of mentor
8. Following Cascandra's interests and needs
9. Carey's thought about Cascandra - how she talks about her and perceives her
10. Mentoring – both parties gain – Carey benefits too
11. Cascandra feels in control
12. Asks for help
13. Carey's planning – thinking out loud
14. Mentor's expand child's horizons – show them stuff they have never seen before
    Cascandra weaving
    Jamie baking cookies – " no they don't just come from a box on the store shelf" (Blanche)
      Narissa knitting & it works both ways, Kristen learns from Dustin too
15. Mentor is genuinely concerned for Cascandra
    both Eileen and Carey are very concerned for the child's life away from school, interested
16. Mentor notices changes in Cascandra's spirits – knows her well.

## Appendix G     Master List of Key Words/Phrases from Eileen's Transcripts

May 26, 1998

*In a nutshell: If I can help her then that's good. An example of cross cultural misunderstanding*

1. The mother is a distraction
2. Element of reservation in her voice – afraid of getting to close to Narissa
3. Sees the role of mentor as one of helper
    a. How she helps her
    b. the changes, the benefits she sees
4. Interest, curiosity about Narissa's family, a strong desire to make sense of Narissa's family,
    wants to know more, but afraid to ask and doesn't want to pry, doesn't want to appear nosy
    feels that if she knows more about Narissa, she can put the missing links together
5. Makes a lot of assumptions about Narissa's family
6. Mentor's like to talk about (brag) their student's strengths
7. How they spend time together – the relationship
8. Mentors need support, they need to be told they are helping and making a difference,
9. Relationship changes
10. Thinking about the child when she is away from her
11. Feedback from Narissa
12. Mentor planning
13. Follow the child's needs and interests
14. Desire to contribute – to make a difference
    *mentors have a strong desire for mentoring to be one-on-one. They almost seem to resent distractions and view them as an interruption
15. Cross cultural misunderstandings – assumptions
16. Need for a coordinator
17. Child asks for help
18. "She enjoys the time spent" Narissa's mother doesn't speak English and Narissa doesn't speak her mother's tongue, so the time spent with her mentor is especially important, her mentor is someone to share things with and to talk to
19. Giving gifts – intimacy
20. Recognition

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## Appendix H    Themes from the Four Case Studies

\* Major point made by mentor
- Important point made by mentor
O Minor point made by mentor

| Tiara | Kristen |
|---|---|
| \* friendship –a mentor is a friend <br> \* our time is special <br> \* I've formed a bond with him <br> \* respect <br> \* different relationship between mentor and student and teacher and student <br>   \* getting to know the child as an individual <br>   \* sharing, giving and receiving <br> O putting the child at ease <br> O increased self-confidence <br> O improvement in school work <br> O mentors like, want & need feedback <br>   - putting the child at ease | \* intimidation, awkward beginnings <br> \* self doubt <br> \* mentors want children to enjoy the sessions <br> \* mentors want children to like them <br> \* individualizing the mentorship makes a difference <br> \* getting to know the child as an individual <br>   \* have to follow students interests. <br> *Kinder Surprise won't work for all children* <br> \* our time is special <br> \* different relationship between mentor and student and teacher and student <br>   \* sharing, giving and receiving <br> O mentors see themselves as helpers, want to help the child learn & improve in school <br> O flexibility matters, go with the flow, be willing to change the plan, let student lead <br> O planning makes a difference and should be based on students needs, likes, interests, dislikes <br> O putting the child at ease <br> O improvement in school work <br> O mentors want and like feedback <br> O reciprocity <br> O respect <br> - increased self-confidence <br> - risk taking, the mentor is safe, telling secrets, admits weaknesses <br> - student enjoys learning |
| **Eileen** <br><br> \* wants to help her learn & improve in school <br> O improvement in school (reading) <br> O increased self-confidence <br> O mentors want and need feedback <br> - have to follow student's needs and interests <br> -recognition and praise <br> introducing the child to new things (knit) <br> - risk taking, the mentor is safe, admits weaknesses <br> - individualizing the mentorship makes a difference | **Carey** <br> \* trust <br> \* intimidation, awkward beginning, uncertainty <br> \* both parties benefit <br> \* sharing, giving & receiving <br> \* risk taking, the mentor is safe, telling secrets, admitting weaknesses <br> O teaching new things (paper weaving) <br> O recognition and praise |

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