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The Relationship between Mentoring and Leadership

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The Relationship between Mentoring and Leadership

A Thesis

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Master of Arts

By

Amanda Pickett

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To the families that made, raised, and supported me: you gave me the means to create a

beautiful life and the strength to surmount any challenge. And, to Dr. Naydan, who gave me

the courage to embrace a new path and claim a place for myself in the world: you gave me the

inspiration and drive to pursue a passion-filled future. Lastly, to all the mentors and tutors in

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Abstract

This study is a mixed-method research project designed to assess and understand the relationship between mentoring and leadership, specifically in regard to the acquired benefits, skills, and methods that are gained through this work. Moreover, this study also explores the overlap between mentoring and leadership developmental programs. The results suggest that mentoring is a leadership role which yields significant personal and professional outcomes, transferable skills, and learning opportunities for both mentors and the students that they work with. The results also demonstrate a relationship between mentoring and leadership development within the West Chester University Writing Peer Mentor Program through the benefits and acquired skills that mentors experienced which included increased sense of confidence, community, and institutional knowledge. While more research, with a greater population of participants, is needed to understand the unique impact and influence of mentoring as a leadership role on first-generation students, this research contributes to the growing body of literature that helps program administrators to design impactful and highly effective developmental programs for student engagement. Moreover, this research also provides insight for students aspiring to assume leadership roles.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The Writing Mentor Program

The West Chester University Writing Peer Mentor Program is an academic support component of the developmental WRT123 introductory writing course. In this program are students who were nominated for the role by a West Chester faculty member, completed the interview process with Professor Blake, are in good academic standing, and are currently or were previously enrolled in a 1-credit mentor training course. The training course, WRH197: Becoming a Writing Peer Mentor, teaches students on best theories and practices that surround mentorship and working with entry-level writing students. Throughout this course, students participate in collaborative discussion as they grow their role as mentors working in the field with students. While enrolled in this course, students are simultaneously tasked with mentoring WRT123 students in small groups of two students per session, establishing a cohort among other mentors who are assigned to work with the same professors of WRT123 courses.

WRT123 is a developmental writing course that is intended to help students in need of additional academic and personal support. Students can choose either WRT120 or WRT123 as their first West Chester University general education writing course; however, only WRT123 offers the extra support of mentoring assistance. While students can elect to enroll in the course, they are required to meet with mentors as part of their requirements for WRT123. Hence, mentors are tasked with supporting students as well as helping professors connect with and educate their students. In many ways, mentors serve as role models and university leaders to the students who rely on their advice, knowledge, and institutional expertise. Within each session, mentors engage first-year writing students in establishing a writing process and serve as university-based guides to undergraduate student life and success. Mentors can elect to serve as

many terms as they are a student at West Chester University after they finish the initial training course of WRH197. Upper-level mentors, or those who have served beyond a year, qualify as Senior Mentors—in addition to mentoring WRT 123 students, these students work with the Program Coordinator to advise new mentors on the process of mentoring.

However, even at the entry-level mentor role, mentors perform a variety of administrative tasks that contribute to the benefits and skills that they gain as leaders through their experience in this program. In addition to organizing and managing their mentoring schedule with students, mentors are required to keep detailed and current reports on their sessions. If students run late or do not attend their appointments, mentors are also required to send reminders via follow-up emails to their students. Additionally, after each session, mentors file reports that track the attendance, participation, preparedness, and struggles of their students throughout the session for WRT123 professors to use to develop their courses and support their students' success. Even though the reports are short, they provide a structure of awareness to professors that allows them to best serve their students. Moreover, as student employees of West Chester University, mentors are also responsible for acquiring state and federal clearances before they begin working with students and must keep track of their hours to submit to payroll bi-weekly. These experiences lend to a mentor's sense of responsibility, professionalism, and leadership. In their role, they are employees of the university and, through administrative tasks and expectations, they establish themselves as professionals who must punctually, responsibly, and authoritatively complete their work and adhere to the requirements of the position.

Therefore, mentors of this program act as university resources to the students they serve but the program also enables significant personal, academic, and professional growth for mentors through their leadership experience within the role. As the majority of the WRH197 course's

grading is dependent on mentors' ability to complete their mentoring and administrative work with students, the program is extremely dedicated to helping mentors gain transferable skills by honing their leadership skills, qualities, and behaviors.

Leadership

Across programs and disciplines, the concept and development of leadership is difficult to articulate and design. As the meaning of leadership is perceived differently in academic and business settings, so too is the approach to generating and developing leadership through effective programs and pedagogy. Most scholarship on leadership originates in the fields of business and management and aims to explore leadership as either 1) skills that can be acquired (Mumford et al., 2000), 2) a trait (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991), and/or 3) a behavior (McGregor, 1960), for the purpose of developing programs that can effectively foster leadership through assessment, support, and challenge of individuals (McCauley et al., 2010).

Leaders and Identity

Whereas leadership scholarship focuses primarily on the yields of leadership development programs and specific outcomes for leaders, scholarship surrounding mentoring and tutoring tends to disregard the experience and benefits to mentors outside of their effectiveness to support and advance students and institutional goals. Hence, mentoring remains unrecognized as a collaborative dual-learning opportunity that helps both mentors and students to grow and develop personally, academically, and professionally. Identity, as Denny (2010) explores throughout his text, includes race, class (Denny 2018), sexual-orientation, gender, religion, and/or political affiliations. While mentorship and identity are put in relation, they are not directly assessed for the resulting skillset and significance to mentors. In contrast, the *Peer Tutor Alumni Project* (n.d.), which serves as one model for this study's method and design,

considers long-term implications and takeaways of tutoring and mentorship work in alumni professional success, but does not consider identity or its role in individual mentorship experience. In neglecting to consider how identity and experience factor into the work that mentors do, scholarship fails to recognize the additional learning benefits and outcomes that exist within that role for generating potential leaders and more effective programs.

Although scholarship does address relationships between mentor experiences (Denny, 2010), identity, and critical institutional outcomes of such work (Denny, 2010), it neglects to consider the potential leadership and professional skills that stem from mentorship work among diverse identities. Through tutor narratives, Denny (2010) analyzes the implications of identity in writing center work. Specifically, Denny (2010) explores how tutor identity impacts teaching, learning, and dynamics of power and agency within the writing centers. However, these functions of identity not only play a role in writing center work and tutor experience, but are also applicable to that of mentorship and leadership. Both mentoring and leadership programs must also negotiate multiple tasks and dynamics, including dynamics related to power, in order to effectively develop their identities as leaders. In reference to this study, Denny (2010; 2018) reveals the benefit in understanding the valuable role of identity and power dynamic negotiation in mentor work as a leadership and professional building exercise because it enables mentors to be self-reflective and to adaptively problem-solve. These foci reveal a significant gap in scholarship about how the role and dynamic of mentors as individual and unique leaders adds to not only their own growth but that of their institution, their mentees, and their community.

Leadership as Skills

Because leadership is not indicative of one specific role, the opportunity for individuals serving in such positions to acquire certain benefits and/or skills is variable according to their

experience and practice. Mumford et al. (2000) explore the development of skills as a function of leadership and thus consider which skills constitute leadership skills as well as how emerging leaders acquire those skills through experience and "developmental interventions" which reinforce training (p.92). According to Mumford et al. (2000), the most common skills that are related to or attributed to leadership and leadership development are implementation (conceptual knowledge), basic-problem solving (evaluating and organizing goals), complex-creative problem solving (evaluating solutions and principle knowledge), and complex organizational (wisdom and awareness) skills (p. 91). However, as emphasized by Mumford et al. (2000), leadership and acquisitions of skills do not simply occur unprompted. Leadership and relevant skills typically develop in phases over time as leaders undergo experiences and challenges that shape their understanding and ability to develop solutions and outcomes in complex circumstances that arise.

The developmental interventions that Mumford et al. (2000) recognize as critical factors in leadership include assignments and/or practice that incorporate "environmental opportunities," "learning through interaction," "intellectual involvement," and "challenging problems" (p. 92). Moreover, when considering how leadership skills are fostered through interaction with diverse environments, situations, and people, Mumford et al. assert that "Initially, people must acquire base concepts, learn what is expected of them, and apply these concepts in well-structured, relatively concrete situations" (2000, p. 89). Hence, leadership is not solely a product of programs and/or pedagogy, but rather a complex process which fosters skills that are acquired through rigorous and intellectually challenging training and practice.

Leadership as a Trait

In contrast to Mumford et al. (2000), Kirkpatrick and Locke's (1991) scholarship on leadership development seeks to understand the relationship between traits and characteristics that typify leaders. The noticable difference between a skill and a trait lies in the function of skills to be learned, acquired, and developed, whereas traits are intrinsic. Across disciplines, many scholars have attempted to categorize leadership as trait oriented—that which develops as a product of specific personalities and individuals. Hence, Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) aim to analyze leadership within the field of management as a product of traits and recognize the role that traits play in generating successful leaders. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) found that the six traits that distinguish leaders from non-leaders are "drive, the desire to lead, honesty/integrity, self-confidence, cognitive ability, and knowledge of business" (p. 49). Therefore, traits that are characteristic of leaders are also suggestive of high effort and/or achievement levels. However, while Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) maintain that traits are significant to leadership, they also assert that "traits only endow people with the potential for leadership. To actualize this potential, additional factors are necessary" (p. 56). Therefore, traits, while intrinsic and significant, only serve as the starting point of developing leaders. Moreover, every person applies these traits in unique ways and does not need to possess all six to become an effective leader.

Leadership as a Behavior

Unlike the scholarship described above, which conceives of leadership as a combination of skills and traits, McGregor (1960) assesses leadership as a behavior within the context of business because of the role's incorporation of management and task-orientation. Additionally, through the scope of enterprise and industry, McGregor (1960) analyzes the vast array of needs and conditions that prompt leadership behavior. Potential leaders possess psychological, social,

safety, and self-fulfilling needs as individuals that must be met and considered in order to produce effective leadership behavior (McGregor, 1960, p. 31). Hence, leadership as a behavior is inclusive of a variety of responsibilities, actions, and tasks but is most effective when the leader is being considered and supported by additional factors such as developmental programs and instruction.

Fostering Leadership within Programming

As illustrated in leadership scholarship and research, leadership development programs are particularly valuable within both education and business contexts because of their potential to generate exceptional leaders who not only further the goals and values of their institutions (Bowers et al., 2016), but can also positively impact their society (Kezar, 2012). A development program is a multifaceted program that expands on the ability, understanding, and skill of emerging leaders to perform their role, through theoretical, pedagogical, and practical frameworks. As further explained by Lunsford and Brown (2017), leader development focuses primarily on skills and traits of a specific individual pre-designated to lead, whereas leadership development focuses on "intrapersonal or leader traits and skills needed" for leaders to work and connect with others (p. 264).

However, much like the definition of leadership, the exact model and objective of leadership development programs varies according to specific positions and needs of the communities that leaders work with. As noted in "A Teachable Approach to Leadership" (Leonard, 2017), "Many of the influential models for leadership . . . were identified as management-development models" (p. 246). Similar to McGregor's (1960) research on leadership as a behavior that emphasized management and tasks-completion as the source of success, leadership development programs originated within the field of business as outcome

oriented. Since the 1970's, there has been a significant shift from the approaches and objectives among leadership development programs in business and management fields (McGregor, 1960; Anderson, 2009). Moreover, leadership development has subsequently grown and branched out into education and humanities fields. However, as expressed by Anderson (2009), while there is a use for these models within leadership development, using solely management-based programming is in many ways counterproductive in educational settings because of the diverse needs, identities, and learning capabilities of both the leaders of educational institutions and the student communities that they work with.

According to Avolio (2016), today leadership programs and research consider the following key inquiries: 1) what constitutes a leader? 2) what are leadership roles? 3) how do programs develop leaders? and 4) what can leaders provide to their organizations and/or institutions? Regarding leadership pedagogy and program development, contemporary scholarship emphasizes the role of theory (Leonard, 2017), environments (Padilla et al., 2007), mentoring and coaching (Dugan & Komives, 2007), as well as goal orientation (Culbertson & Jackson, 2017) in evolving leaders, in addition to their self-efficacy and program success. Research has proven that leadership development programs should not only consider the outcomes and benefits that emerging leaders can provide for those they serve and support, but the potential for leaders as individuals and professionals to cultivate their skills, experiences, and identities through their practical, pedagogical, and theoretical education generated in these programs. This is made evident by McCauley et al. (2010), who explore the efficacy of leadership development program models founded on practices in the field of business and management, to generate successful and skillful leaders who exact positive outcomes in their institutions, communities, and careers (McCauley et al., 2010). At the core of these programs and

models, as well as the shift from management style, is the assertion that "all people can learn and grow in ways that make them more effective in the various leadership roles and processes they take on. This process of personal development that improves leader effectiveness is what we understand leader development to be about" (McCauley et al., 2010, p. 3). Therefore, leadership is not exclusionary of any one field, personality, or identity. Anyone can develop into a leader with the support of a multi-faceted program that challenges them to employ many diverse strategies and theories as well as grow their skills and perception of self.

Although there are factors that contribute to emerging leaders seeking out such roles, leadership development programs are designed to foster individuals at every level, inclination, or skill set, to achieve their own potential. Hence, anyone can be a leader if they choose to positively grow, learn, and engage within their programs and positions (McCauley et. al, 2010; Dugan & Komives, 2007). However, as explained by Bowers et al. (2016), leadership qualities and attitudes can affect the outcome for those that they support and lead. Positive leadership, which embodies vast skills and characteristics involving communication, organization, and professionalism, in turn yield more positive outcomes. Hence, McCauley et al. (2010) stress three core elements of leadership program development that support leader growth and experience: 1) assessment, 2) challenge, and 3) support. Assessment, the theory-based element, allows for potential leaders to bridge their understanding of their current self and their ideal self as well as provides clarity about strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth within each individual. Challenge, the practical element, enables leaders to learn through practice by giving them exposure to diverse perspectives, circumstances, and environments. Lastly, support, the pedagogical element, provides leaders with the confidence, knowledge, and clarification to grow

in their abilities and practices. Whereas leadership development programs are unique in their use of these three elements, most utilize this model in some form to generate leaders.

However, despite the extensive research about leadership and related programs across fields of business, management, and the sciences, specifically in regards to how leaders are created, what constitutes a leader, and what models support their growth and success, scholarship neglects to consider how leadership is generated and modified in specific roles that do not directly identify as leadership positions or programs, programs such as mentoring and tutoring. Instead, the focus is on generalized program methods and strategies. Leadership scholarship rarely explores how individual identity and interests, specifically in reference to career and professionalism, factor into the diverse representations and outcomes of leadership philosophy, methodology, and career trajectory. Most contemporary leadership research aims to understand the interconnections between leadership and the relationships (Bowers et al., 2016), identities (Priest & Middleton, 2016), motivations (Rosch & Villanueva, 2016), and valuable traits (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) of the individuals who fulfill the role of leader. The research ultimately suggests that leaders are mutli-faceted and complex but focuses solely on how individual factors influence their success and efficacy (Rosch & Villanueva, 2016; Bowers et al., 2016). Additionally, these factors of individual leader experiences are primarily considered within scholarship only in reference to the outcomes they generate for their institutions, communities, organizations, and beyond.

The unique identities, experiences, benefits, acquired skills, and relationships of leaders as well as the potential for leadership in one-to-one mentoring roles are not connected or explored within contemporary scholarship through their professional ambitions or applications. Moreover, leadership is rarely explored within the context of the one-to-one mentoring or

tutoring roles which, while vital to many educational institutions, is not considered for its potential to generate leadership development or the ways in which it utilizes similar methods. Hence, leadership—which utilizes extremely diverse individuals, pedagogies, and programs— needs to be considered for its value as a unique and multi-faceted learning opportunity which helps people develop not only as leaders but as individuals and professionals in addition to supporting their institutions, industries, and communities.

Mentoring and Tutoring

In contrast, research in tutoring and mentorship programs within higher education, such as the mixed-method studies conducted through the University of British Columbia by Mary DeMarinas et al. (2017) and Peggy Grant (2001), primarily focus on the effects, relationships, and outcomes of mentorship or tutoring on students and their institutions which do fundamentally relate to that of leadership, but which are not explored explicitly in terms of leadership, as in the literature reviewed above. These studies on students in tutoring and mentoring roles do show, in many ways, how both tutoring and mentoring and traditional leadership roles, such as those held by business leaders, utilize similar methods, goals, and skills as many leadership development programs, including that of McCauley et al. (2010). Both leadership and tutoring and mentoring programs develop their students through the McCauley et al. model which incorporates three core elements, including assessment, challenge, and support.

What does get studied in the context of peer tutoring and mentoring is the effect on the students who are tutored and mentored. In the study completed by DeMarinas et al. (2017), research showed a correlation between mentoring and leadership outcomes and goals in an institutional context through measuring the effects of mentorship on student retention and increased academic performance. While mentoring has proven to be an effective means of

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achieving institutional goals to facilitate student success (DeMarinas et al., 2017), scholarship surrounding mentorship in higher education rarely assesses the outcomes, skills, and leadership experience that the role provides to mentors. Moreover, though peer mentorship has many parallels to leadership practice, theory, and pedagogy, it has not been explored in-depth through research in relevant fields. Mentorship is more commonly acknowledged for its effect on university and/or institutional pedagogies and expectations as well as the success and leadership of students rather than the mentors (Lane et al., 2019).

In one of the rare studies that considers the effect of peer tutoring on the tutors themselves, Grant's (2001) study analyzes tutor experiences and outcomes which, like the leadership development model emphasized by McCauley et al. (2010), has tutors reflect and strive to understand themselves as individuals, the results of their work, and their methods within the role. This study emphasizes the similarities between not only tutor and leadership pedagogy and learning experiences, but also how the roles impact individuals serving within informative, advising, and somewhat authoritative roles. The research study performed by Handsford et al. (2010) supports these claims in asserting that mentoring and tutoring are impactful learning opportunities which positively contribute to many institutions and industries. Overall, while mentorship and tutoring are not regarded or modeled as a leadership role, they do function as such and produce similar benefits, skills, and outcomes.

Although peer mentoring and peer tutoring in higher education are two different roles, which in many cases require different responsibilities, they do overlap in strategies and goals to support students. Whereas tutoring requires more subject knowledge and specialization, mentors can also serve as tutors within their position to help students acclimate and achieve as people, academics, and evolving professionals. Additionally, tutors and mentors commonly

utilize the one-on-one style outlined by Weisblat and Sell (2012), but, as employed by the West Chester University Writing Peer Mentor Program, mentoring can take place in small groups.

As further elaborated by Nowacek and Hughes (2015), tutors, much like mentors, act as institutionally experienced "expert outsiders" who bridge educational gaps between content and student understanding. In applying their personal knowledge, identity, and institution-based experience, they support student success and help students to feel like they belong in the community. Additionally, in accord with the teaching philosophies and pedagogies of Freire (1970), Shaughnessy (1977), and hooks (1994), both mentors and tutors provide students with the tools, community, and humanity that they need in order to become successful, critical, and independent thinkers, individuals, and citizens. Moreover, as illustrated in the Fox and Stevenson (2006) study, the collaborative learning experience not only benefits students, but also the mentors and tutors that they work with.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is a commonality in the study of leadership, tutoring, and mentoring. Within leadership scholarship, as indicated by Lunford (1991), Braun et al. (2021), Mullen and Kochan (2000), as well as Archer and Cameron (2013), collaboration functions as a critical function and responsibility of many leadership roles through which, leaders apply and develop their communication, problem-solving, and organization skills while also supporting those they work with. The collaborative dynamic of collaborative-style learning utilizes an open dialogue where students can receive useful feedback from leaders, mentors, or tutors to prompt their progress but retain control of their work and their voice. Ultimately, in embracing collaboration through discussion and conversation as the foundation, individuals are facilitated

but not dependent on, overshadowed by, or alienated by the leaders, mentors, or tutors that support them—they realize their own success.

Similarly, mentoring and tutoring employ collaborative learning, as explored by Miller (2020), Smulyan and Bolton (1998), and North (1982), to exact positive outcomes and increased performance in alignment with institutional and organizational goals. Additionally, this scholarship strives to understand the long- and short-term benefits of collaborative learning for students who engage in the practice. Whereas tutors act conditionally as mentors, and serve as informational resources to students by sharing their knowledge to guide student understanding of situational assignments, students are required to do the work-intensive thinking, creating, and revising within their own work. In contrast, mentors act as conditional tutors for content level needs among the students that they work with but primarily act as institution-based resources that provide academic, personal and professional support to students learning to navigate the university setting. Whereas each of these three roles–mentoring, tutoring, and leadership–pursue specific outcomes through collaborative learning, they overlap in their methods, benefits and skills.

Definitions

For the purpose of understanding in this study, the following definitions will be utilized throughout this thesis:

> *First-generation student:* Students with parents whose education did not progress higher than a high-school level.
>
> *Mentor:* One who consults with students in order to provide guidance, advice, resources, and writing support outside of scheduled class-time for mandatory meetings. The term "mentor" is inclusive of tutoring in some cases, for writing-related support.

Mentee: One who consults with mentors for academic and personal guidance, information, and support.

Leader: One who guides, supports, and provides directions to others regarding operations, performance, and/or personal, social, or position-oriented needs.

Conclusion

Therefore, this research study aims to explore informational gaps across disciplines by expanding on the relationship between mentorship outcomes, leadership, and identity, specifically as it pertains to mentors of diverse backgrounds and interests. While significant research has been conducted regarding mentorship and leadership, their relationship and shared qualities, benefits, and outcomes have not been explored in-depth within the field. Hence, this study aims to provide new data to the field and support future mentor and leadership program development.

Chapter Two: Methods

Significance to the Field

Through a demographic survey and individual interviews, this project explores the leadership experience provided by the West Chester mentoring program. Moreover, the study seeks to understand the relationship between theories of mentorship and practice and leadership development. As upperclass students with more experience as college students and training from the West Chester mentoring program, the mentors endeavor to support students from the WRT123 class, which is a developmental writing course offered as one of the mandatory writing general education courses that all students must take. The mentors' role requires that they support students not only academically, but personally, as they learn to navigate their lives in a higher educational setting. This research thus aims to investigate the role of the West Chester University WRT123 mentors—their experiences, outcomes, and personal engagement with their work—as a means of bringing new value and understanding to the field of education as well as, more specifically, to writing center and mentorship studies.

Moreover, by encouraging the mentors of this program to reflect and metacognitively think about what they have learned because of their experience as mentors, this research also provides insight specifically about the leadership and professional applications of this work. Their participation in this study also fosters mentors' understanding of the importance of research to increase understanding of academic-related matters while allowing peer mentors to learn about and consider research themselves. Moreover, this research prompts mentors to consider what pedagogies, methods, and/or practices effectively work for mentors, considering how and why their roles as mentors potentially contribute to their professional and leadership development. Similarly, mentors and administrators of other programs can equally benefit from these insights,

with a greater focus on the outcomes of mentoring as a result of the strategies and pedagogies that they embody. In the overarching field of education, as well as in writing center and mentorship studies, this study potentially provides increased understanding of mentors' effects on leadership and engagement for and beyond an educational setting. For administrators specifically, this project facilitates their engagement with mentor training pedagogy and program development while also exploring how mentoring can support college students through this dual-learning opportunity.

Additionally, this study provides significance to the field through short-term and long-term benefits to Mentoring and Leadership Studies. Short-term benefits include expanding on the skills and development of the West Chester University mentoring community through the program pedagogy and scaffolded hands-on engagement with first-year writing students. The results of this study reveal strengths and areas for growth within the program while also providing mentors with continual opportunities to gain enriched professional, personal, and academic experiences. Moreover, short-term benefits also include enabling mentors and the students they work with to establish relationships and a sense of community with West Chester University. Because the results of this research yielded leadership skills and experience-based outcomes among mentors within the program, this study could support the growth of the mentoring program at West Chester University but also convey the benefits to implementing mentoring programs like this at various institutions. Hence, the long-term benefits of this research include successive research stemming from the outcomes of this study, implementation of leadership-based mentoring programs at other institutions, and increased awareness within the field about the benefits of leadership and mentor programs within higher education.

Purpose of Study

       This project is a mixed-methods research study that analyzes the personal, academic, and professional outcomes for undergraduate mentors within the West Chester University Writing Peer Mentor Program. Through individual interviews and a collective survey administered to all consenting undergraduate mentors ($n = 25$, $N = 53$) within the program, this study originally sought to understand the relationship between mentorship, leadership, and first-generation experience and explored the following research questions:

1. What is the connection between mentorship in the WCU writing peer mentor program (experience of the mentors) and leadership as I will define it?

2. What are the potential benefits and/or drawbacks that first-generation students experience when assuming the role of mentor?

3. Is mentorship an appealing opportunity to first-generation students? Why or why not?

4. What unique benefits, qualities, and insights do first-generation students bring to the program?

However, in post-analysis of the survey, the study was altered to explore the existing population of willing mentors, which did not include any first-generation students. Among the 24 survey participants, only five mentors were willing to participate and all originated from households with at least one parent or guardian who had acquired a two- or four-year degree at the higher educational level.

Hence, the research questions were adjusted to the following:

1. What is the connection between mentorship in the WCU mentoring program (experience of the mentors) and leadership as I will define it?

2. What are the potential benefits and/or drawbacks that students experience when assuming the role of mentor?

3. Is mentorship an appealing opportunity for students? Why or why not?

4. What unique benefits, qualities, and insights do students bring to the program?

As the population of this study yielded differently than expected, the objectives of the study also adjusted to a more diverse and generalized population, specifically exploring the experiences and takeaways of those mentors from a variety of interests, backgrounds, and educational legacies. Although the objective of this research study remains unchanged in its effort to contribute to existing published research surrounding mentorship programs in higher education institutions, the study has broadened to explore non-first generation mentors. Additionally, this study aims to understand how and why, if possible, this mentorship is particularly educational and engaging to students and the potential benefits of mentorship programs as a professional building and/or leadership generative opportunity for students.

Research Design

This research study applied a mixed-methods approach in data collection. Quantitative data was collected solely from the survey for the purpose of viewing data in numeric form that allowed the primary investigator to acquire evidence of student demographic, background, and academic information. Additionally, the quantitative data was primarily used to determine student profile identities and their first-generation or non-first-generation status. The qualitative data that was acquired through individual student interviews was collected to give additional insights to the numeric data and the study as a whole. Ultimately, the qualitative data collection was intended to provide a platform for students to share their unique mentoring experiences and takeaways. While both variables were equally valuable, the initial population this study sought

was not viable because of the participants: only one first-generation mentor presented in the survey, and none were willing to participate in the interview process.

Rationale

In this study, the primary investigator and researcher sought to create a strong foundation of data and evidence that could be utilized to support leadership and mentor program development for the purpose of retaining and fostering student growth. Through enabling students to share their personal experiences and takeaways from their work within the West Chester University Writing Peer Mentor Program, the primary investigator was able to generate new qualitative and quantitative data about the efficacy and outcomes of the program as a leadership development opportunity for mentors of all levels, backgrounds, and interests. While the target population of first-generation students was not available for consideration in this study, the data collected hold significant value to both the mentor program and the field as a whole. Ultimately, both forms of data collection were coded to create a composite understanding of the relationship between mentoring and leadership as well as how such a program may appeal to students of diverse backgrounds and interests.

Methodology

Surveys

In coordinating the survey, the primary investigator worked closely with the Mentor Program Coordinator over Zoom to schedule a time for recruiting student participation. In the end, it was decided that the survey would be conducted at the beginning of the WRH197, 1-credit, mentor training course in hopes of acquiring the highest yield of participation. In addition to a class visit, which allowed students to dedicate none of their personal time outside their engagement with the course, the investigator also arranged for a digital copy of the informed

consent and pertinent contact information, to be posted by the Program Coordinator on the

WRH197 D2L course page for students' reference. Preceding the class visit to administer the

survey, students were encouraged via email, to review the informed consent documents if they

chose and/or wanted to participate in the research study.

Upon visiting the WRH197, Becoming a Writing Peer Mentor class, to administer the

survey, the survey QR code and direct link were made available to both the in-person students

and the virtual students who were unable to attend due to COVID-19. Before students began the

survey, the investigator presented on the the study and read aloud the informed consent form

from a screen at the front of class, specifically directing students' attention to the risks, benefits,

duration, and purpose of this study, as well as reiterating their option to participate or not without

penalty or pressure. Students were then directed to the 15-question Qualtrics survey (Appendix

A) where they could review and provide consent for their participation. For those who consented

to take the survey, they were able to continue on to complete the remainder of the survey

questions, and for those who did not consent, they were excluded from the survey. Throughout

the duration of the survey, which was given during the first 15 minutes of class time, the

investigator remained at the front of the classroom in-person to answer any questions students

had.

Following the completion of the survey, the responses were analyzed and anonymized

before sharing with other investigators or faculty sponsors. Before leaving the class, the

investigator emphasized to students that those who elected to participate in the follow-up

interviews would be contacted via the email they listed on the Qualtrics survey by me for

scheduling. After reviewing the data acquired by the survey, the investigator emailed students to

schedule a time depending on our individual availability. In the email correspondence

(Appendix C), students were reminded that their participation was optional and provided a link for scheduling that emailed the Zoom information after the appointment was made. Five students responded and scheduled interviews; the remainder were either unresponsive or replied that they were no longer able to participate in the study.

Interviews

At the start of each individual interview, the primary investigator restated the terms of the informed consent and reminded participants that they were under no obligation to participate in the interview and that their participation in no way impacted their status in the WRH 197 class. The investigator also clarified that their choice to participate or not would not impact their grades and that they could choose to stop their participation at any time. Then, the investigator went over the interview process, explaining that their interviews were to last no longer than 30 minutes and informed students that they would be asked 6 questions (Appendix B) with potential follow-up questions as needed.

Before we began each interview, students were made aware that they could elect to participate through audio and/or visual Zoom engagement according to their comfort level. The investigator also ensured that students knew when recording began and informed them that if they wished to stop their participation at any time or refuse to answer a specific question, they were welcome to do so according to their comfort level. After each interview was complete, the Zoom recordings and transcriptions were saved to the password-protected West Chester University Zoom cloud for me to review, analyze, and code before writing my thesis. All data gained from this study has been anonymized and was done so before sharing with the other investigators via written text.

The questions of the interview were generated to understand the personal experiences, perceptions, and takeaways that mentors had during their interactions with their mentees. However, questions were also designed to be broad enough that mentors felt secure in sharing their experiences to their comfort level and face no concern in being identified through their responses. Students were asked to share significant experiences they faced as mentors; their personal, professional, and academic takeaways from their work and time in the program; as well as their approach to mentorship with students.

Setting

This research study was conducted at West Chester University of Pennsylvania, a public research university located in Chester County, Pennsylvania. The University is also the largest of the Pennsylvania State Higher Education System. West Chester University (WCU) has an undergraduate student population of approximately 15,000 students and is composed of two campuses: West Chester and Philadelphia. The research included in this study was conducted at the West Chester campus, in two locations 1) room 215 in Anderson Hall and 2) West Chester University Zoom room account belonging to me, the primary investigator. The first setting was the classroom of the WRH197, Becoming a Writing Peer Mentor, 1-credit training course. West Chester University of Pennsylvania was chosen as the setting for this study because it houses the West Chester Writing Peer Mentor Program community. Additionally, this mentor community was chosen because the curriculum includes student leaders and leadership-based pedagogy without specifically acknowledging or striving to generate leadership as an objective of the curriculum. This study sought to explore the program and its outcome for the potential connections to leadership within the community of students.

Participants

        The participants of this research study were undergraduate college students who were trained to serve as mentors to first-year WRT123 undergraduate developmental writing students. All mentor students who participated in this study attended West Chester University Fall 2021. However, their exact programs, identities, and years of experience vary. Additionally, not all mentors included in this research study were currently enrolled in the WRH197, Becoming a Peer Mentor class, but rather, were serving as mentors for an additional year. The students involved in this study were purposely selected for their involvement with the West Chester Mentor Program. Despite being available to all student mentors serving in Fall 2021, the survey and interview were conveyed as entirely optional to participants.

        Participants were invited to engage with the study to their comfort level and could decline to participate at any stage. Students were given access to the informed consent form prior to any participation in either the quantitative (survey) or qualitative (interview) data collection. For students willing to participate in the survey, they were given the additional choice to accept or decline further involvement in the study via interview participation. Students who elected to participate were later contacted through the institutional email that they listed within the survey. Students who elected to participate in follow-up interviews were debriefed again prior to the interview about their choice to participate, study expectations, and objective of the study to provide insight on their experience as mentors. 25 students completed the survey but of those participants, only 5 chose to partake in the follow-up interviews. For the purpose of keeping the names and identities of the mentors anonymous, they will be referred to as Mentor 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 throughout this section.

<center>**Chapter Three: Results**</center>

Introduction

  Throughout this study, the primary investigator sought to understand and explore the relationship between mentoring and leadership through the experiences of mentors within the West Chester University Writing Peer Mentor Program. This section addresses the results from both the survey responses and individual interviews conducted during the Fall 2021 semester among the West Chester University mentor community. Moreover, the results of this research will be related to current research and scholarship on mentoring and leadership studies.

Review of Results

Becoming a Writing Peer Mentor

  While all five mentors who were interviewed admitted that the cause for exploring the mentorship opportunity was spurred by a recommendation from a faculty member, each expressed unique reasons for seeking the role of mentor. Among the appeals of this role, interviewees shared that they were motivated by potential financial, professional, and educational benefits. In addition to being a paid position, mentoring appealed to the mentors for the prospective career benefits because the position offered new training, work experience, and skills that, as all the interviewed mentors felt, could be valuable within their fields and future careers in varying ways. Moreover, the mentors acknowledged that especially in the times of COVID-19, when they were new to the campus themselves, that the opportunity to mentor presented as appealing for the chance to learn more about and interact with members of the West Chester University campus.

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Identity

Of all the mentors surveyed, 84% identified as white, 12% identified as Asian, and 4% identified as Black. Additionally, 16% of surveyed participants identified as male while 80% identified as female and 4% identified as gender nonbinary. However, all interviewed mentors identified as female. Of those five mentors, only one identified as a minority identity–four identified as white and one as Asian. However, despite the lack of diversity in gender and the minimal diversity in reference to race, each mentor emphasized diverse career interests, to which they applied mentoring and their acquired skills in unique ways. Mentor 1 was a white woman interested in pursuing Nursing. In her interview she explained that her newfound organizational and strengthened communication skills, which she gained through her mentor experience, are also extremely valuable in her career. She further elaborated that in learning how to effectively communicate information and ideas to her mentees, she could potentially do the same in the future with patients about their healthcare. Additionally, she expressed that in learning how to organize herself and her sessions, she learned how to more efficiently multitask, which is common within her field.

Similar to Mentor 1, Mentor 2 also identified as a white female but explained that she was pursuing a career in Psychology. As a student and budding professional seeking a position that would allow her to guide, advise, and support others across various circumstances, she felt that the mentoring experience was an invaluable learning opportunity that allowed her to practically apply what she was learning in both the mentoring training course and her Psychology-based classes. Through mentoring, she was able to hone her communications skills and learned how to organize and structure discussions, which she identified as transferable skills to her future role that would have her performing very similar tasks with clients.

Paralleling Mentor 2, Mentor 3 sought to pursue a career in Speech Pathology and identified her major as Communication Sciences and Disorders. She also identified as a white female and explained that, much like the other mentors, her experience gave her valuable insight into how to be efficient in her future career. Throughout her interview, she addressed that what she found most influential, was the opportunity to work, collaborate, and support students of ranging backgrounds and identities. In learning how to adapt and communicate within a session, she felt that she would be more adequately prepared to work with the unique needs of patients and clients in the future. Moreover, she felt that the administrative tasks that she needed to complete as a mentor also prepared her in some ways to be accountable with paperwork and reports that she will need to complete and commonly experience as a Speech Pathologist.

Unlike the other Mentors, Mentor 4 identified as an Asian woman who was pursuing a career in Early and Special Education. During her interview, she explained that mentoring was, in multiple ways, preparing her for her role as a teacher whose responsibility was to help and support students in need. Ultimately, Mentor 4 expressed that every skill she gained, including the ability to collaborate, communicate, adapt, and organize, as well as her increased level of confidence working with students, supported her progression as a developing educator. Additionally, as an education-based mentor, Mentor 4 specifically expressed that mentorship functioned as a practical teaching position. While she acknowledged that it was not exactly the same as teaching, it gave her valuable experience that would support her future success as an educator.

Lastly, Mentor 5, who identified as a white female, was pursuing a career in Finance and is the only mentor in this study that comes from a traditionally recognized leadership-oriented field. However, as shown by the results of this study, she is one of many mentors who gained

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positive benefits through her experience as a mentor. Additionally, unlike the other mentors, Mentor 5 explained that she often worked with many students in her particular field which, she felt, only gave her students more support in the long-term, because they were able to ask her program specific questions. Mentor 5 also conveyed that her mentoring experience gave her valuable insights into her own career and helped her grow as a professional. Through both the administrative tasks and intrapersonal work with students, she learned how to conduct herself as a professional and institutional role model in addition to generating crucial problem-solving and organizational skills.

Experience

Of the five mentors who were interviewed for this research study, only two had prior tutoring experience, but all were new to the role of mentoring. Additionally, the two mentors with tutoring experience both acknowledged that they were new to tutoring at the college level, having gained their experience through middle and high school tutoring of non-writing related subjects. Hence, being a mentor posed as a new position for each person interviewed. However, the two mentors who had prior tutoring experience did express that they felt more confident assuming the role of mentor because they knew, on a basic level, how to conduct a tutoring session and communicate with fellow students. Among the three mentors that did not possess prior tutoring experience, they each admitted feeling less confident entering into mentoring. They also expressed concern about their competency, efficacy, and capability to help their students in both writing and college life. The mentors' concerns stemmed from both their unease regarding the responsibilities of the role but also their lack of confidence in their ability as writers, scholars, and students themselves.

Moreover, Mentor 2 struggled with feelings of not being fit for the role because, having had a mentor herself as a remedial writing student, she felt that she hardly had the strong foundation of knowledge and skill in writing to adequately support her mentees in their own work. However, for each mentor, over the course of their work with their mentees and relevant feedback, they grew to feel confident in their ability to help students and more knowledgeable about what strategies or practices provided the best result. Through assuming this role, mentors explained that they were expected to manage many tasks pertaining to the needs of their students, professors, and themselves as employees of the university. Each of those designated tasks and responsibilities within the program encouraged mentors to conduct themselves as leaders and professionals because of the expectation that they serve as resources, guides, and role models of the university and academic success. Hence, for each mentor, the mentor role has proven to be a multi-faceted learning opportunity that exceeded their expectations about both the process of mentoring and the dynamic between mentors and their students.

Practice

When conducting a session, each mentor took their own unique approach to mentoring students. However, their method and practice in conducting a session and establishing a relationship with their students did exhibit similarities, as indicated by their responses. When conducting a session, every mentor emphasized that their method was rooted in supporting students according to their level of need, enabling students to determine the extent of the relationship between themselves and their mentor, and facilitating student well-being through the difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the beginning of the semester, as noted by Mentor 3 and 4, they made significant effort to explain their role as a mentor to students, emphasizing that they were institutional resources

and support guides for their students, dedicated to helping them succeed. Mentor 2 explained that in addition to sharing her role, she also made significant effort to express her mindset, which prioritized personal wellbeing over grades, to her students as they engaged in sessions. Moreover, Mentor 1 revealed that, especially in the beginning, she often found herself coaching her students to ask pertinent questions and express their needs during sessions. Students would attend meetings quiet and seemingly withdrawn and, in response, Mentor 1 would employ a variety of tactics and icebreakers to facilitate conversation until, after a few sessions, students grew comfortable and knowledgeable enough to dictate the agenda according to their academic and personal needs. However, Mentor 1 was not the only tutor to utilize icebreakers when establishing relationships and supportive sessions with students. Mentor 2 and 3 utilized the same icebreaker during their first session with students as a method of fostering positivity and connection by encouraging students to list five personal strengths and weaknesses that they felt were representative of who they were as people, students, and/or writers. In doing this, mentors gained not only a preliminary understanding of their students but also enabled their students to engage in the session and conversation.

While working with students from vastly diverse backgrounds, with varying learning capabilities, interests, and career tracks, each of the mentors expressed that they often needed to effectively multi-task and scaffold their sessions, which is evident not only in their use of icebreakers and targeted questioning but also in their recurring mental-health check-ins and task prioritization with their students. All of the five mentors included in their interview that they made a point of taking time at the beginning of each session to check-in with their student about their personal and mental well-being by asking them how they were, how classes and/or their lives were going, and/or how they felt at the time of the session. Following that initial

conversation, mentors elaborated that their students were often more engaged and ready to participate as a result. While all mentors also conveyed that attendance was spotty for some students, they found that the students that did attend were genuinely engaged after growing comfortable talking and collaborating with their mentor.

Once mentors did establish connections with students and students grew more comfortable with the dynamic, the mentors expressed in their interviews that students sought information and guidance on topics including navigating the campus, finding resources, how to use D2L, accessing course materials, conducting themselves with professors, and, especially, writing. Hence, mentors needed to guide the session according to the varying needs and questions of their students and multitask in order to support both of their students within each session. In scaffolding the tasks and topics of each session, mentors ensured that students were not only utilizing the full extent of their time but also evolving as students and writers.

Benefits & Leadership Skills

Throughout their interviews, mentors revealed multiple intersecting benefits that they experienced through their work with students and the program. In the wake of the global COVID-19 Pandemic, every mentor expressed that their role in supporting students in the academic setting allowed them to grow more acclimated to West Chester University's campus and its resources and/or to establish a community with other students. Each of the mentors interviewed in the semester of Fall 2021 were first-year students the previous year. Hence, when mentoring, both they and the students they were mentoring were new to the campus. Mentor 2 and Mentor 4 shared that in helping their students to find resources and locations on campus, they became more familiar with college life themselves and, as a result, learned to be more efficient and prioritize their own academic success. Specifically, Mentor 2 found that while

advising her mentees on their writing and academic success, she was learning from them about D2L, campus events, and useful resources. Additionally, all of the five mentors experienced the benefit of establishing a community of fellow students on campus through the other mentors. Mentor 3 explained that mentoring allowed her to not only get to know new people but to grow socially.

In addition to the benefits of learning their campus and acquiring a newfound sense of community among fellow students, mentors expressed many other benefits of the role that contributed to their growth as leaders and fledgling professionals within their respective fields. Most notably, all five mentors who were interviewed conveyed that, through their work with students and WRT123 professors, they learned how to be more efficient, prompt, and accessible communicators and collaborators who can guide, instruct, and advocate for the needs of the students that they mentor. Mentors 1, 2, and 5 specifically addressed the benefit of being able to work with students from varying diverse backgrounds and identities. They explained that their experience helped them interact, find common ground, and/or connect with students who both did and did not relate to them as individuals personally or academically. Throughout mentoring, mentors are required to work with students from varying majors and backgrounds that may differ from the identity of the mentor.

Therefore, the experience of mentoring, which, in many cases, requires mentors to prompt and guide conversation with students, enables mentors to develop their communication skills, their ability to convey pertinent information, and their efficacy in collaborating with students who possess different ideas. Mentor 3 conveyed an example, as she explained, part of developing her communication skills was learning how to effectively provide feedback to writing and meeting students on their level of communication because "not all students communicate[d]

the same way as a [her]." Moreover, Mentor 4, after acknowledging the development of her communication in an administrative capacity, specifically focused on her discomfort with sending professional style emails and her need to learn to appropriately respond or engage the coordinator, professors, and her mentees when she began her work as mentor. Throughout her experience, she grew more confident and efficient in communicating concisely and punctually, to ensure that her work with her mentees stayed on track.

Ultimately, each of the mentors' growth in communication resulted in many additional skills and benefits that helped them perform their work with mentees and professors but also, according to their interviews, has enabled them to develop transferable skills as emerging leaders and professionals in unique ways. In learning how to communicate effectively, mentors also acquired significant confidence in their ability to mentor, in themselves as scholars, as well in their increased organization, scaffolding of sessions, time management, and advising capabilities. The benefits and acquired skills of this role therefore form the foundation of leadership and professional development by providing mentors with experiences that foster transferable skills that apply to their unique careers and interests. As illustrated in Table A, transferable skills that are common in leadership, also present in mentoring as a result of their tasks and responsibilities.

Table A: Mentoring as a Leadership and Professional Development Role	
Tasks & Responsibilities	Transferable Skills
1. Managing the needs of 2 students within a session. 2. Tailoring session according to students needs, level of engagement, and wellbeing.	Adaptability/Problem-Solving
1. Active listening. 2. Synthesizing materials from writing course. 3. Collaborating with mentees on writing. 4. Corresponding with professors, program coordinator, and students.	Intrapersonal/Communication

5. Guiding students through assignments, D2L, campus resources, and conduct.	
1. Scaffolding sessions. 2. Scheduling meeting times. 3. Efficiently and punctually completing reports for professors regarding sessions.	Organization

In accordance with the model posed by McCauley et al. (2010), mentors experienced all three elements of leadership development including assessment, challenge, and support through their collaboration with students and the mentor training course. They underwent assessment as they developed their confidence and method both in the classroom and during their sessions with students. Challenge was an integral part of their responsibilities to connect, advise, and support their mentees. Lastly, support was generated through the mentor training course and cohort of serving mentors which facilitated discussion, reflection, and growth. These markers in leadership development, which are also present in mentor training and practice, show that mentorship is a leadership position that not only employs similar pedagogy but also supports related skill acquisition, professional evolution, and personal growth. Mentors serve as leaders to the students who depend on them and the institutions that utilize them as figures of academic support and success.

Conclusion

Over the course of this study, the research has established a relationship between mentoring and leadership, both in how these roles intersect and how they support students aspiring for careers within their respective fields. Additionally, this research study has shown, through the many positive outcomes and benefits experienced by mentors, the significant effects of the Writing Peer Mentoring program at West Chester University in generating leaders and professionals across fields. Moreover, this research explores how such a program poses as a unique dual learning and developmental opportunity for mentors and the students that they

support. Among the population of mentors who participated in this study, common themes and outcomes resulted from their individual and collective experiences, which included shared benefits, transferable skills, experience, appeal to the role, and leadership methods of engagement. Moreover, this research confirms that a lack of research regarding first-generation students in mentoring and leadership roles continues to exist. Therefore, this study fills some of the existing gaps in scholarship about leadership and professional development opportunities in mentoring programs within higher education, for mentors of all backgrounds and interests.

Chapter Four: Discussion

Introduction

  While this research was unable to explore first-generation students and the ways in which programs like this can support their growth as mentors, leaders, and professionals, it does give insight into why the West Chester University's Writing Peer Mentoring program should expand to include those communities in the future. Moreover, there are significant implications of this research to support future research studies and program development across mentoring and leadership studies at this educational institution and others nationwide. Hence, this chapter will explore the limitations, effectiveness of the model, and implications of this study as well as recommendations for future research before concluding with a self-evaluation of the primary investigator's work within this study. Ultimately, this chapter aims to provide future researchers with a composite understanding of this study's strengths and weaknesses, while also enabling them to consider how to conduct future research that expands on the objectives, methods, and results of this study and the role of mentoring as a leadership role.

Effectiveness of the Model

  The mixed-method model applied in this research study was effective in providing greater understanding regarding the relationship between leadership and mentoring, as well as the shared and overlapping outcomes, incentives, and qualities of those roles. In both the survey and interviews, students shared their responses in a safe environment and provided valuable insights into the influence of identity and experience on mentor work, leadership, and professional development. The qualitative data collected enabled the primary investigator to establish the correlation between diverse mentor experience and leadership development. In addition to providing the framework for the results of this study, the qualitative data generated

the narratives that inform the relationship between mentoring and leadership. Meanwhile, the quantitative data allowed the primary investigator to understand the study's participant demographic and identities, which supported the relationship and applications of mentoring as a professional development experience and leader-generative role. Ultimately, the quantitative data gave context to the qualitative data, informing on the significance of identity in the relationship between mentoring, leadership, and professional development. Both data collection models—the survey and the interview—were effective for the use of this study because they allowed the primary investigator to gain a composite understanding of the mentors' experiences, takeaways, and identities. While the study was not able to assess the specific first-generation population it initially intended to explore, it was effective in exploring the experiences, outcomes, and identities of participating mentors.

The qualitative data acquired from the Qualtrics survey gave the primary investigator insight into the students' demographic information, specifically including their degree tracks, their familial background in higher education, and other markers of their identity, which lent context to their personal narratives and experiences as mentors of the West Chester University's Writing Peer Mentor Program. Moreover, the quantitative data revealed a potential area for growth within the mentor population and the program overall, which would facilitate more first-generation and diverse student identities to be integrated. Additionally, the interview model was effective in generating greater understanding and insight regarding the method, practice, and pedagogy of mentors within the program. Specifically, the qualitative data collected in the interviews was effective in establishing a relationship between mentoring, leadership, and professional development. By enabling mentors to share their interactions and takeaways from working with students, the model proved effective in yielding enriched results, which supported

mentors' metacognitive understanding of their experience and allowed for the primary investigator to see connections between mentoring, leadership, and professional development. Through individual interviews, students were given the opportunity to share their experiences and takeaways, which emphasized their role as not only knowledgeable mentors, but also as evolving leaders.

Implications of Research

The findings of this research will impact how administrators and mentors understand the role of mentoring as a leadership position and develop effective programs that generate growth in skills, professional identity, and personal achievement. Moreover, these findings inform administrators and researchers about the value of mentoring as a leadership position and academic support resource to institutions, faculty, and students–both mentors and mentees. An implication for the mentoring program at West Chester University is that there is potential to expand inclusion and recruitment to more first-generation students and students of marginalized identities. The findings of this study emphasized the unique contributions of mentors from varying levels of experience, career interests, and identities within their practice and engagement with students. Additionally, findings revealed the vast benefits for mentors who progressed throughout this program. Hence, there is significant potential for the program to further diversify and provide more composite perspectives for both the mentors and their students. By diversifying the population of mentors that serve in this program, the West Chester University Writing Peer Mentoring program can provide more accurate representation and give credence to the value of identity within the institution. Moreover, this implication also serves to provide a more accurate representation of the fields and discourses that students can pursue and receive help with at the university.

Another implication of this study is that the role of mentors and the framework of the program be considered through the scope of leadership and explore the ways in which leadership and mentoring intersect. This would allow mentors to metacognitively and reflectively understand their roles in new and incentivizing ways while also utilizing additional critical frameworks that they can apply within their work with students. Examples of such frameworks include the scholarship generated by Dugan et al. (2017), Porfilio and Ford (2015), and Collinson and Tourish (2015), which all explore leadership theory and its role in the applications and outcomes of leadership work both within the educational setting and the world. These scholars specifically address the need for leaders to consider themselves in relation to cultural and social constructs that they work within as well as how identity and power play an influence. Ultimately, by enabling mentors to recognize their role as leaders and role models to the institutions and student communities that they serve through critical cultural and social frameworks, mentors are given the tools to apply their role and skills in larger contexts. Mentors are thus able to see how they might approach and generate meaning within the role of guiding and supporting the students that they serve but also how they might expand upon such work and eventually apply it within their professions and their role as citizens.

However, there is also an implication for leadership studies that presents in multiple fields and careers such as education, which are dedicated to generating knowledgeable, responsible, and capable students, leaders, and citizens. Much like mentorship has the potential to gain significant insight and innovation from the theories, pedagogies, and practices of leadership work, the findings of this study revealed the many ways in which leadership studies could consider incorporating mentorship work into their curriculum as a method of developing intrapersonal skills and other beneficial outcomes. As indicated by this study, mentoring presents

as a unique leadership opportunity that enables leaders to learn, practice, and evolve simultaneously. Additionally, through a variety of intersecting tasks that occur in tandem during sessions, mentoring has also proven to be an extremely metacognitive, reflective, and knowledge-generative opportunity, which allows leaders to make positive impacts on the communities they work with as well as within their own lives. As utilized within the West Chester University Writing Peer Mentor program, mentorship poses as a unique practical experience for leaders across disciplines, to grow their skills while also supporting the growth, understanding, and outcomes of those they work with in the same position and those they serve.

Another implication that stems from the findings of this study, specifically regarding the benefits elicited from the mentors, is that both leadership and mentor scholarship need to consider the ways in which identity and individual interests factor into the applications of these theories, pedagogies, and practices among leaders. As the mentors illustrated throughout their responses, each of them found themselves applying the skills they acquired within this role to their future careers and professions. While all mentors hailed from different fields, they each explored the implications of how their experiences with students generated transferable skills that they could utilize in future professional settings, which included Speech Pathology, Psychology, Nursing, Business, and Education. Mentoring acts not only as a leadership role but a professional development opportunity for students to garner essential administrative and collaborative experience that yield significant intrapersonal, problem-solving, and organization skills. Hence, mentoring prepares and supports students as leaders as well as equips them to work in their respective fields and should hence, be explored further for its notable influence in education.

Limitations of Research

      The primary investigator recognizes that there were numerous limitations that may have affected the results of the study. The first limitation of this study is that the study could not yield the targeted population of first-generation mentors and, hence, the population of participants shifted the focus of the study. Rather than primarily exploring first-generation students and the unique ways in which their experiences, takeaways, and skills influenced the relationship between their work as mentors, leaders, and burgeoning professionals within their respective fields, post-survey, the study adapted to the willing population of participants, which included non-first-generation mentors within the program. Moreover, while this study only received one first-generation survey response and no interviews, the entire population of serving mentors within the program did not participate. Hence, a second limitation of this study is the low participation rates of all active mentors of the West Chester University Peer Mentor Program. Twenty-three students participated in the survey, out of which, five elected to complete the individual follow-up interview. However, there were approximately 60 students serving as mentors in the Fall of 2021.

      Therefore, a limitation of the study is the low participation and response rate among the population of mentors in the follow-up interview section of this research study. Although 15 students out of the 25 who participated in the survey did select that they were willing to complete the follow-up interview, only five remained willing over the course of the semester. Hence, the limited response size that resulted from the survey (Appendix A) and the scheduling email (Appendix C) prevented the responses from a more diverse interview group. This limitation prevented a larger and more composite collection of narrative interview responses, which may have contributed additional insights and connections regarding the relationship between

mentoring, leadership, and professional development. Overall, there were fewer responses to analyze than possible. However, the data that was collected allowed the primary investigator to acquire multiple perspectives and draw connections between mentor experiences, takeaways, and skills, and leadership.

Given the diverse interests and fields of the participating mentors, another limitation is that the primary investigator was not able to generate questions in advance that were tailored to the unique applications of this work to the various fields and interests of the mentors. For each student, many of their elaborations beyond their initial answer were formed as a result of follow-up questions asked by the primary investigator. Follow-up questions were not premeditated in their design and, while significant to the collection of data, were specified to each student's experiences. Hence the depth of students' answers and the focus of their interviews in some ways varied according to the follow-up questions. While most of the study was standardized to achieve accurate and unbiased results, because of the variability of the follow-up questions, there was a limit to standardization of research and the level of engagement for each interviewed mentor.

Additionally, the population of mentor-participants was limited to only the West Chester University mentors that were actively serving in the program during the Fall of 2021. This study did not seek to include and was not advertised beyond mentors who were actively mentoring first-year WRT123 students. In addition, the study was also closed to the general West Chester University student body and mentors who had served as mentors at one point in their experience as students because this research aimed to explore a select group of mentors who were actively learning and engaging students as mentors. However, this methodological choice became a limitation because it limited the population of participants of both first-generation and non-first-generation mentors, which might have allowed the study to be completed the way in which it

was designed. Lastly, due to the timeline of the study, the data was unable to be coded by additional researchers. All data included in this study and analyzed for results has been done solely by the primary investigator.

Recommendations for Future Research

As illustrated by the limitations and implications of this study, there is significant opportunity for future studies to expand on this research and, as a result, to provide a more extensive and comprehensive understanding of mentoring as a leadership role that fosters personal and professional growth among mentors, specifically those of marginalized identities, who make up a significant and essential population within higher education communities. One area for future research to expand is in the population of the study, which was limited due to the timeline of this study and the number of participants. In future research, researchers should consider exploring all the past and present mentors within this program and/or pursue additional mentor programs at other institutions to assess how the results compare and contrast to those that occurred in this study. Additionally, future researchers should consider extending the study over a longer period of time to give mentors a greater range of availability to participate. As the first semester back in-person since the COVID-19 Pandemic began in March 2020, students who agreed to participate and, later retracted, mentioned that the primary reason for the change was the time constraints and workload of their semesters. This was largely because interviews were only open to be conducted over a two-month window according to the primary researcher's schedule. Perhaps, in a longer length study, mentors would have felt more able and inclined to participate.

Moreover, future research may also consider extending the length of the study in order to assess and understand how the results found in this study change and/or evolve as mentors gain

additional experience after their initial semester in the training course. In implementing this study over the length of two semesters or more, researchers could see the progression of mentors, as leaders, their skills, and the outcomes of their service to students. Additionally, a longer study over the expanse of multiple semesters, would provide particular insight into first-generation experiences and give researchers a greater understanding into how the outcomes and experience differs or compares to that of other mentors. This would allow researchers to explore the unique ways in which mentorship is or is not a leadership role for first-generation students, the outcomes they experience, and the possible evolution that occurs for them over the time that they serve in the position.

Another possibility for future research is exploring the impacts of leadership pedagogy integrated into the mentoring training program and examining the impact of those critical frameworks on the mentor experience, outcomes, and understanding. By implementing a leadership-specific training program for mentors, researchers can support administrative recognition and development of the role as well as enable the mentors to metacognitively and reflectively understand their role and practice. Moreover, this form of training may have a greater positive impact on mentors' practical experience with students. While this training program would need to undergo validation and involve a form of assessment for mentors to examine its impact, the program could help increase the level of confidence that mentors feel. Additionally, this formalized training could enable mentors to put their role in context of the world around them and how they can apply their work as leaders, to positively impact the experiences of their students and institutional community.

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<h1 style="text-align: center;">Appendices</h1>

Appendix A

<p style="text-align: center;">Study Survey</p>

Q1 Informed Consent Project Title: Leadership and Mentoring Investigator(s): Amanda Pickett; Margaret Ervin

<h2 style="text-align: center;">Project Overview:</h2>

Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being done by Amanda Pickett as part of her master's Thesis to analyze the personal, academic, and professional outcomes for undergraduate mentors within the West Chester University Peer Mentor Program.

Participation:

- Your participation will take about 45 minutes in total:

    - 15 minutes for the survey and,

    - If indicated, 30 minutes for an audio or visual Zoom recording interview depending on the participants comfort level.

Benefits of Participating in this study:

- Encouraged reflection and metacognition which lead to increased engagement and transfer of knowledge.

- Awareness of the importance of research to increase understanding of academic-related matters.

- Involvement in a research study which allows peer mentors to learn about and consider research themselves.

- Learn about what effectively works for mentors and why, and about how their roles as mentors contribute to their professional and leadership development.

- For society, increased understanding of a mentor affects leadership and engagement.

- For administrators, engage with mentor training pedagogy and program development.

- Understand how mentoring can support first-generation college students.

What is the purpose of this study?

- To analyze the personal, academic, and professional outcomes for undergraduate mentors within the West Chester University Peer Mentor Program.

- To understand the relationship between mentorship, leadership, and first-generation experience.

- To explore the following research questions:

    - What is the connection between mentorship in the WCU mentoring program (experience of the mentors) and leadership as I will define it?

    - What are the potential benefits and/or drawbacks first-generation students experience when assuming the role of mentor?

    - Is mentorship an appealing opportunity to first-generation students? Why or why not?

    - What unique benefits, qualities, and insights do first-generation students bring to the program?

Are there any experimental medical treatments?

No

Is there any risk to me?

None

How will you protect my privacy?

- Interviews will be recorded through Zoom and downloaded to password protected file/computer for further analysis, transcription, and coding. Your records will be private. Only audio participation will be required in Zoom recording if the participants prefer.

- Only Amanda Pickett, Margaret Ervin, and the IRB will have access to your name and responses. Your name will not be used in any reports.

- Records will be stored: Password Protected File/Computer

- Records will be destroyed after manuscript development, but no less than three years.

Do I get paid to take part in this study?

No

For any questions with this study, contact:

- Primary Investigator: Amanda Pickett at ap964407@wcupa.edu

- Faculty Sponsor: Margaret Ervin at MErvin@wcupa.edu

What will you do with my Identifiable Information?

- Identifiers like name and personalized information will be removed.

- All data will be anonymized.

- For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the ORSP at 610-436-3557.

I, _____ (your name), have read this form and I understand the statements in this form. I know that if I am uncomfortable with this study, I can stop at any time. I know that it is not possible to know all possible risks in a study, and I think that reasonable safety measures have been taken to decrease any risk.

Subject/Participant Signature:_____

Signature Date: _____

By clicking yes to this question, you are giving your consent for participation in this study. If choosing no, you will be rejecting consent and will not be asked to complete any further part of this survey.

    o Yes (1)

    o No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Q1 = No

DEMOGRAPHIC SECTION (5 questions)

Q2 What is your name? (Please list your full name)

_____

Q3 What is your email? (Please provide ONLY your WCU email)

_____

Q4 What is your gender?

    o Male (1)

    o Female (2)

    o Non-binary / third gender (3)

    o Prefer not to say (4)

Q5 What is your ethnicity?

o White (1)

o Black or African American (2)

o American Indian or Alaska Native (3)

o Asian (4)

o Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)

o Other (6)

Q6 What language(s) do you speak? (Please list any and all languages you speak fluently)

_____

ACADEMIC SECTION (3 questions)

Q7 What is your major?

_____

Q8 What year are you?

o First Year (Freshman) (1)

o Second Year (Sophomore) (2)

o Third Year (Junior) (3)

o Fourth Year (Senior) (4)

o Fifth year and up (5)

Q9 Are you a transfer student?

o No (1)

o Yes (2)

BACKGROUND SECTION (6 questions)

Q10 Please select your Mother's achieved level of education:

o Some high school, no diploma (1)

o High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) (2)

o Higher Education degree (for example: Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate, Professional) (3)

o Not applicable (4)

Q11 Please select your Father's achieved level of education:

o Some high school, no diploma (1)

o High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) (2)

o Higher Education degree (for example: Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate, Professional) (3)

o Not applicable (4)

Q12 If applicable, please select your guardian's achieved level of education:

o Some high school, no diploma (1)

o High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) (2)

o Higher Education degree (for example: Associates, Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate, Professional) (3)

o Not applicable (4)

Q13 Do you come from a single parent, two parent, or guardianship household?

o Single parent (1)

o Two parent (2)

o Guardianship (3)

Q14 Are there any other family members, within your immediate family, who are currently in college or college graduates?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

Q16 If you answered yes to the previous question, please select the family members:

o Younger sibling (1)

o Older sibling (2)

o Child (3)

o Not applicable (4)

LEADERSHIP SECTION:(4 questions)

Q17 Have you ever mentored and/or tutored before?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

Q18 If you answered yes to the previous question, please list how many semesters you have mentored and/or tutored:

(If no, respond N/A)

_____

Q19 Have you ever, or do you presently assume any additional leadership roles on campus?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

 Q20 If you answered yes to the previous question, please list your leadership roles:

(If no, respond N/A)

_____

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

Q24 Do you consent to participating in a follow-up survey?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. Why did you want to become a mentor?

2. How has your position as a mentor influenced you?

3. What personal, academic, and professional benefits have you received from mentoring?

4. When you mentor, what generally happens in the mentoring session?

5. What kind of attitude do you bring to the mentoring sessions?

6. Has your perspective about mentoring changed since you began? How?

Appendix C

Hello,

I hope you all are having a good semester. Thank you so much for choosing to participate in my M.A. thesis project. I am contacting you because you individually selected that you would

like to participate in the follow-up 30-minute interview. Again, thank you so much for being willing to participate and furthering this project.

As stated on the informed consent document, which I have attached to this email, **your participation is completely voluntary and will have no impact on your grade should you choose**, at any time, that you would like to discontinue your participation. If you would no longer like to participate in this study, you are not obligated to do so. **I only ask that you please send me an email, separately at** ap964407@wcupa.edu , **if you do not wish to continue so that I can remove you from my list**. Additionally, if at any point during the interview you would like to refrain from answering a question or stop your participation, you are free to do so.

Moving forward, if you choose to participate, interviews will be conducted via Zoom and be recorded for transcription to be used as data in the study. You are free to participate with your camera's on or off according to your comfort level. The interview will consist of 6 pre-designed questions but may also include follow-up questions if needed. Additionally, interviews will not extend beyond 30 minutes.

To schedule interviews with me, please use this link to choose a time:

https://booking.setmore.com/scheduleappointment/7523c4ee-d1b9-4bd7-af51-7bd147d12f2c/services/sb55440fe935471daef6fef26ac38d0e8fa1c0094

Please note my availability via the link but, if none of those times work for you, please contact me and I will find a time that works for you. I know that everyone is very busy so I want to accommodate your participation as best I can. Please contact me at ap964407@wcupa.edu with any questions and/or concerns.

Thank you,

Amanda Pickett

English Master's Candidate, Writing, Teaching, and Criticism

Pennsylvania State University, '20

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